Rationale

The formal study of Auslan contributes to the overall intellectual and social enrichment of both first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners by providing:
- opportunities for engagement with the Deaf community and insight into its rich cultural heritage
- opportunities to develop intercultural capabilities, understanding and respect for others, appreciation of diversity and openness to different perspectives and experiences.

This curriculum provides direction for an integrated, inclusive and meaningful approach to language education in Auslan for both first and second language learners.

Rationale for first language learners

This curriculum meets the need of young deaf people to formally learn their own language, and it recognises the significance of Auslan in the linguistic landscape of Australia. It provides deaf children, and potentially hearing children of deaf parents, with access to education in and about their first language, playing an important part in the development of a strong sense of self-esteem and identity and contributing in crucial ways to overall learning and achievements. It enables learners to develop a wider recognition and understanding of their language, culture and identity, thus contributing to their psychological wellbeing as well as to their academic development.

Rationale for second language learners

Many deaf children today are educated in inclusive school settings, thus raising the profile of Auslan in the wider community. The presence of deaf students and interpreting practitioners in schools creates a need and offers opportunities for a wider range of peer-group communication partners, and not all interactions can or should be mediated by an interpreting practitioner. One of the key reasons for introducing Auslan in schools, therefore, is for humanistic purposes: to increase opportunities for interaction between deaf children and their hearing or hard of hearing peers, and to reduce barriers to communication. Through learning Auslan, L2 learners gain access to additional knowledge and understanding of the nature and purpose of human languages and of the use of a different language modality. In addition, from a vocational perspective, greater participation of deaf people in society in a diverse range of occupations and breadth of community spheres creates possibilities for future career options and personal fulfilment for L2 learners. In general educational terms, learning Auslan as a second language enables students to engage meaningfully with a different language and culture and to enhance understanding of their own language and culture. Such intercultural learning is essential in the increasingly diverse and changing contexts in which they live and will work.

For all learners
- broadens students' understanding that each language is an integrated, evolving system for the framing and communication of meaning; and encourages understanding of the role of language as an expression of cultural and personal identity and a shaper of perspectives
- contributes to the overall curriculum intent by providing distinctive real-life and intellectual opportunities for students to expand their engagement with the wider world and to reflect on the cultural and social assumptions that underpin their own world view and language use. Such awareness of different perspectives is an integral part of effective communication
- contributes to the development of critical thinking and the ability to adapt to change and equips students with learning strategies and study habits that are the foundation not only for lifelong learning but also for any subsequent language learning.

The opportunity to learn Auslan formally is becoming available in an increasing number of Australian schools, and the aim of this national curriculum is to make this learning opportunity accessible in a systematic manner to students around Australia. Language learning is life enhancing. This national curriculum offers all Australian students the opportunity to benefit from the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional development that will result from learning the unique and sophisticated visual-gestural language of the Australian Deaf community.

Foundation to Year 2 Achievement Standard

By the end of Year 2, students interact with teachers and each other to talk about themselves, their families, friends and immediate environment. They follow instructions to complete action-based activities such as signing games or transactional activities, using repeated constructions, gestures and affective non-manual features (NMFs). They interact in familiar classroom routines by responding to requests, such as DS:line-up PLEASE, LOOK-AT-me PRO1. Students ask and respond to simple questions and distinguish between statements and questions. They express likes, dislikes and feelings using lexical signs and affective NMFs. They recognise and produce fingerspelled names for roll call and games and produce modelled signs, phrases and sentence patterns in familiar contexts. They use culturally appropriate protocols, such as maintaining eye contact and responding to and gaining attention by waving or tapping a shoulder or table. They identify specific information in signed texts, such as the properties of colour, number, size or shape, and describe people and objects, for example, PRO3 5-YEARS-OLD, PRO1 HAVE 2 BROTHER, or THAT BALL BIG. Students demonstrate simple procedures using known signs, gestures, objects and list buoys. They recount and sequence shared events using familiar signs and visual prompts. They view short imaginative and expressive texts such as stories and nursery rhymes, demonstrating understanding through drawing, gesture, modelled signs or English. They use fixed handshapes in creative ways, for example to create amusing sequences of signs to enact movements, and portray characteristics through the use of constructed action. They identify similarities and differences in ways they interact when communicating in English and in Auslan.

