

NCEC Guidelines for Catholic School communities in Post-Compulsory Education (1993)

INTRODUCTION

Catholic school communities, in the current context of reshaping and redefining post-compulsory education, face the challenge to provide:

- personal, religious and social development appropriate for emerging adults;
- curriculum frameworks of sufficient scope and complexity to link with a range of pathways to further education, training and work;
- flexible schooling structures; and
- a range of effective partnerships with the wider community.

NCEC national conference: "*Catholic Schools and the National Agenda*"

The July 1993 Conference developed the major themes of:

- a call for renewed emphasis on educating the whole person, taking into account the increasing importance and validity of educating students for continuing education, training and work;
- a recognition of the need for school communities to respond to current economic and social pressures by providing an enhanced climate of hope and confidence to students facing uncertain futures; and
- a need for school communities to promote more effective and productive partnerships with individuals and agencies external to the school.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

The following guidelines were also adopted by the Conference. They are offered to Catholic school communities as an aid in addressing the needs of post-compulsory Catholic students in the 1990s.

PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

1. Catholic school communities should continue to assist young adults to integrate faith and life by:

- providing flexible and creative responses to their needs for education in faith;
- promoting and fostering a well-founded spirit of hope, confidence and optimism in all students for their futures.

Well structured programs and, where appropriate, publicly accredited courses in Religious Education should be provided for all students. While they may be delivered in flexible settings they should encourage students to:

- embrace in adult ways the challenges of their Catholic heritage; and
- adopt creative and purposeful approaches to the challenging world they experience and encounter.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

2. Catholic school communities should continue to integrate the many purposes of curriculum, including vocational education and training, through well designed curriculum frameworks.

Such frameworks would seek to:

- maintain a clear focus on the development of the whole person;
- encourage a broad and balanced range of studies; and
- use valid, reliable and relevant indicators of student performance, designed to report effectively to a wide range of prospective audiences.

Broadly focused curriculum frameworks incorporating a balance of generic and work-related competencies will encourage students to view their post-compulsory schooling as:

- an initial stage of a developing set of adult learning experiences;
- crucial to their full and confident participation in Australian society; and
- specifically designed to provide for entry to tertiary student and training or combinations of work and further education.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

3. Catholic school communities should continue to develop organisational structures designed to provide all students with effective and productive learning environments.

Such organisational structures would aim to:

- promote socially just outcomes for all students;
- promote adaptive, flexible and creative student responses to their learning;
- meet the range of needs of emerging adults;
- enhance formal links with post-school providers of education and training;
- provide valid credit transfer for prior and current learning;
- promote collaborative community participation in forging future learning and employment-related pathways; and
- assist in the development of credentialing frameworks which address the Certification needs of all students.

In devising strategies to enhance social justice, school structures and curriculum models would be informed by criteria which ensure that they:

- are respectful and inclusive of gender, class, race and ethnicity;
- recognise the ways different constructions of knowledge may disadvantage some groups; and

- include and validate the views and experiences of those outside any socially dominant viewpoint.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

4. Catholic school communities should continue to develop partnerships which are informed and sustained by common and agreed learning outcomes for all students.

School-teacher links should assist teachers to:

- up-date their knowledge and skills in specific learning areas;
- explore the relationship of specific learning areas to vocational pathways; and
- further develop a collective and comprehensive responsibility for the developmental needs of students in their care.

School-parent links should strive to:

- promote participatory and inclusive principles and practices;
- make the best possible use of the extensive personal and vocational resources the parent community can provide; and
- provide frequent opportunities for parents to be fully informed on current educational developments, including those most likely to affect student pathways to future education, training and work.

School-industry links should strive to:

- develop co-operative and harmonious relationships with a wide range of business and commercial interests;
- maintain a balanced approach to student learning which is consistent with sound educational practice; and
- promote learning activities which are adequately informed by Catholic principles and ethics.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

5. Catholic school communities should continue their efforts to assist adult members of the school community understand and respond to the challenges of continuing education.

As well as supporting the community links mentioned above, schools should also seek to provide the appropriate education and training for members of Boards and school staff to participate full in post-compulsory school developments.

In particular, teachers will need assistance to update their knowledge and skills in specific learning areas and to explore the relationship of each area to further education and training pathways. They will also require assistance to further develop a collective and comprehensive responsibility for the development needs of the students in their care.

PUBLIC POLICY FRAMEWORKS

6. Catholic education authorities should enter into positive negotiations with governments and public authorities with the aim of establishing equitable public policy frameworks.

Establishing equitable policy frameworks should include providing access for Catholic students and schools to the broadest possible range of post-compulsory education. Such provision should include:

- provision of joint courses with TAFE;
- joint campus sites with TAFE or other approved training providers;
- cross sector training and the recognition of teachers by school and TAFE authorities.