NSW GOVERNMENT | Education

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES PROGRAM K-6 GUIDELINES

Context

In 1981, 37 full-time equivalent (FTE) community language programs K-6 were established in New South Wales government schools. At that stage, fewer than 4,000 students were involved in the program. A further 206.8 (FTE) programs were established between 1982 and 1999, bringing the total number of programs to 243.8 (FTE). Currently, over 44,000 students are involved in the program.

Students in New South Wales government primary schools which offer community language programs have the opportunity of acquiring, maintaining and developing a community language in the course of the normal school day.

The focus in community language programs is communicative competence. Students are encouraged to communicate effectively through the development of skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the community language.

Effective community language programs are characterised by the integration of the language into the curriculum activities of the school rather than the teaching of the language as a separate subject in isolation.

This document has been prepared by officers of the Curriculum Early Years and Primary Learning in the Educational Standards Directorate, in consultation with teachers of community languages K-6 and their supervisors and principals, to assist primary schools in organising and implementing their community language programs.
It is designed also to assist schools considering applying for the establishment of community language programs K-6.

Key policies and support documents

The *Multicultural Plan* outlines strategies to be undertaken across the Department that aim to promote community harmony and counter racism and support the specific needs of students from language backgrounds other than English and their families. The Department reports on achievements against the plan in its *Multicultural Policies and Services Report*.

Priority 1: quality teaching and leadership

Outcome: Teachers and leaders have the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality teaching programs and services that meet the needs of students and clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

1.4 Employ specialist staff to deliver teaching programs and services which assist in meeting the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse NSW

Community languages teachers assist students to develop and maintain their first or heritage Languages.

In addition to this policy and plan, a number of other policies and curriculum documents also shape the contextual framework for EAL/D education in schools: the Department's *Anti-Racism Policy*; the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration,* the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*; and the *K-10 Curriculum Framework* and *Statement of Equity Principles* developed by the NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA).

Applying for a program

Applications for the allocation of new community language programs are sought from primary and central schools throughout the state each year that funding is available. Schools with existing programs are also given the opportunity to vary their allocations.

New positions are allocated to schools based on the following criteria:

- the community language is spoken by the local school community;
- there is demonstrated staff support for the program;
- there is demonstrated parental and community support for the program;
- adequate accommodation in the form of a classroom is available;
- availability of language specific teacher.

New positions are allocated on the understanding that:

- the minimum community language teaching and learning time allocation is 2 hours per week per student group;
- the community language class groups are of approximately normal class size; and
- teachers appointed to these positions should be optimally engaged in teaching community language classes within the guidelines set down by this document.

All applications must be endorsed by the school principal prior to consideration by Curriculum Early Years and Primary Learning in the Educational Standards Directorate.

Objectives of the program

NSW is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse societies in the world. The people of NSW represent diverse cultures, languages, beliefs, practices, families, experiences and outlooks. This diversity includes migrants and children of migrants as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and is reflected in the Department's learning and working environments. Almost 30 percent of students in NSW public schools and more than 40 percent of students in Departmental preschools are from language backgrounds other than English.

Languages are closely linked to the essentially humanistic, cultural and intellectual reasons for making education compulsory. Bilingualism can foster more reflective and imaginative dispositions in citizens, and the principles of democratic discourse, participation and opportunity which Australia proclaims also find resonance with language study since the bulk of humanity lives in societies and continues traditions forged outside of English.

When combined with language skills, these understandings that have the potential to:

- improve understanding within Australia's diverse society
- contribute to the development of a more harmonious society
- increase our international standing as a multicultural and multilingual nation, and
- provide sound reasons for developing our language background resources for the advantage of all Australians.

More specifically, as a result of their involvement in community language programs, students will develop skills in the following areas.

Communication	Students will acquire, maintain and/or develop communication skills in the target community language.
Intercultural understanding	Students will develop a better understanding of their own cultures and/or the culture of the community language in the context of Australia's multicultural society.
Social cohesion	Students will develop an awareness of and an appreciation for the contribution of speakers of community languages to the making of our diverse society.
Self-esteem	The self-esteem of students with a background in the target language will be enhanced through the recognition of their language and culture within the school.
Language and intercultural awareness	Students will develop an awareness of and appreciation for the role and nature of language and culture in everyday life.
General knowledge	Students will gain knowledge and understanding of a range of subject matter related to their needs, interests and aspirations, as well as to other areas of their learning.
Learning how to learn	Students will develop responsibility for and involvement in the learning process.

The diversity of community language learners

Students involved in community language programs are either:

- maintaining and developing further communicative competence in their community language (L1 students), or
- acquiring communicative competence in the community language (L2 students).

