



Asia Education Foundation



WHAT WORKS 9

Achieving intercultural understanding in schools

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Fostering students' intercultural understanding is fundamental to education in a diverse, interconnected and transnational world. The ability to get along with diverse others is perhaps more important than any other capability a child can develop at school (Banks, 2004). This ability lies at the core of intercultural understanding.

Intercultural understanding is one of seven general capabilities specified in the Australian Curriculum and is the focus of several educational initiatives and reports by the United Nations (UN). In the Australian Curriculum, the Intercultural understanding general capability comprises three interrelated organising elements, each made up of several sub-elements:

1. recognising culture and developing respect
2. interacting and empathising with others
3. reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2015a)

Students in Australia are expected to develop this general capability through their schooling.

Despite the substantial international research base on intercultural education that goes as far back as the 1940s (Giles, Pitkin & Ingram, 1946), there has been lack of research in Australia into how schools are defining and subsequently practising intercultural understanding.

Interculturality, the dynamic and evolving exchanges that occur within and across cultural groups (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006), is not an automatic by-product of a multicultural society: it needs to be both considered and intentional. It takes considerable effort, at the institutional and people-to-people levels, to get culturally diverse individuals and groups to go beyond co-existence and tolerance and begin to engage cross-culturally and learn from one another. This remains a challenge even for Australia, which is arguably one of the world's most successful nations at multiculturalism.

Schools in Australia have typically seen intercultural understanding as being knowledge, or learning, about cultures (Asia Education Foundation [AEF], 2013; Hassim, 2013a). One potential drawback of this approach is that the cultures of Asia may be seen as discrete and static, rather than dynamic, changing and interconnected (AEF, 2013). AEF's current work in teacher and school leader professional learning seeks to move schools beyond cultural awareness of Asia, placing greater emphasis on authentic cross-cultural interaction and engagement (AEF, 2014a, 2014b).

What Works 9 explores how Australian schools involved in a successful intercultural programme define and incorporate intercultural understanding as part of their educational practice. In particular, it compares the definitions and practices to what the Australian Curriculum expects of schools concerning the Intercultural understanding general capability. It uses qualitative data and illustrations from Australian schools involved in the [Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project \(BRIDGE\)](#) as a case study of schools that are committed to fostering intercultural understanding.

Managed by AEF, BRIDGE connects Australian teachers, students and school communities with their counterparts across Asia. It is a professional learning programme that builds teacher capacity to develop intercultural understanding through school partnerships. It is made up of five country projects: Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE; Australia-Korea BRIDGE; Australia-China BRIDGE; Australia-Thailand BRIDGE; Australia-Malaysia BRIDGE. As of June 2015, there are 226 BRIDGE school partnerships. BRIDGE has been extensively researched and evaluated, and its success in supporting the development of international school partnerships and intercultural engagement has been affirmed (AEF, 2012, 2014a; Nugroho & Beavis, 2010).

While the BRIDGE data were collected either before or during the early days of Australian Curriculum implementation in schools (depending on state/territory), they provide a useful benchmark for how schools are defining and practising intercultural understanding.

An analysis of the intercultural understanding data provided by Australian BRIDGE schools, in relation to the Australian Curriculum general capability of Intercultural understanding, has yielded the following key findings.

> Definitions

Many BRIDGE schools in Australia view intercultural understanding as knowledge about cultures as well as involving cross-cultural interaction and/or reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations. Very few schools incorporated into their definitions the most sophisticated and complex aspect of intercultural understanding: addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations. It appears that schools need further support to develop their understanding and practice of the 'reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility' organising element of Intercultural understanding.

The intercultural understanding definitions analysed as part of *What Works 9* were provided by individual BRIDGE project leaders in late 2013.

This was a time when implementation of the Australian Curriculum was still relatively recent and scant attention had been paid to how the general capabilities could or should be developed among students at school. Hence, it was not reasonable to expect the definitions to display a thorough understanding of both the conceptual and practical elements of the Intercultural understanding general capability. Encouragingly, definitions that viewed intercultural understanding as being (only) knowledge about cultures were a minority, and many Australian BRIDGE schools recognise cross-cultural interaction and reflexivity as being essential to fostering students' intercultural understanding.

For example, one BRIDGE project leader defined intercultural understanding as 'skills and understandings that enable one to operate within and between cultures; identify the cultural understandings implicit in our own mindsets; and an openness to experiencing and valuing cultures other than our own'. Another project leader stated that intercultural understanding is 'being able to move between cultures with confidence' and 'understanding that there are other ways of perceiving and doing things'.

The intercultural understanding definitions provided by BRIDGE project leaders demonstrate that once schools move beyond a knowledge-about-cultures view of intercultural understanding, they tend to develop more thorough conceptions of this Australian Curriculum general capability. Australian schools can advance their definitions of intercultural understanding by developing a high degree of familiarity with the Intercultural understanding general capability, particularly at the organising element and sub-element levels. To do so, they require tailored professional learning and relevant teaching and learning resources.

> Practice

The *What Works 9* illustrations were developed in 2015, approximately 18 months after the intercultural understanding definitions were first provided by BRIDGE project leaders. All of the schools illustrated in *What Works 9* have demonstrated intercultural understanding practices that go beyond the initial definitions of intercultural understanding. Several interconnected factors appear to have supported this deepening understanding, including:

- time focused on BRIDGE and developing intercultural understanding
- maturing collegial networks, both local and international
- growing familiarity with the Australian Curriculum general capability of Intercultural understanding
- awareness of broader intercultural advancements in educational theory and practice
- access to relevant professional learning and resources.

Addressing these factors systematically as part of planning and design of school policy, curriculum and pedagogy will enable schools to further develop their conception and practice of intercultural understanding. Importantly, the *What Works 9* illustrations indicate that it is possible to fast-track the development of intercultural understanding practice in schools, even though more time typically corresponds to more mature and advanced intercultural practices within a school.

What Works 9 findings serve as an indicative baseline for the theory and practice of intercultural understanding in Australian schools that are involved in an intercultural programme like BRIDGE. However, this baseline should be expanded to be more representative of all schools in Australia, including those that have focused on intercultural learning and those that are yet to do so.

What Works 9 contributes to a deeper understanding of how schools view intercultural understanding, what its implications for school education are, and what practice looks like. It provides a springboard for the development of tools that schools can use to construct and track student learning for intercultural understanding. For example, [AEF's Intercultural understanding toolkit](#) provides a potential starting point for such work to occur. The Toolkit addresses both international and national perspectives on intercultural understanding in schools. Further, it explores the development of intercultural understanding through the Australian Curriculum (including some learning areas). It identifies the curriculum shifts required to enact transformative intercultural learning and suggests useful pedagogies to support intercultural understanding in the classroom.

> What works?

What Works 9 illustrations point to some common actions that assist schools to develop their intercultural understanding and practices.

- Staff develop a thorough understanding of the Intercultural understanding general capability and its component parts within the Australian Curriculum.
- Staff become familiar with opportunities to develop students' intercultural understanding through the Australian Curriculum learning areas.
- Students and staff engage in consistent and constant cross-cultural engagement at a school level, such as through international school partnerships, overseas trips and exchanges.
- Students and staff reflect on their intercultural experiences, with a focus on transforming thinking, attitudes and behaviours towards cultural diversity.
- Staff consolidate and develop collegial networks, locally and internationally, to share, reflect on and further develop intercultural teaching and learning practices.
- Staff undertake professional learning relevant to intercultural understanding.

What Works 9 explores how Australian schools involved in a successful intercultural programme define and incorporate intercultural understanding as part of their educational practice.

It seeks to:

- identify how these schools define intercultural understanding
- identify how they put their definitions into practice
- identify what works for schools to successfully define and practise intercultural understanding
- identify what schools can do to further develop their understanding and practice of intercultural understanding
- establish an indicative baseline of how Australian schools involved in an intercultural programme like BRIDGE define and practise intercultural understanding
- compare this baseline to the Australian Curriculum view of intercultural understanding.

The body of research on intercultural understanding in education involves a wide range of different, yet interrelated, frameworks, such as transformation, critical race theory, anti-prejudice and anti-racism education, cultural studies, and conflict resolution. However, in order to ensure the practical relevance of *What Works 9* to Australian schools, the present study uses an analytical framework that has been adapted from the Intercultural understanding general capability of the Australian Curriculum.

What Works 9 builds on previous AEF research on intercultural understanding in Australian schools, specifically *What Works 3: Achieving intercultural understanding through the teaching of Asia perspectives in the Australian Curriculum: English and History* (AEF, 2013) and *What Works 6: Australia-Asia school partnerships* (AEF, 2014a), which focused on the BRIDGE project.

