Learning through Languages

Review of Languages Education in NSW

Consultation Paper
Learning through Languages

Review of Languages Education in NSW

Consultation Paper
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President's foreword</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background to the Review of Languages Education in NSW</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current languages education landscape in NSW</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial proposals for consultation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Current languages education and provision in NSW</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 School language learning</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Complementary providers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Post-school language learning</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Best practice and recent developments in languages education</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Languages education programs</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The optimal age to begin language programs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Time and intensity in language programs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Languages education continuity</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Languages proficiency frameworks</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 ICT in languages education</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Language teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Australian curriculum</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 <em>Australia in the Asian Century:</em> Australian Government White Paper</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 The Federal Coalition’s languages plan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 The way forward: a broader, more inclusive languages education for NSW</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 <em>Learning through Languages:</em> Initial proposals</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSAL 1: A new K–10 Languages curriculum framework</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSAL 2: A new approach to post-compulsory languages education</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSAL 3: Broader recognition of language proficiency</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSAL 4: Strengthening and supporting the provision of Aboriginal languages</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSAL 5: Raising the profile and supporting the delivery of languages education</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSAL 6: Further national contributions to languages education</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

ACACA  Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
ACARA  Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AECG   Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
ATAR   Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CCAFL  Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages
CLIL   Content and language integrated learning
CLSP   Community Languages Schools Program
DEC    Department of Education and Communities
HSC    Higher School Certificate
KLA    Key learning area
OTEN   Open Training and Education Network
RoSA   Record of School Achievement
SSCL   Saturday School of Community Languages
President’s foreword

Contemporary Australia is both multicultural and multilingual as a result of our history and migration policies: the 2011 Census found that almost a quarter of Australia’s population was born overseas and 43% of people have at least one overseas-born parent. The ubiquity of globalisation in contemporary Australia has also sharpened awareness of our role in the region and, similarly, the world. We are also continuing to develop significant connections with the rich and varied culture and heritage of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Despite Australia’s cultural and linguistic diversity and frequent proclamations about the value and importance of languages for individuals and society as a whole, enrolments in school language courses are relatively low. In the past decade, only around 10% of NSW Higher School Certificate students have undertaken a language course. While these participation rates are similar to those of other English speaking jurisdictions, they represent relatively low ‘flow through’ given that every student in NSW undertakes at least 100 hours of continuous languages education in Years 7–10.

Delivery of an effective languages education is an important aspect of a well-rounded school education. The approach to achieving that effectiveness varies significantly across nations and within nations, between school systems, and even within schools. Any developments or reforms to languages education in Australia, including in NSW, must however recognise the effects of being a predominantly English-speaking nation and the ascendancy of English in Western culture, together with Australia’s cultural and linguistic diversity and our proximity to Asia. It is in this context that the Board of Studies NSW has developed an initial set of proposals for consultation.

In developing these initial proposals, the Board has had regard to the long history of languages education reviews and initiatives, many of which have not resulted in sustained improvements to provision or participation. We have also had regard to the confluence of issues currently drawing attention to the advantages of being a multilingual and multicultural society, which include, but are not limited to, deeper intercultural understandings and the opportunity for improved social cohesion; economic, cultural and social advantages of international engagement; cognitive benefits of language learning; and more effectively harnessing the existing wealth of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the community.

The six initial proposals outlined in the Learning through Languages consultation paper and its companion reference paper seek to broaden the ambit of languages education from acquisition to also include curriculum outcomes in language awareness and intercultural understanding. This broader, more inclusive approach to languages education will assist all students in NSW – irrespective of their geographic location or linguistic or cultural heritage – to develop into informed citizens who can negotiate across and within cultural and linguistic boundaries, both locally and globally. The initial proposals also provide an outline for providers to be more responsive through practical and realistic curriculum and policy adjustments. In this manner, the initial proposals lay the foundations for sustainable and coherent languages education policy for NSW.

Tom Alegounarias
President
Board of Studies NSW
Executive summary

Introduction

Thirteen years into the 21st century, Australia is increasingly multicultural and multilingual. Yet despite the diverse nature of our society and various government reviews and initiatives over the decades regarding languages education, participation in school language learning remains low; in NSW, only about 10% of students undertake a language course for their Higher School Certificate. Further, NSW does not currently have a language policy for schools.

Background to the Review of Languages Education in NSW

In 2012, the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli MP, asked the Board to undertake a review into languages education in NSW. Guided by the terms of reference, the Board conducted preliminary conversations with key NSW languages education stakeholders. Board officers examined past language policies and initiatives and conducted a stocktake of current language provision in and out of school settings in NSW. An extensive analysis of recent developments and best practice in Australia and internationally regarding languages education was also undertaken.

Following the work undertaken, the Board developed six initial proposals for consultation outlined in the Learning through Languages consultation paper and reference paper. The initial proposals for consultation provide the foundation for a broader and more inclusive languages education for all NSW students.

Current languages education landscape in NSW

- Languages are not currently compulsory in K–6. Between 30% and 40% of NSW primary schools have a language program, with the majority situated in the Sydney metropolitan area.
- Where languages are taught, lessons are typically 30–40 minutes once a week from a specialist primary language teacher who uses one of the Board’s K–10 syllabuses, which are available in 17 languages.
• In Years 7–10, students are required to undertake 100 hours of continuous languages learning, preferably in Years 7–8 (Stage 4). The Board’s K–10 syllabuses in 17 languages are used to deliver this mandatory requirement for the Record of School Achievement. If undertaken in Stage 4, students might go on to study a language as an elective in Years 9 and 10 (Stage 5).

• Only about 10% of students undertake a language course for their HSC. There are many reasons for this, including the perceived difficulty and lack of relevance of languages, the low parental and community value placed on languages, the lack of continuity between primary and secondary school, and staffing and resource issues.

