

Primary Curriculum Review: Responding to curriculum overload

Re-presenting the *English Curriculum*:
Information for teachers

April 2010

Contents

Why re-present the English Curriculum?	3
What is the new structure?	3
How does the new structure differ from the current one?	4
Are the four strand units removed altogether?	4
Why present the content objectives under the categories of <i>development</i> and <i>skills</i> ? ..	4
Why use the terms listening skills and speaking skills?	5
Why group the content objectives?	5
What is the source of the group names?	6
Do the content objectives show progression?	9
Do the re-presented materials link with the <i>English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines</i> (DES, 1999)?	10
How can you print and use the re-presented materials?	10
Where can I find more information?	10

Re-presenting the *English Curriculum*: Information for teachers

Why re-present the English Curriculum?

The re-presentation is a response to what teachers have told us about the challenges they experience in using the *English Curriculum* to support their planning. The re-presented materials should bring greater clarity and easier navigability to the content of the *English Curriculum* and so provide practical support in the planning of English at whole school level and at individual class teacher level. The new structure presents the content in a more user-friendly way.

What is the new structure?

An overview of the structure is set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of structure

		Oral Language		Reading	Writing
Development		Enjoy oral language		Enjoy listening to reading	Oral language and writing
		Perform social functions Explore story and poetry Discuss experiences Discuss issues, concerns and new concepts Share solutions and opinions Share feelings and imagination		Print-rich environment Early reading Reading genres Personal reading Independent reading Respond to reading Range of audiences	Classroom environment Early writing Writing genres Personal experiences and choice Writing across the curriculum Independent writing Respond through writing Writing with others Valuing children's writing
Skills		Oral Language		Reading	Writing
		Listening	Speaking		
		Active listening	Tone, facial expression and gesture Vocabulary and syntax Function of words Asking questions Giving descriptions	Sight vocabulary Word identification Phonological and phonemic awareness Confirming and self-correcting Comprehension Information retrieval skills	Writing process Spelling Grammar, punctuation and syntax Penmanship and presentation

How does the new structure differ from the current one?

The three strands, *Oral language*, *Reading and Writing* and all of the content objectives remain unchanged.

The four strand units are set aside. This is in response to what teachers have told us about challenges in planning with the strand units. Two categories called *development* and *skills* are used.

Are the four strand units removed altogether?

No. Simple codes are used in the re-presented *English Curriculum* to ensure that all content objectives can be easily traced back to the four strand units of the *English Curriculum* (1999). Table 2 illustrates this code with an example.

Table 2. Codes for the strand units of the *English Curriculum* (1999)

Class levels	Original strand units	Examples
A = Infants B = First & Second C = Third & Fourth D = Fifth & Sixth	1.0 Receptiveness to language 2.0 Competence and confidence in using language 3.0 Developing cognitive abilities through language 4.0 Emotional and imaginative development through language	A1.4 = Infants >> Receptiveness to language > 4 th content objective as listed in the <i>English Curriculum</i> (1999)

Why present the content objectives under the categories of *development* and *skills*?

The two broad categories of *development* and *skills* originate from the *English Curriculum*. The curriculum statement identifies "...the process of acquiring **language skills** and...**developing the ability to use language**"... (*English Curriculum*, DES, 1999, p.3).

The content objectives relating to the **development of language** across the three strands are now organised under *Oral language development*, *Reading development* and *Writing development*. The content objectives relating to each of the specific strands are grouped to promote clarity and accessibility. Table 3 below illustrates this with the example of *Reading development*.

Table 3. Reading development

Reading	
Development	Enjoy listening to reading
	Print-rich environment
	Early reading
	Reading genres
	Personal reading
	Independent reading
	Respond to reading

The content objectives relating to **language skills** are grouped together under *Listening skills*, *Speaking skills*, *Reading skills* and *Writing skills*. Table 4 below illustrates this with an example of *Reading skills*.

Table 4. Reading skills

Reading	
Skills	Sight vocabulary
	Word identification
	Phonological and phonemic awareness
	Confirming and self-correcting
	Comprehension
	Information retrieval skills

Why use the terms listening skills and speaking skills?

The distinction between *listening* and *speaking* in oral language can be traced back to the general aims of the *English Curriculum* where there is a distinction made between listener and speaker. This is illustrated in the general aims listed below.

- Develop the child's ability to engage appropriately in *listener-speaker* relationships
- Develop confidence and competence in *listening*, *speaking*, reading and writing

(*English Curriculum*, DES, 1999, p10)

Why group the content objectives?

Presenting the 424 content objectives in a user-friendly way was important. The content objectives are organised in different groups under both *development* and *skills*. This is illustrated in Table 5. Content objectives that are seen as conceptually related

form each group. For example, all the content objectives relating to *Information retrieval skills* are presented in this group.

Table 5. Writing strand

Writing			
Development	Oral language and writing		
	Classroom environment		
	Early writing		
	Writing genres		
	Personal experiences and choice	Skills	Writing process
	Writing across the curriculum		Spelling
	Independent writing		Grammar, punctuation and syntax
	Respond through writing		Penmanship and presentation
	Range of audiences		
	Writing with others		
	Valuing children's writing		

What is the source of the group names?

