

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE NARRATIVE – SUBGROUP UPDATE

Purpose

This paper provides the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) with a progress update on the work of the Curriculum for Excellence Narrative Sub-Group that was established as an action from the last CAB meeting.

Background

At the first meeting of the CAB, there was a general consensus among the membership that an important early step was for the Board to revisit the principles and values of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Subsequently, CAB considered the '*Curriculum for Excellence – Realising the Benefits in Full*' paper (CAB-02-01) at its second meeting in March. This summarised what CfE was intended to achieve for children and young people and provided an assessment, based on available evidence, of how effectively CfE has been implemented to date. In the discussion of this paper it was agreed that a sub-group should be established to look at the narrative on CfE and develop recommendations for CAB.

A group comprising of the following individuals was established following the March CAB meeting and met on 2 May and 4 June:

- **Ken Muir**, Chief Executive, GTCS
- **Mark Priestley**, Professor of Education, University of Stirling
- **Pauline Walker**, Headteacher, Royal High School
- **Jenny Watson**, Headteacher, Middleton Park Primary School
- **Fiona Nicholson**, Vice-Chair, NPFS
- **Joan MacKay**, Education Scotland
- **Derek Brown**, Scottish Government (on secondment from Fife Council)
- **Malcolm Pentland**, Scottish Government

Progress

In considering what the narrative should aim to do, who it should be for, what it should look like and what it should include, the CfE Narrative Sub-Group concluded the following points so far.

What should the narrative aim to do?

- In line with OECD recommendations, it should 'restate longstanding aims' while also being updated for 2018 to reflect the current context and to show the alignment between CfE and other policy drivers.
- It should be an updated (and, significantly, not a 'revised') narrative that seeks to provide greater clarification, and a consolidation of understanding, in relation to CfE (at the macro level, i.e. of the big ideas, the principles, purpose and values).

- It should assist in improving coherence and understanding of the direction of travel for Scottish education
- It should place an emphasis on the processes of curriculum making to assist practitioners in taking on-paper principles and ideas and, through sense making in collaboration with peers, translating them into meaningful practice to improve learners' experiences through more effective learning, teaching and assessment.

Who should it be for?

- The principal audience for this piece of work should be professional practitioners who will have a lead role in the process of updating the narrative and in testing the drafts with their partners.
- The narrative should be accessible to children and young people, parents, communities, employers and other relevant partners and the wider public.

What should it look like?

- It should provide a single framework that is succinct and avoids extraneous detail.
- It should be clear to follow, written in plain English and as jargon-free as possible.
- It should be a largely visual/diagrammatic representation with an electronic format offering the opportunity for effective sign-posting to more detailed guidance, exemplifications and other materials via hyperlinks.
- It should show a process with a definition of the broader picture in terms of the curriculum and its socio-economic and environmental importance (the '*why*').
- It should lay out what is stated at a national level, such as the four capacities, and the entitlements (the '*what*').
- It should set out of the expectations on practitioners, schools, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, Education Scotland and others in terms of their respective roles in curriculum making and should set out the methodologies and structures that can support the successful blending of national priorities with local imperatives (the '*how*'). It is important to recognise, and reflect, that different practitioners will be at different points in this process.

What should it include?

- A definition of what the curriculum is and an emphasis on its central importance in terms of the critical role education plays in supporting long-term economic and environmental sustainability and greater equity across society.

- An emphasis on/promotion of the value of collective sense making and practitioner enquiry.
- Reference to the importance of both knowledge and skills and to high quality IDL to give coherence to learning.
- Reflective questions (or links to these) to support the framework and to assist practitioners, through offering guidance on their engagement with the purposes and principles of the curriculum, as they enact it into practice.
- Connections, in a coherent way, to Getting It Right for Every Child, Developing the Young Workforce and the National Improvement Framework and other relevant areas of policy development.

Engagement with Professional Practitioners

The Sub-Group recognises the importance of testing its work on the narrative as it develops with practitioners. As well as having a secondary head teacher and primary head teacher on the Sub-Group contributing to this work, they have been able to seek input from practitioner colleagues within their respective schools. A session has already been held with class teachers at Middleton Park Primary and one is scheduled with staff at the Royal High School for 8 June. In addition, the BOCSH Group was updated on this work at a meeting on 5 June and its feedback from its membership will be considered by the Sub-Group.

The Sub-Group has identified the need to ensure that practitioners in other settings also have the opportunity to comment on the proposals and the direction of travel as it develops and would welcome CAB members' suggestions on how that might be achieved.

Next Steps

Subject to the views of CAB at its 15 June meeting, the Sub-Group plans to develop the narrative as outlined in this paper, to test it with practitioners and to provide a draft, along with some recommendations, for the next meeting of CAB.

Conclusion

CAB members are invited to:

- note the work of the Narrative Sub-Group to date and offer comment on what is being proposed at this stage;
- offer suggestions for the Sub-Group's consideration for testing the work on the narrative with practitioners as it develops; and
- note the next steps proposed.