• Currently there are 63 senior secondary language courses. Some languages have differentiated courses – Beginners, Continuers, Extension, Heritage and Background Speakers. Not all languages have all of these courses, and entry is governed by the Board’s eligibility criteria.

• Languages education is not solely the domain of schools: in NSW, more than 30 000 students attend a community language school after school and/or on the weekend for at least two hours a week. Attending these schools is seen as important for language maintenance, intercultural awareness and improved social cohesion.

What is happening in Aboriginal Languages?

NSW was the first state to implement an Aboriginal Languages K–10 syllabus. Since that time, the Board has undertaken extensive work with communities in developing materials. In 2012, 2389 students undertook Aboriginal languages in NSW government primary schools.

What about the Australian curriculum developments?

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is developing F–10 syllabuses in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese, and a Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages. ACARA will undertake further work to determine the process and timelines for developing the Australian curriculum in additional languages beyond those listed.

The Board has yet to determine the timeline for implementation of the Australian curriculum regarding languages and will continue to provide advice to ACARA on the development of the Australian Curriculum: Languages.
Initial proposals for consultation

The Board has developed six initial proposals for consultation that lay the foundation for a broader, more inclusive languages education for all NSW students.

PROPOSAL 1: A new K–10 Languages curriculum framework

- Developing a new K–10 Languages curriculum framework including teaching modules and other support materials for teachers.
- Creating a key learning area (KLA) for Languages in primary school.
- Delivering the 100 mandatory hours of language learning in Stage 4 (Years 7–8) with increased flexibility, such as delivering more English literacy to students who already have a second language.

PROPOSAL 2: A new approach to post-compulsory languages education

- Reviewing the HSC pattern of study requirements to acknowledge the difficulty of language courses (particularly the time on task required to learn scripted languages).
- Considering alternative nomenclatures for the Stage 6 differentiated language courses.
- Considering alternative approaches to the current eligibility criteria for Stage 6 differentiated language courses and adopting an approach that addresses the need for transparent, consistent and fair decisions and the public policy objectives of languages education.
- Working collaboratively with other education stakeholders to encourage the establishment of a uniform ATAR Languages Bonus Points Scheme in NSW.
- Supporting the incorporation of elective units of competency in Asian and other languages into relevant Board VET courses.

PROPOSAL 3: Broader recognition of language proficiency

- Developing a Languages Proficiency Framework to enable language achievement to be assessed, irrespective of where the language learning takes place, eg at a community languages school or at school.
- Providing quality assurance guidance to teachers in schools and other venues, to ensure consistent application of the framework.
- Establishing a K–12 Languages Passport to record and transport proficiency levels.

PROPOSAL 4: Strengthening and supporting the provision of Aboriginal languages

- Developing targeted programming support materials for the Aboriginal Languages K–10 Syllabus.
- Establishing, together with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), an online compendium of Aboriginal Languages resources.
- Allowing more than one Aboriginal language to be taught during the mandatory 100 hours.
- Developing a language reclamation and revitalisation module for delivery within the HSC Aboriginal Studies course.
- Developing a Stage 6 syllabus framework for Aboriginal Languages.
PROPOSAL 5: Raising the profile and supporting the delivery of languages education

- Establishing a NSW Languages Advisory Panel to report to the Minister for Education through the Schools Advisory Council. The panel will identify opportunities and establish synergies in provision and practice within and across the school sectors and into tertiary pathways.

- Establishing a Curriculum Reference Group on Languages that will liaise with industry, business and the wider community and report to the Board. The group will assist the Board in identifying how the language curriculum may be extended to preschool education, and how innovations, including new technologies, can be better used to provide languages education in NSW.

PROPOSAL 6: Further national contributions to languages education

- Advocating to the Commonwealth for funding and reform that work towards future coherence and sustainability of languages education in NSW.

The Board is seeking your views on the initial proposals in *Learning through Languages*. You can have your say by completing our online survey at <www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview/survey.html>. Please read this consultation paper before you respond to the online survey.
1 Current languages education and provision in NSW

This section outlines the current provision of languages education in NSW. It also highlights the key issues that have emerged during preliminary discussions with the NSW languages education community.

1.1 School language learning

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stages 1–3 (Kindergarten – Year 6)

Section 8 of the Education Act 1990 (NSW) mandates the curriculum outcomes for primary school education in six key learning areas (KLAs). ‘Languages’ is not currently a KLA, but may be included as part of the Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) KLA or during the 20% of primary school curriculum available for ‘Additional Activities’.

It is estimated that between 30% and 40% of NSW primary schools have a language program, with the majority situated in the Sydney metropolitan area.

In delivering languages education, NSW schools use the Board’s K–10 syllabuses available in 17 languages. Since 2003, these syllabuses have included outcomes related to making linguistic connections and the relationship between language and culture.
While there are no aggregated statistics across all sectors, the most commonly taught languages in NSW government primary schools in 2012 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Student numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Chinese (Mandarin)</td>
<td>18 771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Italian</td>
<td>14 193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Arabic</td>
<td>9220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 French</td>
<td>7445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Vietnamese</td>
<td>6191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Japanese</td>
<td>4592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Greek</td>
<td>4195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Indonesian</td>
<td>3472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Aboriginal languages*</td>
<td>2389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Spanish</td>
<td>1539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Combined numbers for Bundjalung, Dhanggati, Gamilaraay, Githabul, Gumbaynggirr, Paakantyi, Wadi Wadi, Wiradjuri (statistics provided by DEC in January 2013).

**Existing language programs**

There is a diversity of existing language programs currently operating in NSW primary schools. Some are large-scale programs that receive secure ongoing funding (eg the Community Languages in Schools Program [CLSP] in some government primary schools) and others operate in only a few schools and are dependent on specific grants (eg the Authentic Access Program in some independent schools).