Although many terms and concepts are used to refer to intercultural learning (UNESCO, 2006, 2013), 'intercultural understanding' is preferred for this research because it aligns with the Australian Curriculum context. Other common terms include, for example, intercultural education (UNESCO, 2006), intercultural competence (Bennett, 2004, 2009; UNESCO, 2013), intercultural communication (Arasaratnam, 2009; Matveev & Nelson, 2004), and intercultural language learning (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

What Works 9 takes a broad view of 'culture' while limiting its usage to the group sense, which is consistent with the Australian Curriculum. Culture refers to a group's shared patterns of thinking, interpreting, acting, communicating, perceiving, understanding and believing, and these patterns distinguish one cultural group from another (see, for example, Banks & Banks, 1989; Banks, 2004; Bullivant, 1993). According to this view, culture is not defined merely along national, ethno-linguistic, ethno-racial and/or religious lines.

There needs to be transformation in how young Australians—and indeed broader Australian society—are viewing and engaging with cultural diversity, locally, nationally and globally.

> The Intercultural understanding general capability and transformation

The Australian Curriculum general capability of Intercultural understanding sits within a transformative paradigm (Hassim, 2013a), which implies that there needs to be transformation in how young Australians—and indeed broader Australian society—are viewing and engaging with cultural diversity, locally, nationally and globally.

The transformative paradigm is related to the well-established framework of experiential learning (AEF, 2014b, citing Beard & Wilson, 2006; Kolb, 1984), which views learning as the creation of knowledge through the transformation of experience. Hence, 'knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience' (Kolb, 1984, p. 41, cited in AEF, 2014b). The reason why transformative learning is so important is because 'experiences are not automatically educational' (Howlett, 2014, p. 15, cited in AEF, 2014b) and cross-cultural knowledge and contact do not automatically lead to changed intercultural behaviour (AEF, 2014b, citing Root & Ngampornchai, 2013).

Transformative learning requires learners to search for and make meaning from their experiences – this meaning, in turn, guides understanding and action (AEF, 2014b, citing Mezirow, 1990). Reflexivity is essential to transformative learning (AEF, 2014b, citing Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1997) and is one of the key elements of the Intercultural understanding general capability within the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015a).

A transformative approach to intercultural understanding thus requires critical questioning of how the cultural other is typically portrayed and talked about in Australia's multicultural society as well as within the context of intercultural dialogue and engagement. This is the essence of 'interculturality', which signifies dynamic and evolving exchange within and across cultural groups in multicultural societies (UNESCO, 2006; Hassim, 2013a).

Multiculturalism implies multiple cultural groups living alongside one another in the one society. Without intercultural understanding, however, inter-group prejudice is still possible. Further, learning about specific cultures does not necessarily promote transformative thinking about cultural diversity or cross-cultural engagement (Hassim, 2014b). This fundamental shift from multiculturalism to interculturality can be found in the *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*.

In order to strengthen democracy, education systems need to take into account the multicultural character of society, and aim at actively contributing to peaceful coexistence and positive interaction between different cultural groups. There have traditionally been two approaches: multicultural education and Intercultural Education. Multicultural education uses learning about other cultures in order to produce acceptance, or at least tolerance, of these cultures. Intercultural Education aims to go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups. (UNESCO, 2006, p. 18)

Building on its 2006 *Guidelines* document, UNESCO later released a more comprehensive conceptual and operational framework for developing intercultural competences (UNESCO, 2013). The move from **understanding** to **competences** reflects another development in the discourse on intercultural learning – a shift towards actively enacting one’s intercultural understanding.

*Intercultural competences are abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other terms, abilities to perform “effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). Schools are a central place to nurture such skills and abilities, as was underlined by UNESCO in a previous publication, *Guidelines on Intercultural Education ...* (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5)*

Prior to 2013, UNESCO (2009) released its *UNESCO World Report: Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, which provided an environmental scan as well as an evidence-base on the pressing need to commit to intercultural engagement across the globe. Next, UNESCO published *Education for intercultural understanding* (De Leo, 2010), a resource for schools to facilitate and develop their intercultural understanding practice.

Despite the work of UNESCO, the challenge of effectively educating for intercultural understanding remains. This is largely due to two reasons. First, there are a variety of models and frameworks that education systems, networks and individual schools could consider (Perry & Southwell, 2011). It remains a considerable challenge—at a practical school level—to identify how these approaches converge and diverge, and what works best in particular contexts. Second, there needs to be deeper exploration and understanding of how schools define and practise intercultural understanding.

Perhaps the largest study of intercultural understanding in Australian schools to date—funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant and led by Deakin University—focuses on the transformative aspects of intercultural learning in schools (Intercultural Understanding Project, 2015). However, it does not specifically ask how schools are defining intercultural understanding.

The Intercultural understanding general capability of the Australian Curriculum reflects key elements of intercultural understanding, competence and communication, as well as aspects of intercultural language learning as articulated in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* (ACARA, 2011). The framework for the general capability comprises three interrelated organising elements (Figure 1), which as a whole reflect a commitment to transformative intercultural understanding. These elements are:

- recognising culture and developing respect
- interacting and empathising with others
- reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility (ACARA, 2015a).

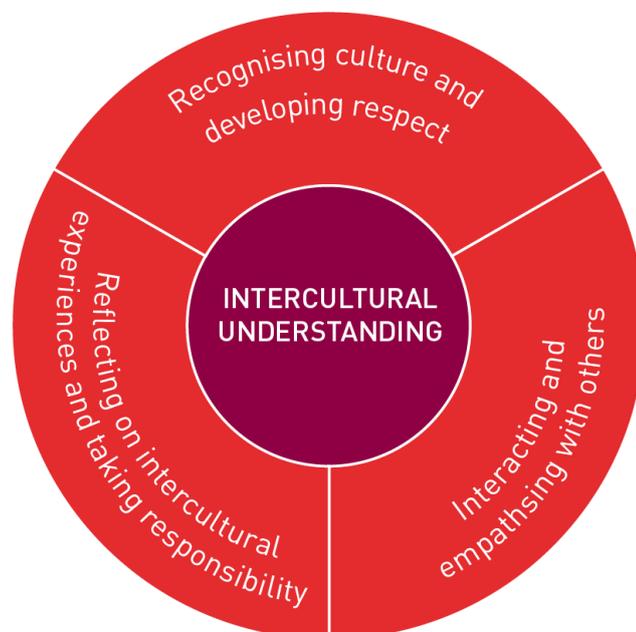


Figure 1: Organising elements for the Intercultural understanding general capability (ACARA, 2015a)

Introduction

Schools have a responsibility to ensure students are receiving an education that prepares them to be interculturally capable in a diverse and interconnected world.

Each of the three organising elements for Intercultural understanding is divided into several sub-elements (Table 1). These sub-elements provide more detailed explanation of what is meant by each organising element.

Organising element	Sub-elements
Recognising culture and developing respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate culture and cultural identity• Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices• Develop respect for cultural diversity
Interacting and empathising with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate across cultures• Consider and develop multiple perspectives• Empathise with others
Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on intercultural experiences• Challenge stereotypes and prejudices• Mediate cultural differences

Table 1: Intercultural understanding general capability organising elements and sub-elements (ACARA, 2015a)

Students in Australian schools are expected to have developed these knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions by the time they finish schooling. Hence, schools have a responsibility to ensure students are receiving an education that prepares them to be interculturally capable in a diverse and interconnected world. Importantly, Intercultural understanding in the Australian Curriculum is not only about cultural awareness and knowledge; rather, it also encompasses respect, communication, perspective taking, empathy, reflexivity, addressing stereotypes and prejudice, and negotiation.

ACARA has developed a learning continuum for all of the Australian Curriculum general capabilities. This assists teachers in planning for and tracking student learning for intercultural understanding. The continuum is divided into six levels, corresponding to what students are expected to demonstrate—with respect to the organising elements and sub-elements—by the end of Foundation (Level 1), Year 2 (Level 2), Year 4 (Level 3), Year 6 (Level 4), Year 8 (Level 5), and Year 10 (Level 6).

Table 2 provides a snapshot of the learning continuum at Levels 5-6, to illustrate how students are expected to develop their intercultural understanding from one level to another. The complete learning continuum is available from the [Australian Curriculum](#) website.

