

# NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK



JULY 2022



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## **SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 A Message from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology**

Our Belize Education Sector Plan (BESPlan) 2021 -2025 states the following about our curriculum:

*Curriculum is the foundation of education. On the surface, it is comprised of a list of topics, objectives and strategies that are used by teachers to deliver content and assist students in developing a prescribed set of skills; on a deeper level, it is society's way of imparting the knowledge, capacities, beliefs, and attitudes that will lead to a desired social and economic state. Therefore, when there is no alignment between the curriculum being delivered and the aspirations of a country, education becomes irrelevant and national development is compromised. The world changes at a rapid pace and so what we teach and learn and how we teach and learn must constantly evolve. This reality calls for building adaptability, innovation, and resilience. Therefore, curriculum, instruction and assessment must go beyond rote memory and general knowledge; they must be designed to promote deep learning, to focus on what students are able to do with the knowledge that they acquire and the extent to which they are able to think critically and to solve problems in a healthy, productive, and sustainable manner. Furthermore, curriculum, instruction, and assessment must be aligned to each other, they must integrate technology to increase impact, and they must be relevant to the needs of students and to national development (BESPlan, 2021).*

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) thanks the Curriculum Reform Steering Committee (CRSC) for their commitment and hard work in developing this National Curriculum Framework. The CRSC had the participation of members from all relevant stakeholders including the Belize National Teachers Union (BNTU), Grant-Aided Managing Authority of Schools (GAMAS), Belize Association of Principals of Secondary Schools (BAPSS), students, primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary institutions, the churches, the Ministry of Human Development, and partners including UNICEF, Pathlight International, and The Love Foundation. The Ministry is also grateful for the guidance provided by UNESCO and the tremendous feedback received from teachers and principals during the national consultation visits across the country.

This National Curriculum Framework has been prepared to guide the development of syllabuses from pre-school to secondary school, along with lesson plans and assessments to be placed on the Ministry's portal. Together we aim to transition to a competency-based education starting in the 2022-2023 academic year, and to continue to transform thereafter for the benefit of our students' success - the main focus of our efforts. The sustainable human development of Belize depends on our success in realising the BESPlan and in revolutionising our curriculum. The economic, social, institutional, and environmental pillars of Horizon 2030 need your active human agency to enhance the capabilities of every Belizean, so that each person in our country may be able to function at her or his best desired state of wellbeing.

## **1.2 The Purpose and Function of this National Curriculum Framework**

The main purpose of this National Curriculum Framework is to promote a consistent, high-quality, competency-based education via policies and practices that set standards across the curriculum system to achieve the best possible outcomes for our students. It functions as a guide to curriculum writers, teachers, administrators, managements, parents, and other education stakeholders. Its components include a common vision, aims and objectives, values and principles, philosophy of teaching and learning, the overall architecture, the importance of competency, the subject areas of learning and cross curricular areas of learning, methodologies and strategies, assessments, and monitoring and evaluation. It is more than just a curriculum – it is the overarching document of the curriculum system.

## **1.3. The Scope of this Curriculum Framework**

### **a. 'Vertical' scope**

There are four levels in the core system of education in Belize. These include pre-primary, primary, Secondary, and tertiary, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Education from the pre-primary to the secondary level takes 14 years; however, only primary school is currently compulsory, with plans to include secondary school in the near future.

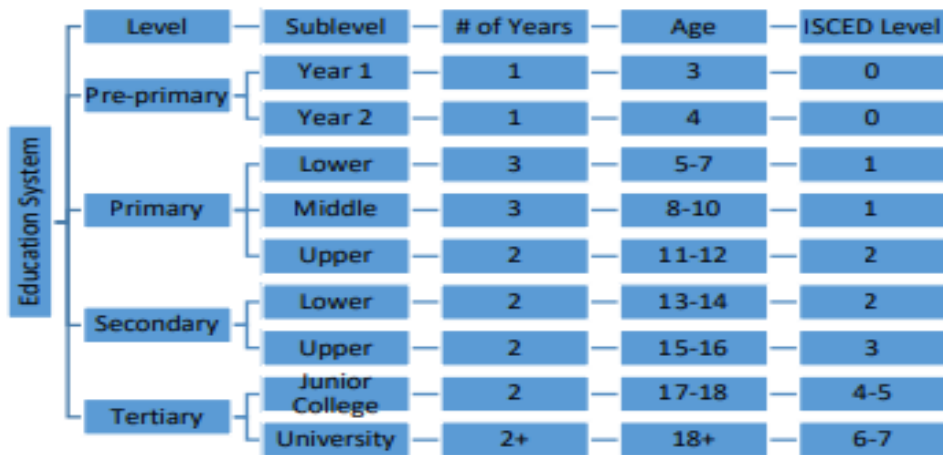


Figure 1: Structure of the Education System (BESPlan, 2021-2025, pg.7). ISCED means the International Standard Classification of Education.

The vertical scope of this Framework includes and is limited to:

- Pre-Primary (Early Childhood) (Year 1 and Year 2)
- Lower Primary (Early Childhood) (Infants 1 and 2, and Standard 1)
- Middle Primary (Standards 2, 3 and 4)
- Upper Primary (Standards 5 & 6)
- Lower Secondary (1st & 2nd Form)
- Upper Secondary (3rd & 4th Form)

This National Curriculum Framework does not directly include other areas, namely Teacher Training, Adult & Continuing Education (ACE), Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and Tertiary Education, as described below.

**b. ‘Horizontal’ scope**

Figure 2 below shows the horizontal scope of the National Curriculum Framework. There are several important horizontal linkages that include the institutions pointed to on the lower right, and the complementary documents and activities on the lower left.

As noted above, teacher training, school leadership, ACE, TVET, and the tertiary sector will be indirectly affected by the National Curriculum Framework. The Framework does have implications that require a reform of the Teacher Training curriculum, and it will also guide the ACE curriculum and the introduction of STEAM at both the primary and secondary

levels. Due to its focus on competencies, it will also complement TVET and potentially make its graduates more capable of meeting industry needs. The Framework should stimulate the Tertiary sector to also focus on competencies and be able to better fulfil its role to undertake research and provide needed extension services.

The Subject Specific Frameworks will be developed based on the National Framework and will guide the subject syllabi writers. Learning Outcomes and Unit Plans will be prepared and available to teachers via the Ministry’s virtual portal. Textbooks and learning materials will need to align with the National Framework. Teaching Philosophy and Practices, Assessment Practice, and Monitoring and Evaluation will all need to be consistent with the National Framework.

