

Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools

Experiences and reflections from the Learning Site

October 2010

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1. Introduction

The issue of curriculum overload has been identified by teachers and principals through two phases of review of the *Primary School Curriculum* (NCCA, 2005; 2008). The issue of curriculum overload is a complex one. Because of this complexity, the NCCA is responding across a range of sites identified in the organisation's Strategic Plan.

At the meeting in June 2009 Council agreed short/medium-term actions. At the *Knowledge and Research Site*, an overview of national and international literature has been undertaken. At the *Interagency Site*, NCCA is collaborating with other agencies to develop materials and to engage in discussions about the curriculum. At the *Learning Site*, during the school year 2009-2010, teachers and other interested parties were invited to engage with curriculum support materials and to give feedback. At the *Committee Site*, the Early Childhood and Primary Committee has a strategic role in advising on Council's response to the issue of overload.

Other areas of work within the organisation are also closely related and will, undoubtedly, have an impact on developments. The publication of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in October 2009 has implications for the Infant Curriculum in primary schools. Developments at junior cycle and the demands for continuity of curriculum and continuity of teaching and learning approaches may influence the fifth and sixth class curriculum at the very least. The introduction of key skills at senior cycle and the emphasis on skills within *Aistear* offer opportunities for Council to explore continuity and progression from children's earliest learning experiences through their primary and post-primary education. New research and findings since 1999 on the way children learn languages and communication skills will also influence future developments.

The physical face of the Primary School Curriculum

The overview of literature has shown that the sheer size of the *Primary School Curriculum* is a key factor in contributing to overload. It consists of 23 books which total no less than 2,650 pages and is organised in six separate curriculum areas comprising 11 subjects. As well as the 23 books which form the *Primary School Curriculum*, the NCCA, since 1999, has produced a number of guidelines which are intended to provide

practical support to schools on specific aspects of curriculum and assessment. These include

- *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools* (2007)
- *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (2007)
- *Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers* (2007)
- *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* (2005)
- *English Curriculum: Additional Support Material* (2005)
- *English as an Additional Language: Guidelines for Teachers* (2005)
- *Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Teachers* (2004).

Many other organisations and agencies have also issued resource and information packs to schools on subjects, topics and initiatives ranging from dental health, healthy eating, child protection, substance misuse, *Tree Week*, *Discover Science/Young Scientist*, *Green Schools*, *Write-a-Book/Scríobh Leabhar*, *Writers in Schools*, *Heritage in Schools*, *Safety on the Farm*, *Greenwave*, *Gleo*, craft in classrooms and the promotion of various fitness programmes and particular sports.

Council's short-term strategy in responding to the issue of curriculum overload focuses on the challenge of the physical face of the curriculum by attempting to make the current curriculum statements more accessible and navigable for teachers. Its medium-term strategy will focus on the language curriculum and the infant curriculum in primary schools.

Re-presenting the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999)

The short-term strategy of re-presenting the curriculum began in October 2009 with Science, Mathematics, Gaeilge and English. NCCA and the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) collaborated on this aspect of the project. Work began with the use of the *glance cards*¹ that had already been prepared by the PPDS and had been used by advisors in schools during the 2008-2009 school year. See Appendix A for an example of the *English: Oral Language* strand cards. Re-presenting the content objectives of a particular strand/strand unit on one card is premised on the understanding that the cards highlight continuity of content across class levels. The cards are also intended to raise teachers' awareness of points of overlap in content

¹ These *glance cards* can be downloaded from www.ppds.ie

objectives across class levels. For these reasons, they should support both individual classroom planning and whole school planning and review.

The goals of our work for the past school year at the Learning Site were to re-present aspects of the curriculum in order to make it more user-friendly by

- making the content and content objectives more accessible and navigable
- engaging teachers, teacher educators, parents and other interested parties in dialogue on aspects of the curriculum such as progression of content and overlap of content objectives
- tapping into the expressed needs of teachers and improving the support materials accordingly
- beginning to scope out the specific challenges that teachers experience in using the curriculum in addition to those already reported in the two phases of curriculum review to date.

The school-based work on curriculum overload during the 2009-2010 school year, involved teachers using and engaging with these re-presented materials and providing feedback on their experiences. This work at the Learning Site, where teachers could interrogate the re-presented materials in real classroom contexts, provides us with valuable feedback to inform our work in leading and supporting change.²

Three on-line surveys were issued during this school year as outlined in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Three phases of work with schools during the 2009-2010 school year

	Duration	Lines of inquiry
Phase 1	To 13 November 2009	How do you currently use the curriculum books? What is your initial reaction to the glance cards? How do the curriculum books and the glance cards compare in terms of clarity, layout, etc? Have you other suggestions on how the cards might be developed?
Materials were amended based on teachers' feedback and suggestions.		

² *Leading and Supporting Change in Schools: A discussion paper* (NCCA, June 2009)

Phase 2	To 21 Dec 2009	Have you used the re-presented curriculum materials? How are you finding them? How would you like to see them further developed? Would it be helpful if skills were mapped on to content?
Materials were further amended based on teachers' feedback and suggestions.		

Phase 3	To mid June 2010	<p>Having used the re-presented content objectives for a number of months, how do you think they might be useful? To what extent do you agree that they make the curriculum content more user-friendly and provide support for planning? Do you agree with particular statements regarding the (e.g. English) curriculum? Is it clear what the children are expected to learn at each class level? Do the re-presented content objectives highlight any gaps or omissions in the curriculum?</p> <p>As well as a general invitation to teachers, we also invited teacher educators, committee members, parents and other web-users to participate in the survey and asked some general questions about the Primary School Curriculum and the work of the NCCA:</p> <p>Can you identify priorities for children's learning in the primary school? Do you find the ACTION website useful? Are you aware of</p>
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		<i>Aistear?</i> How might the curriculum be further improved to alleviate overload and to meet the needs of children?
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The next section of this report focuses on Phases 1 and 2. The third section describes the findings from Phase 3. In total, 258 unique respondents participated in at least one of the phases of online engagement during the school year.

2. Teachers' voices: Phases 1 and 2

This section outlines teachers' reactions to the PPDS glance cards and to the NCCA-developed re-presented content objectives. The data includes quotes from email requests from teachers, their first reactions to the cards collected in the Phase 1 survey, and further feedback collected in the Phase 2 survey. In Phase 2, additional materials were made available to teachers, including skills cards related to Science and Mathematics and a curriculum overview wall-chart. Teachers also had a longer time-frame to engage with the materials and to use them in their work.

The feedback and commentary from the teachers and schools influenced how the materials were further developed and how the curriculum re-presentation work will evolve into the future.

2.1 Who was involved and how were they involved?

A general open invitation to all schools and teachers to participate in the overload initiative was issued through *info@ncca* magazine and *InTouch*³. Teachers were invited to request and use the re-presented materials and to give feedback.

The initiative was also described on the NCCA website and teachers were invited to participate at (URL) www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload. Direct links to the curriculum overload page were promoted at the NCCA home page throughout the year via the *Hot Topics* and *What's new* items. As well as the general open invitation to participate, nine teachers in the Monaghan area agreed to participate in the first phase of the overload work. These teachers were already involved in a Teacher Professional Community (TPC) that operated from Monaghan Education Centre and was facilitated by PPDS. Most of them were multi-grade teachers in small schools.

Schools already involved in the NCCA's Primary School Network (language and assessment strands) were also offered access to the re-presented materials and were invited to give feedback. The teachers involved in the language strand were particularly interested in the re-presented *Curaclam na Gaeilge* and, as well as giving feedback

³ *info@ncca*. Issue 13. September 2009.
InTouch. Issue No. 107, 108, 109. November 2009, December 2009, Jan/Feb 2010.

through the surveys, the insights they shared through the network are helping to inform the work of the NCCA in interrogating and re-presenting Curaclam na Gaeilge.

Teachers were asked to give their initial feedback on the glance cards via an online survey before 13 November 2009. The Phase 2 survey, where the teachers gave more detailed feedback on the glance cards and gave their initial reactions to the skills cards and curriculum overview wall chart, closed on 21 December 2009.

Teachers who requested the glance cards, and the teachers in the Primary School Network, were sent emails with direct links to the online surveys. There were also links from the curriculum overload page on the NCCA website (www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload) and from the curriculum planning page on the PPDS website. The surveys were available for completion through English or Irish.

Teachers' voices through email requests

Thirty-three teachers sent emails to curriculumoverload@ncca.ie before the close of the surveys on 21 December, asking for the glance cards, having either read an article or seen the information on the website. (The other 76 teachers who participated downloaded the materials directly from the website.) Some of the email requests were very interesting and their content resonated with the views of teachers from the two curriculum reviews (2005; 2008). The quotations from emails are followed by the initials of the teacher who sent the email and the date on which it was sent. The following two extracts support the finding from *Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 2* that *covering all of the curriculum* is a concern for teachers.

I would be very interested in reviewing the glance cards. I would welcome any intervention to lessen the frustration of only getting half the subjects done each day! (AF, 17/11/09)

I am a teaching principal who teaches 3rd to 6th class....I recently completed a Masters in Science and discovered that curriculum overload was a contributory factor in poor teaching, particularly science teaching (RM, 17/11/09).

The emails also highlighted that curriculum overload is a particular challenge in multi-grade classes. Teachers in these classes affirmed the NCCA's strategy of addressing curriculum overload through school-based work, by re-presenting the curriculum to make the content more accessible and manageable for teachers.

I am a teaching principal in a two teacher school and I find the curriculum almost impossible to cover. If the new material takes into account a multi-grade situation such as mine, then I would be delighted to try it out and provide feedback (PF, 13/11/09).

I am in a three teacher school and have classes with three age groups in them and planning is difficult. We have found that with multi-classes it is more difficult to fit all the content needed. There are areas of overlap, but it is difficult to see the overview and find where the overlaps are and how to integrate subjects effectively. I was an advisory teacher in England when they introduced the new curriculum in 1990 and there were the same problems and we found a way to help teachers manage it through topics. So I am very interested in these materials (MS, 9/11/09).

One teacher outlined her desire to participate in the project because of the challenges she faces meeting the wide range of needs of individual children in the allocated time.

I would love to get involved with this. As a special needs teacher it is increasingly hard to meet the requirements of the primary school curriculum when the students within the classroom have various abilities and disabilities. If this can help in any way I would like to be part of it (SN, 15/11/09).

This resonated with the second aspect of the issue of time that, in particular, came to the fore in Phase 2 of the Primary Curriculum Review when teachers referred to the challenge of meeting the learning needs of all children in the available time.

2.2 Teachers' voices in the online surveys

Profile of teachers who took part

79 teachers responded to the Phase 1 survey, and 60 responded in Phase 2. Teachers who completed the survey in Phase 2 were asked to indicate if they had already taken part in the first phase. Of the 59 teachers who answered this question, 26 stated that they had not participated in Phase 1. Therefore, the total unique number of teachers who participated in the first two phases of online engagement is calculated as 105 (79 + 26).

These 105 respondents were made up of teachers of all class levels. 30 were infant teachers, 19 were multi-class teachers and ten were learning support/resource teachers. 21 principals responded; 15 of these principals were teaching principals. 11 respondents were post-holders with responsibility for one of the subject areas.

The respondents who answered the questions regarding their school type indicated that they represented a range of school types and sizes. Table 2, below, summarises the range of schools represented.

Table 2. Profile of schools represented by the teachers who responded

Location	Type	Gender	Size	DEIS	Language of instruction
n	n	n	n	n	n
Urban 54	Junior school 19	Girls only 9	<100 children 33	Urban, Band 1 19	English medium 95
Rural 46	Senior school 5	Boys only 7	101-200 children 19	Urban Band 2 5	Gaelscoil 1
	Vertical school 71	Mixed 83	201-300 children 16	Rural DEIS 8	Scoil sa Ghaeltacht 3
	Special school 3		>300 children 30	Not in DEIS 60	
n = 100	n = 98	n = 99	n = 98	n = 92	n = 99

n= 92-100

It is worth noting that, even within this relatively small group of teachers, the issue of curriculum overload is experienced by teachers across a range of school types, sizes and locations.

Cards the teachers viewed and used

Table 3 below, shows the breakdown of the types of cards viewed or used by teachers who responded to the survey.

Table 3: Cards used by the teachers

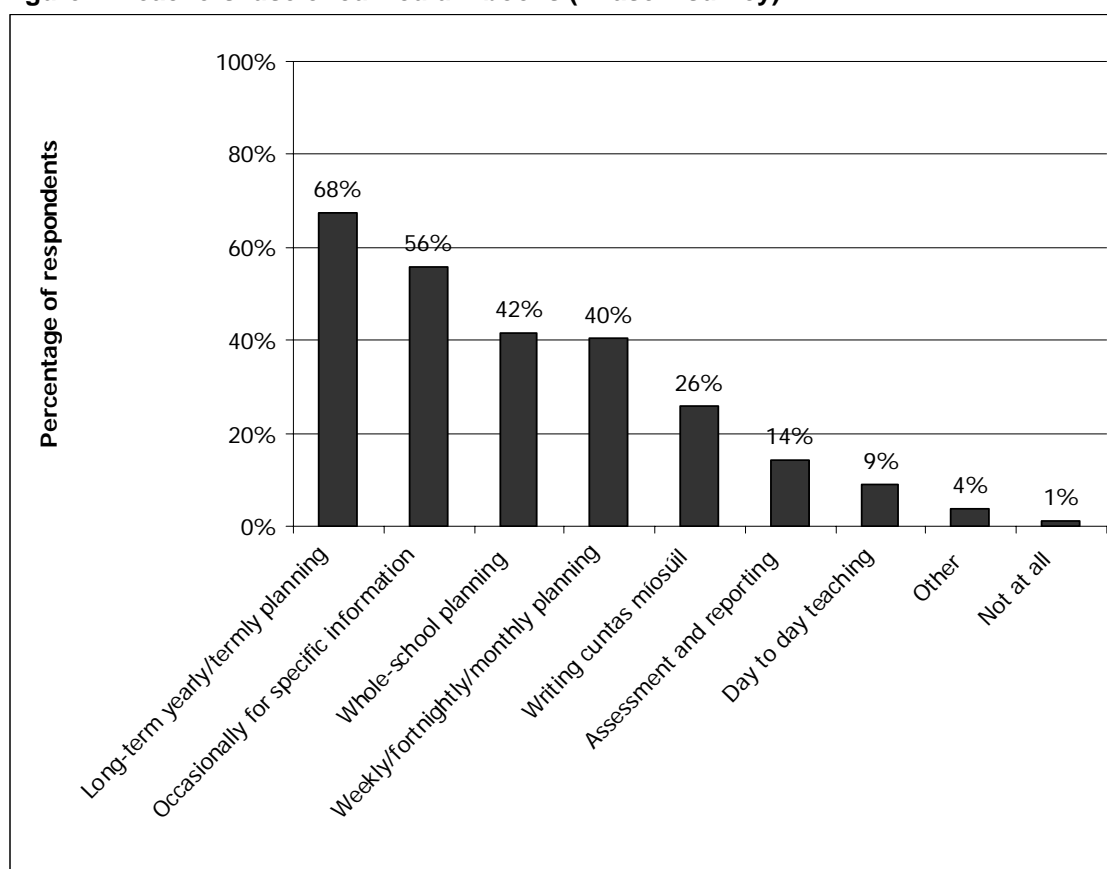
	Phase 1 Survey n=79	Phase 2 Survey n=60
English	65% (49)	71% (35)
Science	52% (39)	71% (35)
Mathematics	47% (35)	71% (35)
Gaeilge	32% (24)	61% (30)
Mathematics skills cards	N/A	39% (19)
Science skills cards	N/A	31% (15)
Total number of cards engaged with	147	169

It is interesting to note the high numbers of teachers who participated in the survey engaging with the English materials, given our evidence from *Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 1* that this curriculum subject is causing particular challenges for teachers in terms of accessibility. Phase 3 of this initiative provided opportunities to examine questions and issues related to the specific subjects in more detail.