Examples of the programs are provided in the companion reference paper.

**What we were told**

- The ‘typical’ language program in a NSW primary school involves a 30–40 minute lesson once a week delivered during relief from face-to-face teaching time.
- The language teacher is either a specialist primary school language teacher or a teaching assistant.
- As there are currently no KLA requirements or mandatory hours for languages in primary school, often the impetus to establish and maintain a language program rests with the primary school principal or ardent parents.
- There is often over-reliance on individual teachers for the provision and continuation of a language program in primary schools. If the teacher leaves or retires, the language program may cease or a different language may be substituted according to teacher availability.
- Primary schools cannot assure parents that students will be able to continue the study of the same language(s) in secondary school.
- Some primary school teachers believe that there is too much to teach within the available instructional time in primary school, and areas such as languages, which are not nationally tested, are not given priority.
There are many NSW teachers who speak a language other than English but are not currently teaching that language. There is therefore an untapped resource that could potentially be harnessed.

There is no aggregated data available at either the NSW or Commonwealth level for languages education across school sectors prior to Year 8, in particular for the language(s) students are studying, for how long, the mode of teaching (face-to-face/ICT/blended model) and to what level of proficiency.

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Stage 4 (Years 7–8)

It is a requirement for the Record of School Achievement (RoSA) that students receive 100 hours of instruction in one language over a continuous 12-month period between Years 7 and 10, but preferably in Stage 4. The Board’s K–10 Language syllabuses in 17 languages are used to deliver the mandatory 100 hours in schools across NSW.

Stage 5 (Years 9–10)

In Stage 5, there is a significant drop in the number of students studying languages. In 2013, there were a total of 11,040 enrolments across all of the language courses in Stage 5.1

What we were told

• In most cases, the mandatory 100 hours of languages education are delivered in classrooms of students of varying experience, skills and motivation. This may result in behavioural issues as the curriculum is not differentiated.
• Some ‘language tasters’ are offered in Year 7, whereby students are exposed to, for example, a term of Japanese, a term of Spanish, a term of French and a term of Latin.
• There is provision for schools to seek Board endorsement for School Developed courses in languages where there is no Board Developed syllabus. This flexibility may assist in meeting community needs and maximising available resources.
• Schools often regard smaller language elective classes as too expensive and not viable to deliver.
• Reasons for students not continuing languages into Stage 5 include:
  – negative language learning experiences in primary school and Stage 4
  – low parental and community value placed on language learning
  – the perception that language study is ‘too hard’ and/or ‘only for more able students’
  – the wide range of other available subjects (including vocational education), which are perceived as more vocationally relevant.

SENIOR SECONDARY

Stage 6 (Years 11–12)

Only around 10% of students undertake a language course in Stage 6.2 There is a range of Preliminary and HSC (Stage 6) language courses available, including Beginners, Continuers, Extension, Heritage and Background Speakers. Not all courses, however, are available in all languages.

2. Board of Studies internal statistics, 2013.
In total, there are 63 language syllabuses available to Stage 6 students, with the widest range of courses available in Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. In 2012, the Heritage language courses in these four languages were examined in the HSC for the first time.

The range of Stage 6 differentiated language courses is reviewed annually as part of a syllabus evaluation process undertaken by the Board. Where funding is available, the Board will develop courses to cater for changing demand, which is generated by migration, settlement patterns and other factors.

Since the early 1990s, small-candidature community languages have been supported by an inter-jurisdiction collaboration of senior secondary curriculum and assessment authorities, known as CCAFL (Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages). The curriculum and assessment authorities share responsibility for syllabus development, and for the production and marking of Year 12 examination papers.

In Stage 6, specific ‘eligibility criteria’ govern entry into the differentiated language courses. The Board’s eligibility criteria seek to ensure that students undertake courses that are educationally appropriate for them and where they can maximise improvement in linguistic proficiency. A student’s eligibility for a particular course is determined by the school principal, based on the Board’s criteria.

The Board’s eligibility criteria are intended to assist in the achievement of public policy objectives. One of these objectives is that languages education is intended to encourage the acquisition of a second language by students, not merely enabling greater proficiency by students in their existing language(s). A second objective is that the Board intends that students learn and develop additional knowledge and skills as a result of undertaking HSC courses over a period of two years.

2012 HSC language course enrolments

The most popular language subjects were:
- French (1894 enrolments over three courses)
- Japanese (1654 over five courses)
- Chinese (967 over five courses)
- Italian (774 over three courses).

The most popular single language courses were:
- French Continuers (921 enrolments)
- Chinese Background Speakers (826)
- French Beginners (754)
- Japanese Continuers (722).

The total number of candidates enrolled in the 2012 HSC was 76,174.

What we were told
- There are many reasons for the relatively low participation in languages in senior secondary school, including:
  - entrenched perceptions that language courses are ‘too hard’ and/or ‘only for the more able students’. Students widely believe that, for the same level of effort, they can do comparatively better in other subjects, and therefore obtain a higher Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)
  - low parental and community value placed on language learning
• a large number of other Stage 6 courses are regarded as more vocationally relevant
• in Stage 6, language classes are small and often taught in atypical circumstances (eg outside of the regular timetable), requiring students to have more self-direction.

• There are differing views about the need for and efficacy of the Board’s eligibility criteria. Some consider that eligibility criteria ensure a level playing field, allowing students to learn with students who have had a similar exposure to the language and encouraging students who are second language learners to undertake study in language(s). Others believe that the criteria place unfair restrictions on students who have some experience of the language. This is particularly the case with the criteria for Continuers courses in languages for which Heritage and Background Speakers courses exist.

