



Australian Government  
Department of Education,  
Science and Training

# The National Education Agenda

*Australia-Asia  
Engagement Update 2005*



Asia Education Foundation



Recent international events have heightened the need for a curriculum which reflects our increasingly interconnected world. The tsunami in Asia has focussed our attention on our region and the need for Australian students to engage with Asia over the long term.

## Where is your school at?

Our school leadership team supports the inclusion of studies of Asia to prepare students for the future.

Our school policies explicitly acknowledge the need to include studies of Asia in the curriculum.

Our studies of Asia programs support implementation of local curriculum and national priority areas such as Literacy, Information Communication Technology, Antbullying and Racism and Civics and Citizenship Education.

A team of teachers manages the implementation of the studies of Asia at all year levels and in a range of learning areas.

Our school is building a significant collection of curriculum resources on Asia.

Teachers are supported to participate in professional learning programs both in Australia and in Asia.

Students' and teachers' attitudes and knowledge about Asia extends beyond stereotypes.

Students are encouraged to interact and learn from students in the countries of Asia through exchanges and through the use of Information Communication Technology.

There is a discrete budget to support studies of Asia.

### **Support from the profession**

**Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA)**

There is a great need for government secondary schooling to add to the social capital of the nation by providing students with an awareness of the complexities of the world they are about to inherit.

**Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA)**

Studies of Asia promote the knowledge, understanding and relationships we need to live as a civil, cosmopolitan, democratic nation, on the doorstep of the Asian continent.

## **This update:**

- outlines the importance of mainstreaming studies of Asia within school curricula
- explores why it is essential to sustain the momentum of the past decade
- provides support for school principals and leaders to implement programs.

## **The update covers:**

- What are studies of Asia?
- Why studies of Asia?
- What does a commitment to studies of Asia mean?
- What does this look like in practice?
- Ten key issues for implementation
- Supporting studies of Asia
- Resources
- Contacts and links.

## **Where to next?**

### **2005 forums for principals and school leaders**

In 2005 the APAPDC and the AEF, with funding from the Australian Government, are offering forums to support school principals and leaders to identify opportunities to increase the profile and uptake of studies of Asia in their schools. Topics will be decided through consultation at a state level. Options could include:

- The importance of Australia–Asia engagement
- The role of the AEF
- Leadership and case studies of change
- Planning for change.

Studies of Asia advisors will be available for discussion at all forums. For further information about dates and venues please contact your state or territory advisor or Max Rayner, Professional Officer, Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council, tel: 08 82459812 or email: [max@apapdc.edu.au](mailto:max@apapdc.edu.au).

## **What are studies of Asia?**

Studies of Asia refers to the explicit inclusion of content on Asia in a school's curriculum. This should be evidenced in a range of learning areas and enable students to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills over time. Learning about Asia can be integrated into local curriculum requirements – and 3,000 schools around Australia did so in 2004.

The AEF has developed five curriculum emphases to support program development. These (overlapping) emphases are designed to raise issues that are likely to be topical, influential, significant and stimulate student interest. The emphases and some common curriculum responses are:

### **Developing concepts of Asia**

- Explore the term 'Asia' in geographical, historical, cultural and economic terms.
- Acquire knowledge and appreciation of the diversity of Asia's peoples, societies, environments and cultures.
- Identify and analyse Asian communities.

### **Challenging stereotypes**

- Identify and analyse persistent stereotypes that obstruct Australians' understandings of modern Asia.

### **Contemporary issues**

- Identify and analyse issues or events in Asia that have current interest and relevance. Critically analyse the perspectives.

### **World contributions by the peoples of Asia**

- Identify the contributions of the cultures of Asia to world heritage, traditions and human endeavour, including those in the arts, science, technology, business, education and religious and spiritual beliefs.
- Develop an understanding of particular civilisations, traditions, values and beliefs of Asian countries that have an effect on other cultures.

### **Likely implications of closer Asia–Australia relationships**

- Develop an understanding of changes occurring in Australian society through Asian immigration
- Analyse the links between Australia and Asia and examine the implications for mutually beneficial relationships.

These curriculum emphases are outlined in more detail in the *Studies of Asia: A Statement for Australian Schools*.

## **Background**

Australian schools have included studies of Asia in their curricula for many years. It was given strong impetus in 1992 when the Asia Education Foundation was established by the Department of Education, Science and Training as a joint activity of the Asialink Centre at The University of Melbourne and Curriculum Corporation.