Teachers' use of the curriculum books

The focus of this re-presentation work is to make the curriculum statements more accessible and navigable for teachers. For this reason, in the Phase 1 survey, teachers were asked how they used the curriculum statement books. (In the Phase 2 survey, they were asked how they used the re-presented cards.) Figure 1 shows the teachers' use of the curriculum books as reported in the Phase 1 survey. The data is ordered according to the most frequent type of use of the curriculum books.

Figure 1. Teachers' use of curriculum books (Phase 1 survey)



n=77

The greatest number of teachers (68%) reported that they used the curriculum books for long-term yearly/termly planning, while a little over half of the respondents (56%) stated they referred to them occasionally when looking for specific information. 9% of respondents said they used the curriculum books in their day to day teaching.

It is interesting to note that one of the respondents who did not report any of the suggested uses of the curriculum books (and instead ticked 'other uses') did not use the physical books but used the digital content online and had already engaged in re-presenting the curriculum for his/her own use.

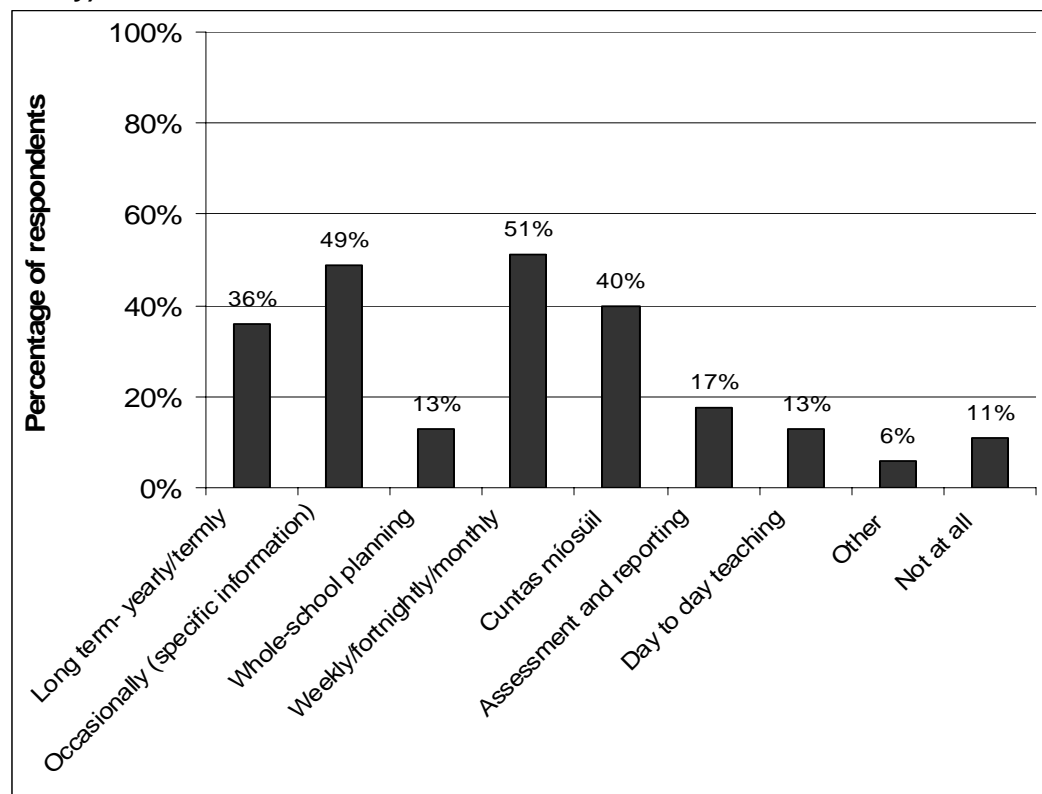
I use the curriculum downloaded into Microsoft Word and use the headings so that I know I haven't left anything out. Glance cards are great for planning quickly.

Other uses of the books included for research, for resource teaching, and to develop checklists.

Teachers' use of the glance cards

In the Phase 2 survey, teachers were asked how they had used the glance cards, as it was hoped that they would have had received or downloaded them over a number of weeks before responding to the survey. Their responses are shown in Figure 2, below. For the purposes of comparison, the data is in the same order as Figure 1.

Figure 2. Teachers' use of glance cards (Phase 2 survey)



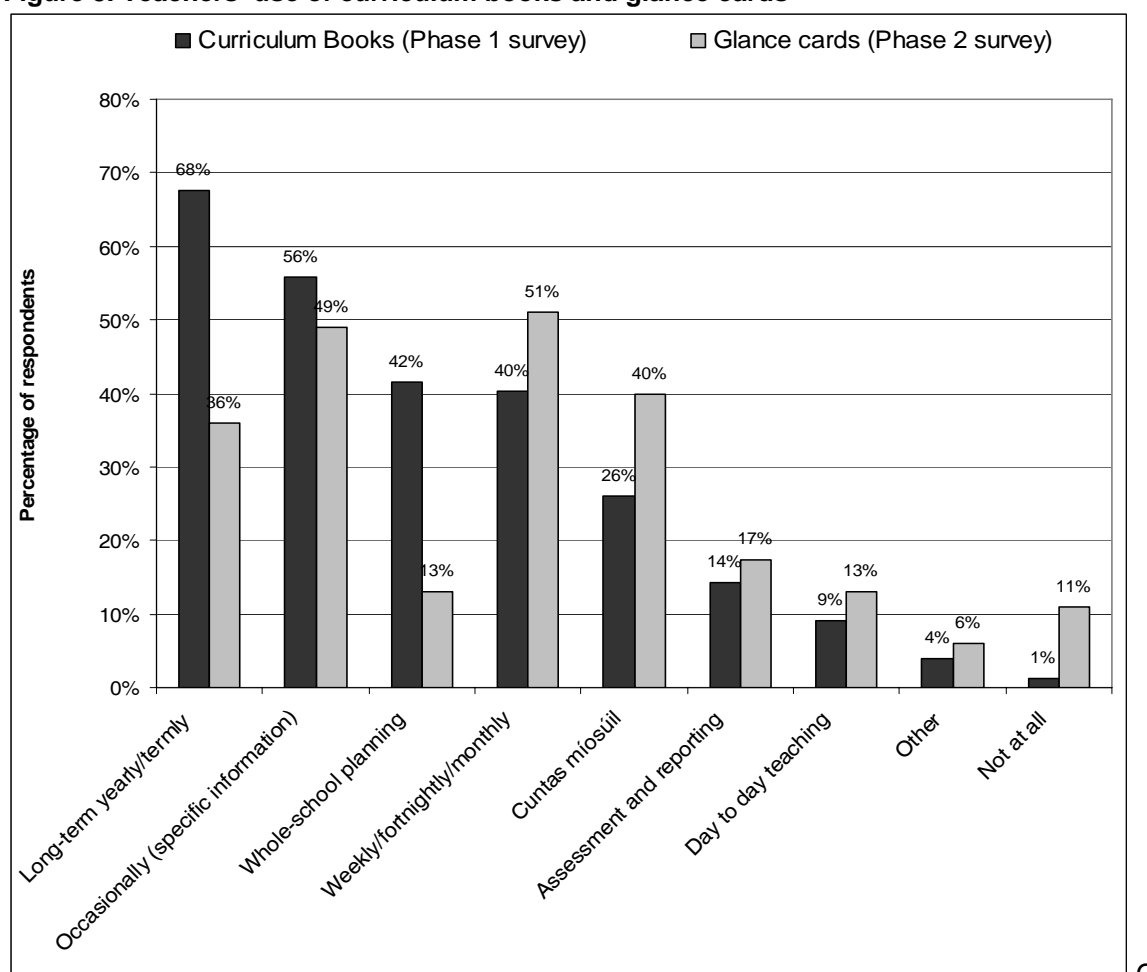
n=46

The highest reported use of the glance cards was in short-term weekly, fortnightly or monthly planning, with 51% of respondents stating that they had used the cards for this purpose. The relatively high number of respondents who had not used the glance cards at all (11%) could be due to two possible reasons. Firstly, some teachers may have only recently received the materials and were completing the survey before they had a chance to engage with them. (Some teachers had the cards since October; others only

requested and received them in mid-December.) Secondly, this online survey took place during December, when learning activities are often planned around themes related to Christmas and winter, and are often planned well in advance.

As not all the teachers who completed the Phase 2 Survey had participated in Phase 1, the data may not be directly comparable. However, we can compare the data using percentages of teachers, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Teachers' use of curriculum books and glance cards



Curriculum books n=77, Glance Cards n=46

It is interesting to note that higher percentages of the respondents to the Phase 2 survey said that they used the glance cards in their everyday work in the classroom (13%) and in-short term planning (51%), assessing and reporting (17%) than respondents to the Phase 1 survey who said that they used the curriculum books in these areas. As will be seen in the next section of this report, this pattern has continued in the Phase 3 survey. It is particularly encouraging to see that teachers have reported that the provision of these

materials has increased teachers' engagement with the curriculum in their everyday work in the classroom.

Teachers' initial response to the glance cards

Each glance card presents the content objectives for a particular strand unit from infants to sixth class. There is a column for each class/class level. The glance cards for *English: Oral language* are attached as Appendix A. The cards for the four subjects can be viewed and/or downloaded from www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload.

In Phase 1 many respondents had only very recently received the cards so the survey asked broad questions to identify teachers' early reactions to the re-presented curriculum. Table 4 outlines teachers' initial impressions as to the usefulness of the glance cards, taking into account three aspects: their layout as a table, the fact that all class levels are on one card and the use of colour coding (to match the curriculum documents).

Teachers in Phase 2, who had *not* completed the Phase 1 survey, were given the opportunity to answer this question in the second survey, and the data below includes their responses.

Table 4. Teachers' initial response to glance cards

	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	
	%	%	%	%	
Layout as a table	39	44	14	3	n=79
Objectives for all class levels on one card	53	28	18	1	n=78
Colour coding to match curriculum documents	48	23	25	4	n=81

n=78-81

83% of respondents said the layout and the fact that the objectives were all on one card was either useful or very useful. Many of the supplementary comments agreed that the layout showing objectives for all class levels on one card was useful, particularly for multi-grade teachers and for whole school planning.

However, there were many other requests for the cards to be presented by class level instead of by strand, in both Phases 1 and 2. The comments below were typical of those responses.

*Teachers like to see their own areas of work at a glance rather than “wading” through all the other classes.
I think it would be more user-friendly for a single grade class to have the objectives for their class in isolation.*

As well as laying it out for single class levels, multi class situations should also be considered, e.g. third and fourth on one page or third to sixth on one page, etc. For me, a teacher of third to sixth, the infant information was of little value to me and I would love to have fewer cards!

These conflicting comments and requests for different formats reflect the different needs of teachers, depending on the range of classes they teach and also the context in which they teach. They also, perhaps, call into question the extent to which any one presentation format can adequately meet the needs of all teachers in accessing a curriculum as large as the *Primary School Curriculum*.

Clarity in curriculum books and in glance cards

In the Phase 1 survey, respondents were asked to state how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statements regarding the curriculum books and the glance cards:

- The layout is clear.
- The language is easy to read and understand.
- It is easy to see what children should be enabled to do at each class level.
- Progression in the content objectives between class levels is obvious.
- Overlap of the content objectives between class levels is obvious.

The teachers' views on how clearly the layout, objectives, language, progression and overlap are shown in the curriculum books and in the glance cards are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Teachers' views on clarity in curriculum books and in glance cards

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		%	%	%	%
Layout is clear	Books	3	65	29	3
	Cards	52	46	2	0
Language easy to read & understand	Books	5	69	23	3
	Cards	46	51	3	0
Easy to see what children should be enabled to do	Books	4	58	32	6
	Cards	53	39	8	0
Progression is obvious	Books	2	37	49	12
	Cards	39	47	11	3
Overlap is obvious	Books	5	35	52	8
	Cards	22	65	11	2

n= 61-65

There was strongest support for the layout, language and objectives (what the children should be enabled to do at each level) of the glance cards. In their comments, some respondents further illuminated why they favoured the layout of the glance cards rather than the layout of the curriculum books, beginning with **ease of navigation**.

I rarely use the actual curriculum books because they can be a bit difficult to navigate.

A lot of vital planning time is taken up going through each book trying to find something that the glance cards have in plain view on a page.

Agus tú ag múineadh, tá sé i bhfad níos fusa na leidchártaí a úsáid seachas na leabhair mhóra a tharraingt amach. Caithfidh tú breathnú ar na leabhair churaclaim ó am go ham áfach!

When the **language** of the curriculum was rated, 47% of respondents agreed that the language was clear and easy to understand. Some teachers commented negatively on the language and objectives in the curriculum, declaring that they found the curriculum *woolly, not specific enough, very unclear and general and sometimes vague*.

The data showed that, in the curriculum books, **progression** and **overlap** between class levels are not obvious for the teachers who were surveyed. 61% of respondents disagreed that progression was obvious and 60% disagreed that overlap was obvious. In

the additional comments some respondents reported why they found the glance cards more useful in highlighting progression than the curriculum books.

...it is easy to look back at the previous years' objective and you know what they should know.

... it's easier to work out what level the class should already be at.

While you can trace the progression and development in the curriculum documents, it takes much more time and effort to work it out!

I think the glance cards would be useful for whole school planning and to ensure that the same objectives are not being repeated by each year group.

Format and layout of cards

In Phase 2 the teachers were asked about the presentation of the cards and how they had used them. The formats used most by teachers were as a stapled or a bound booklet with one third of respondents having used the cards in each of these formats. Other teachers used the materials as separate printed cards, as laminated cards, as a wall chart, or as a set of vertical pull-down sheets.

When asked about the usefulness of the different formats to teachers in general, the responses indicate that all would be useful, with the most useful format being separate laminated cards. However teachers' responses to this question were very positive for all choices, with just three teachers stating that even the least popular format– a set of vertical pull down sheets – would not be useful. These data emphasise the need to present curriculum in a variety of formats and layouts to meet the needs of teachers in different contexts.

The NCCA developed and revised the materials and cards based on feedback from the teachers. In the Phase 2 survey, therefore, teachers were asked for their reactions to two different sets of skills cards, which were laid out slightly differently⁴. The Science skills cards, developed by the PPDS, showed the skills repeated across classes, while the Mathematics skills cards, developed by the NCCA, showed how skills progressed or overlapped between classes.