• The Board should bring greater clarity, openness and transparency into decision-making processes relating to eligibility criteria, and continue to help school principals achieve greater consistency in their decisions.

• The course terminology ‘Beginners’, ‘Continuers’, ‘Heritage’ and ‘Background Speakers’ may potentially stigmatise students. The Board should consider using terms that are more descriptive of the level of complexity in the course, such as the nomenclature currently used in other subjects (eg Standard and Advanced in English). Further, the Board may wish to adopt the notion of ‘multiple entry points’ into language courses, rather than ‘eligibility criteria’.

The place of Aboriginal Languages

The introduction of the Board’s Aboriginal Languages K–10 Syllabus in 2005 was a major development. Nowadays, Aboriginal languages are widely taught in primary schools (government and Catholic) in regional and remote NSW. In 2012, 2389 students undertook Aboriginal languages in government schools. Classes are often delivered by community members who are casually employed as teaching assistants, working alongside the classroom teacher.

Several Aboriginal languages – Wiradjuri, Dhurga, Gamilaraay, Bundjalung, Paakantyi and Gumbaynggirr – are currently taught in secondary schools as the mandatory 100 hours of language study requirement in Stages 4–5.

Aboriginal Languages is offered as an elective subject at Stage 5; however, uptake is limited (in 2012, enrolments were 47 and the majority of these were in Life Skills courses).

Currently, there is no Stage 6 Aboriginal Languages syllabus framework. Work has previously been undertaken in this area by NSW on behalf of the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is also currently developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages framework for Foundation to Year 12.
1.2 Complementary providers

NSW has a long tradition of language provision by complementary providers. These providers give students the opportunity for language acquisition, language maintenance, intercultural awareness and improved social cohesion, enabling students to study a language that is not offered by the ‘home school’. Complementary providers therefore fill a gap in the mainstream schools system.

Some complementary providers are government schools where learning can contribute towards attainment of a Board credential, in others learning has traditionally been ‘informal’.

**Department of Education and Communities providers**

- Saturday School of Community Languages (SSCL) operates in 16 locations across NSW and offers students in Years 7–12 from government and non-government schools the opportunity to study 26 languages up to and including Stage 6. The SSCL is for students who wish to study a community language not offered by their home school and who have a background in the language. All teachers are government accredited and use the Board’s syllabuses.
- The Open High School (OHS) is a government secondary distance education school offering courses in 13 languages to students in Years 9–12.
- The Distance High Schools are government schools across NSW that cater for students who are not able to access languages in their own school and/or require flexible learning programs.
- TAFE also offers Stage 6 language courses through its distance provider, the Open Training and Education Network (oTEN).

**What we were told**

- Schools do not always promote languages education with external providers due to potential consequent reductions in the staffing establishment in the school. There is also significant administration (‘paperwork’) for the home school when a student undertakes a language subject with SSCL or OHS.

**Outside tutors**

Outside tutors may be engaged privately by students for instruction in the Board’s Language syllabuses where the student wishes their languages education to receive accreditation and contribute towards achievement of a certification (e.g. the HSC).

The outside tutor must present their program, the units of work, the assessment schedule and their qualifications to the principal of the school the student attends, and the principal must be satisfied that the Board’s requirements for the HSC program of study will be met. Outside tutors provide tuition in languages that are not available at the school, the Open High School or other distance education providers.

**Community Languages Schools Program**

Community languages schools, previously known as ‘ethnic languages schools’, are out-of-hours language schools for K–12 students in government and non-government schools.

The CLSP is administered on a grants basis by the Department of Education and Communities. To receive a grant, CLSP schools must be incorporated organisations and have education as an objective. The NSW and Commonwealth governments co-fund each CLSP student $120 per year. In addition, there is a one-off $2500 establishment grant.
In NSW, there are currently 250 incorporated organisations that operate 277 CLSP schools in more than 439 locations, with 2353 teachers and more than 30 000 students.

As part of the current NSW funding guidelines, CLSP schools are required to use the Board’s language syllabuses or develop and teach curriculum based on the Board’s K–10 languages framework and to provide a minimum of two hours of language instruction per week.

**What we were told**

- CLSP enhances cultural maintenance, tolerance and diversity.
- CLSP students are a feeder for the SSCL.
- The majority of CLSP schools operate in government schools on a gratis rent arrangement, but may not have access to schools’ ICT equipment.
- Many CLSP teachers work on a voluntary basis.
- CLSP teachers may undertake professional development in teaching. In 2012, 205 CLSP teachers successfully completed the Certificate in Language Teaching (a 60-hour course) provided by the University of Sydney.
- CLSP would welcome a voluntary common reporting framework.
- Historically, some criticism has been levelled at CLSP schools, including:
  - lack of rigour because there is no mandated assessment
  - lack of formal qualifications among some teachers
  - undue focus on culture and/or religion.
- There are a number of community schools, which may or may not teach language, that operate outside the Department-administered CLSP system. These schools may receive support from foreign governments and foreign government organisations.
1.3 Post-school language learning

TAFE

Since early 2011, language courses at the TAFE institutes across NSW have operated on a commercial basis. Over that time, enrolments have fallen – although there have been increases at individual institutes. The TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute at Ultimo has the largest language program in NSW. Most of the students are professionals who take evening or Saturday classes. Languages taught are Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Korean, Indonesian, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Arabic.

University

Over the past decade, the number of languages offered in Australian universities has dropped from 66 to 29. Over half of all Australian universities with language programs are involved in collaborative languages education arrangements, including sharing resources and facilities.

Private colleges

Private colleges offer accredited courses across a wide range of industries, including languages. They increasingly provide pathways to higher education.