Students know that Auslan is a language in its own right, different from mime and gestures used in spoken languages. They know that eye contact is necessary for effective communication and that meaning is communicated visually through the use of whole signs, gestures or fingerspelling. They identify and categorise signs according to handshape and they recognise major types of path movements. They know that some signs link to the appearance of a referent, for example PEN, HOUSE, and that some words, such as proper nouns, are borrowed from English by fingerspelling and mouthing. They know that locations of signs can be modified to change meaning, for example when pointing to people. They recognise the importance of facial expression, eye gaze and other NMFs in a visual-gestural language and culture and know that sign order is flexible in Auslan.

Aims

The Australian Curriculum: Languages – Auslan aims to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable students to:
- communicate in Auslan
- understand language, culture and learning and their relationship, and thereby develop an intercultural capability in communication
- understand themselves as communicators
- develop a knowledge and an understanding of the diversity of Deaf experience and the nature of identity.

These aims are interrelated and provide the basis for two organising strands for learning Auslan: Communicating and Understanding.

Key Ideas

Language and culture

The interrelationship of language, culture and learning provides the foundation for the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

In the languages learning area the focus is on both language and culture, as students learn to communicate meaningfully across linguistic and cultural systems, and different contexts. This process involves reflection and analysis, as students move between the new language being learnt and their own existing language(s). It is a reciprocal and dynamic process which develops language use within intercultural dimensions of learning experiences. It is not a 'one plus one' relationship between two languages and cultures, where each language and culture stay separate and self-contained. Comparison and referencing between (at least) two languages and cultures build understanding of how languages 'work', how they relate to each other and how language and culture shape and reflect experience; that is, the experience of language using and language learning. The experience of being in two worlds at once involves noticing, questioning and developing awareness of how language and culture shape identity.

Structure

Learner background and time-on-task are two major variables that influence language learning and they provide the basis for the structure of the Australian Curriculum: Languages. These variables are addressed through the specification of content and the description of achievement standards according to pathways and learning sequences respectively.

Pathways

In the Australian Curriculum: Languages, pathways for second language learners, background language learners and first language learners have been developed as appropriate to cater for the dominant group(s) of students learning each specific language within the current Australian context. For the majority of languages, one curriculum pathway has been developed for Years F–10, catering for the dominant cohort of learners for that language in the current Australian context. For Chinese, pathways have been developed for three learner groups: first language learners, background language learners and second language learners.

The Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages includes three learner pathways:
- first language learner pathway
- revival language learner pathway
- second language learner pathway.

Sequences of learning

The design of the Australian Curriculum: Languages takes account of different entry points into language learning across Foundation – Year 10, which reflects current practice in languages.

For the second language learner pathway and the background language learner pathway, there are two learning sequences:
- Foundation–Year 10 sequence
- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

For the first language learner pathway, there is one learning sequence:
- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

Content and achievement standards are described initially in a three-year band for Foundation–Year 2 followed by two-year bands of learning: Years 3–4; Years 5–6, Years 7–8 and Years 9–10.

The Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages is written in the bands Foundation – Year 2, Years 3–6 and Years 7–10. In the absence of pedagogical evidence across the country for all these languages, the broader band distinctions provide maximum local flexibility in curriculum development.

Content structure

The content of the Australian Curriculum: Languages is organised through two interrelated strands which realise the three aims. The two strands are:
- Communicating: using language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning
- Understanding: analysing language and culture as a resource for interpreting and creating meaning.

The strands reflect three important aspects of language learning:

1) communication

2) analysis of aspects of language and culture

3) reflection that involves
   - reflection on the experience of communicating
   - reflection on comparative dimensions of the languages available in students' repertoires (for example, the first language in relation to second language and self in relation to others).