### **Schools and professional learning**

The AEF schools program is a partnership with state/territory education authorities which supports a network of almost 3,000 primary and secondary schools. These schools develop exemplary and innovative curricular programs and participate in professional learning activities to promote studies of Asia across the curriculum. Networks of Access Asia schools meet regularly to exchange ideas and resources and to participate in local professional development activities. All schools are eligible for support from the AEF. Visit

[www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef)

### **Curriculum materials**

The AEF's Access Asia Series, published by Curriculum Corporation, includes more than 60 teaching and learning materials. These high quality resources include a series of books, videos, multimedia CD-ROMs and maps and the award-winning Access Asia website. Go to

[www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia)

## **Why studies of Asia?**

What it means to be a good citizen in Australia, the region and the world inevitably requires consideration of Asian peoples and cultures. It is becoming increasingly accepted that Australia today, and into the future, will be defined by its engagement with Asia.

In the last 100 years Australia has evolved from being overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic to becoming one of the world's most multicultural societies. Its population is including more and more people of Asian origin. It is imperative therefore that Australian citizens are educated to be aware of the diverse history, values and beliefs of Asian societies.

Changing trade and migration patterns, military conflicts and shifting strategic alliances have all seen Australia's economic, social and political relationships with Asia take on increasing importance in the last two decades. Close engagement with Asia is now a priority in Australian external affairs policy. The growth and proximity of Asian economies and the increasing reciprocity of trading arrangements between Australia and Asian nations means that it is vital for Australians to be more knowledgeable and confident in their relationships with the peoples of Asia.

Not only do Asian studies have intellectual value in their own right – they are in Australia's national interest, potentially enhancing security, the environment and the economy. Studies of Asia can assist young people to appreciate the value of cultural and linguistic diversity. It is crucial for creating tolerance and harmony within Australia and abroad.

For all these reasons studies of Asia needs bipartisan political support from federal, state and territory governments and commitment from all education jurisdictions. As Bruce Wilson (CEO Curriculum Corporation) said at the August 2004 National Asia Forum: '... without this, we'll be playing at the margins of schooling and our children will inhabit the margins of Asia'.

## **Key themes**

### **Citizenship**

As citizens we belong to local, regional and global communities. Global citizens are aware of this wider world and have a sense of their own role within it. Developing the knowledge, skills and values to participate as active and informed Australian citizens in this international context has been endorsed as a National Goal for Schooling in the 21st century.

Teachers are at the forefront of providing Civics and Citizenship Education to young Australians, ensuring that the next generation will be responsible global citizens. The Discovering Democracy program acknowledges the centrality of civics and citizenship education to the maintenance of a strong and vital democracy. There is an ideal opportunity for schools to integrate this program with studies of Asia, thus broadening students' understandings of good citizenship.

continued overleaf...

## Globalisation

The explosion in communication, travel, and information that we call globalisation has opened the nations of the world up to each other in ways never before imagined – literally collapsing time and space in the creation of a new global village and marketplace ripe with new opportunities, and also with new threats.

[Carillo Gantner, 2003]

Studies of Asia will assist young people to make sense of, and engage more effectively with, an increasingly complex world. The global dimension of good citizenship entails not only equipping people with the cross-cultural knowledge to deal effectively with issues such as sustainable development, trade relations and international security, but also to understand the global aspects of local communities.

## Diversity

Globalisation entails a responsibility to respect and value diversity. But this needs to go beyond tokenism or simple goodwill. It must be underpinned by thorough knowledge of other peoples, their cultures, their histories and their contemporary realities. It also involves a recognition that ethnocentric attitudes and stereotyping can damage individuals. Classroom strategies can counteract such attitudes and help to promote community harmony.

Schooling should assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts, understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understandings to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally.

[National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century]

## What does a commitment to studies of Asia mean?

The AEF commissioned a study to examine what a commitment to studies of Asia means in terms of school practice, and to look at the conditions that encourage and support such commitment. Schools were selected where there had been extensive interest in teaching about Asia for some time. Commitment to studies of Asia was characterised by:

- Support and encouragement from school principals and curriculum leaders
- Promoting understanding of Asian societies and encouraging respect and tolerance
- Linking studies of Asia to Languages Other Than English (LOTE)
- Linking with Asian community groups and cultural sites
- Adopting a whole school approach so that these studies had a priority in the school's strategic plan or curriculum policy
- Encouraging teacher professional learning in the area over time
- Support for programs by education systems, professional associations and agencies such as the AEF.

## **What does this look like in practice?**

Studies of Asia is not an event. It is a planned and structured process that requires internal and external support. Some schools are just embarking on this process. Others are further advanced.