A clear preference for one layout could not be inferred from the quantitative data. The qualitative data had some interesting comments. Four of the twelve teachers who made

⁴ The materials are available to download from www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload.

additional comments said that they preferred the layout of the Science skills cards as they found them *much easier to follow and understand or much clearer*. Three of these teachers commented negatively on the layout of the Maths skills cards, saying they were *quite unclear, some of the text seems all over the place*.

Curriculum overview wall chart

Teachers participating in Phase 2 of the work also received a wall chart presenting an overview of the curriculum. A draft of this wall chart was created by the School Development Planning Support (Primary) as a teacher-friendly overview of the strands and strand units in the curriculum⁵.

Of the 18 teachers who printed the curriculum overview wall chart in colour, all but one agreed that they found it helpful in providing an overview of the curriculum and in becoming more aware of the curriculum content. They also reported that the colour-coding was useful in highlighting when specific strand/strand units are introduced in the curriculum.

16 of the teachers (89%) stated that it would be useful to support whole school and class planning, and to identify linkage possibilities within a subject. 13 (72%) of the respondents said that it would be useful to identify possibilities for cross-curricular integration.

How the cards could be further developed

The last question in the Phase 1 survey asked teachers how they thought the cards/support materials might be developed to make them more useful to them. This feedback helped to shape the further development of support materials.

A number of teachers commented on the **format and layout of the cards**, and the information presented on them. There were numerous requests for cards showing objectives for single class levels, as noted previously.

..... they should be presented in separate year group format and numbered if possible.

⁵ This wall chart can be downloaded from www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload. The wall-chart should be printed in colour as it uses the same colour coding for each class level as that used in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). The colours are used to show the class level entry point of content in the curriculum.

I would prefer to see glance cards just for the individual class levels that I am teaching. I think this would provide more opportunities for thematic teaching and cross-curricular integration.

Perhaps devise cards for class levels only e.g. oral language, reading and writing for infants on the one card. I know progression won't be evident but it's what teachers want.

Interesting suggestions were made to **make the content more searchable**, navigable and usable electronically.

I would love if you could click on the various class combos and be able to print (just) them without having to print off and read all the various levels. Say if you had 2nd, 3rd and 4th, that you could click a button and that you would view and print off only the curriculum objectives for those classes.

Make the cards as user friendly as possible so that class teachers can cut and paste into their notes. Do the same for all areas across the curriculum.

NCCA should consider looking into computerising the various planning documentation required in schools (weekly/monthly/termly/annually)...to determine the feasibility of implementing an online software application that would make the planning and monitoring of objectives more efficient and transparent. ...Common sense should prevail – and technology should play a central part in streamlining teachers' workload.

Data from the Phase 2 survey support these findings, with requests for glance cards to cater for different contexts and class groupings, and to make the content more electronically accessible for teachers to manipulate.

It would be great if there were two types of glance cards available, possibly one for one class situations..but also a set for multi class situations. I know this is a big ask, but when you have four classes sitting in front of you, it would make it a lot easier and give great guidance.

While using the English glance cards to complete my next termly plan, it would have been really helpful if I could have highlighted only the objectives for infants to cut and paste ... I found my planning much easier to complete with the cards and if I could have cut and paste as well I would have been even more delighted.

Based on these suggestions, NCCA developed re-presented content objectives for English, Gaeilge, Science and Mathematics in various formats. Since the surveys concluded, re-presented content objectives for Physical Education have also been made available to view and download. Additionally, NCCA has developed an online curriculum planning tool which was published at www.curriculumonline/primaryplanningtool at the end of August this year. This tool helps teachers to find and select content objectives from the *Primary School Curriculum*. They can search for objectives by class, subject,

strand, strand unit, or keyword. Teachers can output their selected objectives in short-term planning notes or in a yearly overview. Over time and informed by teachers' feedback, the Council plans to further enhance the functionality of the online curriculum planning tool.

A few teachers in Phase 1 made specific recommendations as to the **presentation** of the glance cards.

I think the presentation of the cards is extremely important for teachers to access. Colour coded is a bonus and they should focus on helping teachers prepare for short term planning. If they were laminated and reduced somewhat and presented in a small box like the Maith Thú cards or the Chatterbox box...

.....have them in a small portable size for easy transport to and from school.

I feel the glance cards for Gaeilge are concise and easy to use. They also provide a good day to day resource to teachers. Perhaps there could be a box beside each objective which the teacher could tick when this objective is achieved.

In the Phase 2 survey, when asked how the glance and skills cards might be developed, and how the curriculum in general might be made more user-friendly, the teachers again emphasised that short, compact, user-friendly cards are very welcome, as long as they are kept bound and simple. One interesting comment suggests that glance card type materials is a good way to present all curriculum content and teacher guidelines, rather than just content objectives. He/she recommended

...producing similar simple reference guides for the curriculum content itself in order to draw teachers away from the textbook and into the curriculum e.g. cards listing the genres of writing and poetry in English for quick reference with a concise definition/ example of each genre, a quick reference guide for the ways to listen and respond to music from the music curriculum, etc.

A number of teachers in both phases requested that opportunities for **integration and linkage** would be indicated on the cards.

Perhaps a box called integration at the bottom of the page to help link up subject objectives.

To tackle curriculum overload, I think there should have been methodologies showing where integration and linkage occur within and between subjects... That's what would help teachers with the workload.

These were great. The History, Geography, Science, SPHE would be good in a format that could be cut up easily so that you could match similar content - (integrate) the subjects easier. It is very cumbersome having all the books out and going from one to the other for the objectives that are similar.

Other teachers suggested that **additional information** might be presented on the cards, such as the language of mathematics or that the italicised text from the curriculum which helps to explain the objectives and gives examples should be included.

... the only benefits that I missed from the hard-copy curriculum were the hints every so often to set you on the right track with an objective – the ideas for activities in italics.

An interesting observation from one teacher related to the cards' usefulness for **differentiation**.

The glance cards are very useful in that it is very easy and clear to read the objectives between each level, so as a teacher you know where the children are at in relation to their learning. Great for planning for the higher achiever as you know at a glance how to extend the topic. Likewise for the under achiever, it's clear what objective you need to go back over with them.

2.3 Will re-presentation of the curriculum deal with overload?

Many teachers who responded to the surveys reported that there are other issues associated with the *Primary School Curriculum*, and that producing glance cards did not and would not fully address the question of curriculum overload.

....the purpose and use of the cards need to be explained more clearly.... how do they help curriculum overload exactly?

I really thought that this was going to be a way to tackle curriculum overload and this is just the curriculum book objectives regurgitated into a table format.

Teachers did indicate that they found the cards helpful for planning, but that their usefulness did not extend beyond that.

All class levels on one card give a great holistic view of primary education... great for school planning and yearly schemes but not for much else.

These (cards) are quite useful for when it comes to planning but it still doesn't make the curriculum any easier to teach, as it states that they do not replace the curriculum documents. Granted, I do feel they would make short term planning easier but not long term planning.

For some respondents, their own understanding of the curriculum and engagement with it is a key issue, but even knowing the curriculum intimately is not enough as there is ambiguity concerning the requirements of content coverage.

The curriculum works as a document once you are familiar with it. I feel its success is about teachers having the opportunity to be familiar with it as well as having a fundamental understanding of what are the underlying concepts - practices that might be more evident if text books did not feature as much in planning.

(There should be...) a reminder on each subject as to our choices re content: do we have to cover all the content objectives over one or two years? Do we have to cover every content objective? Reminders that we don't have to do every subject every week: a reminder to block our time to suit the time of year or to suit an integrated subject.

Some teachers commented negatively on how the **content objectives** in the *Primary School Curriculum* are structured and articulated, stating they are *written in a vague language*.

There should be additional information required on the HOW in order to complement the WHAT. Numerous examples should be provided to fully support the implementation of objectives - much of the language used is too "woolly" and not specific enough.

Some of the language used on the cards as with the curriculum can make the objective unachievable e.g. will explore/ develop an understanding/ appreciation of... These are not observable outcomes and therefore can be ticked when not really achieved. This is a semantic issue I suppose and, while developing an understanding is what we are all about, it can be more useful to state the outcome e.g. explore and discuss repeated addition and group counting/ recognise and practise repeated addition. As these are 'glance cards' and not the curriculum it is not necessary to approach at a conceptual level.

Data from the surveys also highlights that the sheer volume of content objectives and level of detail in the curriculum cannot be adequately addressed by glance cards. The first quotation below perhaps best summarises the comments made by many respondents on the issue of overload.

The problem is not with the cards: it's with the fact that the curriculum content of each subject is too detailed. Going through the content objectives for 11 subjects (for) each week/fortnight's short term planning is where the overload lies.

While the glance cards are useful and concise, they are still very detailed as the curriculum is detailed. Putting the content of the curriculum on to one page does not reduce the amount to be taught; it only makes it clearer what is to be taught. I had hoped that this survey would either make the workload lighter or more obviously show ways of integration. Clarifying that workload is not making it any more manageable!

I think that a lot of the content of the various subjects should be cut out or we should be given the option of making more either/or choices re content.

During this work NCCA developed documents in various different formats and designed different kinds of support materials. We have identified a number of challenges in the course of this work that resonate with the sentiments of teachers in the survey, particularly in relation to the structure and language of the objectives. For example, when the content objectives are laid out on cards

- there are some instances where a clear lack of progression is obvious e.g. when the content objective is of a lower order in the senior classes than in the junior classes
- there is an explicit lack of progression also in instances where a particular objective may be introduced in junior classes, does not appear in the middle classes, but is included again in senior classes
- some objectives across class levels are similar but not identical, in that different terminology is used, but the intent of the objective is the same
- the objective is not actually an objective in the true sense, it is more an input or throughput, e.g. *(the child should be enabled to)...experience a classroom environment that encourages writing*

Many teachers requested extracting objectives just for one class level, but, essentially, this may be little more than copying content from the curriculum documents. In subsequent drafts of the materials, we also numbered the content objectives for easier referencing and navigability.

Some teachers requested that the examples (in italics in the curriculum books) would be included on the cards. This was possible, but it increased the number/volume of the cards as there was a lot more text. We therefore designed separate documents for junior classes (infants-2nd) and for senior classes (3rd-6th), which included the italicised examples. We distributed and made these support materials available for download on the website from January - June 2010. In July 2010 the English language versions of re-presented content objectives for physical education for junior and senior classes were made available for viewing and download on the website.

3. Voices of teachers, teacher educators, parents: Phase 3

The third online survey elicited responses from a wide range of respondents. The survey was open from mid-May to mid-June 2010. It sought reaction to the glance cards for English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and Science. It also asked broader questions in relation to aspects of the Primary School Curriculum. As per the two previous phases, a general invitation to respond to the survey issued through the NCCA e-zine and website as well as through an article in *Intouch*. The members of the NCCA's *Language and Early Childhood and Primary* committees were instrumental in encouraging people within their organisations to answer the survey. Teachers who had indicated an interest in participating in the curriculum overload initiative were emailed with the direct link to the survey.

3.1 Profile of respondents

213 people responded to the Phase 3 survey (208 through the English medium and 5 through the Irish medium survey). Respondents who completed the survey were asked to indicate if they had already taken part in either or both of the first two phases. Of the 205 teachers who answered this question, 153 stated that it was the first survey that they had completed and that they had not participated in Phases 1 or 2. 27 people indicated they were responding for the second time and 25 people completed all three surveys. Therefore, the total unique number of respondents who participated in one of the phases of online engagement during the school year is calculated as 258 (153 + 105).

The 213 respondents in phase 3 included teachers of all class levels. 43 were infant teachers, 18 were teachers of 5th or 6th class. 33 were multi-grade teachers and 36 were learning support/resource teachers. 39 principals responded; 24 of these were teaching principals. 15 respondents were post-holders with responsibility for one of the subject areas. The respondents also included 16 teacher educators and six parents.

The respondents who answered the questions regarding their school type indicated that they represented a range of school types and sizes. Table 6 summarises the range of schools represented.

Table 6. Profile of schools represented by the respondents

Location	Type	Gender	Size	DEIS	Language of instruction
n	n	n	n	n	n
Urban 111	Junior school 39	Girls only 19	<100 children 52	Urban, Band 1 37	English medium 167
Rural 68	Senior school 13	Boys only 15	101-200 children 43	Urban Band 2 16	Gaelscoil 7
	Vertical school 118	Mixed 143	201-300 children 34	Rural DEIS 11	Scoil sa Ghaeltacht 4
	Special school 2		>300 children 51	Not in DEIS 101	
n = 179	n = 172	n = 177	n = 180	n = 165	n = 178

n= 165-180

There were five distinct sections in the survey. Table 7, below, outlines the average number of respondents who answered the questions in each section, in the order in which they appeared in the survey.

Table 7. Breakdown of response rate to sections in online survey

Section	Average responses (n)	Average responses (% of total)
Re-presented content objectives: English	116	54 %
Athleagan amach ar na cuspóirí ábhair: Gaeilge	63	30%
Re-presented content objectives: Maths	85	40%
Re-presented content objectives: Science	75	35 %
Responding to curriculum overload: general questions	76	36%

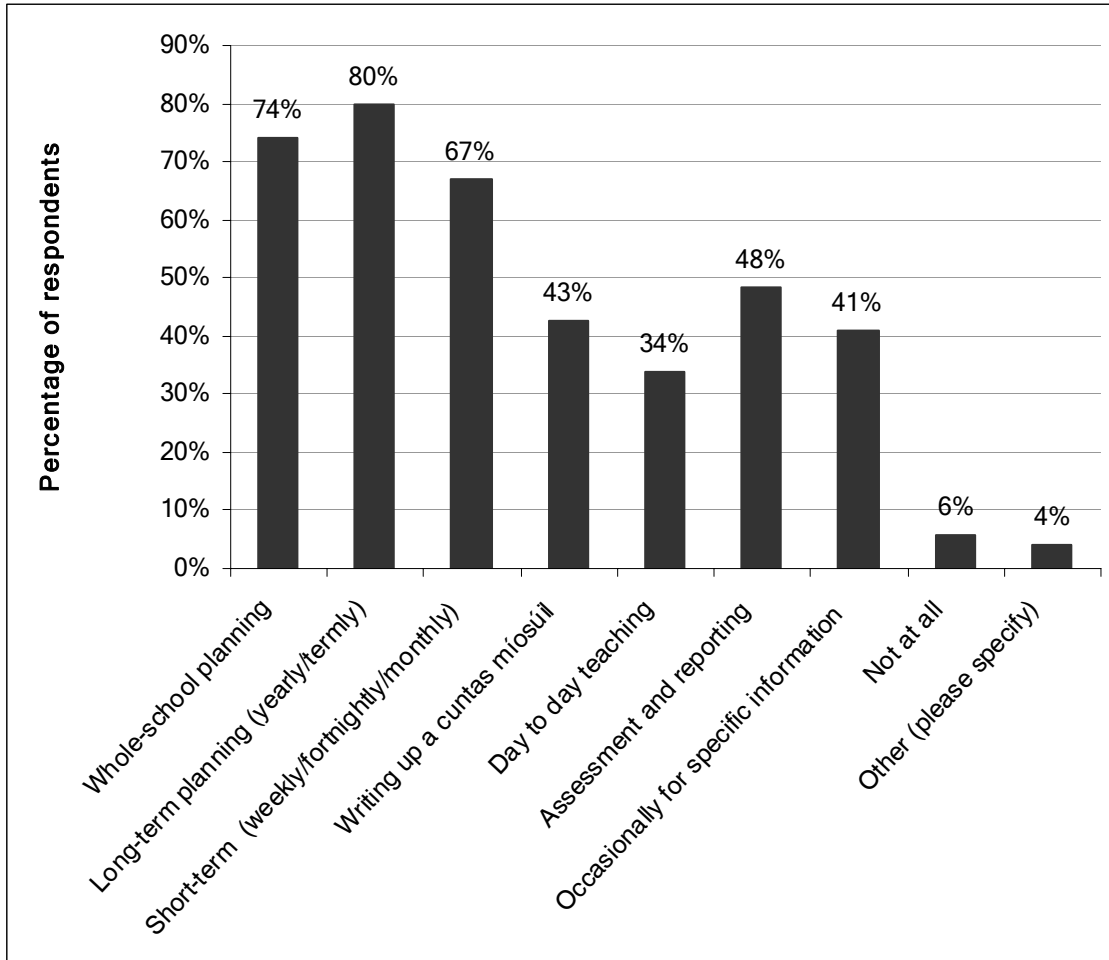
Over half of the respondents answered the questions relating to the re-presented English Curriculum, mirroring the high level of feedback on the English Curriculum in the previous two surveys. The low number of respondents to the section on Curaclam na Gaeilge is of note, particularly as a translation of the questions was provided and respondents had the option to answer the qualitative questions in English or Irish.