Recognising culture and developing respect	
Level 5	Level 6
Typically by the end of Year 8, students:	Typically by the end of Year 10, students:
Investigate culture and cultural identity explain ways that cultural groups and identities change over time and in different contexts	Investigate culture and cultural identity analyse how membership of local, regional, national and international groups shapes identities including their own
Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices analyse the dynamic nature of cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices in a range of personal, social and historical contexts	Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices critically analyse the complex and dynamic nature of knowledge, beliefs and practices in a wide range of contexts over time
Develop respect for cultural diversity understand the importance of maintaining and celebrating cultural traditions for the development of personal, group and national identities	Develop respect for cultural diversity understand the importance of mutual respect in promoting cultural exchange and collaboration in an interconnected world
Interacting and empathising with others	
Level 5	Level 6
Typically by the end of Year 8, students:	Typically by the end of Year 10, students:
Communicate across cultures explore ways that culture shapes the use of language in a wide range of contexts	Communicate across cultures analyse the complex relationship between language, thought and context to understand and enhance communication
Consider and develop multiple perspectives assess diverse perspectives and the assumptions on which they are based	Consider and develop multiple perspectives present a balanced view on issues where conflicting views cannot easily be resolved
Empathise with others imagine and describe the feelings and motivations of people in challenging situations	Empathise with others recognise the effect that empathising with others has on their own feelings, motivations and actions
Recognising culture and developing respect	
Level 5	Level 6
Typically by the end of Year 8, students:	Typically by the end of Year 10, students:
Reflect on intercultural experiences reflect critically on the representation of various cultural groups in texts and the media and how they respond	Reflect on intercultural experiences reflect critically on the effect of intercultural experiences on their own attitudes and beliefs and those of others
Challenge stereotypes and prejudices identify and challenge stereotypes and prejudices in the representation of group, national and regional identities	Challenge stereotypes and prejudices critique the use of stereotypes and prejudices in texts and issues concerning specific cultural groups at national, regional and global levels
Mediate cultural difference identify and address challenging issues in ways that respect cultural diversity and the right of all to be heard	Mediate cultural difference recognise the challenges and benefits of living and working in a culturally diverse society and the role that cultural mediation plays in learning to live together

Table 2: Intercultural understanding general capability learning continuum at Levels 5-6 (ACARA, 2015a)

One of the most important reasons for helping students develop Asia capabilities at school relates not only to Australia's future, but also the social sustainability of the world.

Collectively, the ACARA organising elements, sub-elements and learning continuum for Intercultural understanding are intended for school educators, supporting them to plan for and track students' intercultural learning through the various levels of schooling (F-10).

Transformative intercultural understanding is evident when individuals and groups demonstrate the ability to understand, respect and empathise with culturally relative standpoints and behave accordingly in cross-cultural situations. It is essentially about changing the way individuals and groups perceive, respond to and negotiate cultural differences (Bennett, 2004, 2009). This essence is captured in the Australian Curriculum's summary of Intercultural understanding.

Intercultural understanding combines personal, interpersonal and social knowledge and skills. It involves students in learning to value and view critically their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others through their interactions with people, texts and contexts across the curriculum.

Intercultural understanding encourages students to make connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities, and to negotiate or mediate difference. It develops students' abilities to communicate and empathise with others and to analyse intercultural experiences critically. It offers opportunities for them to consider their own beliefs and attitudes in a new light, and so gain insight into themselves and others. (ACARA, 2015a)

> The relevance of Intercultural understanding to developing Asia capabilities

AEF's definition of 'Asia capabilities' combines the following two elements of the Australian Curriculum.

1. The Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority:
 - a. recognition of the diversity within and between the countries of the Asia region
 - b. knowledge and understanding of Asian histories, societies, cultures, beliefs and environments, and the connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia, and the rest of the world
 - c. skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia, to effectively live, work and learn in the region (ACARA, 2015b).
2. The Intercultural understanding general capability (discussed previously).

In addition, Asia capabilities can also include communicative ability in at least one Asian language.

One of the most important reasons for helping students develop Asia capabilities at school relates not only to Australia's future, but also the social sustainability of the world. An interconnected world demands a future that is co-created and shared.

Social sustainability incorporates people-to-people and institutional elements, and underpins economic, political and environmental sustainability (Anand & Sen, 2000). Australia's engagement with Asia sits within this social sustainability context, which requires transformation in how students view and interact with Asia's culturally diverse peoples and societies (Hassim, 2013a). Such transformation with respect to cultural diversity and interconnectivity is the role of intercultural understanding in education.

In a survey of 1,471 teachers and 481 principals in Australia concerning Asia capabilities, 72 per cent of respondents indicated that fostering intercultural understanding was a key reason for focusing on Asia in the curriculum (Halse et al., 2013). Further, teachers

articulated the benefits in terms of building banks of knowledge, understanding, awareness and sensitivity to the diversity, richness, complexity and depth of the histories and cultures of countries in Asia. A significant proportion of responses also pointed to the value and benefits of teaching and learning about Asia in helping overcome racial and cultural stereotypes and in developing greater intercultural tolerance and respect among students. Teachers said they hoped that teaching and learning about countries in Asia would help counter 'racist generalisations that stifle thinking' and help to alleviate 'fear and xenophobia'. On the other hand, other teachers said that an Asian focus in their teaching helped students from Asia to learn, understand, embrace and celebrate their own histories and heritages.
(p. 64)

In the same survey, almost three quarters (73 per cent) of teacher respondents believed that a key feature of the 'Asia literate teacher' was effectiveness in building intercultural understanding through teaching practices, character, dispositions and behaviours. The dispositions and behaviours include being 'accepting', 'open-minded', 'compassionate', 'flexible', 'adaptable', 'forward thinking', 'outward looking', 'culturally inquisitive', 'non-judgemental' and having 'a strong sense of justice' (Halse et al., 2013, p. 65).

Intercultural understanding is also a key facet of global citizenship. The UN's Global Education First Initiative specifies global citizenship as one of three priorities for education internationally and describes it as follows.

Introduction

An intercultural understanding view of the Asia and Australia's engagement with Australia cross-curriculum priority within the Australian Curriculum has been argued by AEF in recent years.

The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it. Education must also be relevant in answering the big questions of the day. Technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century. (UN, 2015)

Hence, transformative intercultural understanding requires students to see beyond their own contexts and standpoints, reflect on their own thoughts and actions, and negotiate the complexities and implications of a diverse and interconnected world (Rizvi, 2012).

An intercultural understanding view of the Asia and Australia's engagement with Australia cross-curriculum priority within the Australian Curriculum has been argued by AEF in recent years (AEF, 2013; Hassim, 2013a, 2013b). This approach is an attempt at enabling students to appreciate 'what makes the Asia region tick' (Hassim, 2013a, p. 13), which is foundational to deep and informed engagement with and within the region. It is supported by the idea that education seeks to transform individuals and societies. Intercultural understanding provides a well-developed theoretical and empirical research base to support transformative learning. Hence, educators need to ask, 'What is the transformative value of learning about Asia, and why do we need this transformation?' (Hassim, 2014b).

An intercultural approach to learning for Asia capabilities takes students to the edge of their comfort zones (Hassim, 2013b), which is 'where the excitement of real development, true growth and meaningful transformation lies' (Grant & Brueck, 2010, p. 10). Otherwise, learning about Asia primarily becomes an awareness-raising and information-sharing exercise.

In utilising an intercultural approach, it is important to ensure that cultural groups are not stereotyped or treated as discrete and/or static. Transformative intercultural learning is much more than two cultural groups interacting with one another to understand similarities and differences.

The Third Space is a (real or imagined) space where diverse peoples can explore how their cultures intersect. Because Third Spaces are innumerable, educators need to focus on developing students' transferable intercultural capabilities.

Students need to understand and deconstruct what underpins thinking and behaviour; they need to focus on how cultures intersect and the implications of cultural interconnections; they need to understand how some aspects of culture remain sacred while other aspects constantly evolve.

School educators can refer to the Third Space/Place model of intercultural interactions to advance their practice. This model stemmed from socio-linguistics (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993, 1998) but has since influenced intercultural learning theory. The Third Space is a (real or imagined) space where diverse peoples can explore how their cultures intersect. Because Third Spaces are innumerable, educators need to focus on developing students' transferable intercultural capabilities.

The Third Space model acknowledges that people bring their own cultural background and standpoints to Third Space interactions. They cannot be expected to abandon these backgrounds and standpoints and become like the cultural other (Hassim, 2014a). In a classroom context, students focus on common areas of conversation or inquiry topics to which they bring their own cultural perspectives. The intent is not to identify a superior standpoint, but to see, understand and articulate common issues from multiple perspectives with a view to working towards shared outcomes. This enables students to develop the ability to deal with cultural differences and cross-culturally awkward and ambiguous scenarios, which is central to intercultural competence (UNESCO, 2013).

BRIDGE has been recognised nationally and internationally for its innovation in supporting Australia-Asia school partnerships.

