

*“Language skills and cultural sensitivity will be the currency of this new world order.”* — General Peter Cosgrove, speaking to the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council conference, May 2002.

**Media headlines suggest that the teaching of Languages (other than English) in Australian schools has reached a crisis point. The proportion of students graduating from Year 12 with a second language has dropped from 40% in the 1960s to 13% currently.**

This has occurred at a time when global contact and the need for such interaction has increased to unprecedented levels and schools themselves are looking for international partners and friends. A capacity to communicate effectively must be the foundation of such relationships in a globalised world.

Australian schools have many high quality Languages programs. Many teachers, for example, have shown how effectively language learning can be integrated into their programs. But we need more quality programs to provide more opportunities for our students.



**MICHAEL MANISKA**  
**LANGUAGES CHAMPION**  
School Principal, Telopea Park School ACT

*“Today’s students will be tomorrow’s global citizens. They will have to know how to negotiate a multitude of perspectives and ways of thinking. Learning a language is the ideal platform for this requirement...”*



Asia Education Foundation



Australian Federation  
of Modern Language  
Teachers Associations

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW.

- Discuss and share the benefits of Languages learning with your school community; expressing your personal commitment to Languages at your school is very important.
- Set goals and targets for Languages provision in your school that enable the delivery of quality programs.
- Give Languages due consideration in timetabling arrangements, as Languages is one of the eight Key Learning Areas.
- Consider making Languages a core rather than an elective element of your program.
- Ensure that there is continuing access to Languages learning over all the years of schooling you provide.
- Explore ways of coordinating the Languages offerings between Primary and Secondary schools.
- Consider the cultural backgrounds of your students in deciding which Languages you offer in your school.
- Explore complementary providers of Languages for your students, if your school cannot offer Languages that suit their needs, e.g. consider distance education providers, Government Schools of Languages and after-hours ethnic/community Languages schools.
- Utilise students and their families who speak one or more languages, as well as other community resources such as radio, television and press, to support Languages learning.
- Encourage your staff and students to see the value of acquiring proficiency in a second language. When counselling about subject choice takes place, ensure that the case for Languages learning has at least an equal place with other learning areas.
- Talk to parents about the benefits of Languages learning.
- Reflect on why students may not be continuing to learn Languages at your school beyond a compulsory program.

#### OPEN THE DOOR TO A BIGGER WORLD

Encourage your students to learn Languages. Now.  
[www.languagesopenthedoor.edu.au](http://www.languagesopenthedoor.edu.au)

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Australian Government

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Information for School Principals

# LANGUAGES

**What’s happening at your school?**



## OPEN THE DOOR TO A BIGGER WORLD

**Build Languages learning. Now.**

### Why run a strong Languages program?

There are a number of strong reasons why the learning of Languages in Australian schools should be promoted and supported by you in your role as a school leader. The obvious reason is to enable more effective communication with the non-English-speaking peoples of the world.

Learning another language is about recognising one of the realities of life — 94% of the world's population, or about 6.15 billion people, currently speak a language other than English. **How many of your students speak a Language other than English?**

### A strong Languages program enriches the life and profile of a school.

Schools with healthy Languages programs consistently report that they generate interest and involvement from parents (especially at Primary level), other community members and organizations and, in some cases, businesses and industry groups. **Does your Languages program help publicly define the richness of your school's offerings?**

### Internationalisation and global connections are significantly enriched by being able to communicate in the language of your partners.

Many Australian schools have taken a lead in developing global connections and relationships through international partner school arrangements, participation in student and teacher exchange programs, conducting excursions overseas, making international connections via new communication technologies and so on. **What connections does your school have internationally? Are these connections supported by your Languages program?**



**MAJOR MICHAEL STONE**  
**LANGUAGES CHAMPION**

East Timor peace negotiator,  
Australian Defence Force

**"There is no faster and more conclusive way to prove to a foreigner that you are dedicated and truly interested in them than speaking their language. There are few skills that have such value in today's global marketplace..."**



**OLIVIA STRATTON**  
**LANGUAGES CHAMPION**

Master of Gastronomy, TV Presenter and  
former Miss World Australia

**"Being multilingual has opened up many career avenues for me around the globe within my chosen areas of food, wine, tourism and fashion. I found learning another language at a young age particularly valuable; it has made it much easier for me to subsequently pick up other languages..."**

### Second language learning can be an important aid to the development of literacy and generic cognitive and life skills.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that learning another language can enhance literacy in a student's first language and build useful cognitive and social skills that are beneficial in all areas of school and later life. **What do you know about how learning Languages can develop literacy and other skills?**

### In learning a new language, students can learn things that they can learn in no other way.

Through learning Languages students can understand and value their own culture and the cultures of other people, so that they can view the world from a wider perspective. In many parts of the world, school systems have chosen to make learning at least a second language a curricular requirement. An important part of being a responsible world citizen of the 21st century is to be able to manage sensitive, effective communication and knowledge transfer across languages and cultures. **What do you think students learn about their own and other cultures when they learn Languages?**

### Second language proficiency opens career opportunities that wouldn't otherwise exist.

In response to a rapidly changing global marketplace, all economically-developed countries now recognise the importance of a highly skilled, multilingual workforce. **Does the careers advice your students receive reflect this?**

### Second language proficiency is valuable to students for many of their own personal reasons.

Overseas travel, participation in exchange programs and world-wide communication via the internet are increasingly part of students' lives. **What connections do your students have with the non-English-speaking world?**

Australian Ministers of Education are committed to the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country. We believe that through learning languages our students and the broader Australian community gain important benefits.

— *Australia's Ministers of Education as signatories to the National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools: National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008*

To effectively participate in a globalised world there should be the compulsory learning of a foreign language from 7 years of age or earlier. — *Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry ACCI Skills for a Nation: A Blueprint for Improving Education and Training 2007–2017*

Monolingual English native speakers are already losing the advantage in their own language because English language skills are becoming a basic skill around the world. With English now part of the school curriculum in many countries from Europe to Asia, Australians are increasingly competing for jobs with people who are just as competent in English as they are in their own native language and possibly one or two more. It has been observed that the London business world prefers graduates from European universities rather than British institutions because they speak English as well as at least one other language, and often two or three.

— *Group of Eight Universities Languages in Crisis: A rescue plan for Australia (2007)*



**DR JAMES BRADFIELD MOODY**  
**LANGUAGES CHAMPION**

CSIRO Scientist and  
World Economic Forum Young Global Leader

**"Learning another language at school and then cementing it through an overseas exchange gave me a skill that has benefited me my entire life – I can't imagine what I would be doing without it..."**