3.2 The re-presented English Curriculum

In the Phase 3 survey, respondents were asked how they thought the *Re-presented content objectives: English*, might be used. Their responses are shown in Figure 5

below. For the purposes of comparison, the data is in the same order as previous Figures relating to use of materials.

Figure 5. Uses of re-presented content objectives: English



n=124

In the case of 'other' uses, respondents reported using them to help student teachers in preparing plans and schemes for teaching practice, to plan for a multi-grade context and one teacher used them for *making sense of a dense and difficult curriculum*. It is encouraging to note the significant increase in the percentage of teachers who reported that they used the *Re-presented content objectives: English* for day-to-day teaching (34%) from those who reported using the curriculum books for day-to-day teaching in Phase 1 (9%).

Were the purposes achieved?

90% either agreed or strongly agreed that the content was presented in a more user-friendly way and 86% agreed or strongly agreed that the re-presented format provided greater support for planning than the English Curriculum statement document.

Table 8. Achievement of purposes in the re-presented format

Response options	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	No response
Content is presented in a more user-friendly way	38%	52%	6%	4%	
Provide greater support for planning in English than the curriculum (statement) document	33%	53%	5%	4%	5%

n=120

Format of the re-presented English Curriculum

When asked about specific features of the re-presented format, users were also overwhelmingly positive about all aspects as seen from Table 9.

Table 9. Format of re-presented English Curriculum

Response options	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	No response
The setting aside of the four strands is helpful	35%	62%	2%	0%	1%
The re-presentation of the content under the categories of 'Development' and 'Skills' is helpful	26%	66%	5%	3%	0%
The organisation of the content objectives into related groups is helpful	27%	67%	4%	1%	1%
The language used to name the groups is user-friendly (e.g 'early writing', 'comprehension')	36%	58%	3%	1%	2%
The new structure is clearer than the structure used in the curriculum books	45%	47%	4%	0%	4%

n=118

97% of respondents favoured setting aside the original four strands, endorsing the approach taken by NCCA in issuing the *English: Additional Support Material* in 2005. Respondents were also very favourable to the approach taken in the re-presented

documents to categorise the objectives under the headings *Development* and *Skills* and to group them with user-friendly headings. It is significant that 92% of respondents said that this new structure is *clearer than the structure used in the curriculum books*. This was supported in the qualitative data, where respondents said that the structure was *user friendly, easier to access than [curriculum] books, fantastic and very, very useful and helpful for planning*.

I like the way the content objectives are grouped under related headings and I also find the skills heading very effective....For example it clarifies the area of Independent reading at infant level.

...it allows me to choose resources that enable fulfilment of the objective more considerately and not presume that the textbook or resource will do so in and of itself.

These results are very encouraging and point to the fact that users really welcomed the materials. In terms of next steps, one teacher commented:

...Would like to see hard copy of re-presented English Curriculum sent to all teachers. We now have an almost whole new population of class teachers from time of English Inservice and even re-presented curriculum (due to retirements, moves to Resource, EAL, etc). Many English, Scottish trained...They are not familiar with Curriculum documents at all. Nothing compares with hard copy to flick through if NCCA are really committed to the curriculum being used as a working document.

Some teachers requested that the document would be broken into sections for class levels to make it shorter for individual needs. Responding to this, NCCA published the content objectives for the English Curriculum in two sections: one section covers junior infants to second class, and the other third to sixth class. These new materials are available for download from the website. Accessing content objectives for a specific class(es) is also made easier for teachers through the new online curriculum planning tool (www.curriculumonline/primaryplanningtool) discussed on pages 22-23 of this document.

General comments about the English Curriculum

Though the various glance cards have helped to make the current curriculum more accessible, many respondents expressed negative opinions about the English Curriculum *per se*.

I have agreed with all of the above - everything IS clearer, but it is still not clear! There are so many bits and pieces to English planning, that it is confusing and a pain.

The structure is much clearer but there is a difficulty around the language used in that it is not a common language used and understood by all teachers, the concept of "early writing" may mean different things to different people.

While it helps, the English curriculum remains overcrowded, dense, academic and unhelpful in planning and teaching.

Some respondents referred to the overloaded nature of the English Curriculum.

I feel there are too many objectives in the curriculum.

I find the English Curriculum is very overloaded and if I were to teach all the aspects of it I wouldn't get around to teaching anything else!

An interesting comment pertained to English in the Infant curriculum.

We would hope that all steps to re-present the curriculum would attempt to make the English Curriculum more relevant for infant teachers and infant education in general. It is strongly felt that the strands and strand units of the current Primary School Curriculum are geared more towards children from first class on.

Another respondent commented:

I think the English Curriculum needs a complete overhaul. It is now out of date and no amount of swapping names and aims can fix it.

86% of respondents said it was clear what the children are expected to learn at each class level. A minority of respondents, 14% of the 115 people who answered the question, felt that the *Re-presented content objectives: English* **did not** make clear to them what the children are expected to learn.

I feel the English Curriculum is very wishy-washy. It is difficult to know exactly what the children should know at each level. It does leave more choice to individual schools, but I think it would be easier to plan if there were more definite concrete objectives.

Objectives are too general and vague e.g. draw and write stories for infants. A bit more guidance would be helpful e.g. how long? what prompts to use at infant level?

Specific objectives for each year group are necessary to avoid areas being left out or done twice in a two year cycle.

The language in the content objectives remains academic and difficult to comprehend. Not all are learning outcomes for pupils.

The final question in the English Curriculum section of the survey asked if the *Re-presented content objectives: English* highlighted any gaps or omissions in the English Curriculum. 64% of the 103 respondents who answered the question said that there were no omissions. One respondent reported that they answered in the negative because of their sense of an already overloaded curriculum.

As I said there are no omissions...the English Curriculum is overloaded!

36% of the 103 people who answered the question answered that there were omissions. Some comments in this regard were very interesting in light of Council's recent decision to focus on a review and revision of the Language Curriculum. One teacher noted that *DEIS schools and all the programmes they have to run are not taken account of* (in the current English Curriculum).

Specific to the area of *Reading*, there were a number of observations relating to perceived gaps/deficiencies in the current curriculum.

The research that underpins this curriculum is difficult to ascertain. Essential components of reading are not evident throughout the reading strand e.g fluency, vocabulary.

.....Should have a structured phonics programme.

For example, there is little concrete help in the English curriculum for the teaching of synthetic phonics, the teaching of reading and supporting comprehension in reading.

A learning support teacher highlighted shortcomings in the current curriculum with regard to reading.

As a Learning Support teacher, I am delighted to see this much needed review. However, I don't think 're-presentation' of the content is enough; the content must also be reviewed and modified. The English Curriculum is a Whole Language Curriculum. In the teaching of reading, I understand that current research advocates a 'balanced' approach between whole language and skills approaches, so the current curriculum needs to be re-aligned. As well as retaining the whole language elements, (analytic phonics, analogy) a structured phonics programme, from initial letter sounds up to multisyllable word identification strategies, should be included. This is very strongly supported by current research, was requested by teachers in the Primary Curriculum Review Phase 1 and must be added if we are serious about inclusion and the raising of literacy standards. This is a serious omission.

This respondent also listed reading fluency and word identification as omissions.

There were few comments specifically relating to Oral Language, but one respondent noted that he/she would like a *focus on creative, expressive oral and written language*. Another felt there was not enough emphasis on poetry in the curriculum.

I believe (poetry) deserves a section all to itself, composing, discussing, reading, reciting ... poetry is not used enough and is a wonderful tool and gift.

In relation to the strand of *Writing*, a few respondents noted omissions.

...clarity on functional writing, for example punctuation and grammar

....steps in learning writing genres, editing/drafting skills

...ICT and the English curriculum – the editing process, publishing, blogging, etc.

I feel that the development of fine motor skills in the infant classroom is essential, yet it does not appear in any of the curriculum documents.

Spelling strategies – very little on this in the curriculum

...(would) like that there is more focus on creative, independent, expressive writing

An interesting observation was made by one teacher in the context of English in T2 schools (schools where English is the second language).

There needs to be a specific curriculum for English taught in Gaelscoileanna, particularly in the infant classes, due to the reduced time allowed for instruction in T2 (schools) and the absence of English as the language of instruction in other subjects.

Opinions differed as to the amount of specification/detail that is required in the curriculum. One respondent was of the view

It should get down to brass tacks and clearly name or number the objective for the lesson and time of year.

Another had a polar opposite opinion.

Too detailed a document would cease to be user-friendly.

This feedback will provide rich data for NCCA in its future deliberations around the Language Curriculum. However, the comment of one observer probably succinctly sums up the challenge facing the NCCA in any revision of the English Curriculum!

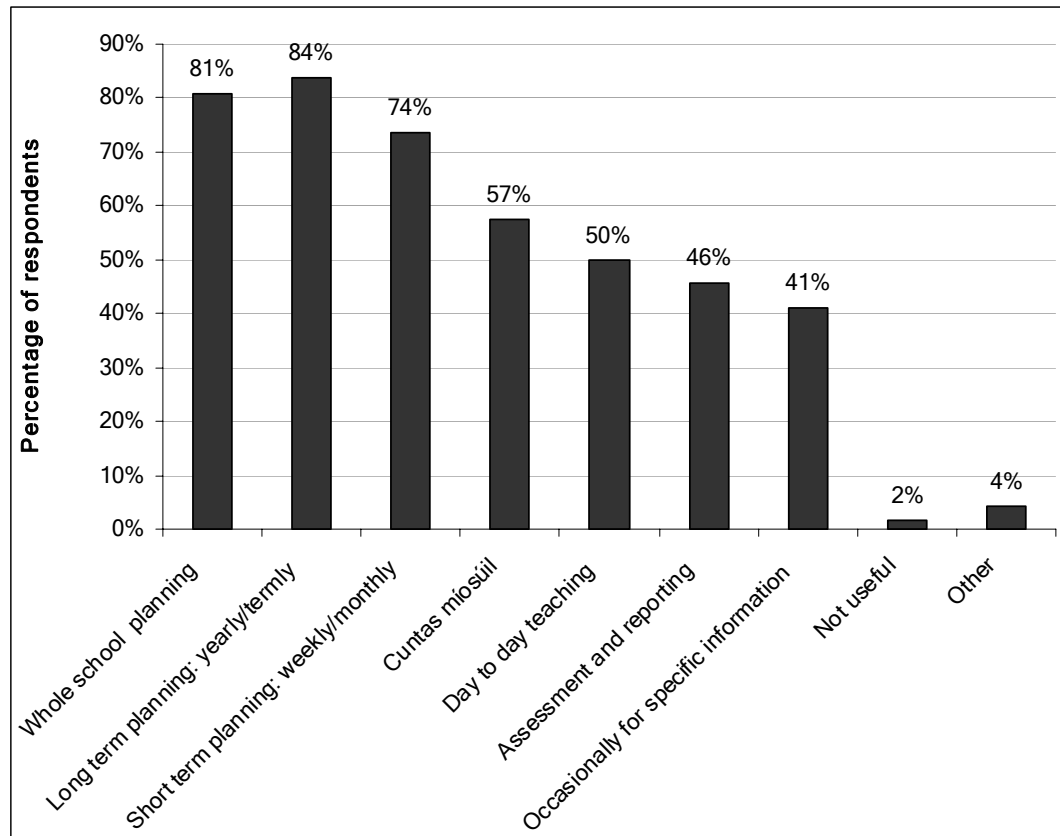
It would be better to say 'I don't know.' The teaching of English is such a huge area that I would not relish the job of drawing up a curriculum.

3.3 Curaclam na Gaeilge: Athleagan amach / The re-presented Irish Curriculum

Of the 213 respondents to the phase 3 survey, less than one third answered the questions that related to *Curaclam na Gaeilge*, with between 57 and 68 responses (for the various questions in this section). Respondents were given the option of adding any comments in Gaeilge or in English.

Respondents were asked how they thought the *Re-presented content objectives: Gaeilge (Athleagan amach)* might be used. Their responses are shown in Figure 6. For the purposes of comparison, the data is in the same order as previous Figures relating to use of materials.

Figure 6. Uses of Curaclam na Gaeilge: Athleagan amach



n=68

Another use was specified as ... *sa chomhthéacs ilrangach* (the multi-grade context). One respondent to this question said the re-presented format *makes the Gaeilge curriculum more amenable for planning*. Once again, the significant increase in the percentage of teachers who reported that the re-presented content objectives would be

useful in their day-to-day teaching as opposed to those who reported using the curriculum books for the same purpose (Figure 1, page 14) is extremely encouraging. This percentage rose from 9% reported in Phase 1 to 50% in this survey.

The survey asked respondents whether or not they thought that the *Re-presented content objectives: Gaeilge* fulfilled the following purposes:

- to show integration
- to support teachers in their planning
- to link with the day to day work in the classroom and
- to make the curriculum easier to understand.

It asked users to what extent they agreed that these purposes had been achieved in the re-presented format. Of the 64 respondents to the question, 93% either agreed or strongly agreed that all four purposes had been achieved.

When asked about specific features of the re-presented structure and format, respondents were also overwhelmingly positive about each of the four features, as shown in table 10 below.