What Works 9 employed a qualitative case-study approach in two parts – BRIDGE was used as a case study of schools in Australia that are committed to fostering intercultural understanding. The first part involved coding of intercultural understanding definitions provided by BRIDGE schools against elements of the Intercultural understanding general capability in the Australian Curriculum. The second part analysed intercultural understanding practices at BRIDGE schools in Australia, presented as a set of illustrations. This approach was developed in response to the following research questions.

- How do Australian schools involved in BRIDGE define intercultural understanding?
- How do these schools practise their definitions of intercultural understanding?
- How can these schools successfully define and practise intercultural understanding?
- How might these schools further develop their understanding and practice of intercultural understanding?
- What is the indicative baseline for defining and practising intercultural understanding with respect to these schools?
- How does this baseline compare with the Australian Curriculum view of intercultural understanding?

For the purposes of *What Works 9*, 'baseline' refers to a 'usually initial set of critical observations or data used for comparison or a control' (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The indicative baseline is expected to act as a tool for schools to assess their current intercultural understanding context, develop their thinking and practice around intercultural learning, and track their development in this space.

> BRIDGE overview

The Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project (BRIDGE) connects Australian teachers, students and school communities with their counterparts across Asia. BRIDGE is an acronym for 'Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement'. Managed by AEF, it is a professional learning programme that builds teacher capacity through school partnerships to develop intercultural understanding, improve Asian language skills (if applicable), enhance ICT skills, and establish sustainable school partnerships and a community of learners.

BRIDGE has been recognised nationally and internationally for its innovation in supporting Australia-Asia school partnerships. For example, it was acknowledged as one of Australia's leading educational innovations at the 2012 Biennial National Education Forum.

Prior to that, it was shortlisted in the final 20 projects in the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations-BMW Award for Intercultural Innovation 2011, of which it ranked 16th out of 400 entries from 70 countries.

BRIDGE consists of five country projects: 1) Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE (Indonesia BRIDGE); 2) Australia-Korea BRIDGE (Korea BRIDGE); 3) Australia-China BRIDGE (China BRIDGE); 4) Australia-Thailand BRIDGE (Thailand BRIDGE); 5) Australia-Malaysia BRIDGE (Malaysia BRIDGE).

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the different country projects.

BRIDGE Project	No. of school partnerships	No. of teachers directly involved*
Indonesia (est. 2008)	132	532
China (est. 2011)	36	72
Korea (est. 2009)	32	64
Thailand (est. 2013)	18	36
Malaysia (est. 2015)	8	16
Total	226	720

Table 3: Number of BRIDGE partnerships and teachers directly involved, according to country project

(*BRIDGE requires at least one teacher from each school within a partnership to be directly involved)

While the exact focus of each BRIDGE country project varies and specific activities differ from school to school, the overarching concern of BRIDGE is the fostering of intercultural understanding through authentic cross-cultural engagement.

BRIDGE has been extensively researched and evaluated. *What Works ó*, which focused on the key features and outcomes of the project, as well as previous BRIDGE evaluations and reports (AEF, 2012, 2014a; Nugroho & Beavis, 2010) have found that the project incorporates elements considered optimum for successful school partnerships, including:

- systematic support and involvement by all stakeholders in the school community (leadership, teachers, students and parents)
- balanced and committed collaboration and communication between partner schools
- planning for and working towards partnership sustainability
- curricular, co-curricular and pedagogical embedding
- purposeful professional learning.

Drawing on a survey of Australian BRIDGE schools, *What Works 6* demonstrated that BRIDGE has been successful in achieving its key objectives (AEF, 2014a). The following findings are especially relevant to intercultural understanding:

- 97 per cent of all BRIDGE teachers in Australia stated that their intercultural understanding has developed as a result of BRIDGE.
- 95 per cent reported that their knowledge and awareness of the partner country has expanded.
- 92 per cent reported that BRIDGE has enabled their students to expand their knowledge and awareness of the partner country.
- 90 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that students have further developed their intercultural understanding as a result of BRIDGE.
- 88 per cent maintain contact with their partner school.
- 79 per cent indicated that staff at their school had a chance to visit the partner school and make personal connections.
- 72 per cent reported that BRIDGE has enabled their school to establish a sustainable school partnership to support such cross-cultural engagement.

> Coding of BRIDGE schools' intercultural understanding definitions

In late 2013, AEF invited BRIDGE project leaders to respond to the Annual BRIDGE Survey. The 2013 survey was more comprehensive than in previous years, incorporating items focused on how key features of BRIDGE correspond to certain personal and professional outcomes among participants. Importantly, the survey included an open response question that asked respondents to define intercultural understanding. At the time, Malaysia BRIDGE did not yet exist. A total of 184 survey responses were received.

What Works 9 focuses only the Australian responses ($n=93$) for two reasons. First, this removes issues arising from language differences. In particular, overseas respondents may have struggled to find the appropriate terminology to discuss complex intercultural concepts in their national language. Their responses then had to be interpreted and translated into English, which would have further exacerbated the problem. Hence, for analysis purposes, the Australian responses in English are not directly comparable to the responses translated into English. Second, schools in the BRIDGE partner countries receive a different nature and level of professional learning support to their counterparts in Australia. This is likely to impact on the ways in which the schools overseas develop their views about intercultural understanding in education.

The Australian definitions of intercultural understanding were coded using a coding system informed by the ACARA framework for the Intercultural understanding general capability, encompassing both the organising elements and sub-elements (listed previously in Table 1). However, it was necessary to modify this framework for coding purposes in order to align more specifically to the *What Works 9* data set. The four codes that were used and what was counted within each code are specified in Table 4 below. This coding system enabled some quantitative analysis of the data to be conducted alongside the (primarily) qualitative analysis.

Code no.	Code	Inclusions
1	Knowledge about cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating culture and cultural identity Exploring cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices Comparing cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices
2	Interacting cross-culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cultural communication Cross-cultural engagement
3	Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering multiple cultural perspectives Developing multiple perspectives Reflecting on intercultural experiences Developing respect for cultural diversity Empathising with cultural others
4	Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging (cultural) stereotypes and prejudices Mediating cultural differences

Table 4: Coding system used for *What Works 9*

Although the intercultural understanding definitions were provided by individual BRIDGE project leaders, their responses were intended to be reflective of their particular school's involvement in BRIDGE.

> Illustrations

The four *What Works 9* illustrations (see Table 5) do not only focus on advanced cases of intercultural understanding theory and practice among Australian BRIDGE schools. Rather, they provide an indication of the spectrum of approaches to intercultural understanding in these schools.

St Paul's School, QLD Contact: Maureen Noakes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• China BRIDGE• Metropolitan• Independent• Pre-Prep-12	St Joseph's School, SA Contact: Sally Izzo <ul style="list-style-type: none">• China BRIDGE• Remote• Catholic• R-12
Wooranna Park Primary School, VIC Contact: Janet Whittle <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Korea BRIDGE• Metropolitan• Government• F-6	John Paul College, QLD Contact: Rhiannen Gimpel <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thailand BRIDGE• Metropolitan• Independent• Pre-Prep-12

Table 5: *What Works 9* illustrations

The illustrated schools were identified through the coding applied to the intercultural understanding definitions provided by BRIDGE project leaders. The BRIDGE project leader from each school was then invited to provide information for, and subsequently verify, the illustrations.

Building on their respective definitions of intercultural understanding, the four project leaders were asked several key questions, including:

- How is intercultural understanding demonstrated in teaching?
- How is it demonstrated in learning?
- How is it demonstrated in other aspects of the school?
 - o School leadership
 - o Broader staff attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and actions
 - o The planned and taught curriculum
 - o Teaching and learning resources
 - o Assessment
 - o School policy and official documents
 - o Family and community engagement
 - o Engagement with the partner school
 - o School culture and hidden curriculum
 - o Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

- What outcomes have been observed among students and staff, specifically transformed thinking and/or behaviour with respect to cultural diversity?
- How has the school considered the Australian Curriculum view of Intercultural understanding in planning for and enacting intercultural learning?
- What resources and samples of planning or student work can you share with other schools?

In providing their responses to these questions, the project leaders were asked to focus on the last 18 months. As their intercultural understanding definitions were collected in late 2013, this study explores how these definitions have since been put into practice. The views of the BRIDGE project leader do not necessarily represent the official views of the school.

> Analytical framework

The analytical framework used for the intercultural understanding definitions and illustrations was the coding system adapted from the Australian Curriculum general capability of Intercultural understanding (see Table 4).

How do BRIDGE schools define intercultural understanding?

The majority of Australian BRIDGE schools surveyed view intercultural understanding as being more than knowledge about cultures.

Two types of frequency tables were developed based on the coding of intercultural understanding definitions provided by BRIDGE project leaders in Australia ($n=93$). The first type includes cumulative totals for each individual code (1-4) across all BRIDGE country projects. The second type combines the frequencies for all coding combinations and non-combinations across all BRIDGE country projects. The coding applied to the definitions enabled identification and exploration of key patterns in how Australian BRIDGE schools define intercultural understanding.