To ensure that all students involved in the program benefit from the study of a community language, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of the student group when planning and programming.

Students may:

- have had exposure to both the target language and the culture of the target language (L1)
- have had exposure only to the target language
- have some background in the target language
- have had exposure to the culture of the target language
- be familiar with more than one script
- be speakers of a dialect of the target language,
- have no background in either the target language or the culture of the target language (L2).

Specialist community language teachers

Specialist teachers of community languages are appointed to schools additional to normal staffing establishment, to design and deliver teaching programs specifically for the identified student target group. Specialist community language teachers have the same status and working conditions as any other teacher. They are required to fulfill the same duties as other teaching personnel, i.e.

- follow the NESA K-10 Languages syllabus
- designs programs and learning experiences that are relevant to learners' needs and language levels
- submit a teaching program and daybook when required
- participate in playground duty rosters
- participate in staff and grade meetings
- participate in assemblies and sport activities
- written report on student learning outcomes from the NESA K-10 Languages syllabus
- participate in school based activities involving the wider school community such as meet the teacher nights and parent teacher interviews.

The role of community language teachers is to deliver language programs. They should therefore not be used in place of casual relief teachers or as support teachers.

Community language teachers, like other teachers, are entitled to weekly release from face-to-face teaching time. In the case of permanent part-time teachers, this entitlement is 22 minutes per day.
A casual supply teacher, employed at two or more schools for a total of five (full) days, is entitled to release time.

The teacher appointed to these positions should be optimally engaged in teaching the community language classes within the organisational patterns appropriate to the school and as set down in this document.

Community language teachers seeking permanent status must be approved by the department and have successfully undertaken a language fluency test in the community language. These language fluency tests will be arranged by Teacher Approvals, in conjunction with the University of Sydney.

Overseas trained teachers may be required to undertake the Proficiency English Assessment Test (PEAT) before an approval number is granted.

The program supervisor

It is important that the community language teacher is supervised by the executive for accountability and undertakes professional development. The community language teacher's program should be written in English and supported by specific examples in the target language.

Since the community language teacher's program is a work register and a public

document, it must be comprehensible to the supervisor and principal.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor of the community language program to become aware of the areas in which the community language teacher may need assistance and to advise on professional development needs. Community Languages teachers need to be included in the school plan and allocated an

annual budget for professional learning and resources from within school funds.

The supervisor participates in negotiations with the principal concerning timetabling, funding and teaching facilities.

Specialist community language teachers are also expected to fulfill requirements of the NESA accreditation process. They need to be aware that they may be expected to give demonstration lessons for the principal and supervisor from time to time. In this way, the principal and supervisor are aware of the areas in which the teacher may need assistance, e.g. ensuring that teaching methodology is consistent with current trends, that the subject matter being taught is consistent with the school's curriculum, that classroom management and discipline are consistent with the school's policy and that Departmental guidelines are being met.

It is also the responsibility of the supervisor of the community language program to ensure that the community language teacher:

- participates in staff meetings
- participates in school-based curriculum committees
- is invited to grade meetings
- is actively involved in extracurricular activities, such as sport carnivals, excursions, multicultural days, education and book weeks, speech nights
- reports on the progress of the community language program at staff meetings and in the school newsletter
- participates at assembly
- is rostered for playground duty
- is provided with appropriate weekly release from face-to-face teaching (RFF).

Guidelines for community language programs

The guidelines for the implementation of community language programs in primary schools specifically relate to time allocation, group structure and group size.

Community language teacher allocations are provided to schools on the condition they meet these guidelines each year. Allocations are reviewed annually using the Community Languages Programs K-6 (CLP) Census collection data.

Time allocation

The **minimum** time allocation for community language programs staffed by teachers additional to establishment is **2 hours per week per student group**.

Schools will need to consider how to allocate time for community language classes to ensure this requirement is met.

Teacher allocation	No of groups	Teaching time (hrs)	Assembly (hrs)	Release (hrs)	Sport (hrs)	Total (hrs)
0.4	4	4 x 2 = 8	3/4	3/4	–	9 1/2
0.5	5	5 x 2 = 10	3/4	1	–	11 3/4
0.6	6	6 x 2 = 12	3/4	1 1/4	–	14 1/4
1.0	10	10 x 2 = 20	3/4	2	1	23 3/4

Group structure

Schools which have specialist community language teachers are able to form a maximum of 10 classes where each group will be involved in the program for at least 2 hours per week. This is for one full-time teacher or equivalent.