Table 10. Format of the re-presented *Curaclam na Gaeilge*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
Is maith an rud é na snáithaonaid a chur ar leataobh (setting aside of strand units is good)	34%	61%	2%	2%	2%
Tá sé cabhrach go bhfuil na cuspóirí eagraithe sna grúpaí nua (objectives re-grouped is helpful)	27%	70%	0%	2%	2%
Tá ainmneacha na ngrúpaí nua úsáideach agus éasca le tuiscint (naming of groups is helpful and easy to understand)	20%	72%	3%	2%	3%
Tá an struchtúr seo níos fearr ná an leagan amach sa leabhar curaclaim (format is better than curriculum book)	34%	55%	3%	2%	6%

n=63

95% of those who answered the question agreed either strongly or very strongly that the setting aside of the strand units was a good thing. Similarly, almost unanimously, they

found the new re-groupings very helpful and indicated that the structure of the re-presented format was better than that in the curriculum statement/book.

Taitníonn an leagan seo go mór liom... Tá sé ar fad níos éasca/soiléire (I really like this layout... It is far easier/clearer).

One teacher highlighted however, that the layout and terminology of the curriculum may continue to cause confusion.

I get mixed up between the strands, strand units, themes, feidhmeanna teanga. Not sure this new layout helps to distil all of this for me and makes it any clearer what (and how) content needs to be taught at each class level.

One respondent particularly liked the blank overview of the feidhmeanna teanga (language functions) at the end of the document and suggested this could be filled in for each class and become a part of the school plan. Another strongly praised the explanations/translations in English in the re-presented materials as he/she claimed (s)he often got confused by the terminology. This feedback again points to the general satisfaction among users with the re-presented materials and suggests that their availability should be promoted more widely.

Respondents also alluded to the overloaded aspect of the curriculum, that there is far too much in it - *an iomarca ann ar fad* – particularly if teaching multi-grade classes..

Arís, tá I bhfad níos mó cuspóirí ann, an-dheacair iad go léir a chomhlíonadh. (Again, there are far too many objectives, very difficult to fulfill them all).

Bain triail as an athleagan agus tusa ag múineadh ranganna 4, 5 agus 6! Ochón! Ochón! (Try out the re-presented format when teaching 4th, 5th an 6th. Ochón!)

Similar to the comments on the English Curriculum, there were some criticisms that the objectives in *Curaclam na Gaeilge* are *broad and vague and not set out as clear learning outcomes*.

More than half of the 57 respondents (53%) who answered the question relating to gaps or omissions in the current curriculum thought that the re-presented format highlighted gaps/omissions in *Curaclam na Gaeilge*. Some teachers were critical of particular aspects, for example grammar, reading and writing.

nuair a bhí rang a cúig agam ní raibh mé ró-shásta leis na leabhair churaclaim. Níl sé soiléir maidir le gramadach. Caithfidh gach múinteoir é a mhúineadh ach níl sé ann. Ceapaim go mbeadh cuspóirí don gramadach agus béim níos mó a chur ar an gramadach. (when I had 5th class I was not happy with the curriculum books. They are not clear in relation to grammar. Every teacher must teach it, but it is not there. I think there should be objectives relating to grammar and more emphasis on grammar).

Nílim cinnte go bhfuil béim sách láidir sa churaclam ar cén chaoi gur chóir léitheoireacht a mhúineadh trí na ranganna ar fad. (I am not sure that there is sufficient emphasis on the way reading should be taught throughout all the classes).

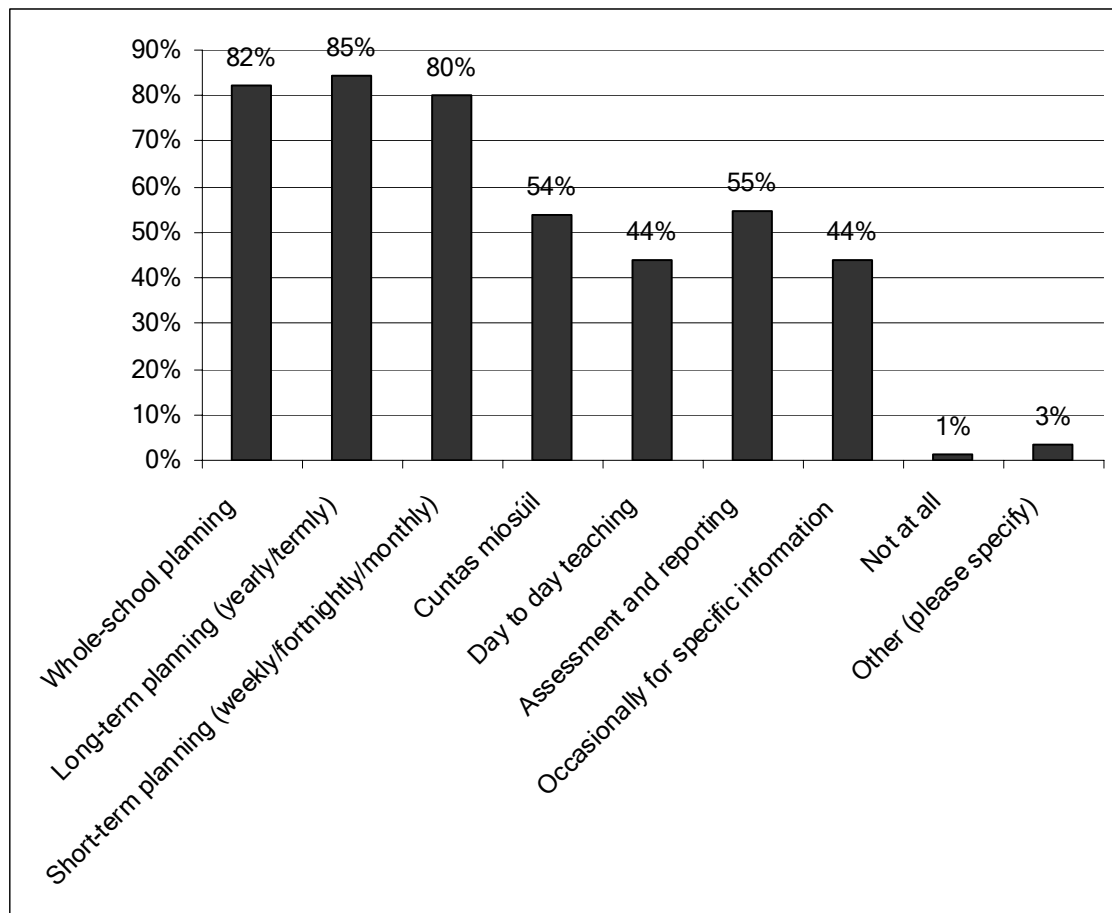
Tá béim ró-mhór fós ar scríbhneoireacht, i bhfad ró-luath fós. (There is still too much emphasis on writing, still much too early).

Once again, the feedback provided by teachers and others through this survey should provide NCCA with rich data when the work on reviewing the Language Curriculum begins.

3.4 The re-presented Mathematics Curriculum

91 respondents completed this section of the survey; 122 skipped it. In the Phase 3 survey, respondents were asked how they thought the *Re-presented content objectives: Mathematics* and the *Mathematics Bridging Content* might be used. Their responses are shown in Figure 7. For the purposes of comparison, the data is in the same order as previous Figures relating to use of materials.

Figure 7. Uses of re-presented content objectives and bridging content: Mathematics



n=91

Another use for the bridging content was specified as ...*allows meaningful liaison with second level school*. The use of these materials for day-to-day teaching of mathematics was reported by 44%, another significant increase from the 9% of teachers who reported using the curriculum books for the same purpose in Phase 1.

Were the purposes achieved?

Of the 87 respondents to the question, 96% either agreed or strongly agreed that the content was more user-friendly and 91% either agreed or strongly agreed that the re-presented format provided greater support for planning than the Mathematics Curriculum statement document.

A significant finding is that in the case of Mathematics, 98% of respondents were of the view that it was clear from the re-presented content objectives what the children are expected to learn at each class level. This figure was significantly more than for the English and Gaelge materials. Some respondents illuminated this finding:

Maths very much lends itself to this new layout as, unlike the language area, the objectives are much clearer and more like real learning outcomes.

It is much easier to see what the children should know at the end of the year. It can even be used as a checklist for each child to assess their knowledge of the (maths) curriculum.

Extremely clear what the children should have mastered at each level. I'm extremely impressed with this document, particularly how helpful it is to teachers in 6th class.

A few teachers noted that the re-presented format was particularly helpful in a multi-grade situation.

The new format is perfect for multi-class teachers, a glance card showing the levels that the children should be at makes it so much easier in assessing the suitability of textbook/online lesson materials for the IWB than having to dust down the curriculum book. Much more user-friendly. Great work!

As for the other subject areas, those who used these materials found them to be extremely helpful to them. This finding re-inforces the suggestion that their availability to all teachers should be widely promoted in subsequent school years.

The overloaded nature of the Mathematics Curriculum was also referred to with one teacher stating that the difficulty associated with the materials was *just the time factor to get it all done*.

A few teachers, as in the previous two phases, noted the relative inflexibility of the current format when used electronically for planning.

What I would find useful would be if the objectives for each class could be accessed individually.

The only difficulty I find with the content objectives is their insertion into cells. When I am planning which content objectives I need to address in the classroom, I have to copy and paste each objective separately: I would like to be able to highlight a cluster of objectives, copy and paste them into my notes.

This is exactly what teachers can now do with the NCCA's curriculum planning tool at www.curriculumonline/primaryplanningtool.

Are there gaps or omissions?

Finally, in relation to the *Re-presented Content Objectives: Mathematics*, 80% of the 80 respondents who answered the question said that the re-presented curriculum did not highlight any gaps or omissions in the Mathematics Curriculum for them. Of those who identified gaps, some added additional comments that included

I feel more could be included in terms of skills development.

I think that problem-solving is the umbrella under which all content sits. Further, a greater emphasis on mental maths across all strands is required.

...the fact that concrete experiences are very limited after the junior classes and the extent to which we abstract problem-solving, moving it away from real experiences to computational exercises....

One respondent said that Maths Recovery (a programme that is currently run in DEIS schools) needs to be introduced in all schools.

In relation to the bridging content and glossary, the question stated that they were developed for four purposes: to promote curriculum continuity from primary to post-primary; to support teachers, both primary and post-primary, in planning for mathematics; the glossary was also designed as an information guide for parents. Users were asked to what extent they agreed that these four purposes had been achieved. 94% or more of those who responded to each section of the question either agreed or agreed strongly that all four objectives had been achieved.

Some respondents expressed interesting views and comments on the topic of transition and specifically in relation to the transition materials developed by NCCA.

Curriculum discontinuity is a key factor in transfer difficulties for the child so these bridging documents are vital, particularly in an area like Maths where the different

teaching approaches of secondary education can lose the child. In particular the glossary is very useful, as it provides the opportunity to extend the language of the primary whole-school maths plan to second-level learnings. A great development.

Great idea. We need more of this kind of material for all subjects to help pupils (and teachers) with moving from primary to secondary.

As I have kept in touch with the post-primary maths curriculum, I have a clear idea of what 6th class children face, but I can recognise its great value to parents and teachers as it removes much of the fear of the unknown for them and makes it less daunting, I'd imagine.

Any structured information/contact that can be passed between primary and post-primary is needed and ...would be valued.

Some respondents expressed some reservations about the reality on the ground.

It will be useful if and when it is implemented.

It is very important that teachers know what happens at second level, but I am not sure how aware teachers are at second level of what is on the curriculum at primary.

Bridging materials fine. Continuity between 6th class and second level is poor. (We should) have some training courses where 6th class teachers can meet with second level maths teachers.....

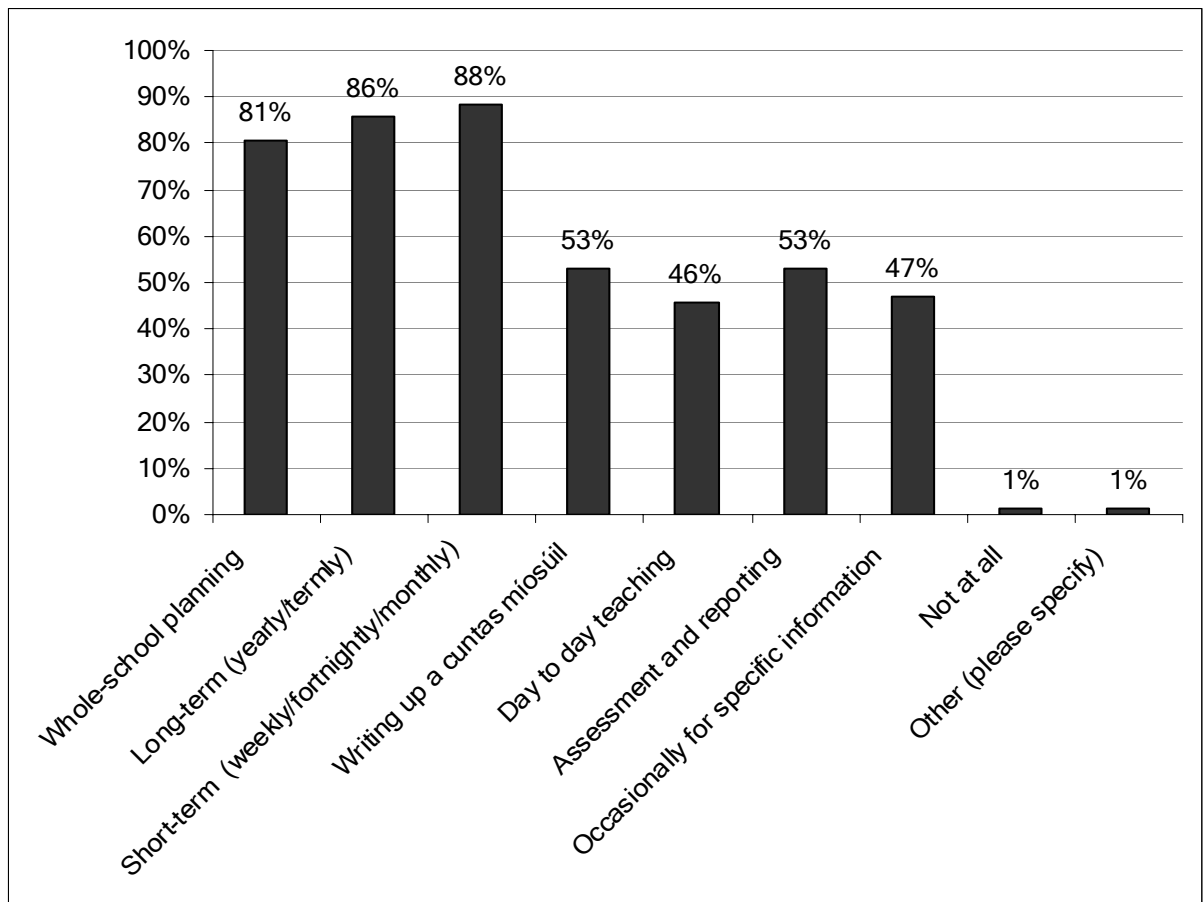
It is encouraging to note that these types of meetings between teachers at both levels have been taking place already as an integral part of the *Project Maths* initiative at second level.

