



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

NEW SOUTH WALES

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27 December 2013

Ms Carol Taylor
Chief Executive
NSW Board of Studies
Sydney NSW

carol.taylor@bos.nsw.edu.au

Dear Carol,

Re: CEC Response to Review of Languages Education in NSW

On behalf of Catholic school authorities in NSW, the CEC, NSW welcomes the opportunity to contribute to *Learning Through Languages: Review of Languages Education in NSW*. This submission acknowledges the importance of Languages education in the curriculum for both primary and secondary schools. It reflects the outcomes of a process of consultation with Catholic Diocesan and Congregational school authorities.

Learning languages can be a meaningful experience for all students, given adequate programing, resourcing and instructional strategies. Accordingly, any new Languages Education policy for NSW schools should be based on the following principles:

1. That School authorities and the State Government should encourage and promote Language learning across K-12;
2. That the basis of any State Languages education policy be the inherent value of Languages Education learning to the student;
3. That Languages Education has the capacity to:
 - enrich the intellectual, educational and social development of the individual;
 - improve critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills for 21st century learning;
 - provide an insight into the nature, role and purpose of language;
 - enhance English literacy skills through comparative language analysis and learning grammatical concepts and rules;
 - provide the ability to communicate effectively across and within cultures;
 - broaden students' horizons by developing intercultural awareness and a sense of global citizenship;
4. That all students of non-English speaking background be given the opportunity to undertake the learning of their first language through a range of delivery options

which are appropriately resourced including Community Schools and online delivery;

5. That available Government funding to support Languages Education be allocated on the basis that all language learning is of the same inherent value regardless of the ethnic, geographic or historical origin of the language;
6. That given the multi-ethnic and multi-language nature of NSW society, matters of Languages Education policy implementation, including choice of language, be reserved as matters for determination by school authorities in consultation with their communities.

The CEC, NSW believes that the learning of Languages is an inherently valuable cognitive and affective experience for students of all ages. However, learning another language is hard work, requires considerable time and sustained effort over several years. Expectations of curriculum and teacher quality should never be less than for any other learning area.

The CEC also wishes to point out that Languages in Schools is arguably the most inquired into aspect of Australian education. Reports have been regular and repetitive in their recommendations but have resulted in little practical effect. Indeed, the comprehensive and excellent NSW Review of Languages in 1997 was never released by the NSW Minister at the time.

New languages policies invariably fail because of lack of sustained expectations and planning for continuity of both curriculum and teacher supply. The viability and sustainability of reforms in Languages Education are heavily resource dependent. Resolute and appropriate Government resourcing of Languages Education in NSW is critical if any worthwhile improvement is to be made in NSW schools.

Please contact Ian Baker (phone 9287 1560) if you would like to discuss this advice.

Yours sincerely,



Brian Croke
Executive Director

**SUBMISSION TO THE NSW BOARD OF STUDIES ON
REVIEW OF LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN NSW**

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reserved as matters for determination by school authorities in consultation with their communities.

On the basis of these principles, the Catholic Education Commission NSW submits seven high-level policy responses to the Review proposals.

1. Support for development of a Languages Education policy

Development of a Languages policy for NSW is long overdue and welcomed especially as its stated intention is to “provide the foundation for a broader and more inclusive Languages education for all NSW students”. It is important, however, that the policy includes initiatives that will sustain Languages Education at least at the current levels and also enhance current provision and strengthen and stimulate sustained growth of Languages Education in NSW.

2. Support for a new K-10 Languages curriculum framework with a phased approach to Languages Education reform with an initial focus on the implementation of a K-6 Languages KLA

(a) K-6 Issues

The CEC, NSW supports the establishment of Languages Education as a KLA in primary school because it will promote the status of the learning area and signal the value placed on Languages Education by the NSW Government. This policy initiative will also render the Languages curriculum architecture consistent with the NSW K-10 syllabus.

The creation of a primary Languages Education KLA will be consistent with the emerging Australian Curriculum and ACARA curriculum developments in Languages. It is in line with the imperatives outlined in the *Melbourne Declaration* which named Languages as a core discipline for study across all stages of schooling.

Current research evidence reviewed by the UK’s *CfBT Education Trust (Lessons from Abroad: International review of primary languages, 2012)* shows clearly that:

- young children learn languages differently from older learners and have some advantages over those who start later;
- early learners tend to be more intuitive, less anxious and better at acquiring the sounds and rhythms of the new language;
- starting learning a new language early allows more time for language learning and this sustained experience has the potential to lead to higher levels of proficiency at the end of secondary school;
- education systems in developed countries more commonly introduce the new language at the beginning of compulsory education.

While the CfBT review of international research and developments in early language learning presents the evidence on the benefits of starting to learn a foreign language in primary school or earlier, it also outlines the issues and challenges which need to be addressed, including:

- a suitable curriculum with adequate time allocation;
- sufficient number of well-trained teachers;
- careful management of transition between phases; and
- age-appropriate pedagogy.

The CEC supports strongly the goal for actual languages learning from Kindergarten.

With respect to K-10 syllabus issues, CEC is of the view that actual languages learning should commence in Kindergarten and be prioritised within the three-strand structure of each K-10 Languages syllabus.

(b) 7-10 Issues

The CEC,NSW supports the proposal to maintain the “100 mandatory hours” and continue to deliver it in stage 4 but only as a short term focus until K-6 mandatory Languages is implemented.

The CEC,NSW supports the principle of flexibility only for achievement of the primary goals of introducing a “broader, more inclusive languages education for all NSW students”. That is, flexibility should not be at the expense of achieving focused and consistent study of a single Language. All variations should be considered on a case-by-case basis and administered by the BoSTES.

3. Support for a new approach to post-compulsory Languages Education

The CEC,NSW supports the proposals for post compulsory Languages Education with priority consideration given to a review of the current eligibility criteria and more disciplined application of standards by the BoSTES.

4. Broader recognition of language proficiency

The CEC,NSW supports the development of a Language Proficiency Framework and the proposal to provide quality assurance to ensure consistent application of the Framework by schools and other providers. The Commission also supports the establishment of a K-12 Languages passport to record and transport proficiency levels.

5. Strengthening and supporting the provision of Aboriginal languages

The CEC,NSW supports the proposals to strengthen the provision of Aboriginal languages with priority given to engagement with key Aboriginal stakeholders.

6 Raising the profile and supporting the delivery of Languages Education

The CEC,NSW supports the establishment of a high level Languages Advisory Panel which reports to the Minister for Education through the NSW Schools Advisory Council. This panel should have representation from the three school sectors.

The Commission also supports the establishment of a Curriculum Reference Group on Languages which will report to and advise the BoSTES on curriculum development.

7. Further national contributions to Languages Education

The CEC,NSW supports the ongoing contributions by NSW to a National Languages Policy and curriculum development.

In summary, the CEC's four key policy propositions are:

- i. Support for the introduction of a Languages K-6 KLA.
- ii. Support for the delivery of the 100 mandatory hours in stage 4 as a short-term focus until K-6 mandatory Languages is implemented.
- iii. Support for the proposals for post-compulsory Languages Education.
- iv. Support for the proposal to form a high-level advisory group with representation from the three school sectors which reports to the NSW Minister for Education.

December 2013