Suggested group structure: Full-time programs	Suggested group structure: Part-time programs
The number of groups formed in a community language program is dependent upon the number of students participating in the program. A maximum of 10 classes allows schools to incorporate students into the program in a number of ways. For example: - background speaker group, K-2 or K-6 if numbers warrant it - non background speaker groups K-6 - mixed groups K-6 - whole class groups. Many combinations of groups are possible provided that the minimum time allocation is observed.	It is unlikely that schools with part-time specialist community language teachers will be able to incorporate the maximum number of groups into their program. The possible grouping structure will depend upon teacher allocation. Part-time programs may be able to target only specific groups, such as K-2 or K-6 background speakers, or cater for K-2 or K-6 only.

Group size

Specialist community language teachers are required to teach groups close in number to normal classes in the school. Language learning is maximised through the interaction that is possible in a group of reasonable size. Language teaching, like teaching in general, is more effective when a classroom with the appropriate furniture and facilities is available.

Organisational considerations at school level

The implementation of a community language program usually affects the entire organisation of the school. Some factors to be considered are:

- school size
- school organisation and timetabling constraints
- school policy and curriculum guidelines.

School size

Community language programs have been successfully implemented in primary schools where student enrolments range from one thousand students to forty students.

School size and teacher allocation will determine the possible dimensions of community language programs. Some factors which schools need to consider are:

- the total number of students enrolled at the school
- the number of community language teachers allocated to the school
- the number of students whose first language is the language of the community language program
- the number of students in the program

- the number of students participating in the program according to the prescribed guidelines
- the availability and location of classroom space for the program.

The size of the staffing allocation for community languages may make it difficult or impossible to offer a community language program to the majority of students.

Consequently, decisions may need to be made about which students will participate and how they will participate in the program. If schools wish to allow the participation of most of their students, they may need to arrange their staffing and accommodation in an innovative way.

It is usually not feasible to include the entire school using whole-class groups from across the school within the framework of the guidelines for community language programs. For example, a school with 15 classes K-6 cannot expect that each class will be able to participate in the program.

Schools wishing to extend the language program to include greater numbers of students may do so by committing school funds to supplement the program.

School policy and curriculum guidelines

Schools are required to develop school-based policy and guidelines for most curriculum areas and perspectives.

Just as these documents must be reflected in the organisation, structure and content of the community language program, the school needs to ensure that mainstream teachers collaborate with the community language teacher. Co-operative implementation of Departmental policies and school-based curriculum provides a firm foundation for the success of the community language program.

Specific considerations

Allocation of lesson time

In determining the number of lessons per week which should be allocated to students, it is necessary to consider the optimum frequency of exposure to the target language and optimum integration in the total school timetable for linguistic purposes, while minimising disturbance to the total school routine.

The models which follow are in order of suitability.

Note: The figures quoted are for the absolute minimum of two (2) hours per week.

Model 1	Number of lessons per week: 3
	Duration: 40 minutes
	Comment: Length of lesson enables completion of a variety of activities. Sufficient frequency of exposure.
Model 2	Number of lessons per week: 2 + 1
	Duration: 2 x 45 + 1 x 30 minutes
	Comment: Sufficient frequency of exposure. 45-minute periods facilitate completion of tasks. 30-minute period is satisfactory only as follow-up.
Model 3	Number of lessons per week: 2
	Duration: 60 minutes
	Comment: Length of lessons facilitates programming of a variety of activities. (Essential if K-2 are involved). Insufficient frequency of exposure.
Model 4	Number of lessons per week: 4
	Duration: 30 minutes
	Comment: Length of lessons may be too short to complete a satisfactory lesson. Movement to and from classroom by students and teachers reduces actual teaching time to 20 minutes. Sufficient frequency of exposure. Perhaps too many interruptions to mainstream teacher's timetable.

Group organisation

Size

Specialist community language teachers are required to teach groups close in number to normal classes in the school. Language is learned through interaction. Consequently effective language learning is most likely to occur in groups of at least 15 or more students. Groups smaller than this inhibit students from interacting with a variety of language models.

Organisation

A variety of organisational modes are currently being used by primary schools throughout the state, including withdrawal and whole class groups.

Withdrawal caters for the different levels of ability between L1 and L2 learners.

Whole-class groups can be taken by the community language teacher, provided that this is done in the community language room, where students can be immersed in an environment which reflects the target language and its nuances.

In choosing the mode most suitable to the school, it is important to consider the following aims and issues, all of

which distinguish community languages modes from those of English as an Additional Language or dialect (EALD):

- maintenance and development of the existing language of L1 learners;

- language development of L2 learners from zero to proficiency; and

- frequency of exposure to the language (i.e. number of times per week the students will have community language lessons).