Specifically in relation to the glossary, a few respondents indicated that it would help to address the issue of teacher competence and mathematical knowledge. It was also noted that it would be useful especially for EAL children and their parents. One respondent indicated that the glossary would be useful *as part of a conversation with parents rather than as an outline of what has or will be covered.*

3.5 The re-presented Science Curriculum

77 respondents answered parts of this section of the survey, 136 skipped it. In the Phase 3 survey, respondents were asked how they had used the *Re-presented content objectives: Science* as it was hoped that they would have received/downloaded these materials and used them in their work over a number of weeks before responding to the survey. Their responses are shown in Figure 8. For the purposes of comparison, the data is in the same order as previous figures relating to use of materials.

Figure 8. Uses of re-presented content objectives: Science



n=77

The use of these materials for day-to-day teaching of science was reported as 46%, another significant increase from the 9% of teachers who reported using the curriculum books for the same purpose in Phase 1.

Were the purposes achieved?

Of the 76 respondents to the question, 96% either agreed or strongly agreed that the content was more user-friendly and 93% either agreed or strongly agreed that the re-

presented format provided greater support for planning than the Science Curriculum statement document.

One respondent noted however that

The science objectives are very hard to fulfil. Time factor is a huge constraint, as well as (lack of) resources/money for science.

A few teachers also felt they did not have sufficient basic scientific knowledge to teach science effectively.

Science is my 'achilles heel' and in order to understand the objectives I need to study the curriculum carefully and also refer regularly to the teacher guidelines, particularly exemplars.

...always feel a great omission was that basic scientific knowledge (in which few of us have a background) was never provided.

97% of respondents said it was clear to them, from the re-presented content objectives, what the children are expected to learn at each class level. This is a very strong endorsement of the content objectives of the Science Curriculum from this group of teachers. Some respondents threw further light on this finding.

Yes, but it was clear anyway.....Science and Maths are easier to lay out in this new format as there is more definite content.

(This is a)... very easy reference to what the children are expected to know before moving into the next class. Really helps teachers to recap on main points learned the previous year and to build from there. All on one sheet and no need to go through pages and pages in a book.

One respondent was of the view that the content of the Science Curriculum is *not sufficiently challenging for gifted children.*

Finally, in relation to the *Re-presented Content Objectives: Science*, 73% of the 71 respondents who answered the question said that the re-presented curriculum did not highlight any gaps or omissions in the Science Curriculum for them. Those respondents who answered that it did highlight gaps did not expand on this response.

3.6 Responding to curriculum overload: general questions

Priorities in primary education

88 people responded to the question that asked them to identify three priorities for children's learning and development in primary school. **Language and literacy, maths and numeracy**, and the development of **skills** and **dispositions** emerged as clear priorities amongst respondents, as shown in Table 11. The table shows the number of times each theme was identified as a first, second or third priority by respondents.

Table 11. Priorities in children's primary school education as identified by respondents

Theme	Number of respondents who listed as Priority 1 n	Number of respondents who listed as Priority 2 n	Number of respondents who listed as Priority 3 n	Total n
Language and literacy (combined)	28	10	5	43
Maths (including numeracy)	10	22	15	47
Skills (in general; learning skills; problem solving skills; thinking skills),	9	13	14	36
Social and personal skills specifically and S.P.H.E. (combined)	4	6	13	23
Dispositions (towards themselves, others, learning and school)	9	5	3	17
English	11	3	1	15
Arts education	3	5	5	13
Gaeilge	3	3	5	11
Curriculum content – subjects (without specifying subjects)	3	3	3	9

Other priorities in children's primary school education identified by a minority of respondents which are not listed in Table 11 above included specific subjects or content such as Information Technology, S.E.S.E., P.E., languages and religion. Curriculum-related issues such as child-centred and developmental philosophies, differentiation, integration, teaching methods, assessment, and time were also identified. Non-curriculum issues cited were teacher professional development, resources and class size.

Current work of the NCCA

ACTION website and re-presentation work

Respondents were asked to what extent they found the ACTION website and the re-presentation work helpful in responding to curriculum overload. Of the 93 respondents to this question almost a third (29%) indicated that they were not familiar with the ACTION website. They did not know that there were interactive teacher guidelines on the site nor that there were samples of teaching and learning from Irish classrooms available to view and download. 86% of the 93 people who responded to the question said that the curriculum re-presentation work was either useful or very useful in responding to curriculum overload.

The lack of awareness of the ACTION website among respondents is disappointing given the resources that have gone into the development of the website. It suggests that some NCCA resources should now go into promotion of the site as well as its continued development. This is echoed by some respondents who said ACTION *should be promoted more in schools.*

...(as) valuable as NCCA work is, there is a need to get it out there for all. This can be a challenge..

Unsurprisingly, some respondents also alluded to the lack of time and the issue of overload in this respect.

Teachers argue that they have very little time to view these examples and others available on your website and other (websites).

The re-presentations are well done and useful for planning, but I'm not sure they reduce overload. There needs to be a mechanism where the actual curriculum CONTENT can be reviewed/amended/reduced/increased at intervals, without re-publishing an entire curriculum. In this way our work would be aligned with current research on pedagogy and teachers' experiences in classrooms.

Maybe there are just too many subjects, strands and strand units relative to the length of the school year.

Two comments in this section of the survey are interesting on the topic of transition.

For primary teachers, ACTION gives an insight into the changing face of secondary education and helps inform teaching and learning that will prepare the child for transfer to secondary education.

...teachers can have a limited understanding of some content areas and where this fits in learning as the child transfers to post primary.

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

The next two questions in the survey related to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Of the 95 respondents who answered the question, 59% were aware of *Aistear*. In the supplementary questions that asked if, in the view of the respondent, *Aistear* had implications/potential for the Infant Curriculum, many answered that though they were aware of its existence, they had not read it or experienced it sufficiently to be in a position to answer the question. Of those who did express a view, many were very positive about its possible impact.

It can provide a wonderful planning tool for infant teachers who want to use a theme approach and teach through play. It also validates all the incidental teaching an infant teacher does in any given day.

A number of respondents indicated that in particular *Aistear's* highlighting of the role of play in early learning would have implications for the Infant Curriculum and validate the upcoming work on play with infant teachers that NCCA is undertaking.

Although it (Aistear) shares many principles of learning and development (with the Primary School Curriculum), I feel it has great potential for the infant teacher. It espouses play as a teaching and learning methodology which I strongly agree with.

I think that it provides an additional dimension to the infant curriculum with an alternative approach, i.e. learning through play, which can be very effective.

Some respondents queried how policy would adapt to accommodate the introduction of *Aistear*.

As an infant teacher and having looked at Aistear, I have a dilemma. I wholeheartedly agree with the Aistear principles, but the curriculum content and the amount of it, and my belief that infants should at least have the basic literacy and numeracy skills required for 1st class, would require a third year in infants to do it all properly.

It does not match up. This appears not to have been fully thought through at policy level. Furthermore, the 4/5 years old intake at infant level is very problematic in the system overall.

...huge implications....Bring it on....we need to have our infant curriculum more responsive to the needs of 4-year old children, but it must note the realities of large class sizes in small rooms with few resources.

There were some suggestions that the Infant Curriculum should be revised in light of *Aistear* and one respondent suggested that *Aistear* should replace the Infant Curriculum.

The data will provide insights when Council's work in reviewing the Infant Curriculum begins.

Of the 66 respondents who answered the question, about half (47%) were not happy with having online access only (no hard copy) of *Aistear*. The most common theme in the responses was that a hard copy is easier for teachers to use in their day-to-day work in the school and classroom, for example:

I, and many teachers, like having a book which can be flicked through, bookmarked, and underlined. I find a book more useful for planning and easier to use.

It is easier to have a manual to refer to when planning and in day to day teaching situations.

Is aoibhinn liom fíorleabhair a bheidh agam, níos éasca le léamh i mo thuairim. (I love having a hard copy, easier to read in my opinion).

Internet access in school and teacher competence and confidence in accessing and using online resources were among the other reasons cited by respondents who were not satisfied with only online access to *Aistear*.

Any further ideas?

The second last question in the survey asked if respondents had any further ideas on how the curriculum might be made more user-friendly and easier to access and navigate for teachers. 45 people responded to this question. Some of the respondents complimented the work already completed and made suggestions as to how the format, layout or navigability of the cards with the re-presented content objectives might be improved ... *even in simple ways like having downloadable Word documents that can be easily cut and pasted*. Others suggested that providing hard copies of the re-presented materials for teachers would be useful. A few respondents encouraged the NCCA to extend the work to other subjects, and two noted the need to take the particular needs of multi-grade teachers into consideration.

Some of these concerns will be addressed through the searchable interactive online database of objectives for teachers. This online planning tool is now available at www.curriculumonline.ie/primaryplanningtool. Seven of the respondents affirmed this development, recommending some kind of interactive planning tool for teachers, or stating their support for the work.

Look forward to the database, seems like it will be very useful. Perhaps after searching the database it could generate documents useful in the classroom, e.g. link to samples of what other teachers did in this area, show how integration across subjects might happen.

The second part of the quotation above highlights another common theme in the responses: that teachers would welcome opportunities to share ideas and practice and that the curriculum *needs to be fluid ... to allow teachers to share and collaborate ... to upload and communicate*. Such a curriculum would facilitate sharing and providing information for teachers about resources, teaching ideas and links, which was another theme that emerged in the responses.

Perhaps there could be a lesson link or resources link beside each objective or methods to differentiate for different learners.

Other respondents noted the need to provide in-service for teachers, and in particular support in relation to ICT. This would support teachers in using online planning and collaboration tools.

Five respondents felt that some of the objectives should be revised or re-worded to make them simpler and clearer. The curriculum should also *remind teachers if all or a selection of content objectives have to be done for each subject*.

Another five respondents stated, however, that the curriculum content itself should be reduced, (by up to 20% according to one respondent) saying that it *is impossible to deliver this curriculum as it stands, and more is often less*.

Views on the Primary School Curriculum

The final question of the Phase 3 survey asked respondents if they had views on how the *Primary School Curriculum* might be further improved to alleviate overload and to meet the needs of children in a modern Ireland. 65 people answered the question. 46% gave responses relating to the theme of **reviewing, revising or reducing the content in the curriculum**.

Review of content at intervals in each curricular area, by educationalists and teachers with teaching and/or proven academic/research expertise and make amendments.

Scale down on the ambition of the depth of subjects in the primary school; if the scale cannot be cut back, then (reduce) the number of expected strand units to be covered in any one year.

I think we need to look at each objective and see if it is absolutely necessary!

Reduce the amount of repetition.

Make the curriculum much, much shorter.

A few respondents suggested devising a core curriculum with other content added in later or being optional. Some also referred to the issue of time allocation to individual subjects.

It is impossible to cover the whole curriculum and I feel that when I try to, the children end up confused and with very little grasp of any of it. I have to prioritise areas that I feel children are most in need of with the result that there are several areas that I only touch on, especially when I have a weaker class. Perhaps there should be a list of vital areas children need?

Teach the curriculum in a spiral fashion commencing with a strong emphasis on the 3 r's at junior level and then expanding out into certain areas as children progress through the primary school system. By 5th and 6th you would be covering all current curriculum areas.

Change the time allocations for different subject areas. There is insufficient time allowed for maths and English, particularly for the 1st/2nd who are still engaged in learning to read and write as well as learning how to spell independently.

Concentrate on core subjects plus a menu type selection of supplementary subjects. Vary it from term to term...too much to do and not enough time at the moment.

Address the need to make students experts in all subject areas. Placing equal importance on all subject areas puts teachers under enormous pressure. We are half teaching our students to try and cover all areas. We are barely dipping into strands and saying it's covered. This isn't teaching.

Others stressed the need for there to be more autonomy at school and classroom level in terms of the implementation of the curriculum.

Let the school tailor the curriculum to suit pupils' needs.

Leverage for teachers to make a curriculum more applicable to school context.

Teachers must be given more flexibility within the existing curriculum.

Let the class teacher decide, as it is impossible to make a general decision about the amount of work each class can achieve. Sometimes a class might be weaker or quicker than another class of the same standard.

The Department needs to get more realistic, and inspectors should trust teachers to be professional and to cover the curriculum in their own way, while adhering to requirements.

Five respondents expressed the opinion that Religion should be removed from the curriculum and that the teaching of religion be moved outside of the school setting to free up time for other subjects within the school day. Four respondents were of the opinion that Drama should not be a standalone subject and should be either integrated with English or designated as a methodology. There was a suggestion to reduce the focus on Gaeilge and to put more focus on SPHE.

25% of respondents to this question recommended placing **an increased focus on skills, skill development and application, and skills across subjects.**

... The role of skills should be highlighted more - perhaps if the children's learning was more skill focused they would be more independent learners and would be better placed to excel when they are adults.

I think there needs to be a greater focus on effective integration and the development of skills rather than developing individual subjects.

There needs to be a focus on the basic skills - academic, social, personal, which every child should acquire by the end of 6th class, irrespective of the subject taught. Attaining specific targets in these areas should be a priority; they should be child-centred and stand apart from the subject-matter of individual subjects.

Have SPHE as a core subject in the infant cycle which will set the foundation for active methodologies, group work, talk and discussion, collaborative/co-operative learning, problem solving, skills through content etc which are fundamentals of the curriculum. This would enhance curriculum implementation at all levels.

A number of respondents made suggestions about highlighting **integration** across the curriculum.

Integration should be more specific not just an option.

I think more emphasis on integration across the curriculum would help. I find a thematic approach works well to ensure integration.

I think that some subjects could be presented in a more integration-friendly way - Geography, Science and History could be presented in one book with clear activities and ideas for integration as could the Arts subjects. The overlap in some areas presents difficulty especially with whole school planning - ie Environmental awareness.

A smaller number of respondents gave suggestions in relation to issues such as continued professional development for teachers, specialist teachers, multi-class contexts, authentic learning, resourcing/funding and differentiation.

There were interesting views put forward on **how the curriculum might be presented and communicated to teachers**. A number of these requested that the re-presentation work be extended to all subjects.

Have all of the curriculum subjects re-presented using the same format as English, Maths, Gaeilge and Science.

Have these glance cards for all subjects.

Just please continue with this project and extend it to all curriculum areas.

A recurring request was that all of the information for a particular class level would be found together, for example:

Each class and class groups material (eg. all subjects for infants) put into one easy reference book instead of 11 books to reference when planning.

Finally, a number of respondents referred to the **role of textbooks** in their suggestions as to how overload might be alleviated.

....less emphasis on text books and more support for a differentiated approach to learning.

Textbooks do NOT match the curriculum in many subject areas.

Say loudly to schools and teachers Do not be slaves to textbooks.

The curriculum is not the issue - the over use of content loaded textbooks is the issue.

Conclusion

As NCCA engaged with teachers to re-present the curriculum and thus make it more accessible and navigable for them during the past school year, it was clear that many primary teachers had strong views on the issue of curriculum overload.

It is interesting to note that from October 2009 to June 2010 more than 100 teachers have indicated an interest to be involved in this initiative. The commitment required from the many teachers who participated in the work was not just to complete an online survey. Many agreed to take the time to use the re-presented materials and to give feedback on them, even at a time when schools and teachers are facing so many other challenges.