A feature of studies of Asia is that it can be delivered in different ways by different schools, depending on local contexts and curriculum priorities. These examples highlight different approaches taken by schools at different stages of the process.

### **Unley High School (SA)**

A Year 10 art program where students make meanings, comparisons and connections with their own culture by exploring contemporary Japanese art, American pop art and western youth culture.

### **Canberra Grammar School (ACT)**

Offers studies of Asia throughout the K–12 curriculum: Year 1 – ‘Transport in Asia’, Year 6 – ‘A Taste of Asia’, Year 9 – ‘The impact of monsoons and global warming in Asia’ and Year 11/12 – ‘Pre and post colonial Vietnam’ and the wars in Indo-China.

### **Beckenham Primary School (WA)**

Teachers have undertaken professional learning courses and are part of school networks that support studies of Asia programs. Teachers have also participated in study programs to Asia.

### **Christ the King Primary School (VIC)**

With a high percentage of students who are first or second generation migrants, the school offers a unit called ‘Braybrook goes to Bollywood’. Students contact local Indian people to learn about Indian culture, history and geography. The unit challenges cultural stereotypes.

### **Holy Spirit Primary School (NT)**

A literacy activity for Year 3 students based on ‘Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes’. Through the activity students contrast Japanese and Australian culture by comparing issues such as customs, traditions and beliefs.

### **Teven-Tintenbar Public School (NSW)**

This Year 4/5 unit ‘The Rice Growing Cycle’ engages students in problem solving and experiential learning by involving them in all stages of rice growing. The unit integrates the teaching of LOTE (Indonesian) and environmental studies.

### **Caboolture State School (QLD)**

Offers a wide range of teaching units about Asia complemented by whole school activities such as Access Asia Day and Chinese New Year. These activities are promoted in school newsletters and local media.

### **Launceston Church Grammar Junior School (TAS)**

Every second year the school conducts an ‘Asian Day’ program. This whole school celebration builds on studies of Asia units taught across year levels and supports the Indonesian language program.

I believe Australia needs to view itself as a combination of east and west and acknowledge where we are situated in the world. We gain a lot from the cultures that exist within and in close proximity to Australia

[Ian Thorpe, in a message sent to the Studies of Asia National Summit, November 2003]

## Ten key issues

There are a number of challenging issues to be faced when incorporating studies of Asia into the curriculum. These challenges are canvassed here in the interests of finding helpful strategies to address them.

### 1. Fitting it in

Curriculum innovation responding to new social realities has always been a challenge for schools. Studies of Asia has the advantage that it can be integrated into any curriculum area.

### 2. Melding with curriculum frameworks

There is a diversity of curriculum frameworks around Australia. Studies of Asia melds effectively with new curriculum developments at a national and state/territory level.

### 3. Support for teachers

There are compelling arguments for making the school curriculum more culturally inclusive, especially in relation to Asia. However, many schools have not yet engaged with this issue. Teachers are open to new directions, but they need support from their schools and school systems at the interpersonal level and in professional and resource development.

### 4. Mainstreamed or discrete?

There is wide agreement that there should be a focus on culture and identity, including Indigenous and Asian studies, in Australian school curricula in the 21st century. But there are differences of opinion about whether studies of Asia should be a discrete area of study or whether it should support other education initiatives such as Civics and Citizenship. However incorporated, it seems imperative that it be supported by a whole school approach.

### 5. Structured studies

It is evident that formal and structured studies are essential to improve students' depth of understanding of Asia. As the National Summit Report put it: 'It is essential to move beyond starting points such as dragons, kites and Asian food festivals to content that recognises the contemporary and historical civilisations and diversity of the countries and cultures of the Asian region'.

### 6. Sustaining it over time

While there have been many 'early adopters' of studies of Asia in schools, it is not enough just to 'capture' these enthusiasts. For studies of Asia to be sustainable, there needs to be a critical mass of support within the teaching staff, and teachers need ongoing support. Furthermore, curriculum reform and renewal requires changes to school policies and practices and these take time, as do curriculum development and teacher skilling.

### 7. Handling controversial issues

Inevitably, controversial issues will arise in studies of Asia – as in any social study. These could include issues such as civil rights, social justice, religion, gender equity, economic morality, racism and environmental issues. Such topics will need to be handled sensitively and receive balanced study and critical appraisal.

### 8. Community links

Many schools that have been active in studies of Asia have not only gained support from local communities for their initiatives, but have also built stronger connections with these communities for future collaboration. In some contexts there may be challenges for school leaders in raising interest in their school and local communities.