Strands and sub-strands

A set of sub-strands has been identified within each strand, which reflects dimensions of language use and the related content to be taught and learned. The strands and sub-strands do not operate in isolation but are integrated in relation to language use for different purposes in different contexts. The relative contribution of each sub-strand differs for described languages, pathways and bands of learning. The sub-strands are further differentiated according to a set of 'threads' that support the internal organisation of content in each sub-strand. These 'threads' are designed to capture (1) range and variety in the scope of learning and (2) a means for expressing the progression of content across the learning sequences.

Foundation to Year 2 Band Description

The nature of the learners

Children enter the early years of schooling with established communication in one or more languages and Auslan will be learnt as an additional language. Cognitive and social development at this stage is exploratory and egocentric; thus learning typically focuses on their immediate world of family, home, school and friends. Children at this level are learning how to socialise with new people, share with others and participate in structured routines and activities at school. Auslan will be learnt in parallel with English literacy, and the learning of each language assists with the learning of the other.

Auslan learning and use

Rich language input characterises the first stages of learning. The curriculum builds on children's interests and sense of enjoyment and curiosity, with an emphasis on active, experiential learning and confidence building. In these years there is an emphasis on developing language to enable learners to participate in class activities such as storytelling and games. Creative play provides opportunities for using the language for purposeful interaction in a relaxed and informal context.

Children build vocabulary for thinking and talking about school topics, routines and processes. They build knowledge and understanding of Auslan by interacting with each other, the teacher and deaf children, and by participating in structured routines and activities. With support and modelling, they use Auslan for different functions such as greeting, thanking, apologising, asking and responding to questions, expressing wishes, likes or dislikes, following simple directions, and taking turns in games and simple shared learning activities. They learn to produce signed phrases independently using modelled language, for example by describing simple pictures.

Contexts of interaction

The primary context for interaction is the language classroom, with the Auslan teacher and classmates. Learners' use of Auslan primarily relates to classroom routines and activities and to talking about their own life. Additional language enrichment may be gained through interactions with visitors from the Deaf community.

Texts and resources

Texts include filmed children's stories and teacher-generated materials such as pictures or short descriptions. Learners watch live and filmed texts such as explanations. They respond to resources such as short video clips, or substitution or matching exercises, and produce texts such as conversations using formulaic language.

Features of Auslan use

Children in Foundation to Year 2 become familiar with all handshapes, movements and locations of single signs. They are learning to produce simple positive and negative statements with some time marking, and to use plain verbs or unmodified indicating verbs. They learn to describe familiar objects, animals or people using simple lexical adjectives and to depict the movement of people, animals and means of transport using an appropriate classifier handshape in an entity depicting sign. They are able to use simple handling and SASS depicting signs. They explore emotions through the use of NMFs, and begin to use NMFs for grammatical purposes in modelled language. They learn to use simple constructed action to represent the characteristics of a single animal or themselves or another. They learn the metalanguage of nouns, verbs and adjectives, and learn that signers can modify verbs to show the referents involved.

As children learn to adjust their language to suit different purposes and situations, they begin to understand how culture shapes language use. They compare how they feel when they use different languages and how they view different languages and people who use them. This introduction to the meta dimension of intercultural learning develops the ability to 'decentre', to consider different perspectives and ways of being, and to become aware of themselves as communicators and cultural participants.

Level of support

Support is provided through visual and tactile materials, such as pictures, objects and charts, and the use of gesture and modelling. The main source of support is the teacher's talk, such as questions and statements, explanations, prompts, recycling of language, stories and feedback. Learners rely on modelled language and scaffolded tasks to create their own texts, for example, choosing signs to complete sentences or using pictures to sequence a story that has been told to them.

The role of English

Learners are encouraged to use Auslan whenever possible, with the teacher providing rich and supported language input. English is used as a medium of instruction and for explanation and discussion or in areas from the Understanding strand. This allows learners to talk about differences and similarities that they notice between Auslan and their first language(s) and culture(s), to ask questions about language and culture, to consider how they feel when they see or use Auslan.