Most of the groups can be traced back to the broad objectives in the *English Curriculum*. Table 6 shows the links between the broad objectives and groups. In a very small number of cases the groups do not explicitly link with the broad objectives for English. Instead these groupings can be traced to the other identified sections of the *English Curriculum* (DES, 1999) and *English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines* (DES, 1999). This is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 6. Links between the English Curriculum broad objectives and the group names.

Broad objectives	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
Gain pleasure and fulfillment from language activity Explore, experiment with and enjoy all the playful aspects of language	Enjoy oral language	Enjoy listening to reading Personal reading	Personal experiences and choice
Develop the skill of listening actively and appreciate the significance of tone, facial expression and gesture	Active listening Tone, facial expression and gesture		
Explore and express reactions to poetry, fiction and the arts, and refine aesthetic response through oral language activity and writing Compose, relate and write his/her own stories and poems	Explore story and poetry Share feelings and imagination	Reading genres Respond to reading	Writing genres Respond through writing
Learn to understand the conventions of social language interaction and use oral language in a variety of social situations	Perform social functions		
Expand his/her vocabulary and develop a command of grammar, syntax and punctuation	Vocabulary and Functions of words		Grammar, punctuation and syntax
Become fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences Explore and develop ideas and concepts through talk, directed discussion and writing	Discuss issues, concerns and new concepts	Personal reading	Personal experiences and choice Writing across the curriculum
Organise, clarify, interpret experience through oral language activity and writing	Active listening Discuss experiences		Oral language and writing Personal experiences and choice Writing across the curriculum
Identify and evaluate the key points, issues and central meaning of a text or oral presentation and organize efficiently the information gained	Active listening	Comprehension Information retrieval skills Respond to reading	

Table 6 (cont.) Links between the English Curriculum broad objectives and the group names

Broad objectives	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
Justify and defend opinions and present a coherent argument orally and in writing Use oral language to manipulate images in problem solving	Share solutions and opinions		Writing genres
Express intuitions, feelings, impressions, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations through talk, discussion and writing Create, develop and sustain imaginary situations through talk, discussion and improvisational drama	Share feelings and imagination	Respond to reading	Respond through writing
Develop print awareness, an understanding of the purposes of print, and a control over the different ways meaning is derived from print Develop a range of reading skills and abilities that would include phonemic awareness, word identification strategies and a growing sight vocabulary		Print awareness Sight vocabulary Word identification Phonological and phonemic awareness Confirming and self-correcting	Classroom environment
Develop an appropriate range of comprehension strategies		Comprehension	
Develop an awareness of the richness and diversity of reading material available and read from a variety of texts of gradually increasing complexity		Reading genres Personal reading	
Choose his/her reading material and engage in and enjoy sustained silent reading		Personal reading Independent reading	
Develop a sense of discrimination with regard to the use of language and images in the media	Tone, facial expression and gesture Discuss issues, concerns and new concepts	Respond to writing	Respond in writing
Write for different purposes and different audiences			Range of audiences
Write in a variety of genres appropriate to school and outside needs			Writing genres

Learn to edit and refine writing and develop a sense of appropriate presentation			Writing process Penmanship and presentation
Develop a personal style of writing and learn to distinguish and to use appropriate levels of formality			Range of audiences Penmanship and presentation
Share writing and responses to reading experience with other children and adults		Responding to reading	Writing with others Valuing children's writing
Use computer technology in learning to write and for information retrieval		Information retrieval skills	Penmanship and presentation
Enhance reading and writing development through the involvement of parents or guardians		Early reading	Range of audiences

Table 7. Links between the English Curriculum documents and group names that are not specifically identified in the broad objectives in English

<i>English Curriculum (DES, 1999)</i>	<i>English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines (DES, 1999)</i>	Group
"...lead the child to use questions in order to gain maximum information" p.7		Asking questions (Oral language)
"...through...more elaborate descriptions, the ability to write in continuous prose can develop." p. 5		Giving descriptions (Oral language)
"Through...describing...things and ideas, knowledge is extended and the command of language is developed". p. 6		
	Early writing p. 77	Early writing (Writing)
"...he/she can become an independent writer, attaining the competence to write for sustained periods."		Independent writing (Writing)
	Spelling p. 85	Spelling (Writing)

Do the content objectives show progression?

Yes. The content objectives are aligned to highlight the continuity of learning across the class levels. The alignment also promotes differentiation by making it easy for the teacher to select a content objective that matches the needs of the individual child.

Do the re-presented materials link with the English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines (DES, 1999)?

Yes. The materials link the content objectives and the related methodologies and approaches section of the *English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines (DES, 1999)*. The relevant page numbers of the guidelines document are identified alongside the content objectives.

How can you print and use the re-presented materials?

The re-presented materials can be downloaded and printed as a single document. Teachers can then use the pages to create, for example, a

- single booklet for all three strands
- separate booklet for each strand
- concertina style fold-out document for each strand

Where can I find more information?

Please visit www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload to find out more.