Code	Cumulative frequency (all BRIDGE projects; 93 Australian schools)
1 – Knowledge about cultures	82
2 – Interacting cross-culturally	39
3 – Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	47
4 – Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations	11

Table 6: Cumulative frequencies of each code across all BRIDGE country projects

Table 6 seems to indicate that many Australian BRIDGE schools view intercultural understanding as knowledge about cultures. However, upon closer inspection, more than half (54 per cent) of all the frequencies were to do with interaction, reflection and addressing cross-cultural challenges. This observation is supported by Table 7 below, which shows clearly that the majority of Australian BRIDGE schools surveyed view intercultural understanding as being more than knowledge about cultures. This represents an excellent platform for consolidating and further developing the theory and practice of intercultural understanding in these schools.

Nevertheless, the element of 'addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations' (Code 4) was not well represented in the coding frequencies, with only 6 per cent of Australian BRIDGE schools referring to it in their intercultural understanding definitions. This may indicate that many BRIDGE schools do not yet see the challenging of cultural stereotypes and prejudices and/or the negotiation of cultural differences as being central to intercultural understanding in education, otherwise called the 'social action' approach (Banks, 1999). It may also indicate that schools need professional learning support targeted specifically at developing their thinking and practice around this element of intercultural understanding.

It is noteworthy that the cumulative frequency for 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3) exceeded that of 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2), and this is largely due to data from Indonesia BRIDGE. The element of 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' can be seen as being conceptually more advanced than 'interacting cross-culturally'. This is because cultural knowledge and interactions do not necessarily transform thinking and behaviour with respect to cultural diversity; rather, it is reflecting on the knowledge and interactions that lies at the core of transformative intercultural learning (AEF, 2014b; Hassim, 2014b). The significant occurrence of Code 3 in the definitions provided by Indonesia BRIDGE schools was expected given that Indonesia BRIDGE is the oldest and largest of all the BRIDGE country projects. Indeed, time and collegial networks are important factors in developing strong and sustainable intercultural engagement programmes (AEF, 2014a).

Code	Frequency (all BRIDGE projects; 93 Australian schools)
1 only – Knowledge about cultures	29
2 only – Interacting cross-culturally	3
3 only – Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	6
1, 2	13
1, 3	17
2, 3	1
1, 2, 3	13
1, 3, 4	1
2, 3, 4	1
1, 2, 3, 4	9
Total	93

Table 7: Frequencies of coding combinations and non-combinations across all BRIDGE country projects

What Table 6 does not illustrate is how the element of 'knowledge about cultures' (Code 1) often occurs in combination with other elements, especially 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2) and/or 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3). This is captured by Table 7. If the four codes are viewed along a continuum of increasing conceptual and practical complexity, then it is safe to say that the majority of Australian BRIDGE schools do not have a simplistic view of intercultural understanding.

How do BRIDGE schools define intercultural understanding?

It is possible to state that 69 per cent of the definitions demonstrate a view of intercultural understanding that goes beyond a knowledge-about-cultures mindset.

More precisely, 57 per cent of intercultural understanding definitions provided by these schools encompassed the element of 'knowledge about cultures' in combination with at least one other element (likely Code 2 or Code 3). 'Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations' (Code 4) never occurred in isolation. Hence, schools that incorporated this element as part of their definitions are very likely to have an advanced view of intercultural understanding.

Furthermore, because the elements of 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2) and 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3) are more conceptually advanced than 'knowledge about cultures' (Code 1), it is possible to state that 69 per cent of the definitions demonstrate a view of intercultural understanding that goes beyond a knowledge-about-cultures mindset. Hence, a large majority of the intercultural understanding definitions reflect the necessary shift from the multicultural to the intercultural in education (UNESCO, 2006).

BRIDGE has been supportive of developing more advanced conceptions of intercultural understanding in Australian schools when *What Works 9* findings are viewed alongside some of the findings of *What Works 6*, in particular:

- 97 per cent of all BRIDGE teachers in Australia stated that their intercultural understanding has developed as a result of BRIDGE
- 90 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that students have further developed their intercultural understanding as a result of BRIDGE (AEF, 2014a).

While these *What Works 6* findings were based on perception data, not actual measurements of effectiveness or success, they serve as a useful indicator of how BRIDGE's success as an intercultural programme has been perceived by BRIDGE project leaders. Furthermore, when these leaders were asked to assess intercultural developments at their respective schools in 2013, they did not typically have the tools to break down the theory and practice of intercultural understanding into its component elements (as this study has done).

It is encouraging to observe that the occurrences of Code 4 (addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations) were not anomalous based on their frequency and distribution across the different BRIDGE country projects. Table 8 below provides examples of the intercultural understanding definitions provided by Australian BRIDGE schools. The examples correspond to the most common coding combinations in the data and Code 1 (knowledge about cultures) only, which was the most common non-combination.

Code	Examples
1 only	<p>Having an understanding of other cultures' customs, traditions, food, language and general society.</p> <p>Knowledge of each other's cultures and an understanding of similarities and differences between cultures.</p>
1, 2	<p>Being able to move between cultures with confidence.</p> <p>Understanding that there are other ways of perceiving and doing things.</p> <p>Intercultural understanding is the development of skills to assist in cross-cultural communication – this includes an understanding of culture, language, geography, history and society.</p>
1, 3	<p>Understanding the cultural context of why people do the things they do. Trying to see the world through different perspectives based on cultural perceptions. Taking into account the cultural complexities that frame our world and that of others.</p> <p>Having understanding and knowledge of a different culture, their beliefs and way of life. Not judging others who live differently but recognising the world is made up of a diverse set of cultural beliefs.</p>
1, 2, 3	<p>The skills and understandings that enable one to operate within and between cultures; identify the cultural understandings implicit in our own mindsets; and an openness to experiencing and valuing cultures other than our own.</p> <p>Intercultural understanding means people learn how people from another culture shape their identities and gain more understanding about their selves. Through engaging with people from another culture, people acquire intercultural understanding and cultivate mutual respect among each other.</p>
1, 2, 3, 4	<p>Intercultural understanding is something that is constantly evolving. The more aware one becomes of understanding the nuances of other cultures, the more one realises that there is [much] to learn, and that assumptions cannot be made. It is something to be worked on with mutual respect and openness to learning, to improve understanding and communication as well as appreciation between the cultures and across the cultures. It also requires reflection and self-reflection.</p> <p>Understanding about self and another culture, and the ability to negotiate meaning between both cultures and an awareness of one's own position (and responsibilities) between the two cultures.</p> <p>Intercultural understanding assumes that culture is dynamic, multifaceted and is reflected in language. Culture is the set of values, practices, attitudes, perceptions, customs and traditions of a society and is not just ... arts, festivals, food, fashion etc.</p>

Table 8: Examples of intercultural understanding definitions provided by Australian BRIDGE schools

How do BRIDGE schools define intercultural understanding?

There needs to be more investment in unpacking the Intercultural understanding general capability with school educators and supporting them to develop contextually appropriate applications of intercultural teaching and learning.

At a BRIDGE country project level, there appears to be a direct relationship between size/newness of the project and level of sophistication reflected in the intercultural understanding definitions. While time and collegial support are factors in well-developed intercultural engagement initiatives (AEF, 2014a), this does not necessarily mean that developing an advanced view of intercultural understanding has to be a slow process (Hassim, 2013b, citing AEF, 2013).

The sheer multiplicity of wording in the BRIDGE intercultural understanding definitions is both an opportunity and a challenge. From the perspective of opportunity, it shows that Australian teachers are attempting to make sense of a complex educational idea and translate it into classroom practice. This relates to the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#), especially Standard 2 (Know the content and how to teach it) and Standard 3 (Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015). From the perspective of challenge, however, the multiplicity of wording indicates that school educators in Australia are not entirely familiar with the terminology and/or broader implications of the Intercultural understanding general capability within the Australian Curriculum. As the BRIDGE project has developed in the last several years, so too has the complexity of intercultural understanding theory, which is now reflected in the Australian Curriculum. There needs to be more investment in unpacking the Intercultural understanding general capability with school educators and supporting them to develop contextually appropriate applications of intercultural teaching and learning.

Overall, the coding results set an indicative baseline for further work on developing understandings of intercultural understanding in Australian schools. In time, the baseline will need to be updated and expanded to encompass a broader range of schools—including those not engaged in an intercultural programme—across states/territories, geo-locations and sectors. Importantly, because the current baseline is based on data generated by schools that partake in a successful intercultural programme, it is reasonable to assume that schools not involved in such a programme will require more support to develop their intercultural thinking and practice.