Community colleges

Community colleges are not-for-profit, community-owned providers of adult and youth education, training and learning in a local environment. They commonly use local language resources and are therefore able to readily cater to changing patterns of demand.

What we were told

- Post-school languages education has traditionally been the domain of higher education. Enrolments in vocational education are increasing (during and post school) and, accordingly, further thought should be given to the delivery of languages and intercultural courses (especially for business, hospitality and retail) at TAFE and other post-school providers.

- Where students are on the university pathway, there are two types of bonus points programs that encourage the study of languages at the senior secondary school level:
  - automatic ATAR bonus: available to students who successfully complete a language course at the senior secondary level. The scheme is operational in Victoria and other selected Australian universities. The bonus points can be used for entry to any degree program
  - course-based bonus: available to students who wish to gain entry into particular language-affiliated courses. The bonus points are usually administered by the university (including all Group of Eight (Go8) universities), and the number of bonus points depends on the student’s attainment in the course at the senior secondary level.
2 Best practice and recent developments in languages education

This section offers brief analysis of best practice in teaching pedagogies and language learning styles (focusing on primary school) and recent developments on the languages education landscape in NSW, around Australia, and around the world. For more comprehensive analysis, please see the companion reference paper.

2.1 Languages education programs

Languages education programs can be segmented into four main categories, from language awareness through to bilingual programs. A common feature of the programs is that intercultural skills and capabilities are included as a means of exploring the link between language and culture. The current K–10 Board Language syllabuses explore this through the ‘Moving between cultures’ outcomes.

(a) Language awareness programs

- Language awareness programs are generally found in the early years of primary schooling and may be taught by primary teachers who do not have a language background.
- Language awareness programs involve reflecting on how language is learned, on the similarities and differences between languages (alphabet, sentence structure, orthography/script, sounds/accents) and on the conventions of language.

(b) Language sensitisation or language encounter programs

- Like language awareness programs, language sensitisation or language encounter programs are generally found in the early years of primary schooling and tend to be delivered by generalist primary classroom teachers with some training in languages, and can also be taught collaboratively with a native speaker or a community support teacher.
- Language sensitisation programs involve presenting students with ‘tasters’ of language(s) to foster linguistic and intercultural awareness. These tasters include learning common words and phrases in the target language(s).
(c) **Language acquisition (competence) programs**

- Language acquisition (competence) programs involve students acquiring a second language, often to a defined level of proficiency. This type of language program emphasises progression and requires concentrated study of the language as a subject in its own right.
- Teachers of this program require linguistic and pedagogical proficiency. Accordingly, most teachers of primary language competency programs are specialist language teachers.

(d) **Immersion and partial-immersion programs**

- The concept of immersion language teaching refers to teaching the curriculum through the medium of the second language, i.e., the second language is used by the teacher and students as the language of communication and work.
- Some programs use ‘partial immersion’, delivering one or two KLAs in a target language. One such methodology is content and language integrated learning (CLIL).
- Again, teachers require linguistic and pedagogical proficiency and therefore most primary school language competency programs are taught by specialist language teachers.

2.2 **The optimal age to begin language programs**

- In some countries, second language acquisition begins from preschool, whereas in other countries it is introduced in the upper primary years.
- There is a general trend, however, towards an early start.
- Research on the optimal age is conflicting, and the diverse nature of languages education programs means that it is very difficult to make meaningful comparisons. The fundamental difference is that younger learners rely much more on intuition and an innate ability for language learning, whereas older learners rely more on their general cognitive abilities and the knowledge gained from their first language.
- The research on both sides about the optimal age to begin languages education highlights that the quality of the program and the teaching, together with the time spent on task, and not the age of the learner, are the ultimate determinants of language proficiency.

2.3 **Time and intensity in language programs**

The factors that are critically important to attaining second language proficiency are:
- the overall amount of language learning time available during a student’s education
- the distribution of language learning time within a week
- opportunities for using the language outside the classroom
- the quality of the language program and teaching.

2.4 **Languages education continuity**

The Board’s K–10 language syllabuses can facilitate progression from primary to secondary school. However, there is frequently a disconnection between primary and secondary teaching and pedagogies. Further, given the fact that most students in NSW change schools between primary school and secondary school, language continuity has eluded many systems and schools.
The middle school approach to dealing with continuity issues

In some education circles, there is mounting impetus to institute a ‘middle school’ approach to teaching and learning in Australia. This approach, widespread in the United States and other parts of the OECD, focuses on students aged between 10 and 14 (Years 5–8), a time during which the development needs of students are physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally demanding.

2.5 Languages proficiency frameworks

Languages proficiency frameworks are used as a tool to ensure that language learners have a tangible structure on which they can progress to language proficiency. Proficiency frameworks have become increasingly important, with increased integration across regions and internationally. Examples include the Common European Languages Framework and the Chinese Proficiency Test (known widely as HSK).

2.6 ICT in languages education

In all areas of school education, there are many existing and emerging teaching methods that are aided by information and communications technologies. This is especially so in the domain of languages education, where significant inroads have already been made.

2.7 Language teachers

Arguably, the most important factor affecting the coherence and sustainability of languages education in NSW is the availability of qualified language teachers. There are significant issues regarding language teachers in NSW:

- part-time or casual employment with little real presence or support in schools
- marginalisation in schools from mainstream curriculum areas
- lack of a career path in languages education
- lack of qualified teachers, especially at the primary school level
- poor retention of qualified teachers in language teaching.