### 9. Raising the profile

About 25% of schools are not teaching about Asia at all and a further 25% do so only in superficial ways. Less than 50% of schools are integrating studies of Asia across the curriculum. Very few pre-service teacher education programs focus on Asia.

### 10. Maintaining the momentum

Studies of Asia are at a crossroad. In 2003 funding support decreased by 80% after the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy, resulting in lower participation in teacher professional development, fewer sales of resources and a great uncertainty about funding in 2004 and beyond. It is imperative to maintain the momentum established in the past decade.

... the change we're engaged in here (with the studies of Asia) ... involves new knowledge, a changed cultural orientation, and a shift in perspectives about the world. It impinges on politics and values. It's a venture into territory where prejudice and racism lurk. Most demanding of all, of course, it affects teacher behaviour and the school timetable.

[Bruce Wilson, CEO Curriculum Corporation, National Asia Forum, August 2004]

# Supporting studies of Asia

## At the school level

Curriculum change always requires time, energy and resources. Successful introduction of studies of Asia in your school will require:

- The active support of the principal, key school staff and, ideally, influential members of the community
- A coordinated whole school approach
- Provision of appropriate resources
- A school ethos that endorses the philosophies and goals of studies of Asia
- Teacher training, support and relevant professional development.

## Teacher professional learning

Teaching studies of Asia requires not just the inclusion of new content and the use of new learning materials, but also the development of cross-cultural understandings and empathy. This necessarily involves teachers developing the skills to access authentic and culturally respectful sources of information about Asian peoples, events, issues and lifestyles. Ideally it also involves the sharing of exemplary classroom practice in this area.

A range of professional development programs are available for studies of Asia, including university courses, short and extended professional development programs and workshops, and international programs. Go to the AEF website for further information:

<http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef>

## International programs

In the past 12 years the AEF has provided almost 1500 Australian and New Zealand educators with the opportunity to participate in programs in Australia and Asia.

These include **short study programs** to countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. These programs support curriculum development in areas such as the Arts, Studies Of Society and Environment/Human Society and its Environment, English, Languages Other Than English, Technology, and Health.

An **International conference**, *Linking Latitudes*, is held approximately every three years. Previous conferences were held in Bali in 1997, Shanghai in 2001 and Hanoi in 2004.

**Exchanges** with educators from Indonesia, India and Korea are a strong feature of the AEF's international programs.

For more information about AEF international programs email: [aasp@asialink.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:aasp@asialink.unimelb.edu.au) or contact the AEF: 03 8344 4800.

## **Supporting studies of Asia continued.**

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### **Responding to whole-school issues and priorities through the studies of Asia**

Including studies of Asia in the curriculum is an effective strategy in meeting local curriculum needs and addressing whole-school issues such as:

#### **Dealing with school-based issues**

Schools are required to respond to a range of issues such as bullying, racism, dealing with diversity and community harmony. Including studies of Asia in the curriculum supports school leaders, teachers and students to deal with these issues.

#### **Literacy**

High quality studies of Asia resources are available to support the teaching of English and literacy. With a contemporary focus, the resources make use of authentic sources and voices to connect with the English curriculum and provide engaging and challenging teaching opportunities. A guide to these resources is available at: [www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/curriculum/index.html](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/curriculum/index.html)

#### **Languages Education**

Studies of Asia complements students' learning of languages. It is closely aligned with a key goal of contemporary languages learning, which is the development of intercultural competence – the ability to understand, interact with, value and critically reflect on diversity within one's own and others' cultures. Studies of Asia supports connections between languages and other areas of the curriculum.

#### **Values Education**

Common values identified in the Draft National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools such as Tolerance and Understanding, Respect, Social Justice and Responsibility, can be supported through the studies of Asia. Values Education inclusive of studies of Asia is an ideal opportunity to develop student civic and social skills.

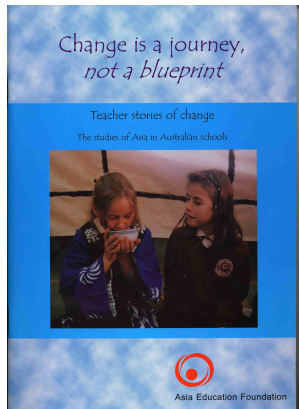
#### **Civics and Citizenship Education**

A guide to linking studies of Asia to Civics and Citizenship Education is available at: [www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/curriculum/index.html](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/curriculum/index.html)

Our kids are our future. If that future is to be one of peace and prosperity, they will need the capacity to engage in a dialogue with others of different cultures and creeds. And that applies both within Australia and abroad. Your role in guiding them on the path to that future is a vital and honourable one...