From the perspective of implementation, the Australian Curriculum is relatively new. Many schools throughout Australia are still becoming accustomed to its content, scope and sequence, and its implications for classroom teaching and learning. At both systemic and school levels, less attention has been paid to how the general capabilities, like Intercultural understanding, should be developed among students.

Developmental targets for advancing conceptions of intercultural understanding in Australian schools could be set based on the findings of *What Works 9*.

Developmental targets for advancing conceptions of intercultural understanding in Australian schools could be set based on the findings of *What Works 9*. Such targets are expected to support implementation of the Intercultural understanding general capability in Australian schools. This is due to the strong alignment between the coding system used in the present study and the organising elements and sub-elements of the general capability.

St Paul's international school partnerships provide opportunities for authentic intercultural experiences.

St Paul's School is a metropolitan, co-educational Pre-Prep to Year 12 independent (Anglican) school located in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. The school, which has around 1400 students, has a significantly above-average **Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA)** value. Sixteen per cent of students come from a non-English language background. St Paul's has been taking part in China BRIDGE since 2012 and has a partnership with Dongfang Decai School in Beijing, along with other sister schools in China. St Paul's also has a partner school in Japan and connections with schools in Thailand and Indonesia.

> Maureen's intercultural understanding definition

Intercultural understanding is taking an informed stance between one's cultural perspective and another cultural perspective, as carried through language choices, behaviour and values.

> Intercultural understanding practice at the school

Maureen Noakes is the Learning Manager for Languages at St Paul's. From a curriculum perspective, she describes how intercultural understanding frames, and features within, the school's Languages programme. At times, issues around culture and identity are raised and discussed in English, Social Sciences and Religious and Values Education, enabling students to explore different cultural perspectives. However, Maureen sees the potential for deeper investigations of culture and intercultural understanding beyond simple compare and contrast approaches. Maureen also sees opportunities within the curriculum for students to be exposed to different intercultural learning experiences and to develop empathy. To date, there has been some consideration in curriculum planning of the Intercultural understanding general capability within the Australian Curriculum, even though this has varied from one learning area to another, with Languages featuring most prominently.

In Year 8, Chinese language students have engaged in hands-on activities to learn about Chinese arts, crafts, food and festivals; Years 10 and 11 students have sought to enrich their learning experiences by taking part in activities as diverse as learning how to order food at a Chinese restaurant to investigating opportunities to study Chinese at university. For Maureen, a recent highlight was her Year 7 students' participation in the Sunshine Coast Modern Language Teacher's Association Speech Contest. The judges of the Year 7 Division were amazed at the students' high level of communicative competence given that they had studied Chinese for only less than a year.

St Paul's international school partnerships provide opportunities for authentic intercultural experiences. For example, email exchanges with Dongfang Decai, the BRIDGE partnership school, have occurred over the

Maureen observes that her school is gradually becoming more aware and accepting of cultural diversity. The demand for language learning is growing and there has been an increase in student numbers for Japanese language—taught from Pre-Prep to Year 12—into the senior years.

last three years. Interactions within this partnership are predominantly asynchronous (via email and wikis). Nonetheless, the BRIDGE project leaders at both schools have shared their expanded learning and collaboration with other colleagues in order to strengthen the partnership. Through the **Language Learning Space**, synchronous (videoconferencing) interactions via weekly Skype sessions are held in language classes to support the development of students' listening and speaking skills in Chinese. Furthermore, the school's in-country learning programmes have been held since 2006. The theme of the most recent programme was environmental, as students investigated Australian and Chinese perspectives of the social use of space. Maureen feels that further work can be done to maximise the intercultural learning opportunities of these visits across the taught curriculum.

Intercultural understanding is also promoted as part of service learning at St Paul's, which is actively involved in Interact and Round Square. For example, students wishing to become Middle or Senior School leaders are expected to volunteer at Soup Kitchen to serve the poor and help build community projects in Vanuatu. Each year, three Year 11 students are chosen to go to World School to take part in discussions with students from other countries about global issues of common concern. Service learning, community service and student leadership are all valued aspects of the school, in accordance with its core mission and values. As a result, serious consideration is being given to the possibility of all Year 10 students going to Vanuatu for two weeks to undertake service learning.

According to Maureen, the school's leadership supports intercultural understanding initiatives by promoting greater teaching and learning autonomy among teachers and students. Yet, she sees the valuing of language learning by the school community as a persistent challenge. From the perspective of intercultural learning, she wishes to develop greater understanding among parents that language learning is not subversive; rather, it can unite culturally diverse communities. In 2014 and 2015, Roly Sussex OAM, Emeritus Professor of Applied Language Studies at the University of Queensland, spoke to parents at St Paul's about where Languages sit within the school's curriculum and the personal value of learning languages.

Maureen observes that her school is gradually becoming more aware and accepting of cultural diversity. The demand for language learning is growing and there has been an increase in student numbers for Japanese language—taught from Pre-Prep to Year 12—into the senior years. Chinese language is still yet to experience similar progress beyond Year 9. Hence, Maureen aspires to embark on further work to help students, parents and colleagues understand the language-culture connection and ways of working across cultures while maintaining their own sense of identity.

St Paul's has been promoting itself as an international school since 2000, and the school has witnessed an expansion in intercultural learning opportunities ever since. For example, it has attracted many short-term (two- to three-week) study tours, mainly involving students from Japan. Hence, Japanese language students at St Paul's can interact with native Japanese speakers at least once every two to three weeks. In contrast, international students from China and South Korea stay at the school for much longer, so the challenges of facilitating cross-cultural dialogue with these students are different.

Moving forwards, St Paul's has developed a plan for 2014–2028. Among other objectives, the plan seeks to engage the broader school community in a conversation around the need to understand and value diverse perspectives while addressing issues of common concern.

Importantly, some students have been transformed by their intercultural experiences through St Paul's China Program. One student wrote in St Paul's Yearly Handbook 2014:

The 2014 China program offered me the chance to step out of my comfort zone and to experience what life is like in China. Here in Australia, I had read about China and Chinese ways but I had never been to a Chinese speaking country. I have learnt Chinese since 2010. I really wanted to go to China to see for it myself and to challenge some assumptions I had about China.

By the end of the two weeks, the nine students – six from St Paul's and three from the International Montessori School were one big family. I made friends with everyone on the program and we all worked together to have a great time ... I can see the power of learning another language and I have used my additional language skills to forge friendships with others.

Going to China and returning in one piece made me more independent and confident. I faced situations that I had never experienced before, and completed tasks that I had never attempted before.

> Analysis

The intercultural understanding definition provided by Maureen displayed the element of 'knowledge about cultures' (Code 1). Based on the information provided for this illustration, however, it appears that intercultural understanding practice at her school now encompasses 'knowledge about cultures' as well as the elements of 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2) and 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3).

This development seems to have been influenced by time and collegial networks (AEF, 2014a) as well as growing familiarity with the Australian Curriculum view of intercultural understanding, awareness of broader advancements in intercultural theory and practice, and access to relevant professional learning.

For those students who had the opportunity to travel overseas, their intercultural experiences and accompanying reflections reflect the element of 'addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations' (Code 4), which accords with the observation that in-country experiences provide opportunities for transformative intercultural learning (AEF, 2014b).

Code no.	Code	Inclusions
1	Knowledge about cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating culture and cultural identity Exploring cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices Comparing cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices
2	Interacting cross-culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cultural communication Cross-cultural engagement
3	Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering multiple cultural perspectives Developing multiple perspectives Reflecting on intercultural experiences Developing respect for cultural diversity Empathising with cultural others
4	Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging (cultural) stereotypes and prejudices Mediating cultural differences

Table 9: Assessment of St Paul's intercultural understanding practice against the *What Works 9* coding system

Sally describes her desire to expand intercultural experiences at the school through BRIDGE because of the largely mono-cultural nature of the student population.

St Joseph's School is a remote, co-educational R-12 Catholic (day and boarding) school located in Port Lincoln, South Australia. The school, which has total enrolments of over 700, has an above-average [Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage \(ICSEA\)](#) value. The student population is not culturally diverse. St Joseph's has been taking part in China BRIDGE since 2013. It has a partnership with Huantai Experimental School in Shandong, China. Students from F-1 and Years 5-8 participate in the BRIDGE project.

> Sally's intercultural understanding definition

Intercultural understanding is being able to join in and work with people in a variety of contexts. To do this requires an ability to know and understand your own culture and other cultures and being able to work between the two.