Teachers have given us messages about how we might develop these materials, promote them and distribute them more widely to support them in their work. The development of an online curriculum planning tool, with its searchable database of content objectives, is a direct result of the feedback given to us by the teachers. However, their comments about the sheer volume of content and the unsuitability of some of the language used in the curriculum cannot be responded to by re-presentation alone.

The findings in the three phases of the initiative fully endorse the recent decision of Council to re-examine both the Infant Curriculum and the Language Curriculum and to commence work on their re-construction. There is rich data in the findings about how this work might proceed and how the views of teachers, principals, teacher educators and parents might be incorporated into any future revisions of the *Primary School Curriculum*.

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Appendix A

Glance cards for English: Oral language

English

Curriculum ‘Glance Cards’

A fundamental principle of the curriculum is that children’s current understanding and knowledge should form the basis for new learning. The curriculum is designed to follow an incremental approach to teaching and learning by increasing the complexity of concepts as the child progresses through the primary school. The content objectives outlined in each of the strand units observe a spiral progression as the curriculum advances from infants to sixth class.

These curriculum “glance cards” were designed to provide a one-page overview of the content objectives in each strand unit for all class levels. **It is not intended that these glance cards replace the curriculum documents** but that rather they will provide an immediate snapshot of how particular concepts are developed from infants to sixth class.

Teachers are advised to pay particular attention to this feature of the curriculum when planning their work. It is important that teachers are fully aware of the level of knowledge and understanding required of the child in previous class levels as it will inform current planning. It is also important that teachers are familiar with what the children will be learn after the present class level so that they can prepare the child adequately for further learning. Awareness of the curriculum content which precedes and follows the current class content ensures progression in teaching and learning, and minimises unnecessary duplication.

Teachers may find this useful when they are engaging in continuing professional development, or when they are planning for teaching and learning. However, **it is essential that teachers consult the curriculum documents when engaging in planning as the content objectives are expanded upon in the context of the various class levels.**

It is also assumed that every content objective in these cards is preceded by “**The child will be enabled to....**” as is stated in the curriculum. Where it appears that a content objective applies to junior classes and is discontinued in higher class levels, it is intended that teachers continue to explicitly teach these concepts if the required level of understanding has not been reached. If the learning objective has been realised, the teacher will endeavour to maintain and consolidate the learning.

Strand: Oral Language

Strand unit: Developing receptiveness to oral language

Infants	First and second	Third and fourth	Fifth and sixth
Experience, recognise and observe simple commands		Give and follow instructions on how to perform a particular task or process	Follow detailed instructions or directions from others in order to test their accuracy Take part in games in which unseen objects are identified from descriptions given by other pupils
Listen to a story or description and respond to it	Listen to stories, descriptions, instructions and directions and respond to them	Listen to, retell and tape a narrative or a description, taking turns giving the account	Listen to expressions, reactions, opinions and interpretations and retell or summarise them Listen to radio broadcasts and discuss what has been learned Listen to authors reading and discussing their own work
Hear, repeat and elaborate words, phrases and sentences modelled by the teacher	Listen to sounds and respond to them	Discuss the use and effect of music, sound effects and non-verbal clues in audio tapes, video tapes and film clips	Listen to sound tapes or watch videos and films and discuss how sound effects enhance the content
Use and interpret tone of voice expressing varying emotions	Experience challenging vocabulary and sentence structure from the teacher	Experience the teacher's use of challenging vocabulary and sentence structure	Experience from the teacher a growing elaboration and sophistication in the use of vocabulary and sentence structure
Learn to adapt appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to secure and maintain the attention of a partner	Use gesture and movement to extend the meaning of what he/she is saying	Use mime to convey ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes	Use mime to convey ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes
Mime and interpret gesture, movement and attitude conveying various emotions	Becoming more adept in using appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour in order to secure and maintain the attention of the listener	Become increasingly aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others	Be continually aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others
Mime and interpret gesture, movement and attitude conveying various emotions	Express in mime various emotions and reactions, and interpret the emotions and reactions of others		Interpret mood, attitude, emotion and atmosphere in video extracts, advertisements, paintings and photographs

Strand: Oral Language

Strand unit: Confidence and competence in using language

Infants	First and second	Third and fourth	Fifth and sixth
Talk about past and present experiences, and plan, predict and speculate about future and imaginary experiences	Talk about and reflect on past and present experiences, and plan, predict, anticipate and speculate about future and imaginary experiences	Summarise and prioritise ideas	
Use language to perform common social functions	Engage in real and imaginary situations to perform different social functions	Practice the common social functions in the everyday context of class and school and through improvisational drama	Practise and use improvisational drama to acquire a facility in performing more elaborate social functions.
Initiate and sustain a conversation on a particular topic	Initiate discussions, respond to the initiatives of others, and have practice in taking turns	Initiate conversations and respond to the initiatives of others in talking about experiences and activities	Converse freely and confidently on a range of topics
	Focus on the subject under discussion and sustain a conversation on it	Give and take turns in speaking and experience a classroom environment in which tolerance for the views of others is fostered	Give and take turns in an environment where tolerance for the views of others is fostered
Combine simple sentences through the use of connecting words	Experiment with word order and examine its implications for meaning and clarity	Present ideas that are relevant to the subject in a logical sequence	Acquire the ability to give detailed instructions and directions Explore the possibilities of language and sentence structure in expressing increasingly complex thoughts
Experiment with descriptive words to add elaborative detail	Experiment with more elaborate vocabulary and sentence structure in order to extend and explore meaning	Make lists of local expressions and words Play synonym and antonym games	Discuss the meaning, effect and diversity of local words and expressions Discuss the positive and negative effects of jargon, slang and cliché, and express examples of them in his/her own language

		Hear, discuss and react to local storytellers	Hear accents and dialects other than his/her own on tape and on video and discuss them
		Use improvisational drama to re-create well-known characters	Use improvisational drama to learn how local idiom, accent and dialect can influence the effect of language in particular situations
Choose appropriate words to name and describe things and events		Become aware of new words and new connotations of words through his/her reading and writing experience	
		Discuss the meanings and origins of words, phrases and expressions with the teacher	Become familiar with compound and complex sentences and know and understand the terms 'phrase' and 'clause'
		Become familiar with the functions without necessarily using technical grammatical terms	Understand the functions and know the names of the parts of speech Learn about and name the basic properties of nouns and verbs

Strand: Oral language

Strand unit: Developing cognitive abilities through oral language

Infants	First and second	Third and fourth	Fifth and sixth
Provide further information in response to the teacher's prompting	Give a description, recount a narrative or describe a process, and answer questions about it	Discuss issues that directly affect his/her life	Discuss ideas of major concern
Listen to a story or a narrative and ask questions about it	Listen to other children describe experiences and ask questions about their reactions to them	Discuss a story being read and predict future events and likely outcomes in it	Discuss ideas and concepts encountered in other areas of the curriculum
Show understanding of text	Listen to a story or a narrative and ask questions about it		
Focus on descriptive detail and begin to be explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes, events, colour, shape, size, position	Become increasingly explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes and events by adding elaborative detail to what he/she describes and narrates		Use a discussion of the familiar as the basis of a more formal or objective grasp of a topic or concept
Discuss different possible solutions to simple problems		Discuss different possible solutions to problems	
Ask questions in order to satisfy curiosity about the world	Ask questions that will satisfy his/her curiosity and wonder	Discuss causes and effects in relation to processes and events and predict possible outcomes	Use the basic key questions and checking questions as a means of extending knowledge
		Learn how to use the basic key questions	Listen to a presentation on a particular topic, decide through discussions which are the most appropriate questions to ask, and then prioritise them
		Listen to a presentation and discuss and decide which are the most important questions to ask	Respond to arguments presented by the teacher.
		Discuss what he/she knows of a particular topic or process as a basis for encountering new problems	Discuss the value, truth or relevance of popular ideas,

Strand: Oral language

Strand unit: Developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

Infants	First and second	Third and fourth	Fifth and sixth
<p>Reflect on and talk about a wide range of everyday experience and feelings</p> <p>Create and tell stories.</p>	<p>Describe everyday experiences and events</p> <p>Express feelings in order to clarify them and explain them to others</p> <p>Tell stories to his/her own words and answer questions about them.</p>	<p>Describe everyday experiences to the class or group and discuss them</p> <p>Express feelings and attitudes through improvisational drama</p> <p>Discuss favourite moments, important events and exciting characters in a story, play or poem</p> <p>Create and tell stories to the class or group and retell them after questioning, comparing the versions</p>	<p>Discuss with others his/her reactions to everyday experiences and to local, national and world events</p> <p>Discuss the concerns of other children</p> <p>Discuss ideas, concepts and images encountered in literature</p>
<p>Listen to, learn and retell a rich variety of stories, rhymes and songs</p> <p>Recognise and re-create sounds in the immediate environment</p> <p>Create real and imaginary sound worlds</p> <p>Use language to create and sustain imaginary situations in play</p> <p>Experiment with different voices in role-playing</p>	<p>Re-create stories and poems in improvisational drama</p> <p>Recognise and re-create sounds in the environment</p> <p>Create real and imaginary sound worlds</p> <p>Use play and improvisational drama to sustain imaginary situations</p> <p>Use imaginative play to create humorous characters and situations</p> <p>Listen to and say nonsense words and unusual words</p> <p>Listen to, read, learn and recite more sophisticated nonsense</p>	<p>Express reactions to events and characters in stories</p> <p>Dramatise stories.</p> <p>Create and sustain imaginary contexts through improvisational drama</p> <p>React to poems through improvisational drama</p> <p>Experience and enjoy playful aspects of language</p>	<p>Discuss personal reading and writing</p> <p>Discuss plays, films and television programmes</p> <p>Experience and enjoy playful aspects of language</p>

	verse and rhymes		
	Clap the rhythms of poems and rhymes		
Listen to, learn and ask riddles	Listen to, learn and tell riddles and jokes		
Respond through discussion, mime and role-playing to stories, rhymes and songs heard and learnt	Listen to, read, learn and recite a varied and appropriate repertoire of rhymes and poems	Discuss reactions to poems	Express individual responses to poems and literature and discuss different interpretations

Appendix B

Printed version of Phase 1 survey

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 1

1. Introduction

This survey relates to 'glance cards' that have been developed by the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is gathering feedback on these cards to explore ways of making the content in the 11 curriculum (content) books more accessible and more user-friendly in order to support you in curriculum planning and teaching. The following questions are designed to probe your initial reaction to the materials. Your feedback will help us to shape the further development of these and similar support materials.

Initially we will use the 'glance cards' for Science, Mathematics, Gaeilge and English. These materials are available for download at www.ppds.ie in the curriculum planning section of the site. They are also available from the Curriculum Overload page at the NCCA site. You will return to that page automatically on completion of this survey.

It should take no more than 10 minutes to complete the survey and it should be submitted before 13 November 2009.

1. I am responding as a(n)

(Please tick all that apply)

- infant class teacher
- 1st or 2nd class teacher
- 3rd or 4th class teacher
- 5th or 6th class teacher
- multi-class teacher
- teaching principal
- administrative principal
- learning support/resource teacher
- post-holder with responsibility for Science
- post-holder with responsibility for Gaeilge
- post-holder with responsibility for Maths
- post-holder with responsibility for English

2. I teach in a school that is.....

	Location	Type	Gender	Language of instruction	Size	School Support Programme (DEIS)
Description	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 1

3. I have looked at the 'glance cards' for.....

- Gaeilge Science Mathematics English

4. How do you currently use the curriculum books?

- Not at all
- For whole-school planning
- For my long-term yearly/termly planning
- For my short-term weekly/fortnightly/monthly planning
- For writing up my cuntas míosúil
- In my day to day teaching
- For assessment and reporting
- I refer to them occasionally for specific information
- Other

Other (please specify)

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 1

2. Layout of 'glance cards'

Each card shows the content objectives for a particular strand unit from infants to sixth class. There is a column for each class/class level.

The following questions ask for your initial reaction to these cards and to their current layout.

5. Please rate what you think of the following:

	Not useful at all	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
Layout as a table	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Objectives for each strand unit for all class levels on the one card	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Colour coding to match curriculum documents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional comments

6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Primary School Curriculum books and the 'glance cards'?

	Primary School Curriculum books	Glance cards
The layout is clear	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
The language is easy to read and to understand	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
It is easy to see what children should be enabled to do at each class level	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Progression in the content objectives between class levels is obvious	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Overlap of the content objectives between class levels is obvious	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Any additional comments

7. Do you have any views on how these cards/materials might be developed to make them more useful to teachers?

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 1

3. Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The NCCA will continue to gather feedback and to revise these materials over the coming months. If you would like to stay informed of these developments, to give further feedback and to receive copies of any revised materials, enter your name and email address below. Please note that individual teachers and schools will not be identified in any report based on findings from this work.

8. Name:

9. Email address:

10. I would like to receive revised materials, when they become available, for:

Gaelige

Mathematics

Science

English

Overview of
curriculum objectives

Appendix C

Printed version of Phase 2 survey

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 2

1. Introduction

This is the second survey in a planned series of four surveys during this school year, relating to the issue of curriculum overload. This survey specifically looks for feedback on 'glance cards' and Science skills cards that have been developed by the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) and on Mathematics skills cards and a curriculum overview wall-chart that have been developed by NCCA.

Thanks very much to all who took the time to respond to the first survey. Some of the feedback requested 'glance cards' for single class levels and we are currently exploring that option. Further feedback will help us to shape the ongoing development of these and similar support materials.

The materials are available for download from the Curriculum Overload page at the NCCA website. You will return to that page automatically on completion of this survey.

We recognise that schools are very busy places, especially at this time of the year. We thank you for taking the time to return this completed survey to us by 18 December 2009.

1. I am responding as a(n)

(Please tick all that apply)

- infant class teacher
- 1st or 2nd class teacher
- 3rd or 4th class teacher
- 5th or 6th class teacher
- multi-grade teacher
- teaching principal
- administrative principal
- learning support/resource teacher
- post-holder with responsibility for Science
- post-holder with responsibility for Gaeilge
- post-holder with responsibility for Maths
- post-holder with responsibility for English

2. I teach in a school that is.....

	Location	Type	Gender	Language of instruction	Size	School Support Programme (DEIS)
Description	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 2

3. Is this is the first or second NCCA survey you have completed on the topic of curriculum re-presentation?

First

Second

2. Glance Cards and Skills Cards

4. I have looked at the cards for.....

Gaeilge

Science

Science
skills

Mathematics

Mathematics
skills

English

5. How have you used the cards in the past few weeks?

Not at all

For whole-school planning

For my long-term yearly/termly planning

For my short-term weekly/fortnightly/monthly planning

For writing up my cuntas míosúil

In my day to day teaching

For assessment and reporting

I refer to them occasionally for specific information

Other (please specify)

6. In what format did you use the cards?

As a stapled booklet

As a bound booklet

As separate printed cards

As separate laminated cards

As a vertical, pull-down set of sheets

As a wall-chart

Other

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 2

7. In your view, how useful is each format:

	Not useful at all	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
As a stapled booklet	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
As a bound booklet	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
As separate printed cards	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
As separate laminated cards	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
As a vertical pull-down set of sheets	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
As a wall-chart	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Any additional comments

3. Glance cards and skills cards....cont'd.

8. Please skip to Question 9 if you completed the first survey.

Each 'glance card' shows the content objectives for a particular strand unit from infants to sixth class. There is a column for each class/class level.