[General Peter Cosgrove AC MC at the AEF National Summit 2003]

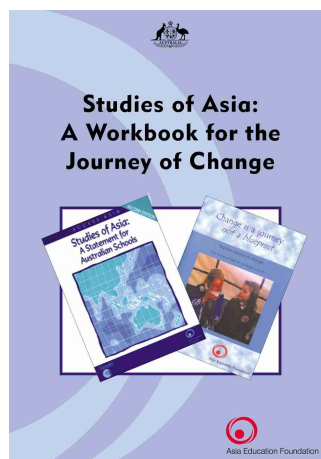
The following resources will be provided to all principals and leaders who participate in the forums in 2005. Schools participating in Access Asia will already have received them.



As its title suggests, *Change is a journey, not a blueprint* gives accounts of individual teachers' work and experiences in bringing studies of Asia into their classrooms. It is both helpful and inspirational to read about the variety of different ways this has occurred. Perhaps even more importantly, it does not simply focus on the success of different initiatives and approaches. It acknowledges difficulties along the way, provides core advice, and includes a section on sustaining the program. All of these features make this resource very relevant, practical and accessible for teachers who want to participate in this curriculum initiative. To download it from the web, go to: [www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/pd/changeisajourney.html](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/pd/changeisajourney.html)

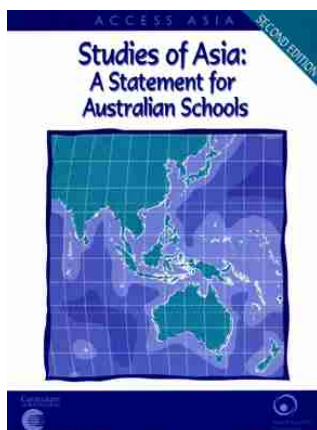
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Phone: 03 8344 4800 Fax: 03 9347 1768 Email: [s.blyth@asialink.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:s.blyth@asialink.unimelb.edu.au)



The *Studies of Asia Workbook* speaks directly to educators who are introducing or developing studies of Asia in their schools. It is a 'hands on' guide that contains examples, ideas, tools and templates that can be adapted for particular contexts. The workbook is designed for use in flexible ways, with the understanding that teachers will select what is relevant for their needs. It is available online at:

[www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/pd/studiesofasia.html](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/pd/studiesofasia.html)



*Studies of Asia: A Statement for Australian Schools* is available for sale from Curriculum Corporation. To purchase it go to

[http://www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/about\\_access\\_asia.htm](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/about_access_asia.htm)

It assists and guides curriculum decision-makers. It provides a clear rationale of why it is important in Australia in the 21st century to study the Asian region. It advocates and outlines processes for adopting a whole school systemic approach, so that studies of Asia can be reflected across the curriculum as well as in planning contexts. The statement includes critical checkpoints and definitions and takes into account current curriculum policy as well as potentially controversial issues that may need to be addressed.

## Support from other education sectors

### National Catholic Education Commission

The NCEC supports a strong and broad focus on the studies of Asia in schooling in these early years of the 21st century ... through deep understandings, sustained interactions and genuine valuing of Asian countries, cultures and people.

### The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA)

The independent schools sector recognises the contribution made by studies of Asia in developing globally responsible citizens through greater understanding and cultural awareness.

# Contacts and Links

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## Key Websites

### **Asia Education Foundation** <http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef>

This site has sections devoted to Curriculum Materials, School Programs and Partnerships and Professional Development. You will find here information about the AEF and its state/territory advisors, links to PDF files of key teaching and learning materials, train the trainer programs for teachers in leadership positions, professional development programs, postgraduate courses and key reports.

### **Curriculum Resources** <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/>

This Curriculum Corporation website has information about the Access Asia series, a broad range of classroom resource material, lesson plans, bibliographies and links to other useful websites.

### **Asia EdNet** <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/network>

Asia EdNet is a national collaborative project for all educators interested in studies of Asia and Asian languages funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Science and Training, and jointly managed by the Asia Education Foundation and Curriculum Corporation. Asia EdNet offers educators:

- a self-paced online tutorial that helps you use new technologies creatively and critically
- a free, email-based discussion group that lets you share resources and ideas with peers
- regular guest experts who share their knowledge and experience in a directory of evaluated online resources
- a regular newsletter to help you stay informed and up-to-date.