> Intercultural understanding practice at the school

Sally Izzo teaches Asian Studies at St Joseph's and regularly uses AEF and Scootle curriculum resources in her classroom practice. BRIDGE has been instrumental in cementing the place of Asian Studies at the school, and Sally attempts to align her teaching and curriculum planning to the Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority and (to a lesser extent) the Intercultural understanding general capability of the Australian Curriculum. In her Year 1 classroom, Sally has focused on Chinese New Year as part of a celebrations theme, and her students have compared this celebration to other New Year's celebrations around the world. This has enabled students to also share experiences of their own cultural celebrations.

Sally describes her desire to expand intercultural experiences at the school through BRIDGE because of the largely mono-cultural nature of the student population. She wants her students to have a strong sense of their own cultural identity while appreciating cultural diversity. BRIDGE has enabled the development of collaborative activities, such as letter writing, between St Joseph's and Huantai. For example, Year 6 students from St Joseph's have written to their peers in China about special things in Australia and why they are proud to be Australian. The students from Huantai have reciprocated with a similar letter about their life in China and on being Chinese.

Year 9 students at St Joseph's explore Chinese and Australian cuisines during cooking classes and actively interact with their Huantai peers on Wikispace discussion forums. In 2014, 10 students and four teachers from Huantai visited St Joseph's. This was followed by a reciprocal visit to Huantai by a teacher and a student from St Joseph's. Further reciprocal visits by students and staff from both schools are being planned.

It appears that St Joseph's has exceeded Sally's conception and expectations of intercultural understanding over the last 18 months.

According to Sally, students at St Joseph's are learning to respect and value other cultures as they interact with their peers from China. They have further developed their cross-cultural communicative competence as well as the confidence to openly discuss cultural differences online and face-to-face.

These teaching and learning activities receive strong support from school leadership, and Sally credits this support for enabling staff and students from both partner schools to engage in cross-cultural visits. School leadership views these visits as important to the promotion of intercultural understanding across the entire school, which has contributed to staff and families becoming increasingly active in the area of intercultural learning.

For example, staff members display an open disposition towards the visitors from Huantai, allowing them to visit their classrooms and engaging in joint activities such as cooking. In 2015, families at St Joseph's are once again hosting visitors from Huantai after the success of the 2014 visit. The visitors participated in a community night and were treated to a welcome dinner by school council. The success of these activities and events has been the focus of several stories in the local newspaper. St Joseph's efforts have also gained the attention of other schools, with Sally networking with these schools in planning the next trip to China. Further, the Year 5 unit on the Willow Tree (a Chinese tale) was shared with another school and adapted.

Overall, St Joseph's has hosted two separate delegations from its partner school in the last 18 months, with another larger visit planned for July 2015. Many students are showing more interest in being involved in hosting a Chinese student or visiting China. Some students are even interacting with their Chinese peers outside of school. Sally reports a heightened sense of intercultural understanding among teachers, students and parents, along with much stronger interest in China and Chinese language learning.

> Analysis

The intercultural understanding definition provided by Sally in 2013 reflected the elements of 'knowledge about cultures' (Code 1) and 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2). However, based on the information provided for this illustration, it is reasonable to state that intercultural understanding practice at the school firmly reflects these elements as well as aspects of 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3). It appears that St Joseph's has exceeded Sally's conception and expectations of intercultural understanding over the last 18 months. Indeed, time and collegial networks are important factors in developing strong and sustainable intercultural engagement programmes (AEF, 2014a).

Code no.	Code	Inclusions
1	Knowledge about cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating culture and cultural identity Exploring cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices Comparing cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices
2	Interacting cross-culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cultural communication Cross-cultural engagement
3	Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering multiple cultural perspectives Developing multiple perspectives Reflecting on intercultural experiences Developing respect for cultural diversity Empathising with cultural others
4	Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging (cultural) stereotypes and prejudices Mediating cultural differences

Table 10: Assessment of St Joseph's intercultural understanding practice against the *What Works 9* coding system

The school's participation in BRIDGE provides an extension to the intercultural experiences and interactions that naturally occur within the school due to its culturally diverse student population.

Wooranna Park Primary School is a metropolitan, F-6 government school located in Dandenong, in the south-east of Melbourne. The school, which has total enrolments of over 350, has a significantly below-average **Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA)** value. The student population is culturally diverse, and nearly 70 per cent of students come from a language background other than English. Wooranna Park has been part of Korea BRIDGE since 2013 and has developed a partnership with Kangnae Elementary School in South Korea. As a result of this partnership's success, Wooranna Park entered into a second BRIDGE partnership in 2014, as part of Thailand BRIDGE, with Satreephuket.

> Janet's intercultural understanding definition

Intercultural understanding is understanding and valuing other cultures, languages and the interplay between them that exists over time to build a unique community.

> Intercultural understanding practice at the school

Janet Whittle is Assistant Principal (Languages, Wellbeing and Special Rights) at Wooranna Park. The school's participation in BRIDGE provides an extension to the intercultural experiences and interactions that naturally occur within the school due to its culturally diverse student population. In many ways, the school illustrates the face of multicultural Australia to its partner schools in South Korea and Thailand.

As a result of Wooranna Park's involvement in BRIDGE, there has been increased presence of Korea-related content across the school's taught curriculum, in addition to the Korean language programme. This has led to heightened student interest and engagement with respect to Korean language and culture. When it first began, the Korean language programme existed as an extra-curricular class with only two students. Six months later, the school joined Korea BRIDGE. Many more students have since taken part in the programme and regular lunchtime classes are now being offered. According to Janet, students are eager to study Korean and even 'use lunchtimes to study Korean just for fun' (AEF, 2014a). Further, the expansion of the Korean language programme at Wooranna Park has even spurred Janet 'to study Korean seriously' (AEF, 2014a).

From the perspective of intercultural understanding, the school has utilised its participation in BRIDGE as a means of authentic learning (AEF, 2014a). Its approach to fostering intercultural understanding among students and staff appears to be focused primarily on language learning and facilitating cross-cultural contact.

Students and staff at Wooranna Park and Kangnae interact cross-culturally both asynchronously and synchronously. Examples of asynchronous interaction include letter writing among students and collaboration on the BRIDGE partnership Wikispace. BRIDGE teachers from both schools have co-created the Wikispace, which contains digital content, activities and curated online resources for students to use. The schools also use Vokis and other digital platforms (e.g. Edmodo and YouTube) to support curriculum-based collaborations.

However, based on Janet's observations, students are even more eager to engage in synchronous interactions with their partner school peers. For example, some Korean language classes at Wooranna Park involve live Skype sessions with students and staff at Kangnae. Every fortnight the Korean BRIDGE teacher at Kangnae offers short Korean language lessons for the Wooranna Park students. In addition, students at both schools assist one another with learning new vocabulary, in English or Korean, and this activity also involves peer assessment and correction. As Wooranna Park's Korea BRIDGE and Thailand BRIDGE partnerships consolidate, gain momentum and mature, Janet has observed an increase in discussions 'about the need for Asia literacy across the school' (AEF, 2014a). This indicates a developing disposition of openness towards the countries and cultures of Asia, which is consistent with the school's own rich cultural diversity. It also suggests that the intercultural understanding work undertaken by Janet and her colleagues is bearing fruit. Furthermore, BRIDGE teachers from the partner schools have participated in reciprocated in-country visits and joint professional learning sessions. These collaborative activities have spurred the schools to continue their efforts to promote and support language learning and intercultural understanding among students.

In 2014, AEF observed that Wooranna Park was already quite advanced along the intercultural engagement continuum of school partnerships despite its relatively recent introduction to BRIDGE (AEF, 2014a). This suggests that the school has a sound grasp of what intercultural understanding involves and how transformative intercultural learning can be supported and even fast-tracked.

For a video illustration of Wooranna Park's work around fostering intercultural understanding, visit www.asiaeducation.edu.au/programmes/aef-videos/bridge-school-partnerships. This link also enables access to a range of other video illustrations of BRIDGE schools from across Australia.

Community building lies at the core of intercultural understanding, which is essentially about getting along with diverse others (Banks, 2004).

> Analysis

The intercultural understanding definition provided by Janet in 2013 reflected the elements of 'knowledge about cultures' (Code 1), 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2) and 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3). It demonstrates a strong focus on knowledge, respect and language learning, as well as a (reflective) recognition of the interplay between cultures. Importantly, out of all the intercultural understanding definitions analysed for *What Works 9*, it is unique because it displays a strong commitment to building a community. Community building lies at the core of intercultural understanding, which is essentially about getting along with diverse others (Banks, 2004).

It appears that Wooranna Park has built on Janet's conception and expectations of intercultural understanding over the last 18 months, and this is evident in the expansion of BRIDGE partnership activity at the school. Intercultural understanding practice at the school strongly reflects Codes 1, 2 and 3 as well as one aspect of 'addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations' (Code 4).

