



Asia Education Foundation

# National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools 2011–2012

“Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging... India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. **Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’**, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia.”\*

\*The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008. The *Melbourne Declaration* sets a nationally agreed education agenda for Australia for the next decade.

## CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT

The *National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools 2011–2012* supports the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008).

The *Melbourne Declaration* recognises that the growing influence of India, China and other Asian nations, both globally and in Australia, is a major change in the world that impacts on the future of all young Australians.

In response to this change, the *Melbourne Declaration* acknowledges the clear demand for Australians to become Asia literate through their school education and that all Australian students should be able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia. It also identifies languages, especially Asian languages, as a key part of the Australian school curriculum.

This commitment to Asia literacy comes at a time when Australia's engagement with Asia in trade, investment, immigration, tourism, education and humanitarian assistance has grown at a faster rate than our engagement with the rest of the world combined.

The *National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools 2011–2012* identifies the broad knowledge, skills and understandings required by all students to achieve Asia literacy in the context of existing policies and practices in teaching and learning. As the Australian Curriculum is being fully developed, the aim of the statement is to advocate for and acknowledge the place of Asia literacy in Australian schools and what is required to support its achievement.

Asia literacy provides our young people with a competitive edge in today's world and contributes to our national advantage. Young Australians who possess a regional and global mindset and skill-set will be able to build a creative, prosperous and socially cohesive Australia and develop harmonious regional and global communities that can work together to resolve the issues that affect us all.

Asia literacy makes an important contribution to the achievement of the *Melbourne Declaration's* goals that all young Australians will be successful learners who are able to make sense of their world, be active and informed citizens who appreciate cultural, social and religious diversity, in Australia and globally, and be confident and creative individuals who relate well to others.

The draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* paper released by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority on 31 January 2011 identified Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Korean and Vietnamese as potential languages for which Australian Curriculum will be developed. The importance of students developing Asia literacy skills, knowledge and understandings is reflected in the Australian Curriculum through the cross-curriculum priority of 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia'. Cross-curriculum priorities are embedded in all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. They will have a strong but varying presence depending on their relevance to each of the learning areas.

## ASIA LITERATE YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

The Australian Curriculum establishes that, by the time they leave school, all young people will have developed Asia literacy through gaining foundational and in-depth knowledge, skills and understandings of the histories, geographies, societies, arts, literatures and languages of the diverse countries of Asia and their engagement with Australia.

To become Asia literate students require broad knowledge, skills and understandings as defined below.

### Asia and its diversity

- The peoples and countries of Asia are diverse in ethnic background, traditions, cultures, belief systems and religions.
- Interactions between diverse environments and human activity shape the countries of Asia and its region and have influence globally.

### Achievements and contributions of the peoples of Asia

- The achievements of the peoples and countries of Asia have contributed and continue to contribute to world history and human endeavour, and their participation is fundamental to the well being and progress of the world.
- The arts and literature of Asia have significant influence on the aesthetic and creative pursuits of people and societies in Australia, the region and globally.

### Asia-Australia engagement

- For Australians to be good regional and global citizens we need to understand, learn from, and engage and communicate with our Asian neighbours.
- Australia is located in the Asia region and our histories from ancient times to the present are linked.
- Australians have played and are playing important roles in major events and developments in the Asia region.
- Australians of Asian heritage have influenced Australia's history and continue to influence its dynamic culture and society.

# HOW TO ACHIEVE ASIA LITERACY FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

Asian languages and cross curriculum studies of Asia are both critical to building an Asia literate Australia. They are complementary, but require discrete action if an Asia literate Australia is to be achieved. While cross curriculum studies of Asia provide important cultural knowledge and a relevant context for Asian language learners, the purpose of studies of Asia is not limited to support of Asian languages education alone. Cross curriculum studies of Asia ensure that every young Australian has the broad knowledge to develop intercultural skills and understandings to participate in, learn from, contribute to and engage confidently in diverse cultural environments at home and abroad and enrich their own and Australia's creative, intellectual and social development. Students of Asian languages gain increased communication and intercultural skills and greater depth of knowledge and understandings of one or more Asian cultures.

Achieving Asia literacy in Australian schools requires sustained action to deliver on the intent of the *Melbourne Declaration*. The following six interlinked areas address all levels of schooling.

## 1 Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum requires clear guidelines that reflect the need for studies of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia to be balanced between in-depth, sustained studies and broader studies that explore themes, topics or issues.

## 2 Asia literate school leaders

Asia literacy is most successful when the whole school is engaged. This often requires a cultural change, a shift in attitudes and a readiness to learn new skills in cultural understanding. To achieve high quality teaching and learning programs that achieve Asia literacy, school leaders require access to professional learning, networks and programs that provide knowledge, tools and resources to best enable schools to achieve Asia literacy for all their students.

## 3 Asia literate teachers

Pre-service teacher education has a critical role in ensuring that new teachers in all learning areas and levels of schooling are equipped to take part in the delivery of Asia literacy. Ongoing training and professional learning that provides teachers with access to new content knowledge related to Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia is also needed to equip teachers to implement the Australian Curriculum.

## 4 Asia focused classroom resources

The provision of high quality resources enables and strengthens teacher commitment and capacity to support an Asia literate curriculum. Resources need to support students, teachers and schools to link to their peers in Asia, support the cross-curriculum priority of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia in the Australian Curriculum, and develop and sustain Asian languages programs.

## 5 Asian Language education programs

Creative solutions are needed to address the complex issues that have historically impeded delivery of sustainable language education programs. Studies of Asia stimulate interest in Asian languages and vice versa. Both reinforce to the broader community the significant benefits of effective Asian languages education for all learners.

## 6 Increased student, parent and community demand for Asia literacy

Parents are important partners in engaging young Australians with Asia. They discuss with their children school, subject, course and career choices and support children to participate in a broad range of education experiences. They play a key role in school leadership and setting school priorities through parent bodies and many other kinds of support. It is vital to support Asia literacy by developing awareness of the significance of Asia's influence on Australia to students, parents and the broader community.



## Asia Education Foundation

The Asia Education Foundation is a joint activity of Asialink at The University of Melbourne and Education Services Australia.

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September 2011 © The University of Melbourne – Asia Education Foundation 2011  
This publication is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations through the Grants and Awards Program. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.