2.8 Australian curriculum

- ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures’ and ‘Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia’ are embedded as cross-curriculum priorities in all learning areas of the Australian curriculum. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. This knowledge and understanding will enrich students’ ability to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia, while the Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia priority ensures that students learn about and recognise the diversity within and between the countries of the Asia region. Students will develop knowledge and understanding of Asian societies, cultures, beliefs and environments, and the connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia, and the rest of the world.
• ‘Intercultural understanding’, ‘Ethical understanding’ and ‘Personal and social capability’ are embedded across all learning areas of the Australian curriculum as general capabilities. General capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that, together with curriculum content in each learning area and the cross-curriculum priorities, will assist students to live and work successfully in the 21st century.

• The ACARA Board approved the development of F–10 syllabuses in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese, and a Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

• ACARA will undertake further work to determine the process and timelines for developing the Australian curriculum in additional languages beyond those listed above (in the first instance, for Auslan, classical languages, Hindi and Turkish).

• The Board has yet to determine the timeline for implementation of the Australian curriculum regarding languages and will continue to provide advice to ACARA on the development of the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

2.9 Australia in the Asian Century: Australian Government White Paper

The Australian Government’s Australia in the Asian Century White Paper was released on 28 October 2012. Chapter 6, entitled ‘Building capabilities’, discusses the need to build ‘Asia relevant’ capabilities that are both specialised and broad based. It outlines the skills and education systems that will play a fundamental role in developing these capabilities.

• The national objectives 10 and 11 are specifically relevant to broader languages education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Every Australian student will have significant exposure to studies of Asia across the curriculum to increase their cultural knowledge and skills and enable them to be active in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All schools will engage with at least one school in Asia to support the teaching of a priority Asian language, including through increased use of the National Broadband Network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. All Australian students will have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to undertake a continuous course of study in an Asian language throughout their years of schooling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All students will have access to at least one priority Asian language; these will be Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian and Japanese.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Licensed from the Commonwealth of Australia under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence. The Commonwealth of Australia does not necessarily endorse the content of this publication.

• The White Paper did not include specific funding or implementation details; however, these may emerge through the National Plan for School Improvement and other COAG initiatives and programs.

2.10 The Federal Coalition’s languages plan

In *Policy for Schools: Students First*, the Federal Coalition outlined a target that 40% of Year 12 students will study a language within a decade. There is no explicit specification about which language is to be studied. The plan does not prioritise any languages.

3 The way forward: a broader, more inclusive languages education for NSW

Languages education is highly valued in many countries around the world. In those countries, second language skills are cultivated from a young age in formal school settings. For example, in most European countries, students learn their native tongue plus two additional languages during primary school.

Formal languages education is, however, less of a priority in English-speaking countries such as Australia, even though Australia is a multicultural and multilingual society. Complacency regarding languages education is due to a multitude of factors – including, but not limited to, the ascendancy of English as the world’s lingua franca. This is demonstrated by the fact that much of the non-English-speaking world, especially among the OECD countries, now learns English during their formal schooling. While the value placed on languages education may be different among non-English-speaking communities in Australia, 81% of the total population aged 5 years and over speak only English at home.

The marginalisation of languages education reflects that policy in the area has been piecemeal, contested and, at times, inconsistent. Further, there are perennial issues regarding the provision of language acquisition programs, most specifically the availability of qualified teachers, which means that school sectors and schools struggle to provide coherent and sustainable programs. Furthermore, students do not easily make the link between a broad, inclusive languages education and career opportunities early enough. Instead, they may opt for other courses that they perceive as more vocationally relevant.

Yet, contemporary Australian society is multilingual and a site of multiculturalism due to our historical migration policies and pervasive globalisation. There is an ever-increasing need, therefore, for students to harness their language experience where it already exists, or to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding within a broader, more inclusive languages education where it does not.

NSW education must provide students with optimal opportunities to develop as well-rounded individuals in order to participate in society as informed and engaged citizens, locally and globally, and to contribute to our economic development. Through an explicit broadening of the scope of languages education from a focus on acquisition to the development of intercultural capabilities and
language awareness, community attitudes to language learning and the perpetual provision issues can start to be addressed. This is especially important for Australia at the dawn of what has been termed the ‘Asian century’.

The impetus for introducing a broader, more inclusive languages education in NSW can be distilled into three rationales, which affect individual citizens and society as a whole.

(a) Cognitive learning and development

A broader, more inclusive languages education will assist NSW students in developing an understanding of how languages work. This will facilitate metalinguistic awareness (the ability to reflect on the use of language), which can be used to enhance a student’s cognitive and communication skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). The student’s learning and development will therefore advance, especially in relation to problem solving (patterns), divergent thinking processes, and more efficient use of brain functions. These skills and capabilities are transferable, so that what is learned in one language may be applied to the learning of other languages.

(b) Intercultural skills and capabilities

A broader, more inclusive languages education will provide students with the opportunity to learn about Australia and other cultures. For students, this will foster insights into identity and society and thereby assist with their ability to develop an understanding of themselves in relation to other people, other groups, other cultures and the world at large.

A broader, more inclusive languages education has the capacity to strengthen the diversity of contemporary Australian society and promote social cohesion, as well as assist with cultural maintenance for immigrants and their descendants.

For Aboriginal Australians, a broader, more inclusive languages education will play a vital role in sustaining, and in some cases revitalising, their cultural identity. It is also central to the language revitalisation and reclamation effort, which is fundamental to achieving social justice and reconciliation, and contributing to improved social cohesion between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. A broader languages education will also enable elements such as art, music and dance to be taught within the K–10 curriculum framework.

(c) International engagement, especially in the Asia-Pacific region

A broader, more inclusive languages education will lay the foundations for a more effective international social, economic and cultural engagement in the future. Native and background speakers of languages other than English will be championed as the brokers of intercultural capabilities and understandings, as well as language acquisition – all of which are central to Australia’s future success internationally on social, cultural and economic levels. These innate skills must be better harnessed and used within the mainstream education system, with new value placed on these skills by Australian society in order to advance our relationships with strategically important neighbours and the wider world.
3.1 Learning through Languages: initial proposals

Learning through Languages provides the foundations for a broader, more inclusive languages education for all students in NSW. They offer enhanced learning opportunities for the spectrum of students – recognising those students who arrive at school with language skills and experiences, as well as those without prior exposure to languages other than English. Taken together, the proposals will assist in preparing NSW students to participate as effective citizens in multilingual and multicultural Australia and the world, as well as lay the foundation for a coherent and sustainable languages policy for NSW.

PROPOSAL 1: A new K–10 Languages curriculum framework

The Board proposes a reconceptualisation of the current curriculum framework of language learning. The proposed framework would be sufficiently flexible to support and extend existing language programs and current practices, while also presenting feasible pathways for primary schools across all sectors to engage in languages education for the first time. The curriculum framework articulates into Stage 4 and then into subsequent revisions of the Stage 5 and Stage 6 curriculums.

(a) Creating a new Languages key learning area in primary school

An initial step in the new proposed K–10 compulsory curriculum framework is the creation of a new Languages KLA in primary school. This will signal to the education and wider communities the value placed on languages education by the NSW Government and is in line with the Commonwealth imperatives outlined in the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper.

The new K–10 curriculum will present a framework of knowledge, understanding and skills in languages education in three broad strands.

Strand I: Language awareness (related to the current ‘Making linguistic connections’)

Students develop knowledge and understanding of how their first language and other languages work.

Strand II: Intercultural understanding (related to the current ‘Moving between cultures’)

Students develop the capacity to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures.

Strand III: Language learning (related to the current ‘Using language’)

Students learn to communicate in another language.

Students will be required to engage in at least two out of the three strands across primary school, with Strand III outcomes in primary school encouraged where resources are available. Provision of languages education should be sustained at least at the current levels.
(b) Delivering the mandatory 100 hours of languages education in Stage 4

In Stage 4, it will be mandatory for schools to deliver 100 hours of Strand III outcomes. Strands I and II will also be incorporated.

Schools will have the flexibility to choose whether to begin the study of a new language or continue the language taught in primary school for the 100 hours, or to teach more than one language.

It is also proposed that, for the first time, the language studied for the mandatory 100 hours will be specified on the RoSA. That is, under Mandatory Requirements, the RoSA will note, for example, ‘Languages – French’ or ‘Languages – Aboriginal Languages – Wiradjuri’.

Also, where a student has recently arrived in Australia, the school may deliver the mandatory 100 hours of language in English as a Second Language (ESL). This will be noted on the student’s RoSA.

(c) Developing K–10 exemplar modules and other support materials to support languages education

The Board will support the continuum of languages education by developing K–10 exemplar modules and other support materials that are cross-curricular, modular and task-based (see below). This will enable maximum flexibility for schools to maintain and strengthen their existing language program and introduce new outcomes that will prepare students for local and global citizenship.

The proposed materials recognise:

• that students come to school with a range of knowledge, understanding and skills in language(s) and, specifically, that their first language may or may not be English
• that there is a shortage of specialist primary language teachers. Therefore, materials for the mandatory outcomes will be developed to capitalise on the existing language resources of the classroom and the community. This will enable the delivery of mandatory outcomes in both English and other languages
• the danger of overcrowding the primary curriculum. Therefore, materials will be written to support flexible delivery so that the language outcomes may be integrated with other KLAs
• that knowledge, understanding and skills developed through all three strands can be applied to subsequent language learning in Stages 5 and 6, and beyond.

The proposed materials could also be used in the delivery of CLSP schools. The Board will liaise with the Community Languages Schools Board to determine how to best support this work.

What is cross-curricular?

The outcomes for Strand III – Language Learning will be developed so that they can be achieved while engaging with learning in KLAs such as PDHPE, Creative Arts and others. This will address concerns about the ‘crowded curriculum’ and encourage languages education in meaningful contexts.

What is modular?

In order to allow for the greatest possible flexibility and to accommodate multiple entry and exit points, the proposed mandatory outcomes will be housed in a series of modules that can be delivered independently or as part of a sequence. Each module will include the relevant outcome(s), the prior learning required, task(s) and extension material.
What is task-based?

The materials will link outcomes to tasks that focus on authentic language use. Such tasks could include learning and participating in a PE activity, making and describing artworks, or learning and singing a song.
PROPOSAL 2: A new approach to post-compulsory languages education

The Board recognises that language electives experience a low rate of flow-through and participation in the senior secondary years. To encourage languages education beyond the K–8 provision, the Board will consider:

- reviewing the HSC pattern of study requirements to acknowledge the difficulty of language courses (particularly the time on task required to learn scripted languages)
- considering alternative nomenclatures for the Stage 6 differentiated language courses that use numerical or similar structure, eg Japanese 1, Japanese 2, etc., rather than the current descriptor
- considering alternative approaches to the current eligibility criteria for Stage 6 differential language courses and adopting an approach that addresses the need for transparent, consistent and fair decisions and the public policy objectives of languages education
- working collaboratively with other education stakeholders to encourage the establishment of a uniform ATAR Languages Bonus Points Scheme in NSW
- supporting the incorporation of elective units of competency in Asian and other languages into relevant Board VET courses, eg Business Services, Hospitality, Retail Services, and Tourism and Events.

PROPOSAL 3: Broader recognition of language proficiency

This proposal endeavours to give greater recognition to the language achievement of students in a variety of school and non-school contexts.

Developing a Languages Proficiency Framework and Passport for K–12

The proposed Languages Proficiency Framework will have a series of levels that indicate and describe students’ achievement as they progress along the language-learning continuum.

The proposed framework will provide a common standard for language competency across NSW in formal and informal education settings. This will:

- enable teachers in schools (including CLSP teachers) to indicate the level of language proficiency and achievement of a student, using the Languages Proficiency Framework. Support materials will also be developed that will provide teachers with quality assurance guidance to ensure consistent application of the framework
- enable students to ‘carry’ their level of language proficiency to different schools and/or across school systems, including the transition from primary to secondary school via a Languages Passport
- enable students to record their achievement in school and community languages schools and/or the proficiency level attained on the Board’s ‘Up2Now’ extracurricular tool and include it in their RoSA package.
PROPOSAL 4: Strengthening and supporting the provision of Aboriginal languages

This proposal recognises the importance of support for the development, reclamation and revitalisation of Aboriginal languages.

Developing an Aboriginal Languages curriculum framework and consolidating and extending support for teaching Aboriginal languages

This proposal will develop curriculum and support for Aboriginal languages, and may include:

• developing targeted programming support materials for the K–10 Aboriginal Languages syllabus. The materials will provide support to Aboriginal community languages teachers to implement the syllabus in primary and secondary schools throughout NSW
• establishing, together with the AECG, an online compendium of Aboriginal Languages resources. The resources will be available on terms determined by the AECG, in consultation with the communities and the Board
• allowing more than one Aboriginal language to be taught during the mandatory 100 hours, as the location of some schools is on the boundaries of Aboriginal groups and more than one Aboriginal language is used
• developing a language reclamation and revitalisation module for delivery within the HSC Aboriginal Studies course. This module would teach language reclamation and revitalisation from a social science perspective
• developing a Stage 6 syllabus framework for Aboriginal Languages. As a framework, the syllabus could have wider application and be developed in collaboration and cooperation with other jurisdictions (as occurs for some community languages).

In strengthening and extending Aboriginal languages education in NSW, Aboriginal custodianship will be acknowledged.

PROPOSAL 5: Raising the profile and supporting the delivery of languages education

A significant challenge is educating the community about the cognitive, social, and cultural benefits of languages education. To achieve this, the profile of a broader, more inclusive languages education must be raised.

The Board proposes that a NSW Advisory Panel on Languages and a Board Curriculum Reference Group on Languages be established. These groups will provide appropriate forums to assist in raising the profile of languages education in NSW, as well as support and expand its current delivery.

(a) Establishing a NSW languages advisory panel

It is proposed that a languages advisory panel, reporting to the Minister for Education through the NSW Schools Advisory Council, be established. The panel will be comprised of key stakeholders from the NSW education community, complementary languages education providers, and post-secondary languages education groups.

The remit for the panel will be to identify and establish synergies in provision and practice within and across the school sectors and tertiary pathways in five broad areas:

i. Establishing languages education clusters whereby a group of schools coordinates and provides the same languages or related programs. These schools may be geographically co-located or geographically disparate.
ii. Establishing mechanisms for comprehensive data collection, analysis and evaluation in relation to languages education in NSW, across all school sectors and out of school.

iii. Identifying further opportunities to harness the expertise and opportunities offered by background language speakers, especially community language providers. Develop resources to provide guidance and careers advice about the opportunities that can arise from a broader, more inclusive languages education.

iv. Extending and/or sourcing business-funded internships and scholarships and/or community partnerships for students in school and university to have in-country experiences. This will demonstrate career pathways to which a broader, more inclusive languages education may contribute.

v. Investigating how technology can further enhance languages education through providing meaningful ‘real time’ language experiences with other language learners in partner schools around NSW, Australia and internationally. This is especially valuable for rural and remote schools.

(b) Establishing a Languages curriculum reference group

In the same manner as other Board reference groups, the newly established Curriculum Reference Group on Languages will liaise with industry, business and the wider community and will report to the Board. The remit of the reference group will be to assist the Board with three initial initiatives:

i. Extending the languages pathway by investigating how the Languages curriculum may be extended to preschool education.

ii. Consulting and making recommendations to the Board about the development of clear principles and procedures in relation to eligibility criteria, noting that the criteria exist to assist in the achievement of public policy objectives. The nomenclature of Stage 6 differentiated language courses should also be considered.

iii. Advising the Board of innovations and recent developments in languages education, including how technology may be better used to provide languages education.

PROPOSAL 6: Further national contributions to languages education

Advocating to the Commonwealth reforms that work towards the future coherence and sustainability of languages education in NSW

The Commonwealth has a long history of making policy statements and contributions to languages education policy, the most recent of which is the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper.

Through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and other national forums, NSW may wish to advocate for the following Commonwealth contributions:

- further explanation of how the objectives outlined in the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper will be funded and implemented
- supporting the development of a Stage 5 framework for community languages, enabling students to continue their community languages education begun during the primary school years. The framework could be developed through CCAFL, if endorsed by ACACA
- full and partial scholarships for university students who wish to undertake primary and secondary school education degrees and specialise in languages education
- funding for innovation in languages education, such as trialling language clusters and/or partial immersion trials.
The Board may also advocate for the following Commonwealth assistance for current language teachers:

- ongoing provision of scholarships for in-country experiences
- funding and cooperation for the establishment of postgraduate qualifications:
  - in using ICT pedagogy for language teaching
  - for primary generalist teachers with a language background to deliver CLIL or immersion programs
  - for secondary language teachers in specialist teaching modes such as CLIL or immersion programs
- funding for community language school teachers attaining formal language teaching qualifications.

The Board now seeks your views on the Learning through Languages initial proposals.

You can have your say by completing our online survey at <www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview/survey.html>. Please read this consultation paper before you respond to the online survey. You may wish to read the companion reference paper for information about best practice and recent developments in languages education in Australia and internationally. The reference paper can be downloaded from <www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview>.