Code no.	Code	Inclusions
1	Knowledge about cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating culture and cultural identity Exploring cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices Comparing cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices
2	Interacting cross-culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cultural communication Cross-cultural engagement
3	Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering multiple cultural perspectives Developing multiple perspectives Reflecting on intercultural experiences Developing respect for cultural diversity Empathising with cultural others
4	Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging (cultural) stereotypes and prejudices Mediating cultural differences

Table 11: Assessment of Wooranna Park's intercultural understanding practice against the *What Works 9* coding system

John Paul College is a co-educational Early Learning to Year 12, independent, ecumenical school located in Daisy Hill, south of Brisbane. The school, which has around 2200 students, has a significantly above-average **Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA)** value. John Paul College has been taking part in Thailand BRIDGE since 2013 and has a partnership with Kantharalak Wittaya School in Sisaket, Thailand. In 2014, the College joined Korea BRIDGE, developing a partnership with Sunsim Middle School in South Korea.

> Rhiannen's intercultural understanding definition

Intercultural understanding is an essential part of learning. By fostering intercultural understanding in the classroom, students are able to learn, and value, their own culture, language and beliefs, as well as others. At John Paul College in particular, students learn about, and engage with, diverse cultures in ways that recognise difference, creates connections and fosters mutual respect.

> Intercultural understanding practice at the school

Rhiannen Gimpel is a Design Technologies Teacher and Vocational Trainer and Assessor at John Paul College. She has led the development of strong intercultural relationships between her College and Kantharalak Wittaya and Sunsim. These relationships involve students, staff and the broader school communities. A variety of ICTs are used regularly to connect partner school classrooms. For example, students create pages on a Wikispace to exchange cultural information.

Cooperative curriculum planning between the partner schools is a feature at the College. For example, in Year 7, the curriculum partnership focuses on Community Design and Design Technologies. John Paul students have been working collaboratively and sustainably on projects to design and make products for students at Sunsim. These projects are intended for use as educational resources and as gifts for Sunsim students and staff. Year 7 students at Sunsim reciprocate by learning some English from their John Paul counterparts, with a focus on art and design to align with Community Design at the College. At Kantharalak Wittaya, the reciprocal focus is also on English and design, but with the added component of Home Economics.

At John Paul, Community Design is a subject that allows students to use skills from all Design areas – Home Economics, Visual Art and Applied Design (Manual Arts). This allows students to be highly creative when designing their project. In 2014, there were four Year 7 Design classes at the College (Home Economics, Visual Art, Applied Design and Community Design) – each class rotated every term so that all Year 7 students were able to complete a project in Community Design.

Rhiannen utilises all organising elements and sub-elements of the general capability to plan for teaching and learning, and identifies content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum: Technologies that support intercultural learning.

In 2015, Community Design is being run as a unit in the second semester, which will enable students to create a project that allows them to use skills from Home Economics, Visual Art and Applied Design.

The Australian Curriculum view of intercultural understanding underpins intercultural learning at John Paul. Rhiannen utilises all organising elements and sub-elements of the general capability to plan for teaching and learning, and identifies content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum: Technologies that support intercultural learning. For example, in Year 7 Design and Technologies (Knowledge and Understanding), Rhiannen focuses on the following content descriptions:

- Examine and prioritise competing factors including social, ethical and sustainability considerations in the development of technologies and designed solutions to meet community needs for preferred futures (ACTDEK029)
- Investigate the ways in which products, services and environments evolve globally through the creativity, innovation and enterprise of individuals and groups (ACTDEK030)

Rhiannen elaborates:

In Design Technologies at John Paul College, students are working collaboratively and sustainably to solve problems, to design and make products for those in the local and global community. These projects are designed to cater for the specific needs of the community receiving the product. Students are constantly recognising different cultures and developing respect for diversity. They interact and empathise with others along the way, reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking personal responsibility.

The intercultural understanding focus within Community Design has enabled students at John Paul to successfully develop a product that meets needs of the students in Thailand and South Korea. Rhiannen has observed how students have enjoyed the opportunity to work collaboratively on a project that was intended for people in another country. The popularity of the subject/unit has spurred her to investigate ways to further develop Community Design at John Paul to strengthen intercultural learning and the College's cross-cultural relationships with Sunsim and Kantharalak Wittaya.

Rhiannen's BRIDGE and intercultural experiences at John Paul have been both personally and professionally rewarding. Her in-country experiences have helped her develop her intercultural competences as a teacher and enabled her colleagues to learn from her. They recognise clear transformations in her teaching, resulting from her overseas experiences.

Rhiannen reflects:

After completing two BRIDGE programmes, I have been able to plan for and implement effective teaching and learning processes to address intercultural understanding. By empowering my students to become active participants, they get involved in structuring their own learning, and designing units of work that are aimed at engaging them in real world situations. By working from relevant curriculum documents and embedding ICTs in my teaching, I have been very successful in making my lessons more engaging.

Furthermore, Rhiannen describes how her intercultural experiences have enabled her to better understand and interact with her students in order to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Moving forward, she plans to continue to work with the BRIDGE partner schools with a focus on developing further activities and dialogue to promote greater understanding of student diversity. Rhiannen hopes that this understanding will enable her school and the partner schools to review and improve on how they are responding to students' needs, particularly from a cultural perspective.

On a broader school level, Rhiannen describes her College as a learning environment in which all members have the opportunity to reach their potential of living a fulfilling life and of getting involved. It is a place that is built on mutual respect and hospitality, which extends to people of all cultures and faiths. The College's commitment to BRIDGE is a prime example of its commitment to cross-cultural engagement and understanding.

The John Paul International College was opened in 1997 to prepare and support international students for their studies in Australia. There is a strong focus on student welfare in addition to academic success. Its programmes are intended to develop students' learning as well as English language and intercultural skills so as to enable a smooth transition into education in Australia. International students receive English language tuition, academic and vocational counselling, and assistance with homestay and private accommodation. Their presence at the College adds to the rich variety of intercultural experiences that all students can access.

John Paul also runs annual study abroad and student exchange trips to its partner schools. Prior to their trip, participating students are required to study the language, literature, history, geography and culture of the country they intend to visit. Whilst in country, they participate in collaborative activities with students and/or teachers in that country. Upon their return, students are asked to reflect on their experiences, in particular those that inhibited or supported the development of their intercultural understanding.

Rhiannen now hopes to set up a reciprocal exchange programme with Sunsim and Kantharalak Wittaya, so that her students are able to gain firsthand experience of what it may be like to live the life of their South Korean and Thai counterparts.

Rhiannen now hopes to set up a reciprocal exchange programme with Sunsim and Kantharalak Wittaya, so that her students are able to gain firsthand experience of what it may be like to live the life of their South Korean and Thai counterparts. She believes that by providing students with authentic intercultural experiences—face to face or virtually in the classroom—they will be able to develop an insight into the thoughts, feelings, motivations and behaviours of people from other cultures.

> Analysis

The intercultural understanding definition provided by Rhiannen in 2013 reflected all four elements of 'knowledge about cultures' (Code 1), 'interacting cross-culturally' (Code 2), 'reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations' (Code 3) and 'addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations' (Code 4). The definition displayed thorough familiarity with, and a strong conceptual grasp of, the Australian Curriculum view of intercultural understanding. Based on the information provided for this illustration, Rhiannen has demonstrated awareness of the Intercultural understanding general capability's organising elements and sub-elements. Further, she sees possibilities for supporting authentic intercultural learning when teaching particular content descriptions within the Australian Curriculum: Technologies.

Intercultural practice at the College strongly reflects Codes 1, 2 and 3. In addition, students and staff at John Paul are clearly engaging in activities that require them to address some of the challenges and implications of cross-cultural relations (Code 4). The forward planning with respect to further developing cross-cultural engagement with partner schools lends support to this observation.

It appears that John Paul College has been consistent in enacting Rhiannen's conception and expectations of intercultural understanding over the last 18 months. This development seems to have been influenced by time and maturing collegial networks (AEF, 2014a). In addition, it has been driven by an advanced understanding of the Intercultural understanding general capability and how it can meaningfully and practically apply to teaching and learning situations.

Code no.	Code	Inclusions
1	Knowledge about cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating culture and cultural identity Exploring cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices Comparing cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices
2	Interacting cross-culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cultural communication Cross-cultural engagement
3	Reflecting on cultures and intercultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering multiple cultural perspectives Developing multiple perspectives Reflecting on intercultural experiences Developing respect for cultural diversity Empathising with cultural others
4	Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging (cultural) stereotypes and prejudices Mediating cultural differences

Table 12: Assessment of John Paul's intercultural understanding practice against the *What Works 9* coding system

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