Brookstead State School English Program

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Rationale — English as a Key Learning Area

The Key Learning Area of English is about making sense of diverse human experiences, representing experiences in real and imagined worlds, and developing understandings of texts and language, and their aesthetic value. To do this, students need opportunities to interpret and construct literary and non-literary texts, considering purpose, audience and textual features.

**Literary and non-literary texts** create imaginative worlds and tell stories of cultures and communities. Students need opportunities to understand, appreciate, respond to and create these texts in the English program. Texts include:

- narrative and traditional stories (novels, poetry, plays, picture books)
- personal recounts
- descriptions
- autobiographies and biographies
- explanations
- expository arguments and discussions
- personal and critical responses to texts
- interpretations and reviews of texts.

**Textual features (language)** include text structure, and patterns of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Students need opportunities to understand textual features and how these are used within English texts.

The study of English allows students to understand the way language operates for different social purposes and to know how to use language in a variety of forms. Students need to develop understandings about English texts (any form of written, spoken or visual communication involving language) and recognise how language works within these. They develop these understandings by, for example:

- reading and viewing for enjoyment
- analysing language
- interpreting texts
- constructing texts to entertain and move
- considering the aesthetics of text and language
- arguing for and against representations of people, things and places in texts
- considering ways in which authors and speakers position readers and listeners.

At Brookstead State School, we teach English as a distinct area of study in its own right. However, like other key learning areas, English provides contexts for developing literacy skills and knowledge. Particular aspects of literacy are identified as being most relevant to English and developed through explicit teaching of English. We then provide students with opportunities to interpret and use the English language correctly, fluently, creatively, critically, confidently and effectively in a range of digital and print settings, and in texts designed for a range of purposes and audiences.
School profile
Brookstead State School is a Band 5 school situated on Ware Street, Brookstead some 60km west of Toowoomba and lies midway between Pittsworth and Millmerran. This well-appointed school services the crop growing area from Norwint to Pampas. The community is made up largely of farming families engaged in wheat, sorghum, barley and cotton farming. In spite of the drought and associated hardships, the school has maintained a fairly static enrolment.

Brookstead State School has a caring, family atmosphere where parents are welcome to assist in classrooms and encouraged to initiate and participate in various projects. The school has developed close ties with the surrounding community and both work together for the benefit of the students.

Data from our school-based English assessments, QCATs and the English aspects of NAPLAN and the Year 2 Net help build a picture of our students’ achievement and learning needs, which in turn guides our planning and teaching.

In particular, our data indicates that we need to focus more on the explicit teaching of reading, giving students opportunities to infer, interpret and integrate information from literary texts. To improve the quality of their writing, students need more opportunities to develop understanding of the language elements of narratives.

Learning in English
Year-level plans
At Brookstead State School we have developed year-level plans for Years 1 to 7. Each year-level plan specifies the intended teaching and learning, as well as the assessment for each term. We use the assessment for school-based moderation. Each year-level plan outlines the expectations of each term, including the:

English ‘Ways of working’, ensuring that all Ways of working are substantially addressed at least once at every year level of a juncture period

English ‘Knowledge and understanding’, ensuring that each specific point of each Knowledge and understanding organiser is planned for and explicitly taught (as opposed to incidentally learned) across the juncture period. However, not all points need to be covered each year; rather, teachers select them to build a developmental and sequential program

- relevant text types, insuring that these are taught at the appropriate year level (see Appendix 1)
- relevant language features, ensuring that students can understand, interpret and construct the chosen texts
- treatment for the text types (reading for enjoyment, analysing language, interpreting texts, constructing texts) ensuring a balance across the juncture period
- assessment and monitoring opportunities, ensuring alignment and consistency across year levels.

Note: While we have used the English Essential Learnings to guide the development of each year-level plan, we have also used the literacy indicators to inform the development of these documents. For example, we used the literacy indicators to guide our selection of texts; the strategies our students will need to employ for speaking and listening, reading viewing, and writing and designing; and the textual features that are salient for the students’ learning. We have also made links to the numeracy indicators wherever appropriate.

Units of work
Class teachers are responsible for developing English units of work, which must reflect the Ways of working, Knowledge and understanding, text types, language features and assessment opportunities outlined in the year-level plans.
English units of work should also include:

- an exemplar (of the major assessment), analysed to show the salient language features
- sequence of lessons
- explicit teaching episodes
- teaching and learning strategies
- guide to making judgments
- resources and adjustments for individual and small-group learning.

**Teaching English**

At Brookstead State School, the teaching of English in all classrooms includes a range of strategies that should be evident on a regular basis. Teachers are expected to develop, modify and adapt their teaching strategies and resources to suit the English unit of work, as well as the year level, and the needs and abilities of their students. The key strategies to support the teaching of English are:

- modelled reading (e.g. reading a picture book or novel to the class)
- guided reading (e.g. working with a small group of students to read a levelled reader, or working with students to identify the language features in the class novel)
- independent reading (e.g. providing routines for home readers or individual reading of library books)
- modelled writing (e.g. modelling how to write a recount or an opinion as part of the English unit of work)
- guided writing (e.g. working with the whole class to write a recount after an excursion, or working with a small group to write a biography)
- independent writing (e.g. providing time each week for students to write in English)

Feedback to students in relation to speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing and designing (e.g. teachers discuss with students the cueing systems they are using in reading, or they use the Guide to making judgments to provide feedback about a student’s first draft of an assessment).

The strategies teachers use within English units of work also need to be complemented by a range of classroom routines that provide students with further opportunities to develop understandings and skills associated with the literacy demands of English. For example, classroom routines may include:

- home reading
- library borrowing
- spelling circle
- author’s circle
- guided reading activities
- diary writing
- sharing sessions.