



# Learning through Languages

## Review of Languages Education in NSW

# Overview for consultation



## 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

### What is current languages provision like in NSW schools?

About 30–40% 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 with 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 language learning. This generally occurs in classrooms with students of different levels of exposure and ability. In most cases, elective language classes in Years 9 and 10 are quite small in number.

By the HSC, only about 10% of students undertake a language course. 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.

There are 63 senior secondary language courses. Some languages have differentiated courses – Beginners, Continuers, Extension, Heritage and Background Speakers – and entry is governed by the Board's eligibility criteria.

### 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*.



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### 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.



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## 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 consultation

The Board is seeking your views on the six initial proposals for consultation in *Learning through Languages*. The consultation period is during Term 4, 2013 (9 October – 13 December 2013).

You can have your say by completing our online survey at [www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview/survey.html](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview/survey.html).

The Board will also be conducting a number of metropolitan and regional consultations with principals and language teachers. Registration is via the EventBrite link on the Board's website at [www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/languagesreview).

A consultation report will be provided to the Minister including recommendations, and it is anticipated that a NSW Languages Education Policy will be released during 2014.

Any queries may be directed to [languagesreview@bos.nsw.edu.au](mailto:languagesreview@bos.nsw.edu.au).





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## A new K–10 languages curriculum framework

Current	Proposed
<p>Languages is not currently a key learning area (KLA) in primary school. There is no requirement for students to study languages in primary school</p>	<p>Languages will be established as a mandatory KLA in primary school</p>
<p>Languages are taught as part of the Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) KLA or during the 20% of primary school curriculum available for 'Additional Activities'</p>	<p>A new K–10 languages curriculum framework will be developed, with three strands:</p> <p>Strand 1: Language awareness outcomes – students develop knowledge and understanding of how their first language and other languages work</p> <p>Strand 2: Intercultural understanding outcomes – students develop the capacity to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures</p> <p>Strand 3: Language learning outcomes – students learn to communicate in another language</p>
<p>Between 30% and 40% of NSW primary schools have a language program, with the majority in the Sydney metropolitan area</p>	<p>All students will study programs in at least two of the strands during primary school</p>
<p>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</p> <p>The language teacher is either a specialist primary school language teacher or a teaching assistant</p>	<p>The new Languages KLA and curriculum framework will enable all students to experience meaningful and sustained language experiences in primary school</p> <p>The breadth of the languages framework and its integration with other KLAs will mean that language programs can be delivered by both generalist and specialist primary school teachers</p>
<p>Commonly, the mandatory 100 hours of languages education in Stage 4 or Stage 5 are delivered in classrooms of students of varying language experience and skills</p>	<p>One hundred hours of languages education will be mandatory in Stage 4, with increased flexibility for schools such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when to deliver it</li> <li>• how to deliver it, eg in two 50-hour blocks</li> <li>• for students with rich language background, the opportunity to supplement their English literacy</li> </ul>
<p>Sometimes languages 'tasters' are offered in Year 7, whereby students are exposed to, for example, a term of Japanese, a term of French and a term of Latin</p> <p>Students may then elect to continue with one of these languages in Years 8, 9 or 10 to satisfy the mandatory 100 hours requirement</p>	<p>New K–10 exemplar modules and other support materials will be developed to support a broader, more inclusive languages education</p>
<p>The number of students who study languages as an elective in Years 9 and 10 is relatively low</p>	<p>All students will study languages from primary school to Stage 4, providing a broader base for elective study in later years</p>



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## Senior secondary languages education

### Current

There is a wide range of Preliminary and HSC (Stage 6) language courses available

There are 63 language syllabuses available to Stage 6 students

Currently, however, only around 10% of students undertake a language course in Stage 6

Language courses are differentiated and include Beginners, Continuers, Extension, Heritage and Background Speakers

However, not all courses are available in all languages, and eligibility criteria govern entry into courses

Only about 10% of NSW students undertake a language course for their HSC. Reasons for this include:

- 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
- staffing and resource issues

### Proposed

HSC pattern of study requirements will be reviewed to acknowledge the difficulty of language courses, particularly the time on task needed to learn scripted languages

Alternative nomenclatures for the Stage 6 differentiated language courses will be considered to make them consistent with other Stage 6 courses

Alternative approaches to the current eligibility criteria for Stage 6 differentiated language courses will be considered to address the need for transparent, consistent and fair decisions and the public policy objectives of languages education

The Board will work collaboratively with other education stakeholders to encourage the establishment of a uniform ATAR Languages Bonus Points Scheme in NSW





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## Complementary providers

### Current

Although there are more than 30 000 students across NSW who learn a language at a community language school, there is currently no uniform way of assessing and reporting the skills they have developed in these programs

There is considerable variation in the content and scope of community language school programs

There is no standard method for recognising and building on the language skills that students learn in community schools and other settings

### Proposed

A Languages Proficiency Framework which indicates and describes student achievement as they progress along the language-learning continuum will be developed

The framework will assist in providing a common standard for language competency across NSW in formal and informal education settings

Support materials to ensure quality assurance regarding the proficiency framework will be developed

A Languages Passport in which students can 'carry' their achievement from school to school and across sectors will be established





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## Aboriginal languages

### Current

In 2005, the Board's introduction of the *Aboriginal Languages K–10 Syllabus* was a major development. Since then the Board has worked extensively with local communities regarding Aboriginal languages.

Nowadays, Aboriginal languages are taught in primary schools (government and Catholic), mostly in regional and remote NSW.

In some circumstances, students of different Aboriginal language backgrounds attend the same secondary school due to relocation and settlement patterns.

Language reclamation and revitalisation is significant work for Aboriginal culture and heritage.

A Stage 6 syllabus framework for Aboriginal Languages does not currently exist.

### Proposed

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.