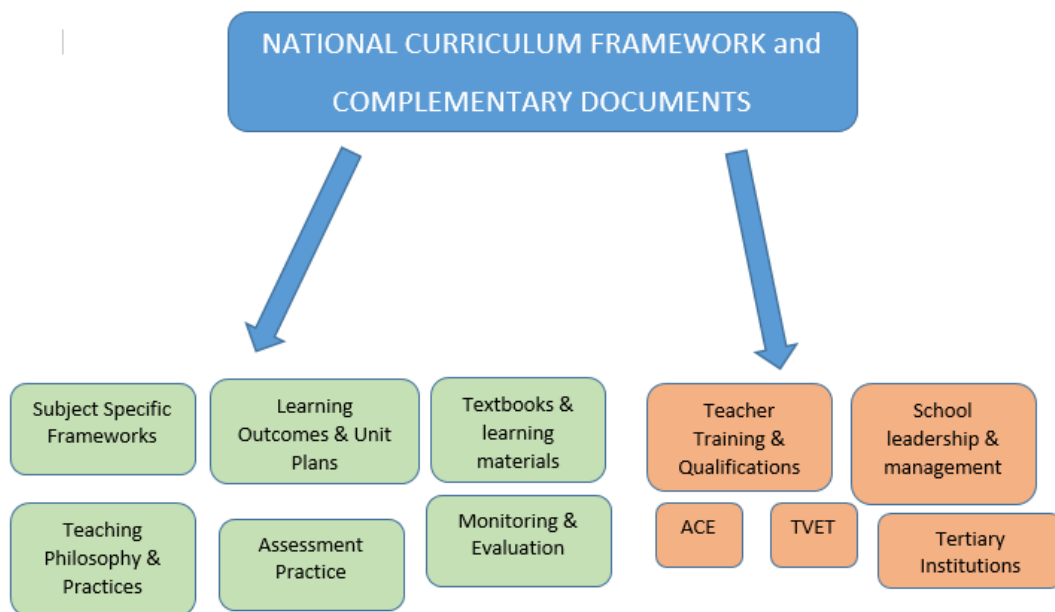


Figure 2: Horizontal Scope of the National Curriculum Framework (Adopted from Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework, International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, 2017, p.25 and modified to context).

## **SECTION 2 – CURRICULUM VISION**

### **VISION STATEMENT**

The competency-based curriculum will enable all students to learn how to think clearly, speak clearly, read well, write well, apply knowledge, and understand and impact the world around them through social interaction, analytical thinking, and human agency. They also will acquire skills such as tolerance, humility, patience, collaboration, cooperation, empathy, positivity, and charity. Likewise, all students must be guided to develop a lifelong love for learning and challenged to grow personally in responsibility based on their distinct aptitudes and capabilities. The curriculum will also be inclusive, respectful of Belize’s cultural diversity, and cater to students with diverse education needs and to those whose native language is not English.

## **SECTION 3 – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **3.1 Aims**

The main aim of the National Curriculum Framework is to provide a high-quality education to all students by focusing on competencies. The Framework seeks to ensure that our students receive values and principles, and innovative knowledge and skills that are relevant to attaining sustainable human development in Belize. A competency-based education will better prepare them to participate meaningfully in the life of the nation, to live harmoniously with others, and be responsible local and global citizens.

### **3.2 Objectives**

- Ensure that teaching and learning evolve from just the acquisition of knowledge through memorisation to the application of the acquired knowledge to develop relevant, innovative skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Provide students with the values and attitudes prized by society that will make them good, productive citizens.
- Encourage students’ active participation to embrace learning as a lifelong endeavour.
- Ensure that every student’s individuality is recognized and respected and that each student’s potential is maximized, regardless of his or her race, religion, gender, or level of ability.

- Foster in students a deep understanding and acceptance of our history, culture, and society, and of their responsibilities as national and global citizens.
- Ensure a strong civic education to teach healthy lifestyles, personal leadership, good governance, social participation, and conflict resolution.
- Provide students with a sustainable human development perspective of national development.
- Encourage and support teacher-training that will deliver competency-based education.
- Promote the development of supporting textbooks and materials that are consistent with the Framework.

## SECTION 4 – VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

### 4.1 Values

The values which underpin our Belizean society and therefore our curriculum are:

- **Unity in diversity** - Belize is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual society, and therefore, schools must ensure that students learn to respect and appreciate diversity and inclusion.
- **Hospitality** – We are a friendly and respectful people, and so school must ensure that all students feel welcomed in the learning environment and foster positive relationships.
- **Cooperation** – Belizeans recognise the benefits of teamwork and thus students must be taught to work together and learn from each other
- **Responsibility** – Taking personal responsibility of our actions is important to success. Students, teachers, and parents have a shared responsibility to optimize learning achievements.
- **Equity** - We believe in the dignity of all persons and that all students have a right to a quality education.
- **Virtue** – Doing what is right and good is important to social cohesion and building a democratic society. Schools must ensure that students learn and transfer values to all life’s circumstances, and that they are motivated to display the characteristics of a respectful and well-mannered person, qualities that make good citizens.
- **Faith in God** – The Preamble of the Belizean Constitution in its first sentence affirms acknowledging the supremacy of God. It is therefore important to



recognise this important value of God's presence to enhance the moral and spiritual growth of our children.

## **4.2 Principles**

**QUALITY EDUCATION FOR THE PERSON** is the core guiding principle of our curriculum. We will develop and deliver the highest quality curriculum so that our students will thrive and be successful. The following principles bring about quality education for the person:

### **Freedom**

The school's self-evident job is to cultivate the intellect, but if the chief task of education is to form the entire human person, then the school and the curriculum must also aspire to promote values in each learner. Intellectual growth, coupled with growth in strength of judgment and moral virtue makes the student free, free to pursue truth on his or her own, free to form himself or herself, free to become a lifelong learner – free to contribute to the classroom community with joyful generosity and creativity.

### **Family**

The family is the first learning institution for children. The family and the professional teachers are collaborators and so we must make that cooperation intentional and effective.

### **Balance**

The three components of competency (knowledge, skills, and values) must be balanced so that the primary focus shifts from just knowledge transfer to building overall competence. For too long our curriculum has been overloaded with a focus on memorisation and teaching to tests. Removing the overload permits time allocation for deep learning through the development of skills via knowledge application, and the instilling of the values of society. As students become ready, we must engage them in higher order thinking skills such as interpreting, analysing, synthesising, evaluating, and creating. Innovation and individuality must be valued, as well as concentration, motivation, and persistence.

## Cohesiveness

There must be a unity of vision between subject areas (cross-curricular learning areas) and between stages of pedagogy. Preschool, primary, and secondary education should be more seamlessly connected.

## Inclusiveness

Schools must ensure that they meet both the needs of students who are gifted, those with diverse learning needs, and those whose home language is not English. The challenge of reaching the needs of boys in the classroom must also be considered.

## Spirit of Inquiry

There is no wisdom without listening. Our students, more than ever before, need to have an openness to the beauty, truth, and goodness around them. Our children must learn wonder for nature, for literature, for mathematics, and all subjects. A contemplative openness, a receptivity to being itself, to spiritual realities, and to the vast yet intricate material world around us – this is the attitude our curriculum must strive to inculcate in teachers and learners alike. To ponder with gratitude, this is the principle that leads to the goal of our education: wisdom.



Figure 3: Principles for Quality Education

## **SECTION 5 – PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching and learning should be founded on the belief that every learner is capable of learning, developing, and growing equally well. It is important that each student's individuality, personal attributes, and capacities are identified, embraced, and nurtured to allow each child to develop to their fullest potential.

