

C19 ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013

The *ACT Multicultural Strategy 2010-2013* promotes social inclusion for ACT residents from all cultural backgrounds. The strategy is available on the ACT Government website at <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au> Directorate activities to support the strategy are noted in Table C19.1.

Table C19.1: Progress against the focus areas of the strategy, 2010-11

Focus area	Progress
Theme 1: Languages	<p>The Directorate supports the teaching of eight priority languages in ACT public schools: four European languages (French, German, Italian and Spanish) and four Asian Languages (Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Indonesian).</p> <p>The current <i>Curriculum Requirements in ACT Public Schools P-10</i> policy requires all primary schools to teach languages for 60 minutes per week in years 3 to 6. All high schools are required to provide a program to students in years 7 and 8 for a minimum of 150 minutes a week. The implementation of this policy has seen an increase of an additional 10,000 students in public schools learning languages, from primary to year 12 (P-12), since 2008.</p> <p>To develop teachers, language-specific and pedagogy-based professional development is offered internally and in conjunction with a number of external organisations such as the Australian National University (ANU), the Alliance Française, the Japan Foundation and the embassies of countries whose languages are taught in ACT public schools. The Directorate also works with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, the Embassy of France and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to support their Speech Contests in the ACT.</p> <p>The Commonwealth Government's <i>National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP)</i> aims to support the teaching and learning of the languages and cultures of Japan, China, Korea and Indonesia. In the ACT, the Directorate is the lead authority in implementing the <i>ACT NALSSP Strategic Plan 2009-2011</i> across the three education sectors. The Strategic Plan aims to develop the linguistic ability of teachers. Student engagement with the languages and cultures of Asia has been encouraged by using the NALSSP to facilitate student participation in events such as the Asia Pacific Day at ANU, the primary schools' Indonesian and Japanese Fun Days, and a Wayang Puppet performance for students of Indonesian. Teachers have been supported to include studies of Asia in the curriculum through professional development focussed on Asia literacy in the English and history curricula.</p> <p>The Directorate has Memoranda of Understanding with both the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, for each to provide a Chinese Language Teacher's Assistant to ACT public schools. Through a separate agreement with the Japan Foundation, a Japanese Teacher's Assistant works in two ACT public schools.</p> <p>The Directorate's Curriculum Officer for Languages meets regularly with members of the ACT Community Language Group, an external organisation, to facilitate support to the ACT Community Language Schools Association (ACT CLS). This support includes the provision of four professional development sessions for ACT CLS teachers in 2011.</p>

Focus area	Progress
<p>Theme 2: Children and Young People</p>	<p>Introductory English Centres The provision of assistance to English as a second language (ESL) students to bring them quickly into mainstream education has been identified by the Australian Government as an important aspect of future economic growth and social cohesion in Australia.</p> <p>ACT schools provide special English language help for children with non-English speaking backgrounds. The Directorate provides an additional four specialist centres, Introductory English Centres (IECs), which offer intensive English language tuition for students with little or no English. Students may attend full-time for up to three terms to improve their knowledge of the English language to enable them to take their places in mainstream classes. The IECs provide programs to improve the literacy and numeracy development of ESL students through the explicit teaching of English language skills.</p> <p>The College Bridging Program The College Bridging Program at Dickson College continues to meet the needs of students aged 16 and over with a refugee experience. The program was developed as a response to the interrupted schooling of many of the young refugees entering the ACT college sector, who face a range of social, cultural, English language and literacy challenges. The program focuses on English language and academic support, plus the broader welfare of the student, including support with settlement issues.</p> <p>The flexible nature of the program allows individual education pathways to progress in college or vocational education. Students have the option to complete the two year program over two or three years. Some students have subject packages primarily made up of the bridging program units; others do a hybrid of bridging units and college accredited or tertiary units and several do only one or two bridging units to further support and consolidate their English language, literacy and numeracy skills. In the vocational education area, students are encouraged to do work experience to gain an understanding of the Australian work context and to be seen by potential employers. Sixteen students were involved in the program in 2010, 10 of whom graduated with a Year 12 Certificate. The Directorate is committed to continuing the program, which addresses the complex needs of students with refugee experiences.</p>
<p>Theme 3: Older People and Aged Care</p>	<p>The Directorate continues to support older people from multicultural backgrounds to participate in life-long learning activities and community life through adult and community education programs. In 2011 the Support Asian Women's Friendship Association was granted \$8,500 for the Learning English and Computer Skills in Other Languages program. The Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT received grants to deliver two programs: the Home Tutor Program and the English for Living Program. Both programs assist migrant and refugee residents in the ACT who have limited or no English language.</p>
<p>Theme 4: Women</p>	<p>See C22 ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015</p>
<p>Theme 5: Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Humanitarian Entrants</p>	<p>Programs for students from refugee background are discussed under Theme 2.</p>

Focus area	Progress
<p>Theme 6: Intercultural Harmony and Religious Acceptance</p>	<p>Through both the Australian Curriculum and the ACT curriculum framework P – 10 <i>Every chance to learn</i>, ACT public school students focus on content relating to intercultural understanding and incorporating the valuing of the cultures and beliefs of others. The content encourages students to engage “with people of diverse cultures in ways that recognise differences, create connections and cultivate respect between people”. (The Australian Curriculum, Capability: Intercultural Understanding)</p> <p>Additional to focussed classroom teaching, many ACT schools recognise and celebrate Australia’s multicultural diversity by participating in Harmony Day, which occurred this year on 21 March 2011. This year’s activities included, with the support of parents and embassies, students hosting community picnics, international song and dance assemblies, multicultural art and craft sessions, cultural sporting activities and multicultural cooking classes.</p> <p>At a very practical level, schools have been provided with information to increase awareness of the dietary restrictions on Muslim children and young people during Ramadan. Schools, when requested by Muslim families, have allocated time and space for prayer during the school day.</p> <p>Section 29 of the <i>Education Act 2004</i> provides for the inclusion of religious education in public schools under certain conditions. It states that if parents of children at a public school ask the principal for their children to receive religious education in a particular religion, the principal must ensure that reasonable time is allowed for their children’s religious education in that religion. It also states that <i>religious education</i> means education in a particular religion as distinct from the study of different religions. This policy is enacted by all public schools in the ACT and is an example of religious acceptance promoted by the Directorate.</p>

Source: Learning and Teaching Branch

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