Foundation to Year 2 Content Descriptions

Communicating		Understanding

Communicating

Socialising

Participate in simple interactions with their peers and teachers using high-frequency signs, non-manual features and gestures to talk about self, family and class activities.
[Key concepts: self, family, friends, experience, feelings; Key processes: interacting, greeting, asking/answering questions, describing]

Participate in guided group activities such as signing games and simple tasks using repeated language structures, facial expressions and gestures.
[Key concepts: games, space, place, memory; Key processes: playing, singing, following instructions, exchanging, classifying]

Develop interaction and communication skills for participation in regular class routines and activities. [Key concepts: fingerspelling, attention, signing space, visual communication; Key processes: interacting, signing, recognising, gaining attention]

Informing

Identify specific points of information in simple Auslan texts relating to people, places and things and use the information to complete guided tasks.
[Key concepts: information, topics; Key processes: identifying, categorising responding, gathering]

Present information about self, family, school and significant objects, using modelled signs and formulaic phrases.
[Key concepts: self, family, routines; Key processes: presenting, describing, contributing, demonstrating, recounting]

Creating

Participate in the shared viewing of recorded or live imaginative signed texts, responding through drawing, miming, gesture or familiar signs.
[Key concepts: imagination, expression; Key processes: viewing, drawing, re-enacting, mimicking, signing]

Express imaginative ideas and visual thinking through the use of familiar signs, mime and gestures, with a focus on emotions, appearance and actions.
[Key concepts: imagination, emotion, expression; Key processes: re-enacting, depicting, creating]

Translating

Translate words used in everyday contexts from Auslan into English and vice versa.
[Key concepts: similarity, difference, meaning; Key processes: recognising, comparing, identifying, translating, explaining]

Create simple print or digital texts such as labels, posters, wall charts or cards that use Auslan images and English words.
[Key concepts: meaning, code, bilingualism; Key processes: labelling, creating]

Identity

Describe aspects of themselves, such as membership of family and their school/class and languages they use, considering how these different elements contribute to their sense of identity.
[Key concepts: identity, similarity, difference, self, family, belonging; Key processes: noticing, identifying, describing, explaining, comparing]

Reflecting

Notice what is similar to or different from their own language and culture when interacting with stories, games and different forms of artistic expression in Auslan and from Deaf culture.
[Key concepts: language, culture, similarity, difference, respect; Key processes: noticing, comparing, responding]

Understanding

Systems of Language

Recognise that meaning can be expressed through English words or Auslan signs and that signs have set handshapes, movements and locations, and identify and reproduce them independently.
[Key concepts: handshape, movement, location, iconicity; Key processes: identifying, noticing, recognising, understanding]

Recognise and restrict signing to the standard signing space, and understand that pronouns, depicting signs and verbs can be located meaningfully in that space.
[Key concepts: signing space, verb modification, depicting signs; Key processes: noticing, identifying, recognising]

Recognise that groups of words are combined to make a clause and that Auslan has word classes such as nouns, adjectives or verbs, and distinguish between statements and questions.
[Key concepts: sign class, clauses, statements, questions; Key processes: recognising, observing]

Understand that texts are made up of units of meaning such as groups of words or sentences and that different types of texts have different features that help serve their purpose.
[Key concepts: text, text types; Key processes: recognising, noticing]

Language variation and change

Understand that all languages including signed languages vary and borrow words and signs from each other.
[Key concepts: language borrowing, variation; Key processes: noticing, recognising]

Language Awareness

Recognise that Auslan is a legitimate language, one of many languages used in Australia and around the world.
[Key concepts: language diversity, difference, vitality; Key processes: identifying, exploring, recognising]

Role of language and culture

Notice that people use language in ways that reflect their culture, such as where and how they live, who they live with and what is important to them.
[Key concepts: language, culture, community, observable phenomena; Key processes: noticing, recognising, questioning, making connections]