### **5.1 Competencies, Deep learning, and Behaviours**

#### Fostering Competencies

Teaching and learning should be based on developing competencies where emphasis is placed not only on developing knowledge but also in developing the relevant skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions that will contribute to students' full personal growth and development and for their active and positive participation in society. Teachers should provide multiple opportunities for students to learn what is worthwhile and enduring, using teaching strategies designed to promote the learning of each student over time and in different contexts.

#### Fostering Deep Learning

Students must be given the opportunity to engage in deep learning where they can apply learning across different disciplines and to solve real life problems. Teaching and learning approaches must make use of cross-curricular linkages. They should be based on models that are student-centred and scientifically proven to foster creativity and problem-solving skills. Bloom's Taxonomy is a useful model that starts at the base with knowledge and moves upward through comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, to evaluation.

#### Fostering Positive Academic Behaviour and Non-Cognitive Behaviours

Emphasis should be placed on helping students to develop positive academic behaviours, mindsets, and perseverance. This will enable them to maximise their attendance at school, preparedness, attentiveness, responsibility to complete work on time and participate in class activities. Learners must be taught adequate language, metacognitive, and self-regulatory skills as tools to monitor and enhance their own learning and development. Non-cognitive skills (inclusive of Life skills), strategies, attitudes and behaviours must also be taught to help students overcome life challenges that inhibit learning and personal development and contribute to their overall self-sufficiency and success.

**5.2 Learning Environments must be positive, safe, happy, stimulating, and culture sensitive**

Teaching and learning must occur in safe and positive spaces where learners feel respected, welcomed, and belonged. The environment must be stimulating to arouse interest and curiosity in various fields and to sustain students' interest in deep learning. Teaching and Learning must be culture sensitive where each child's identity, experiences, and beliefs are used in the process and must not be confined to teachers and the classroom but also extended to the community.

**5.3 Teaching and Learning must promote equity, inclusivity, and respect for uniqueness**

All learners must be given equal opportunities to engage in learning. Planning and teaching must be based on using students' knowledge, experiences, their community resources, along with other array of accessible materials to provide for rich, meaningful, relevant, gender-sensitive, and engaging learning experiences that enhance student achievement even beyond the prescribed standards. Programmes should be differentiated as far as possible to address individual differences, respecting the fact that students vary in capacities, develop at different rates, and learn in different ways.

**5.4 Teaching, learning, and assessment are aligned and based on what is most essential**

Teaching and learning must be focused on what is most essential and responsive to students' individual context. Learning, teaching, and assessment should be aligned to ensure that what is taught through the formal and informal curriculum reflects the intended learning and as well as what is being assessed. Assessments should be student-centred where the focus is on using appropriate and varied tools to measure the rate of development and growth of the individual student.

The teacher and the leader of the school must be responsible to diagnose the Teaching and Learning issues and initiate, promote, and support changes that are necessary to address their immediate needs and goals.

## 5.5 Multiple Intelligences

Respecting the whole child means we must recognise that there are other types of intelligences besides traditional “general” intelligence that focuses on cognitive abilities. Gardner’s model is helpful in explaining multiple intelligences, including logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and intra-personal; the first two that have been traditionally valued in schools and society. Other important models recognise emotional, moral, spiritual, and existential intelligences, among others. This National Curriculum Framework is based on the belief that other types of intelligences must be nurtured to holistically develop the child.

## SECTION 6 – CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE<sup>1</sup>

The curriculum architecture describes the broad structure of the curriculum that includes this National Curriculum Framework and the supporting materials for the levels of pre-school, primary, and secondary. It consists of the following:

### 6.1 The National Curriculum Framework

Standards and requirements for all areas of the curriculum at all levels that apply to all areas of the curriculum are set in this framework. It contains statements of vision, aims and objectives, values and principles which underpin the curriculum, and give direction to curriculum writers and teachers about what is expected of them. These statements represent our overall curriculum direction and regulatory requirements to achieve quality education for all students. **Our highest priority in the Framework is the development of competency in students.**

The framework guides all education policymakers across the education system, as well as curriculum developers, teachers, materials developers, and textbook writers. With regard to teachers in particular, the Framework outlines expectations relating to their approach to teaching and assessment methodology. It also describes the subjects and combinations of subjects which students must undertake in order to successfully complete each stage of schooling. The National Curriculum Framework is accompanied by a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Most of this section is adopted directly from the UNESCO/IBE document, *Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework, International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, 2017.*

Complementary Documents, each of which elaborates on a specific requirement of the Framework itself.

## **6.2 Areas of Learning Statements**

These statements detail the content to be taught and learned in each level of school. The statements describe two types of content:

### **1. Subject Specific Frameworks and Syllabi**

Each Subject Specific Framework relates to a specific subject area for each of the education levels, that is, pre-primary, primary, and secondary. These aim to ensure consistency within and between levels. The Subject Specific Frameworks will provide general aims and objectives, the general learning outcomes expected of students, the general knowledge, skills, and values that students should develop, and advice to teachers about such matters as sequencing content, developing student competencies, assessment, and evaluation.

The Subject Specific Syllabi will be developed from the Subject Specific Frameworks and will be the syllabi for the subject courses for each grade. The Subject Specific Syllabi will provide specific aims and objectives, the specific learning outcomes expected of students, the specific knowledge, skills, and values that students should develop, and advice to teachers about such matters as sequencing content, developing specific student competencies, specific assessment, and specific evaluation.

For example, three general Math Frameworks will be developed, one each for the preschool, primary, and secondary levels, and these Math Frameworks will be guided by the National Curriculum Framework. Specific Math Syllabi will be developed from the Preschool Math Framework for year one preschool math and year two preschool math. Math syllabi for primary will likewise be developed for each grade (Infant I to Standard Six) guided by the Primary Math Framework. The Secondary Math Framework will guide the development of the math syllabi for first, second, third, and fourth form. This will be the case for all subject areas that are presented in Section 8: Areas of Learning of the National Curriculum Framework document.

## **2. Cross curriculum areas of learning**

There are a number of high priority areas of learning which are appropriately taught and learned across all relevant subjects rather than in a single subject. These areas of learning are Cross-Curriculum Learning Area Statements (CCLAs). All teachers should be familiar with these statements and should incorporate their content into their subject teaching as advised in those statements.

### **6.3 Curriculum Support Materials**

There are learning materials available to support the delivery of the curriculum. All these materials must be consistent with the philosophy and standards outlined in the Curriculum Framework.

#### **1. Textbooks**

All textbooks must comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum Framework and must be in alignment with the learning outcomes students are expected to learn. In particular, they must not simply contain knowledge to be earned, but must encourage the development of the skills and values in ways that are appropriate to the subject and focus on helping students achieve competency. They must also engage students in a range of interesting and focused classroom activities.

#### **2. The Teacher Learning Institute (TLI) and National School Portal (501Academy)**

The Ministry of Education will supply a range of support materials to all schools, including standardised unit plans, assessments, and training on how to implement the Areas of Learning Statements. The Ministry's Teacher Learning Institute (TLI) and the National School Portal (501 Academy) will provide courses to serve teachers, students, and parents on various relevant and current topics to support the transition, adoption, and further development of the National Curriculum.

#### **3. Teacher Developed Support Materials**

It is expected that all teachers will develop their own learning support materials, including instructional plans to ensure that their teaching is engaging and addresses the various needs and interests of students in their classes. These materials must also be consistent with the standards and requirements of the Framework.

When taken as a whole, these three components of our Curriculum constitute its 'architecture.' The components and the relationships between them are illustrated in Figure 4 below:

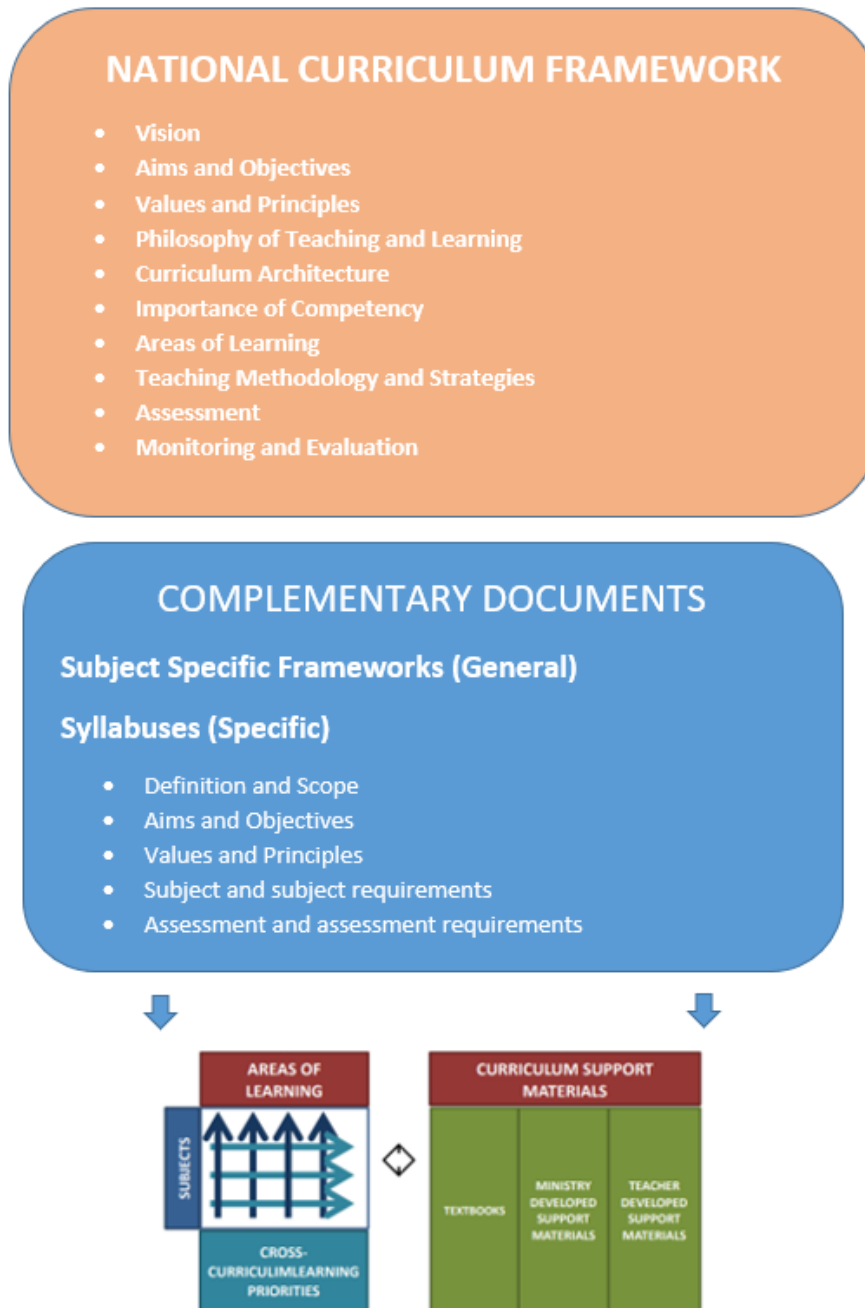


Figure 4: Curriculum Architecture (adapted from Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework, IBE, UNESCO, 2017, p.37, and modified to context).



## SECTION 7 – THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCY

This Curriculum Framework is focused on student competency. Students need more than discrete, de-contextualised knowledge gained mostly through memorisation, and instead they need to develop relevant innovative skills based on the application of knowledge. The aim is to produce active young adults who can apply the knowledge, skills, and values they have acquired in integrated and practical ways to contribute to the sustainable human development of Belize.

Competency is herein defined as *the ability to use learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriately in real situations and contexts and within a defined set of values.*<sup>2</sup> Figure 5 illustrates the nature of competence.

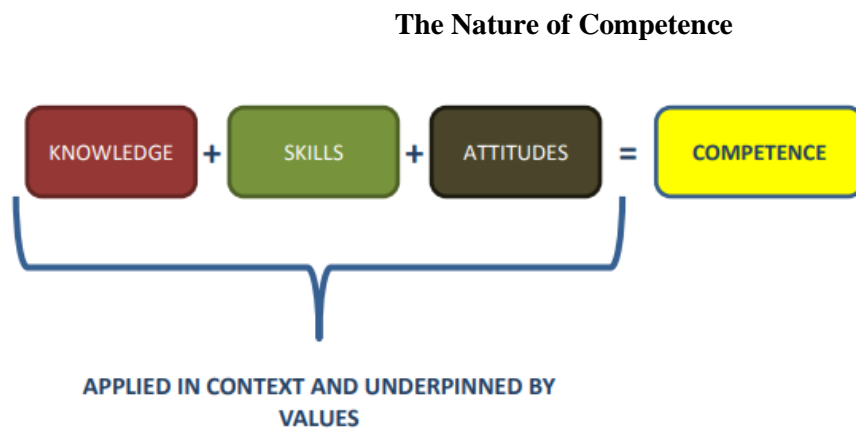


Figure 5: *The Nature of Competence* (Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework, IBE, UNESCO, 2017, p.38).

The Belizean Education System takes a bold step in moving away from the traditional time-based curriculum which requires that within an acceptable time frame, the student must demonstrate mastery of a predefined percentage of the content on standardised assessments to determine promotion or retention.

Instead, the Education System, at all levels, should be built around a defined set of competences that students are expected to demonstrate at the end of the period of formal schooling. These competences are defined as the outcomes or the results of training or schooling, and as the input required for a person to achieve successful

<sup>2</sup> Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework, International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, 2017.

performance in life. Time limitations are adjusted so that the learner is allowed multiple opportunities to gain mastery of concepts and skills.

The following are identified as seven competencies that are universally acceptable for a successful life and those that students need to survive and thrive in an ever-changing global world being shaped by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These competencies are centred first on the individuality of each, and then expands to how the students relate outward to others and to the world around them in the context of core societal values. The competences must be inextricably intertwined within the subject areas and the subject specific content, at all levels and in every subject, such that each teacher is seeking the level specific mastery of the competence.

### **Competency Area #1: Appreciation of the sacred nature of the human person and Character Development**

Students will develop an appreciation for each human person as unique and precious and worthy of respect and a dignified existence. They will appreciate a personal relationship with God and seek to experience and appreciate spiritual growth as a part of their personal journey. As noted previously, the Preamble of the Belizean Constitution in its first sentence affirms acknowledging the supremacy of God. It is therefore important to recognise this important value to enhance the moral and spiritual growth of our children. Consequently, students will develop qualities essential for surviving and being effective in the real world. These qualities include, but are not limited to honesty, perseverance, resilience, reliability, and respect towards others and self.

### **Competency Area #2: Emotional Intelligence and Effective Communication Skills**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) contributes significantly to success in all areas of life. Developing student's EI will help them to better understand and control their emotions and to better understand others, especially during periods of potential and actual interpersonal conflict. Students will use verbal and non-verbal language to effectively communicate ideas. They will be able to select the most effective and appropriate means of communication for a given situation. They should speak truthfully and credibly, listen to others, and manage misunderstanding and conflict in a respectful manner.

**Competency Area #3: Critical and Innovative/Inventive Thinking**

Students will be able to be curious and creative thinkers who will use their imagination to create innovative solutions to problems. They will be willing to take risks, show initiative, display leadership, and be inventive and out-of-the-box thinkers in their quest to turn thoughts into practical solutions. They should be able to analyse situations in a clear and logical manner and use a rational approach to understanding complex concepts. Students should be able to evaluate information and arguments, see patterns and connections, construct meaningful knowledge, and apply it in the real world. They will value the process as much as arriving at the solution.

**Competency Area #4: Collaboration**

Students will develop the capacity to work interdependently and synergistically in teams with strong interpersonal and team-related skills including effective management of team dynamics, making substantive decisions together, and learning from and contributing to the learning of others.

**Competency Area #5: Multicultural Appreciation**

Students will demonstrate respect and appreciation for all aspects of their culture and for the cultures of others. Their ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people who identify with cultures and/or belief systems different from their own, will lead to enhanced and effective communication between people that strengthen relationships.

**Competency Area #6: Digital Literacy**

Students will be able to use technology to enhance the quality of life for themselves. They will be able to locate, retrieve, and edit relevant data, as needed while using technology in a safe manner to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems. They should move from being merely consumers to being active creators of digital data.

**Competency Area #7: Understanding of and Advocacy for Sustainable Human Development**

Students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the Sustainable Human Development (SHD) approach to thinking about and participating in national development with the aim of expanding their capabilities. They will study the social,

economic, institutional, and environmental pillars, and engage in discussions and projects utilising critical thinking and principles aimed at igniting their human agency for positive individual and national transformation. SHD will cover important topics such as building social cohesion through volunteerism and service to others; financial literacy and how the banking sectors works; the Constitution of Belize, the rule of law, and how our courts work; and climate change and environmental sustainability, among other important related topics.

## **SECTION 8 – AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **8.1 Subjects**

The National Curriculum Framework groups subjects into broad Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The purposes of this grouping are:

1. To encourage teachers to see and utilise connections between subjects of a similar type. Taking advantage of these connections in planning teaching programmes and lessons is an important means of achieving objectives related to integrated learning.
2. To allow for flexibility in patterns of study as students grow and mature while ensuring that there is a breadth of study required of every student at every grade level. As students mature, the curriculum should allow them to follow their interests to an extent appropriate to their age and stage of development. In some cases, however, the curriculum will require them to select subjects from within each KLA grouping.

### **Key Learning Areas**

These specify the content, concepts, and skills within specific disciplines. Given the emphasis on integration and establishing cross-curricular links, the following Key Learning Areas of study are being recommended.

KLA 1: Language (English and Spanish)

KLA 2: Mathematics

KLA 3: Expressive Arts

KLA 4: Physical Education & Wellness

KLA 5: Science and Technology

KLA 6: Civic Education and History (Belizean, African, and Mayan)

KLA 7: Religion or Personal Leadership

To encourage integration and to provide flexibility to schools for how they group students, the National Curriculum Framework also divides grade levels into six Levels (L):

### Subject Areas of Learning by Level and Time Allocations

**Table 1. Levels, Description, Grades, and Approximate Age**

Level	Description	Grades	Approx. Ages
L1 - Level 1	Pre-School (Early childhood)	Level 1 and Level 2	3 and 4
L2 - Level 2	Lower Primary (Early childhood)	Infants I and II, and Standard I	5, 6, and 7
L3 - Level 3	Middle Primary	Standards II, III, and IV	8, 9, and 10
L4 - Level 4	Upper Primary	Standards V and VI	11 and 12
L5 - Level 5	Lower Secondary	Forms I and II	13 and 14
L6 - Level 6	Upper Secondary	Forms III and IV	15 and 16

The time allocated to each year is based on the requirements of the Education Act 2000. The Act mandates that *Schools shall operate for a minimum of 180 days per school year, and shall conduct classes for a minimum number of hours as prescribed in the following table:*

**Table 2: Level 1 (Pre-School) - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year**

	KLA	Subjects	Hrs/Wk	Indicative Hrs/Yr
1		Self-Chosen Act	3	108
2		Circle Time (Devotion, weather, calendar -songs, rhymes, jingles)	2	72
3		Lesson Plan Learning Experience	2	72

		(Literacy, numeracy, thematic learning, expressive arts))		
4		Lesson Oriented Work (Apply concepts & skills)	2	72
5		Physical Play (indoor/outdoor)	1	36
6		Group Time (Visual arts, integrating technology, story, skill learning, music)	2	72
7		Snack time	3	108
<b>Total</b>			<b>15</b>	<b>540</b>

**Table 3: Level 2 (Lower Primary)\*\* - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year**

	<b>KLA</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Hrs/ Wk</b>	<b>Indicative Hrs/Yr</b>
1	Language	English (Reading Fluency and Accuracy/Phonics, Comprehension, Production, Grammar and Usage)	5	180
		Spanish	2	72
2	Mathematics	Mathematics	5	180
3	Civic Education and History	Belizean Studies (Other language included w/in curriculum)	5	180
4	Expressive Arts	Expressive Arts (music, dance, crafts, drama)	3	108
5	Physical Education and Wellness	P. E.	2	72
		Health Education	1	36
6	Leadership/Religion	Religion/Life Skills	2	72
<b>Total</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>900</b>

\*\* As a response to the learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Modified Lower Primary Curriculum for the 2022-2023 school year is included in Appendix I below.

**Table 4: Level 3 (Middle Primary) - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year**

	<b>KLA</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Hrs/Wk</b>	<b>Indicative Hrs/Yr</b>
1	Language	English (Reading Fluency and Accuracy/Phonics, Comprehension, Production, Grammar, and Usage)	5	180
		Spanish	2	72
2	Mathematics	Math	5	180
3	Science and Technology	Science and Technology	4	144
4	Civic Education and History	Belizean Studies	4	144
5	Expressive Arts	Expressive Arts	2	72
6	Physical Education and Wellness	P. E.	2	72
		Health Education	2	72
7	Leadership/Religion	Religion/Life Skills	2	72
8	School-Based Area	School-Based Area (gardening, agriculture, environmental education, entrepreneurship)	1	36
		CCLAs	1	36
Total			30	1080

**Table 5: Level 4 (Upper Primary) - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year**

	<b>KLA</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Hrs/ Wk</b>	<b>Indicative Hrs/Yr</b>
1	Language	English (Reading Fluency and Accuracy/Phonics, Comprehension, Production, Grammar and Usage)	5	180
		Spanish	2	72
2	Mathematics	Math	5	180
3	Science and Technology	Science and Technology	4	144
4	Civic Education and History	Belizean Studies	4	144
5	Expressive Arts	Expressive Arts	2	72
6	Physical Education and Wellness	P. E.	2	72
		Health Education	2	72
7	Leadership/Religion	Religion/Life Skills	2	72
8	School-Based Area	School-Based Area (gardening, agriculture, environmental education, entrepreneurship)	1	36
		CCLAs	1	36
Total			30	1080



**Table 6: Level 5 (Lower Secondary) - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year**

	<b>KLA</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Hrs/ Wk</b>	<b>Indicative Hrs/Yr</b>
1	Language	English	4	144
		Literature	2	72
		Spanish	2	72
2	Mathematics	Geometry and Algebra	4	144
3	Science and Technology	Science & Technology	4	144
4	Civic Education and History	Belizean Studies	3	108
5	Expressive Arts	Expressive Arts	2	72
6	Physical Education and Wellness	P. E.	3	108
		Life Skills	2	72
7	Leadership/Religion	Religion /Entrepreneurship	2	72
8	School-Based Area	School-Based Area (gardening, agriculture, environmental education, Vo-Tech, entrepreneurship)	2	72
		CCLAs - Integrated Projects	2	72
Total			32	1152

**Table 7: Level 6 (Upper Secondary) - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year**

<b>KLA</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Hrs/ Wk</b>	<b>Indicative Hrs/Yr</b>	
Core Subjects:				
1 Language	English	3	108	
	Literature	1	36	
	Spanish	2	72	
2 Mathematics	Pre-Calculus and Pre-Statistics	4	144	
3 Civic Education and History	Belizean Studies (World, Mayan, and African History)	3	108	
4 Physical Education and Wellness	Wellness/Fitness	2	72	
	Life Skills	2	72	
5 Leadership/Religion	Religion/Leadership Entrepreneurship	2	72	
6 School-Based Area	School-Based Area	2	72	
	CCLAs - Integrated Projects	2	72	
<i>Sub-total</i>		23	828	
Elective Subjects:				
7, 8, 9	Science Focus	Three Courses	9	324
7, 8, 9	Business Focus	Three Courses	9	324
7, 8, 9	Vocational Focus	Three Courses	9	324
7, 8, 9	Humanities Focus	Three Courses	9	324
<b>Total</b>		32	1152	

**Table 8: Summary of Hours by Level\***

<b>Level (L)</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Minimum hours of instruction per week</b>	<b>Minimum minutes of instruction per week</b>	<b>Hours of instruction per Year</b>
Pre-Primary	Year 1 (3-yr-olds) & Year 2 (4-year-olds)	15	900	540
Lower Primary	Infant 1 to Standard 1	25	1500	900
Middle Primary	Standard 2 to Standard 4	30	1800	1080
Upper Primary	Standard 5 & 6	30	1800	1080
Lower Secondary	1st & 2nd Form	32	1920	1152
Upper Secondary	3rd & 4th Form	32	1920	1152

*\*Based on a 36-instructional week/180-instructional day per year timetable as per the Belize Education Act Chapter 36, Revised Edition 2003.*

## **8.2 Cross-Curriculum Learning**

To equip young Belizeans with the skills, knowledge, values, and practices that will enable them to live together harmoniously and engage effectively with and prosper in a globalised world, it is important that cross-cutting issues are integrated throughout the curriculum in specific ways. Cross-curricular priorities are embedded in all learning areas and will help students to gain personal and social benefits that will make positive contributions to building the human, social, and creative capital of our nation as a means to expanding their freedoms and capabilities to live the lives that they value.

The following Cross-Curriculum Learning Areas (CCLAs) are identified and explained:

- Education for sustainable human development.
- Preservation and promotion of our multi-cultural society.
- Media awareness and fact-checking.
- The challenges and impact of technology.

## **8.3 Cross-Curriculum Learning Areas (CCLAs)**

There are a number of areas of learning which are of high priority for our young people and for our nation, but which are most appropriately taught and learned across a number of subjects rather than in a single subject. The content of these Learning Areas is

contained in the Cross-Curriculum Learning Area Statements, which, among other advice, map these areas of learning to individual subjects. The high priority Cross-Curriculum Learning Areas in our curriculum apply at all levels and for all grades. They are:

- **Education for sustainable human development (SHD)**

Students should be taught to find solutions for the challenges of today, including regional and global challenges. Students must be prepared to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change our societies and care for the planet's sustainability. They will learn about the four pillars of SHD, namely the social, economic, environmental, and institutional pillars. While these will be taught in Science and Technology (for example, in improving economic productivity by harnessing the Fourth Industrial Revolution technology), and Civic Education and History (for example, in personal leadership, life skills, democratic citizenship, and human rights), it will also be incorporated into Languages (for example, discussing these issues in reading, writing, and speaking assignments), in Mathematics (for example, in data collection, representation, analysis, and reporting), and in Physical Education and Wellness (for example, in learning to adopt healthy diets and understanding its positive impact on the nation's health system).

- **Preservation and promotion of our multi-cultural society**

Multi-culturalism is central to our national identity. Therefore, expression, presentation, and promotion of Belize's many cultures through the implementation of this policy within our curriculum should bring people to respect both our uniqueness as individuals and our diversity as Belizeans.

- **Responsible accessing and use of Information**

Students must learn about the impact of traditional and social media on their lives and on society generally. It is especially important for them to critically assess media messages for truth and veracity and develop fact checking abilities across various subject areas. Decision-making relies on accurate information, and today's media world is on proliferated by intentional fake news aimed at pushing selfish and narrow agenda's that are contrary to the principles of SHD.

- **The challenges, opportunities, and impact of Technology**

Technology is not confined to the Science and Technology subject. Artificial intelligence, robotics, digitisation, big data, and the internet of things (IOT) span all other subject areas in this curriculum. Students must learn about the challenges, opportunities, and impact of technology in the subjects of mathematics, languages, Belizean Studies, History, Expressive Arts, and Health and Wellness as well.

## **SECTION 9 – TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES**

Instruction should empower learners and provide them with a meaningful and positive learning experience. It should promote a positive attitude and encourage learners to value their learning process and reflect on it to develop their skills in learning to learn and develop the seven key competencies. It should place the learner at the centre and actively engage them in the process. It emphasizes the real-world activity of the knowledge, skills, and values developed, and promotes the authenticity of the learning experience.

A variety of developmentally appropriate teaching methodologies and strategies should be utilised. These include peer communication and interaction, authentic artifacts, kinaesthetic, project-based, problem-based, and inquiry-based learning, and performance assessment approaches. These will aid in contextualising learning as well as enhancing differentiated instruction. Learners will become empowered to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to accurately assess situations and solve problems they encounter in everyday life.

### **Catering to Diversity**

A competency-based curriculum seeks to directly address issues of inequity to ensure that all students that are differently abled and students from disadvantaged and different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds meet high expectations to prepare them for future success.

Competencies and skills have to do with learners constructing their knowledge and seeking ways to optimise their competencies. It is essential to use students' backgrounds, experiences, and needs to support learning. Teachers should be conscious of various learning styles and modify instruction to make learning more meaningful and relevant.

## **Constructing Understanding through Socialisation**

Socialisation is a critical component in the teaching and learning process. Teachers should engage learners in group activities to facilitate the social construction of ideas. Therefore, learners engage in constructing their knowledge and developing their skills and values by interacting with their environment, vocalising their thoughts, and valuing the importance of shared perspectives. Teachers will develop heterogeneous groupings to foster rich and supportive learning experiences in their engagement among students.

## **Inquiry, Problem, and Project-Based Learning**

Innovative instruction should predominantly feature learning by engaging in real-world and personally meaningful activities. Students will develop deep content knowledge, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills when involved in these types of learning. Teachers should make learning come alive for students and should be able to teach skills effectively and beyond the content while making learning more personalised. Students learn about current issues and engage in deep learning as they work through questioning situations, developing hypotheses, researching information, analysing data, and reporting on findings, either by using quantitative or qualitative approaches.

## **Differentiated Instruction**

The use of Differentiated Instruction offers every student multiple pathways to learning. Teachers should use several types of competency-based learning practices that recognize and adjust to meet the needs of individual learners. Differentiation can provide varied learning materials or assessments to students based on what they have already mastered, what topic or focus is most relevant for their learning goals, and what types of resources are most likely to help them achieve their goals within flexible timeframes. Teachers should focus on collecting student data and then based on that data, place students into diverse groups. These groups are then given different supports or modifications of the same lesson or assignment.

## **Technology as a Learning Tool**

Students must be allowed to learn by observing and manipulating technological devices. This engagement heightens students' interest in learning through exposure to practical learning experiences. This can be achieved using the most innovative technology and resources. The Ministry of Education has created the Teacher Learning Institute and the

501 Academy School Portal as important digital learning platforms to serve students, teachers, and parents.

Teachers should create a learning environment that will serve all students, no matter their learning abilities. Instructions should involve a learning-by-doing approach for learners to retain knowledge. Creativity skills that are developed allows learners to show their capacities while working freely. It also fosters students' capacity to collaborate with their classmates, building cooperation and teamwork. Competency-based learning also caters to various abilities as it focuses on the individual learner and inculcates real-time skills that are paramount for their future. Using this approach, teachers offer their students something new every day that will help them in their personal lives.

## **SECTION 10 – ASSESSMENT**

Competency-based assessment aims to evaluate and build the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the learner and it should be an ongoing process. It helps learners to gradually progress from the beginner to the mastery level.

Assessment is an especially important part of planning, as it provides necessary information about students' needs to guide new phases of planning, or to show educators where they might need to make some adjustment to what they have been doing. Given the diversity of Belizean learners and educators, and particularly those with varying abilities, assessment practices must be designed to ensure that all assessments are accessible to learners so that they can demonstrate what they really know and can do.

Mere participation in traditional classroom assessments does not signify accessibility. Rather, accessible assessments are designed to measure whether students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills meet performance-based criteria – they measure the same knowledge, skills, and values across abilities.

This National Curriculum Framework is focused on student competency to produce students who will apply the knowledge, skills, and values they have acquired in integrated and practical ways. The assessments must be so aligned to be able to evaluate students' level of mastery/proficiency of key knowledge constructs, attitudes, and skills.

### **1. Diagnostic activity - pre-assessment**

This is a particularly key step that helps to assess the prior learning of any learner. The learner gets assessed in terms of competencies, which allows personalizing the teaching approach for individual learner profiles.

## **2. Assessment Activities**

The learning or assessment activities should focus on involving every student for a successful assessment, no matter whether it is formative or summative.

## **3. Competency-based assessment tools**

The competency tools will demonstrate the successful performance of the learner through proper demonstration, and clear and tangible actions. Some of the competency-based assessment tools include interviews, case studies, questionnaires, rubrics, and tests. Teachers engage students in the entire process to garner buy-in and ownership by the students.

## **4. Authentic assessment**

A competency-based curriculum prepares students for the workforce and the real world. Therefore, assessments should be planned in such a way that they are in line with real-life experiences.

## **5. Building student-friendly rubrics**

A scoring guide or rubric is an authentic assessment tool that is used to measure students' performance according to real-life scenarios. The rubric is a working guide both for teachers and students, which is handed out before the assessments in order to let the students know the criteria on which their work will be judged. It helps to evaluate a student's performance based on the total range of criteria rather than a numerical score. A well-written rubric should also be a tool for teachers to understand the quality performance of the student working collaboratively.

### **Characteristics of rubrics**

- Rubrics should have clearly articulated competencies and learning outcomes as their base.
- Rubrics should ultimately measure performance, reflect on learning, and plan the next steps.
- They are intended to give clarity to students about what and why they are learning.

Since competency-based learning is not time-bound, it lets learners revisit the learning activities and get re-assessed. This allows for students to be supported by a reflection of learning and formative feedback.



The assessment learning cycle should be flexible and dynamic, which can take adjustments along the way. Competency assessment is a continuous process, by which student's knowledge and skills are constantly developed. It progresses an individual from being a novice to an expert, helping them to perform well in today's competitive world.

## **SECTION 11 – MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The main purpose and goal of monitoring and evaluation of the National Curriculum is to ensure that the education system is confident that its intentions for the curriculum are being realized and that its benchmarks of quality are being met. Thus, monitoring the quality of the curriculum and its implementation is an on-going process and all components of the curriculum, including the National Curriculum Framework itself, should be the subject of formal, systematic, and regular evaluation (UNESCO-IBE, 2017).

Comprehensive evaluation of the whole curriculum should be within 6 years or after an implementation cycle is completed. The National Curriculum Framework should be the core reference document for each curriculum evaluation exercise. The focus of the evaluation should be on the extent to which each aspect of the Curriculum Framework (Vision, Aims, Objectives, Principles and Values, Competencies, Syllabus quality, Assessment requirements) is being successfully implemented and remains relevant and valid. These evaluations should provide evidence-based reports and recommendations to the Ministry of Education on future direction for the curriculum (UNESCO-IBE, 2017).

A range of instruments and data sources should be developed and utilised for monitoring and evaluations. These could include but not be limited to:

- Teacher feedback;
- School principal feedback;
- Student performance data; and
- Surveys and questionnaires to stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and employers.

Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum should occur at five levels - the student, teacher, school, system, and external levels.

### **Student Level Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Middle, upper primary, and high school students, with support from parents/guardians, teachers, and/or counsellors, engage in Self-Regulated

Learning which requires them to systematically set and self-assess mastery goals aimed at higher achievements as they progress through school.

### **Teacher Level Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Teachers continuously and systematically gather, analyse, and interpret data on students' learning which provides evidence of their progress and achievements based on the curriculum.
- Teachers engage in ongoing data-driven and research-based reflective practice and self-evaluation on the effectiveness of their pedagogical practices and make modifications to cater to students' needs to improve their mastery of the curriculum.
- Teachers engage in systematic reporting of their experiences and students' achievements with primary stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents, students, Managing Authorities, and the Ministry of Education) in accord with curriculum achievement standards.

### **School Level Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Schools engage in systematic Self-study and Self-evaluation via strategic planning processes. Through such processes, schools regularly evaluate learning and teaching, and determine strategies for improvement which are incorporated into the schools' action plans.
- Schools engage in school-based action research to effectively inform decisions on modifying learning and teaching strategies to enhance students' achievement.

### **System Level Monitoring and Evaluation**

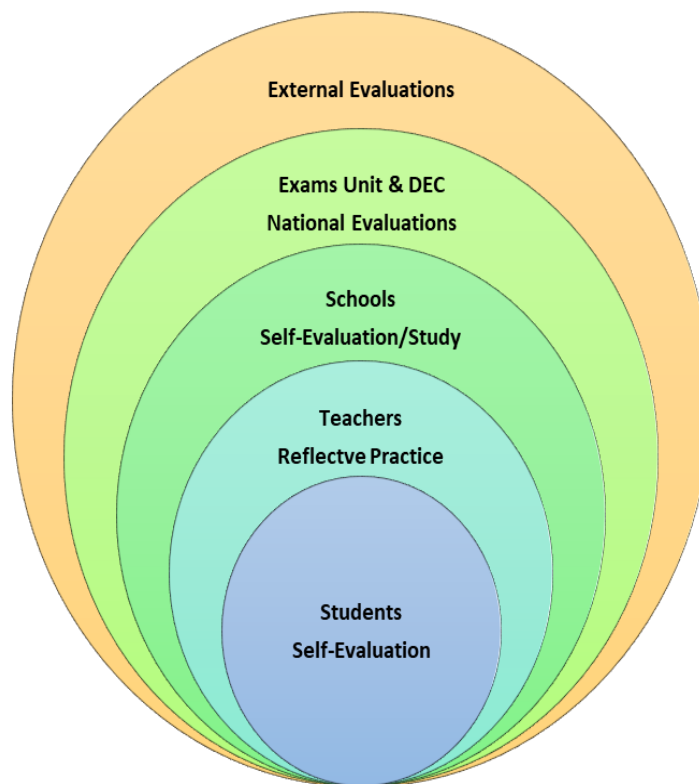
- The Curriculum Unit along with the local Ministry of Education district education centres engage in systematic and continuous monitoring of the implementation of the National Curriculum to provide continuous support to schools via resources and continuous professional development to ensure proper implementation of the curriculum.
- The Assessment Unit engages in systematic evaluation of the implementation of the National Curriculum through school-based and system-wide assessments of student achievement at distinct levels to assess the extent to which the stated intentions for the curriculum are being realised and that the benchmarks of quality are being met.

### External Level Monitoring and Evaluation

- Formal evaluation of the curriculum should be conducted by external agencies such as national experts or international experts.

The results of these processes are provided to schools, Managing Authorities, and the Ministry of Education, and are used to inform policies and practice for improvement of learning and teaching.

### Monitoring & Evaluation Model



## Appendix I: Lower Primary 2022-2023 Learning Loss Mitigation Curriculum

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, students especially at this level have lost significant learning and require special attention. For the 2022-2023 school year, more emphasis will be placed on the core subjects of English and Mathematics, increasing time for each by two hours per week. Total hours per week remain at 25, and time is transferred from the other subjects to these two core subjects.

**Modified Table 3: Level 2 (Lower Primary) - Key Learning Areas, Subjects, Hours per Week, Indicative Hours per Year for 2022-2023.**

	<b>KLA</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Hrs/ Wk</b>	<b>Indicative Hrs/Yr</b>
<b>1</b>	Language	English (Reading Fluency and Accuracy/Phonics, Comprehension, Production, Grammar and Usage)	7	252
		Spanish	1	36
<b>2</b>	Mathematics	Mathematics	7	252
<b>3</b>	Civic Education and History	Belizean Studies (other language included w/in curriculum)	3	108
<b>4</b>	Expressive Arts	Expressive Arts (music, dance, crafts, drama)	2	72
<b>5</b>	Physical Education and Wellness	P. E.	2	72
		Health Education	1	36
<b>6</b>	Leadership/Religion	Religion/Life Skills	2	72
<b>Total</b>			25	900

**Appendix II: Members of the Curriculum Reform Steering Committee (CRSC)**

Rev. Dr. Antonio Anderson	Administrator of the John Paul II Junior College and Mount Carmel High School, Benque Viejo del Carmen, and member of the Executive Committee of Grant Aided Managing Authority of Schools (GAMAS)
Mrs. Sandy Bradshaw	General Manager for Grace Primary School, Belize City
H.E. Mrs. Rossana Briceño	Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children, and Principal at St. Peter’s Anglican Primary School, Orange Walk
Dr. Priscilla Brown	Education Consultant specializing in Curriculum Development and Former Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Belize, Belmopan
Mrs. Althea Jergenson	Teacher at St. Ignatius Primary School, Belize City, and Belize National Teachers Union (BNTU) representative member
Mr. Ray Lawrence	Principal at Ecumenical High School, Dangriga, and member of the Belize Association of Principals of Secondary Schools (BAPSS)
Ms. Miriam Paz	Teacher at St. Peter’s Anglican Primary School, Orange Walk and Belize National Teachers Union (BNTU) representative member
Mr. Guillermo Pech	Principal at Mary Hill RC School, Corozal and Vice-President of the National Catholic Principal Association
Dr. Janeen Quiroz	Assistant Professor at the University of Belize specializing in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Bilingualism
Ms. Yadira Sabal	Graduate of Ecumenical High School and Junior College, and current student at the Caribbean Maritime University in Kingston, Jamaica

Mrs. Salome Tillett	Principal at St. Catherine Academy, Belize City, and member of Grant Aided Managing Authority of Schools (GAMAS) and a member of the Belize Association of Principals of Secondary Schools (BAPSS)
Dr. Mathias R. Vairez Jr.	Assistant Professor at University of Belize, Toledo, Expertise in Educational Leadership, Educational Psychology, Research, Measurement, and Statistics
Hon. Dr. Louis Zabaneh	Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, and Chair of the Curriculum Reform Steering Committee

The Secretariat for the Curriculum Reform Steering Committee comprised Ms. Michelle Turton and Ms. Shanine Campbell from the Curriculum and Assessment Unit of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology. Ms. Natasha Mantock from UNICEF, Mrs. Adele Catzim-Sanchez and Ms. Consuelo Godfrey of Pathlight International Belize, Ms. Deborah Seawell and Ms. Samantha Sharp of the Love Foundation, and Senator Elena Smith, President of the Belize National Teachers Union (BNTU), were invited to participate in the meetings of the CRSC and in the consultation visits around the country. The CRSC was constituted in November 2021 and served until May 2022.

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