The community language classroom

Teachers of community languages require their own teaching area. For effective language learning, they need to establish a functional environment which provides ready access to teaching and learning materials, a variety of resources and access to technology.

If the community language teacher is required to move from room to room, optimum access to these resources is severely reduced. As a result, community language lessons in mainstream classes tend to be influenced by the teacher's ability and endurance to carry and juggle minimal equipment around the school.

During the process of language learning, especially within the minimum exposure of two hours per week, students need to be immersed in an environment which reflects the target language and its nuances. When working in mainstream rooms, students have no access to this total learning environment, and the community language

teacher has limited opportunity to display students' work and devise suitable furniture arrangements which foster communication.

If the community language teacher is teaching in his or her own room, all students K-6 will be working in the same space. To accommodate the range of students, a variety of school furniture will need to be placed in the room so that the students are comfortable.

It is also important that the community language teacher be given sufficient space to display students' work, as well as to create a cultural environment which can motivate students to learn about the culture of which the language is an expression.

It is also important that the community language program is outcome-based and refers to Languages

Syllabuses from NESA to assist them in developing outcomes-based programs.

Lesson content

It is recommended that community language teachers take an integrated approach to their program. For this reason, it is essential that the teacher be familiar with the school-based curriculum and mainstream teachers' programs. Time should be allocated for cooperative planning with the classroom teachers. This can be through the community language teachers being involved in existing school plans regarding teams, grades or stage planning time.

Integrating the content of the community language program with other key learning areas ensures that the mandatory two hours per week spent on learning the target language relates to the students' total curriculum.

The focus in a community language program is communicative competence, whereby students are encouraged to communicate effectively through the acquisition of skills in using the community language.

Students communicate in the language through speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing as well as exploring the interrelationships between the target language and culture.

The role of the language teacher is to design assessment which is representative of the learning occurring in the languages classroom. Assessment should focus on determining the extent to which learners have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Teacher development

Beginning community language teachers attend the Community Language Induction Program (CLIP) and all teachers are offered advice and support from the community language consultant.

Workshops and network meetings are held by language officers to provide professional learning and support for community language teachers.

Community involvement

Community languages are languages spoken by members of school communities. It is important that school community members, who are speakers of the community language, be involved in the implementation of the community language program as much as possible.

These school community members can assist the community language teacher by:

- providing material resources, such as photographs, slides, maps or artefacts to show and display in the community language classroom and the school,
- talking to staff and students about different aspects of their culture,
- demonstrating cooking, dancing, traditional sports and games, specific skills (e.g. calligraphy) and helping with reading and research groups.

Students learn a language from many models. Within the time limitations of community language programs, it is important that the students are exposed to as many different models as possible, so that the language learned is varied and applicable to a variety of communicative situations.

During lesson time, the dominant models are the teacher and students themselves. However, it is important to also involve the community in the programs, so that other models are presented to students. If the community language teacher feels comfortable having a parent or community member in the classroom, they can perform a valuable role working with small groups on oral language activities, e.g. reading, picture talks, language board games, and also participate in discussions. This allows the students to hear and imitate another background speaker model and frees the teacher to work with other groups.

In most cases it will be necessary to ease the parent or community member into this role, in order to build up confidence in dealing with students in a classroom situation. It is important to allow them to become familiar with the routines of the room which contribute towards engagement and discipline. As in mainstream situations where community involvement occurs, the community language teacher should remain in control of the students at all times.

Parents and community members who have special talents in their language may also be willing to share these with the students,

teachers and wider school community. This may involve activities such as writing short stories, producing art work, assisting with music and dance, providing background information for school excursions and photographs for resource development.

There are also parents who are able to assist with the use of technology in the classroom and participate in school excursions.

Beyond the boundaries of school, shop owners and business people are usually very willing to have groups visit their shops or premises, if given adequate notice. Many successful language practice sessions eventuate in a delicatessen, auto-repair shop, the post office and small factories.

Recording these conversations can provide a useful, re-usable resource and can be integrated into other units of work. Some parents and relatives may be prepared to record oral histories of their experiences of migration and early life in Australia. People in senior citizens homes and hospitals are usually willing audiences for concert items which have been prepared from drama and music activities.

It is important that the school's organisation of the community language program permits it to be a vibrant, varied and important subject within the school curriculum. Language is learned through the four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Related policies and support documents

Language syllabuses can be found on the NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) website https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/home

Multicultural Education Plan

https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/Multicultural-Plan-2019-2022.pdf

Multicultural Education Policy

https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2005-0234

All policy documents are available on the Department of Education website:

https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library

More information

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