Please rate what you think of the following:

	Not useful at all	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful
Layout as a table	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
Objectives for each strand unit for all class levels on the one card	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
Colour coding to match curriculum documents	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 2

9. The Science and Mathematics skills cards are formatted slightly differently.

The Science cards repeat the skills while the Mathematics cards show how the skills progress/overlap at each class level.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Science skills cards and the Mathematics skills cards?

	Science skills cards	Mathematics skills cards
The layout is clear	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
The language is easy to read and to understand	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
It is easy to see what children should be enabled to do at each class level	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
Progression in the content objectives between class levels is obvious	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
Overlap of the content objectives between class levels is obvious	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
Any additional comments	<input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/>	

4. Curriculum Overview Wall-Chart

There is a curriculum overview wall-chart available for download at www.ncca.ie/curriculumoverload. A draft was created by the School Development Planning Support (Primary) as a teacher-friendly overview of the strands and strand units of the curriculum. For optimum use, it should be printed in colour (perhaps on card) and joined along the vertical edges to create a wall-chart.

10. Did you print off this support material in colour and create a wall-chart?

Yes

No

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 2

11. If you answered 'No' to above, please skip to Question 13.

If you answered 'Yes,' please answer the following:

	Yes	No
Did you find the wall-chart helpful in providing an overview of the curriculum?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did the wall-chart help you to become more aware of the curriculum content?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did you find the colour-coding useful in highlighting when specific strand/strand units are introduced?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. What do you think are the potential uses for the wall-chart (Please tick all that apply)...

- To support class planning
- To support whole school planning
- To support whole school review
- To promote the importance of children's skills development
- To identify linkage possibilities within a subject
- To identify possibilities for cross-curricular integration

Other (please specify)

13. We are exploring ways of further developing these support materials. Do you think it would be useful to..... (Please tick all that apply)

- Format the content objective 'glance cards' in a similar way to the Mathematics skills cards, highlighting progression/overlap of the objectives?
- Layout the content objective cards for one class level only e.g. first and second class only on one card?

14. Do you have any additional suggestions as to how the 'glance cards,' the skills cards, the overview wall-chart or other support materials might be further developed?

Responding to curriculum overload: Curriculum re-presentation 2

15. Have you any further ideas on how the curriculum might be made more user-friendly (to access and navigate) for teachers?



5. Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The NCCA will continue to gather feedback in order to further improve these materials over the coming months.

16. Please skip this question if you completed the first survey.

If you would like to stay informed of these developments, to give further feedback and to receive copies of any revised materials, enter your name and email address below. Please note that individual teachers and schools will not be identified in any report based on findings from this work.

Name:

Email address:

17. I would like to receive revised materials, when they become available, for:

Gaeilge

Mathematics

Science

English

Overview of curriculum subjects

Appendix D

Printed version of Phase 3 survey

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

1. Introduction

This is the third and last survey during this school year relating to the challenge of curriculum overload. This survey looks for feedback on the re-presented curriculum documents developed by NCCA containing the re-presented content objectives. There is one page each for questions relating to English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and Science, and one page with questions on the Primary School Curriculum in general.

The re-presented content objectives are available for download from the Curriculum Overload page at the NCCA website. You will return to that page automatically on completion of this survey.

Thanks very much to all who took the time to respond to the first two surveys. Some of the feedback requested that teachers would be able to search an online database and select only the specific content objectives they require for their classes at that time. We are currently developing this database and expect it to be available on www.curriculumonline.ie in September 2010.

We recognise that schools are very busy places, especially at this time of the year. We thank you for taking the time to complete this survey before 26 June 2010.

1. I am responding as a(n)

(Please tick all that apply)

- infant class teacher
- 1st or 2nd class teacher
- 3rd or 4th class teacher
- 5th or 6th class teacher
- multi-grade teacher
- teaching principal
- administrative principal
- learning support/resource teacher
- post-holder with responsibility for Science
- post-holder with responsibility for Gaeilge
- post-holder with responsibility for Maths
- post-holder with responsibility for English
- teacher educator
- other

Other (please specify)

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

2. If you are currently teaching, I teach in a school that is.....

	Location	Type	Gender	Language of instruction	Size	School Support Programme (DEIS)
Description	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3. Is this is the first, second or third NCCA survey you have completed on the topic of curriculum re-presentation?

- First
- Second
- Third

2. The Re-presented English Curriculum

In the re-presented content objectives: English, the three strands of Oral Language, Reading and Writing, as outlined in 'English: Additional Support Material' (2005), remain unchanged as do all the content objectives. The four strand units (Receptiveness to language; Competence and confidence in using language; Developing cognitive abilities through language; Emotional and imaginative development through language) have been set aside and the content objectives for each strand are re-presented under the categories 'development' and 'skills.' The categories are further divided into groups of related content objectives. The group names have been informed by the 'English Curriculum' and the 'English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines' (1999).

If you wish to skip the section on the re-presented English Curriculum, please scroll down to the bottom of the page and click 'Next.'

4. How do you think the re-presented content objectives: English might be useful? (Please tick all that apply).

- For whole-school planning
- For long-term planning (yearly/termly)
- For short-term planning (weekly/fortnightly/monthly)
- For writing up a cuntas míosúil
- In day to day teaching
- For assessment and reporting
- To refer to occasionally for specific information
- Not at all
- Other (please specify)

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

5. The re-presented content objectives: English were developed to make the content of the English Curriculum more user-friendly and to support teachers in planning. To what extent do you agree that these purposes have been achieved in this re-presented format?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Content is presented in a more user-friendly way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide greater support for planning in English than the curriculum (statement) document	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Following on from your answer to the question above, do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the re-presented English Curriculum?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
The setting aside of the four strands is helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The re-presentation of the content under the categories of 'Development' and 'Skills' is helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organisation of the content objectives into related groups is helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The language used to name the groups is user-friendly (e.g 'early writing', 'comprehension')	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The new structure is clearer than the structure used in the curriculum books	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comments

7. Is it clear to you, from the re-presented content objectives: English, what the children are expected to learn at each class level?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer

8. Do the re-presented content objectives: English highlight any gaps or omissions in the English Curriculum itself?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

Leis na cuspóirí ábhair a chur i láthair i mbealach comhtháite, tá na snáithaonaid (ag cothú spéise, ag tuiscint teanga, ag úsáid teanga) curtha ar leataobh agus rangú malartach déanta orthu i ngrúpaí nua (Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil, ionchur taitneamhach teanga, cur chuige, scileanna cumarsáide, líofacht agus saibhreas teanga, foghraíocht agus litriú, feasacht teanga agus cultúrtha, tuiscint ar ghramadach). Níl aon athrú sna cuspóirí féin.

To present the content objectives in an integrated way, the strand units (ag cothú spéise, ag tuiscint teanga, ag úsáid teanga) have been set aside and the objectives are presented in seven new groups. The objectives themselves are unchanged.

If you wish to skip the page on the re-presented Curaclam na Gaeilge, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click 'Next.'

9. Conas a bheadh an t-athleagan amach seo ar na cuspóirí ábhair úsáideach, meas tú?

- Sa phleanáil uile-scoile
- Sa phleanáil fhadtéarmach (plean bliana/téarma)
- Sa phleanáil ghearrthréimhseach (plean seachtaine, coicise, míosa)
- Chun an cuntas míosúil a scríobh
- Ó lá go lá agus mé ag múineadh
- Chun measúnú agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh
- Le féachaint orthu ó am go chéile chun eolas faoi leith a aimsiú
- Ní bheadh sé úsáideach ar chor ar bith
- Eile (Mínigh)

10. Rinneadh na cuspóirí ábhair sa Ghaeilge a athleagan amach chun

- comhthathú idir na ceithre shnáithe a shoiléiriú (show integration)

- an phleanáil a éascú (facilitate planning)

- an ceangal idir obair laethúil an ranga agus cuspóirí an churaclaim a shoiléiriú (link with classroom)

- chun go mbeadh sé níos éasca an curaclam a thuiscint (easier to understand)

An bhfuil na haidhmeanna sin bainte amach?

	Aontaím go láidir	Aontaím	Easaontaím	Easaontaím go láidir
Tá comhthathú idir na ceithre shnáithe soiléirithe (integration is clearer)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tá pleanáil níos éasca leis an doiciméad seo ná mar a bhí leis an leabhar curaclaim (planning easier)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tá an ceangal idir obair laethúil an ranga agus cuspóirí an churaclaim soiléirithe (link with classroom clearer)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tá sé níos éasca an curaclam a thuiscint athleagtha amach mar seo (easier to understand)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

11. Tá na snáithaonaid curtha ar leataobh agus tá na cuspóirí eagraithe i ngrúpaí nua, mar atá luaite ar bharr an leathnaigh. Cad é do mheas ar an struchtúr nua?

	Aontaím go láidir	Aontaím	Easaontaím	Easaontaím go láidir
Is maith an rud é na snáithaonaid a chur ar leataobh	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tá sé cabhrach go bhfuil na cuspóirí eagraithe sna grúpaí nua	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tá ainmneacha na ngrúpaí nua úsáideach agus éasca le tuiscint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tá an struchtúr seo níos fearr ná an leagan amach sa leabhar curaclaim	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Aon nótaí eile / Any further comments

12. An bhfuil sé soiléir duitse, ón athleagan amach seo ar na cuspóirí ábhair sa Ghaeilge, cad atá le foghlaim ag páistí sna ranganna éagsúla?

Tá

Níl

Mínigh do fhreagra le do thoil/ Please explain your answer

13. An dtugann an t-athleagan amach ar na cuspóirí ábhair bearnaí nó easnamh ar bith sa Churaclam Gaeilge chun solais?

Tugann

Ní thugann

Mínigh do fhreagra le do thoil/ Please explain your answer

4. The Re-presented Mathematics Curriculum and Bridging Materials

The re-presented content objectives: Mathematics have been developed as two documents, one for Junior Infants-2nd class and one for 3rd-6th class. The content objectives have been numbered and sequenced and the numbering within a strand at junior level continues in the 3rd-6th class cards. The objectives have been aligned to show progression where this is applicable.

The Mathematics Bridging Content illustrates how the strands and strand units in 5th and 6th class are continued at Junior Cycle in post-primary schools. The Maths Glossary is designed to promote a common use of mathematical language and understandings at both levels.

If you wish to skip this page on the re-presented Maths curriculum, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click 'Next'.

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

14. How do you think the re-presented content objectives: Mathematics and the Maths Bridging Content might be useful?

- For whole-school planning
- For long-term planning (yearly/termly)
- For short-term planning (weekly/fortnightly/monthly)
- For writing up a cuntas míosúil
- In day to day teaching
- For assessment and reporting
- To refer to occasionally for specific information
- Not at all
- Other (please specify)

15. The re-presented content objectives: Mathematics were developed to make the content of the Mathematics Curriculum more user-friendly and to support teachers in planning. To what extent do you agree that these purposes have been achieved in this re-presented format?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Content is presented in a more user-friendly way	jn	jn	jn	jn
Provide greater support for planning in Maths than the curriculum (statement) document	jn	jn	jn	jn

Any further comments

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

16. The Bridging materials for Mathematics (bridging content, glossary) were developed to promote curriculum continuity from primary to post-primary. They were also developed to support teachers, both primary and post-primary, in planning for Mathematics. The glossary is also designed for distribution to parents. To what extent do you agree that these purposes have been achieved?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Help primary teachers prepare children for the Maths syllabus at post-primary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help post-primary teachers build on what children learned in Maths in primary school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide support to teachers for planning in Mathematics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The glossary can provide useful information to parents on the use of mathematical terms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comments

17. Is it clear to you, from the re-presented content objectives: Mathematics, what the children are expected to learn at each class level?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer

18. Do the re-presented content objectives: Mathematics highlight any gaps or omissions in the Mathematics Curriculum itself?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer

5. The Re-presented Science Curriculum

The re-presented content objectives: Science have been developed as two documents, one for Junior Infants-2nd class and one for 3rd-6th class. The content objectives have been numbered and sequenced and the numbering within a strand at junior level continues in the 3rd-6th class cards. The objectives have been aligned to show progression where this is applicable.

If you wish to skip this page on the re-presented Science curriculum, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click 'Next'.

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

19. How do you think the re-presented content objectives: Science might be useful?

- For whole-school planning
- For long-term planning (yearly/termly)
- For short-term planning (weekly/fortnightly/monthly)
- For writing up a cuntas míosúil
- In day to day teaching
- For assessment and reporting
- To refer to occasionally for specific information
- Not at all
- Other (please specify)

20. The re-presented content objectives: Science were developed to make the content of the Science Curriculum more user-friendly and to support teachers in planning. To what extent do you agree that these purposes have been achieved in this re-presented format?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Content is presented in a more user-friendly way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide greater support for planning in Science than the curriculum (statement) document	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comments

21. Is it clear to you, from the re-presented content objectives: Science, what the children are expected to learn at each class level?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

22. Do the re-presented content objectives: Science highlight any gaps or omissions in the Science Curriculum itself?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer

6. Responding to Curriculum Overload

Below are some general questions about the Primary School Curriculum. We encourage all respondents to complete this page as it relates to all curriculum areas.

23. Can you identify three priorities (e.g., specific subjects, curriculum areas, content, skills, dispositions, etc.) for children's learning and development in primary school? List these in order of importance with the first item being most important.

1.
2.
3.

24. In relation to some of the current work of NCCA, please answer the following:

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Not familiar with this
To what extent are the interactive guidelines on NCCA's ACTION website (www.action.ncca.ie) (e.g. intercultural, ICT) useful for teachers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent are real examples of teaching and learning from classrooms in Ireland on the ACTION website useful to teachers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent is the curriculum re-presentation work useful in responding to the challenge of curriculum overload?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comments

25. Are you aware of [Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework](#) developed by NCCA for 0-6 year olds?

Yes

No

If you are, do you think it has implications/potential for the 'Infant Curriculum'?

Responding to curriculum overload: Survey 3

26. Are you satisfied with having online access to Aistear (and no printed document)?

Yes

No

If not, please explain

27. In addition to the upcoming online database of the content objectives, described at the introduction to this survey, have you any further ideas on how the curriculum might be made more user-friendly (to access and navigate) for teachers?

28. How might the Primary School Curriculum be further improved to alleviate overload and to meet the needs of children in a modern Ireland?

7. Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The NCCA will continue to gather feedback in order to respond to the challenge of curriculum overload over the coming months.

29. (Please skip this question if you have already given us your email details).

If you would like to stay informed of developments, to give further feedback and to receive notification of any revised materials, enter your name and email address below. Please note that individual teachers and schools will not be identified in any report based on findings from this work.

Name:

Email address: