Child Studies

2013 Chief Assessor's Report

Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

CHILD STUDIES

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Practical Activity

Research Task (Investigation and critical analysis)

In designing the research tasks, teachers should ensure students will be able to address the task within the word-count/time frame. The research is an important opportunity to prepare for the scope and style required for Assessment Type 3: Investigation. Some teachers provided teaching and scaffolding that models the formal style of writing that students should use in the research report. Some of the lower-performing students were given very broad statements or topics to research, making it difficult for them to perform at the higher standards.

Students who performed well showed clear understanding of how to select and acknowledge relevant and appropriate sources, and demonstrated effective or highly effective literacy and numeracy skills. Some research tasks are still very broad and general and may not have been updated for a number of years. Some of these topics continue to be relevant issues, but are no longer contemporary trends. Students would benefit from refreshed topics with clear and consistent use of appropriate terminologies.

Those students who performed at the higher grade bands addressed a question or issue related to child development and demonstrated critical analysis skills. Additionally, their research had considered connections to the practical application. Teachers and students are reminded that it is not appropriate to conduct research about parents or caregivers, as the subject is about the issues and trends related to the health and well-being of children.

The Internet was relied on as the most significant source of information. Students also used textbooks, newspaper articles, television programs, brochures, surveys, and interviews as appropriate sources related to the health and well-being of children. Referencing was more skilled than in previous years with a greater proportion of students being able to select relevant and appropriate materials. In 2013, there was greater variation in how students were able to demonstrate their skills and understanding of critical analysis. The higher-achieving students were able to make comments on the relevance and appropriateness of the actual resources. This skill is good preparation for Assessment Type 3: Investigation.

Action Plan (Problem-solving)

Teachers have provided students with a variety of models for presenting the identification and discussion of factors to make decisions about problem-solving related to the health and well-being of children. While the use of tables can be a succinct way to explore a problem and scenario, teachers are reminded to check that opportunities exist for students to provide evidence that demonstrates the specific features selected for assessment.

It was noted that some students were able to identify a vast range of factors, but often did not include in-depth discussion. When students could recognise critical factors of the issue/problem, their discussion had greater depth. The students who justified their decisions clearly and provided appropriate implementation strategies gave a more considered response, and therefore demonstrated evidence at higher grade bands. Students value some degree of scaffolding; however, there was evidence that this was more prescriptive in some classes than in others, which could overshadow the individual understanding, knowledge, and creativity that students could bring to the problem-solving task.

Students were successful when tasks were structured to allow them to make clear and very relevant decisions and then to justify the reasoning. Some justifications lacked depth and understanding of the problem-solving and range of reasons that led to the decisions. The use of 'simulator babies' as a task did not allow students to make decisions or implement strategies to solve problems. These babies are perhaps better suited to students undertaking a Stage 1 program.

It was encouraging to see that many teachers had made sound use of local and regional resources. This work is to be commended as it supports the development of the community networks and is genuinely relevant and inspiring to student learning. Teachers are encouraged to identify new problem-solving key questions for research and action plans to encourage students to do original research.

Practical Application

Many teachers incorporated a variety of practical applications that were relevant, enjoyable, and valuable to the students. Teachers had generally incorporated all three specific features in the Practical Activity assessment design criterion, while some had strategically selected only two. This year it was pleasing to see a significant increase in the quantity and quality of the 'evidence of practical' presented by the students. This evidence was in the forms of dot point notes, descriptions, and frequently well-organised photographs, sometimes with captions. Where the evidence was thorough, moderators found it much easier to confirm the grades awarded by teachers.

Students were confident in providing evidence of safe management practices, techniques, organisation, and the use of technology. There was less evidence of the generation and maintenance of quality control and the time management of tasks. Some students did not present any evidence for this specific feature, which made the confirmation of grades at moderation more difficult. Teachers are reminded that written instructions on the task, scaffolding, and explicit teaching can help to ensure that all students present a set of evidence that covers all of the performance standards.

Along with photographic evidence, it was pleasing to see electronic evidence included in packages providing student evidence of the practical applications.

Teachers are strongly encouraged once again not to send in items that students have made including garments, books, or toys. Thorough evidence of processes and outcomes that address the performance standards, together with teacher notes and grades, are essential in the moderation process.

Individual Evaluation Report

The 2013 subject outline states that at least two evaluation reports are required. Teachers have continued to develop their learning and assessment plans to allow strategic placement of the evaluation reports and identification of the specific features that suit certain tasks. Well-structured tasks gave clear guidelines for the evaluation reports and included the criteria for assessment. Higher-achieving students were able to present evaluations that had solid evidence connecting to the research or action plan, the processes, and outcomes and included the student's appraisal of their own performance with specific suggestions for improvements, while keeping within the word or time allocation. Teachers who have students who choose to evaluate their practical with an oral or multimodal presentation must ensure that a copy of the presentation is included with any written work for the purpose of moderation. The confirmation process was made more difficult by submissions that had insufficient evidence.

While the types of technology available to society have increased, the impact of technology on the health and well-being of children (R2) was not always appropriately addressed with clarity and/or depth. It is clear that the implications of this contemporary trend are of interest and evolving.

Task Design

When designing tasks that have action plans, teachers must ensure that there is a close connection with an area of study. Some tasks may be better suited to research with critical analysis than to a problem-solving action plan task.

The tasks about a meal for a pregnant woman, children's literacy, and the lunch box have been used very frequently in the past and deserve refreshing to better align with the specific features so that students have the opportunity to access higher grades in 2014 and beyond. Moderators noted that the range of topics has not diversified significantly although there are many other issues that could be explored. While some tasks were very wordy, others were particularly brief and difficult for students of all abilities to decipher and follow. Teachers are advised to review tasks and ensure that students of all abilities can clearly identify the requirements, the timeframe, word-count options, and specific features for the performance standards.

Moderators also observed that some students have submitted pages of extraneous material (e.g. recipes, food orders). These are not evidence of the practical and are unnecessary.

While the word-count is frequently included, this is not the case for all classes or students. Teachers are reminded that the word-count is a stipulation in the subject outline and should encourage students to include a word-count.

Assessment Type 2: Group Activity

Group Decision-making

There were many fine examples of group decision-making this year. The group activity requires collaborative decisions to be made and implementation strategies to be stated. The subject outline states that group decision-making does not require the students to justify their decisions, and teachers generally chose to assess P1 and P2.

Students who demonstrated evidence to the higher standards were able to make a clear connection with an area of study to identify and discuss factors, solve problems, and collaboratively make decisions. While the majority of students could clearly identify a range of issues, the depth of the discussion varied across the range from *limited* to *considered* to *astute*. The lower-achieving students may benefit from an adjusted task design and/or scaffolding to allow them to discuss the factors at a higher standard. Some students wrote implementation strategies as lists, formal prose, or dot point phrases. It is apparent that when students understand the value of a clear and complete set of implementation strategies, the complexity and thoroughness of the group task can be enhanced.

Teachers are reminded that documentation of the task allocated to each student within the group decision-making/problem-solving component must be attached to every individual student's task along with evidence of the practical application. For some classes this documentation will be organised by the students, while for other groups the teacher may need to photocopy enough for each in the group. Provision of this evidence is the individual student's responsibility; it is another opportunity for students to provide evidence of their collaboration before they evaluate the task.

Collaboration

Successful student evidence of collaboration was seen in the group decision-making task, the group practical application, and the individual evaluation. Students had discussed leadership within the group, ideas, procedures, and how all members of the group were to be included and involved. It was inspiring to see that students had provided evidence of individuals' and the team's involvement in the activities using more modern methods, for example, screen shots of social networking pages and digital movies. Students who performed well provided explicit evidence of discussions that supported the health and well-being of children in the age group of birth to 8 years.

Group Practical Application

In some cases, students demonstrated evidence for specific features PA1 (implementation of safe management practices and appropriate techniques, and generation and maintenance of quality control), PA2 (organisation and management of time and resources), and PA3 (selection and application of appropriate technology to prepare learning activities for children in a culturally diverse society). However, in a number of classes only one or two specific features were assessed. Students demonstrated a range of techniques, quality control, and safe management practices.

A significant number of teachers are providing scaffolding to assist students to record the group activity and to comment on the practical and collaborative nature of the task(s). This scaffolding was often similar to the practical activity requirements,

www.theallpapers.com

although in some tasks the format differed to assist students to provide outstanding evidence of their group's activity. Moderators noted that when this process was clear, students were in a better position to evaluate using the specific features for the criteria assessed in the individual evaluation. The lower-achieving students more frequently recounted what happened in the evaluation, which is best placed in the evidence of practical.

Moderators also noted that group tasks seem to be more successful when there are three or more students in the group. Teachers with small classes are to be commended for their creativity in supporting isolated students or those with differing circumstances. Moderators agreed that it was difficult to confirm some practical and collaboration grades when there was no photographic and/or written evidence. Once again there were some innovative multimedia tasks that displayed excellent leadership, student collaboration, and discussions to support the health and well-being of children.

Individual Evaluation Report

With the evidence complete, students are encouraged to address directly the specific features for the individual evaluation and to evaluate the collaboration and practical. Each report is expected to include suggestions for improvement. The higher-achieving students were able to present a sophisticated evaluation of the processes and outcomes of the group decision-making, the practical application, and the collaboration within the group.

The majority of students presented written evaluations within the word-count. The students who chose to provide an oral evaluation were also required to present recorded evidence for moderation. The individual evaluation report is not the appropriate place in which to include further research.

Some samples of work showed evidence that some teachers may not be clear about the differing nature between Assessment Type 2: Group Activity and Assessment Type 1: Practical Application. The nature of group decision-making is quite different from an action plan. It must be noted that the individual evaluation report too is a different component from the Assessment Type 1 and that the evaluation of the role, benefits, and importance of the collaboration within the group need to be addressed.

Task Design

It was encouraging to see a greater range of tasks and better task design for this assessment type this year. Approximately 50% of schools choose to do two group activities with the remaining schools undertaking one group activity. There was a range of extremely well-designed and executed tasks. However, some task design did not allow for best practice and did not provide appropriate opportunities for students to achieve at the highest performance standards.

The design of tasks should explicitly provide students with opportunities to show collaboration at the planning and practical stages and direct the students to provide photographic and/or written evidence of their achievements. Tasks also need to be clearly linked to one or a combination of the areas of study in the subject outline. Students who performed well in the individual evaluation were required to respond to fewer than four specific features in the prescribed word-count of 500 words. The evaluation instructions should be clear so that students understand which criteria need to be met.

Where teachers structured the group activity with a defined focus on an area of study and a contemporary issue, students had a starting point to discuss and identify factors that support the health and well-being of children. Students were better informed to make a range of appropriate decisions about problem-solving and to negotiate and establish appropriate implementation strategies.

Once again, this year topics included preparation of healthy food, dance, game skills, excursions, and celebrations with groups of young children. Some group activities planned and ran events that may possibly lead to successful small business ventures.

The majority of students presented work to the correct word-count. This has been stated in task designs and guided by teacher feedback on student work. Teachers should note that there is no word-count for the evidence of practical, and that providing captions with photographs may contextualise the student learning.

Some group activities had little differentiation between group members, even when evaluations indicated a lack of involvement from some group members. Teachers are encouraged to revisit the subject outline each year and, if necessary, use the addendum to adjust the learning and assessment plan and the group activity task(s).

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

The vast majority of the investigations focused on the health and well-being of the child, with a range of topics being selected. Topics covering technology, obesity, breastfeeding, smacking, and immunisation proved popular. Students must be guided to select topics that are appropriate. It became obvious that students who investigated topics that were outside of the areas of study or were inappropriate struggled to meet the higher levels in the performance standards.

Investigations that presented two clear sides to an argument, with the potential for either a 'yes' or a 'no' conclusion, provided greater scope and a clear framework for students to work with.

The majority of topics selected related to the subject outline and students were able to clearly link their investigations to at least one of the areas of study. These students tended to have some direction and were able to maintain focus on the topic and this assisted the scope, depth, and currency of their investigations. Some students focused on inappropriate issues such as those relating to children older than 8 years of age or exploring topics of child abuse or domestic violence, although it was pleasing to see there were fewer students addressing these topics this year. Teachers are encouraged to guide students away from such topics. Students with well-crafted research questions or hypotheses were able to present a debate, as opposed to just stating information on a topic.

It was noted some students are referring to the investigations as 'special studies', a terminology from previous curriculum statements. There is a concern that this approach is not allowing students to connect with the specific features and intentions of the investigation in the current subject outline.

It became obvious that sometimes a question was too hard for the student to follow through with. It is important for teachers to assist students to choose topics they can find success with and that focus on the health and well-being of the child.

On the whole the investigations were clearly written and gave good direction and insight into the topic being investigated.

Teachers and students are reminded that appendices are not read by the markers (and therefore should not be included), and that markers stop reading at 2000 words, in line with SACE guidelines. Care must also be taken when printing coloured graphs in black and white because the information may be difficult to read and understand.

ICA 1 — Investigation and critical analysis of contemporary trends and/or issues related to the health and well-being of children

In the majority of investigations the introductions were well structured. The majority of students linked their investigation to an area of study and contemporary trend. The better introductions provided links directly with the health and well-being of the child. More successful students used a larger amount of well-selected sources of information while students who met the performance standards at a much lower level demonstrated a limited ability to research. The better investigations demonstrated the use of sound Australian data whilst occasionally referring to overseas studies to back up statements or to counteract/compare them. There has been a move for students to refer only to research from overseas and while this is acceptable they must clearly show how this research links back to their investigation.

Best practice investigations showed evidence of analysis, debate, and critical thinking all the way through the discussion and culminated in a clear conclusion.

It was pleasing to note that many investigations referred specifically to the health and well-being of children, which ensured that they were relevant and focused within the scope of the task. Students who achieved well in this area were able to identify a trend as opposed to a child development issue. A number of students struggled to identify trends; this is an area in which teachers should work with students to help them improve their understanding of trends.

Stronger investigations demonstrated critical analysis in each of their focus questions and drew on this in the conclusion. Less successful investigations tended to just present the research and did not draw any conclusions or analyse the information presented.

It was noted, however, that the vast majority of investigations did include research. In more successful investigations, students used current Australian research and their primary research involved interviews with people who were strongly connected to the investigation topic. In less successful investigations, students used surveys as their method of primary research, many of which had little or no relevance to the investigation topic. Some surveys sought entirely irrelevant information, such as a survey on childhood obesity that included information about the food eaten by Year 12 students.

Graphs, tables, and diagrams were used extensively throughout the investigations and the students who presented these in a well-structured manner made sure these both supported and linked strongly to the research. Students who achieved higher grades also tended to refer to the methodology throughout their investigation. However, some students did not use graphs, diagrams, or tables effectively and

www.theallpapers.com

merely inserted these into the investigation without any form of explanation. Students must use any data they include in their discussion to help the reader connect the data to the rest of the investigation.

ICA2 — Analysis of information for relevance and appropriateness, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources

Investigations that met the performance standards at the higher level tended to be selective, and used referenced sources of information that focused on current and relevant material. It also reflected Australian research or drew clear links to Australian children. Students who relied on American and English data were unable to provide links to the Australian setting.

It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of investigations included referencing of primary research used; those who did not should be encouraged to do so. Many students used options such as SurveyMonkey to conduct their surveys. It is important that students collect and use relevant primary data. Some students surveyed their classmates to find out what food they consumed and as a result the research did not support the discussion at all as the focus of the subject and hence this investigation is on children's growth and development from conception to 8 years. The majority of investigations used diagrams and graphs that were well referenced and discussed in the text of the investigation. However, moderators were concerned by the amount of text being used in graph/diagram text boxes, as much of this needed to be included in the word-count of the investigation.

Research lists/bibliographies showed that the majority of students were focused and discerning when selecting secondary resources. There was an increase in the use of credible sites such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Markers noted that many investigations showed an improvement in referencing, which resulted in a significant decrease in suspected plagiarism. When the methodology was written in the past tense students were able to evaluate and analyse the relevance and usefulness of the sources of research more competently.

Teachers should encourage students to make their own voice clear in their investigation. It is not appropriate to copy or quote large sections of source material, linked to just a few words of the student's own. This limits the student's opportunity to discuss ideas in their own words and keep within the word-count.

ICA3 — Application of literacy and numeracy skill, and use of appropriate

The majority of investigations were generally well written. Numeracy application varied from very poor to good, and this was particularly evident in the presentation of graphs (particularly pie charts) where percentages were included. The best analyses referenced numbers accurately and followed on with critical discussion and debate regarding their significance. Investigations that struggled to demonstrate numeracy skills were directly linked to the nature of the topic selected.

Well-written investigations included tables and graphs from a variety of sources, showed a good understanding of the numbers presented, were well referenced in the body of the work, and were well presented, and hence were generally assessed at a higher level against the performance standards.
A number of investigations included slang such as 'kids' which should not be used in the investigation, because it is a formal piece of writing. Some schools appear to still

be using the old format for writing an investigation which includes identification of the target audience, inclusion of the author's opinion, and a discussion of what the author personally got out of completing the task. These aspects are no longer relevant for this task and are not being assessed; they also make the writing appear more informal.

E4 — Evaluation of contemporary trends and/or issues related to child development in different settings

Better investigations showed evidence of continual evaluation throughout the entire course of the investigation and summed this up in the concluding comments. In the better investigations, reasoned arguments that were well supported with accurate and relevant evidence were used effectively to draw the topic question or hypothesis to a clear, concise conclusion. This allowed for either 'realistic' or 'grey' areas to culminate the debate.

Students who met this performance standard in the lower grade bands tended to rely on their own opinions. It was noted some students used the evaluation to provide advice to parents or the government, which is not relevant to this kind of investigation. Some students showed little ability to evaluate.

Students who presented stronger investigations could connect more than one issue for child development, particularly for children in a variety of settings.

The SACE cover sheet must be used. Hence, title pages and content pages are unnecessary. Appendices and surveys are not looked at when investigations are marked. It is important that students understand this and make sure they do not include information in the appendix which they want to count towards their grade.

All investigations are blind marked, that is, the SACE-appointed markers do not know the mark that any other marker has given the investigation nor do they know the school from which the investigation has come. In line with this, all student names, school names, and marks sheets must be removed from the investigations before sending them to the SACE Board.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

The year 2014 will see the expiry of some learning and assessment plans. Although the performance standards have no changes for 2014, the renewal of the plan is an opportunity to revisit and refresh the scope and sequence of the assessment tasks. Even if the learning and assessment plan has not expired, some teachers may choose to adjust their learning and assessment plan and tasks and these changes need to be written on the addendum.

Moderators noted that this year saw a minor improvement in the packaging of materials. A complete set of the requested student's practical activities should be packaged separately from the set of group activities. The following materials must also be submitted: the current approved learning and assessment plan (which may have been amended — if so, an addendum must also be included), a complete set of assessment tasks, and a Variation — Moderation Materials form (found on the Stage 2 Child Studies minisite) with details of missing work for individual students.

Students have been following teacher guidelines to have their SACE code on their work and to remove their name. Teachers are reminded not to send the required

students' work to moderation in folders, as this is difficult to manage and a time consuming distractor to the process. Additionally this report would like to discourage the use of cover pages for the task and sections of the tasks as these are distractors and unnecessary.

Child Studies
Chief Assessor