



# Language Education in British Columbia

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Languages Without Borders  
CASLT / IISLE / EPSB National Conference  
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# BC background...



- BC is a multicultural province, and language classes at public schools need to reflect the province's rich diversity.
- BC's Language Education Policy came into effect on September 1, 1997.
- School boards must offer a second language in Grades 5 to 8 and choose which second language(s) will be offered.

# BC Language Education policy info...



- In 1997, French, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, Punjabi and German had government approved curricula.
- A generic language curriculum was also developed to provide a template for future language curriculum initiatives.
- School boards may develop their own curricula for second language education, and often do so based upon community request and demographic needs. The impetus, however, often comes from community-based initiatives and result in locally approved curricula.

Examples include: Italian, Farsi, Korean, and most recently Vietnamese.

# What are BC school districts doing re: second language implementation...

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**Positively speaking**, the Vancouver School Board (VSB) states that learning a new language:

- broadens the social and cultural horizons of students
- promotes the continued vitality of all cultures
- enhances mutual understanding and respect by promoting interaction among students from a variety of language communities and backgrounds
- is essential to the intellectual development and socialization of all students
- contributes to personal growth and cultural enrichment
- provides opportunities to link with the past, our multicultural heritage, and our diversity
- serves to prepare our students for the future of British Columbia.

# The VSB has also implemented positive teaching strategies...

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- Secondary language curriculum has been developed with an emphasis on the communicative approach to language teaching.
- This approach is premised on the position that aim of language education is communication for a purpose and it is easier to learn a language when it can be practised in context.
- The communicative approach emphasizes authentic interaction among people by concentrating on developing abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- Second language programs provide opportunities for students to develop oral and written competence in different languages.
- The BC Language Education Policy is based on the understanding that language skills are transferable and thus the student of a second language enhances students ability in their first language.

## BUT, the reality is...

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- Enrollment in elective Asian-language courses has declined.
- The study noted that between the school years of 2001–2002 and 2004–2005, enrollment in Punjabi 11 dropped by 11.8 percent, Japanese 11 by 5.7 percent, and Mandarin Chinese 11 by 4.9 percent.
- Henry Yu, an associate professor of history at UBC, believes that Canada in general hasn't done much even in the area of encouraging and providing support for students with immigrant backgrounds to learn their traditional language.

# What does the future hold...

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The BC Government and school boards are not doing enough to ensure the implementation of a broad number of languages in the public school system.

- Through a lack of both BC government and BC school board financial commitment, the responsibility is falling on ethnocultural community groups to develop language curriculum that meets the government's established standards; however...
- As of 2001, BC government funding ceased for after-school and weekend HL programs.
- No other funding is provided to these ethnocultural community groups towards the development of language curriculum.

**As in the case of Alberta, BC community-based language programs will need to play an important role if the province hopes to move forward...**

**In spite of these constraints, BC's ethnocultural communities have made a huge commitment to the advancement of language education across the province.**

- Enrollment numbers in BC: in 2005, there were approximately 35,000+ second language learners in supplementary schools/programs and over 1,000 instructors and volunteers involved in the delivery of these language programs.
- ▶ Languages that are offered in heritage/international language programs (outside the public school setting) include: Arabic, Amharic, Armenian, Burmese, Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Dari and Pashtu, Farsi, Finnish, German, Greek, Gujerati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Kurdish, Nepali, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Sinhala, Somalian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Trigrigna, Twi, Fanti, Ewe, Ga, Akwapim, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.
- Several multilingual centres operate in a selected high schools in Vancouver and Burnaby.

# Paving the way to a brighter future for language education in BC: *A curriculum success story...*

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The Vietnamese Language Project was initiated in May 2007 in response to the crucial need to support the expanding Vietnamese community in Vancouver.

## **Initial Stage:**

- Formation of a community-based Advisory Committee.
- The Advisory Committee approached the Vancouver School Board to determine feasibility.
- Established a working relationship with the VSB.

## **Fact finding Stage:**

- The Advisory committee and the broader Vietnamese community members, with the assistance of select VSB schools, principals, and teachers, engaged a cross-section of students in Grades 8 and 9 in a survey produced with the assistance of the VSB to measure their level of interest in learning Vietnamese.

The results were written up and reported back to the VSB, with the end results being very positive in terms of interest and commitment.

# Vietnamese language curriculum...

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## Curriculum Development Stage:

- In conjunction with the VSB, it was agreed that the curriculum would be a Board/Authority authorized (BAA) course that would be based on the BC Ministry of Education Authorized generic languages template.
- This was the time intensive part of the initiative as the Advisory committee had to identify experts in the community to assist them with the curriculum writing: planning, research, writing, and revision.
- Ultimately, the curriculum was approved by the VSB.

## Implementation Stage:

- The Vancouver School board will need to identify a certified teacher or teachers who can teach the curriculum.
- The Vietnamese community will work to assist in identifying candidates and also encourage younger members of their community to go into education to ensure long-term success of this initiative.

# Vietnamese language curriculum...

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## Overall goals:

- Students will be encouraged to explore the Vietnamese language and culture.
- Students will learn basic vocabulary, pronunciation and phrases useful for travel, social contacts and daily activities.
- Students will examine various aspects of Vietnamese culture, such as cuisine and geography.
- Both Vietnamese students and students in other cultures will learn the Vietnamese language as a second language.
- Ultimately, this course has been developed to support and encourage students to become acquainted with and have a "taste" of Vietnamese culture through basic Vietnamese language learning and communication. Students will also have the unique opportunity to connect with the Vietnamese culture in their community.

# Selected Community Resources...

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- **Italian Consulate General Education Office**

Tel: 604.684-7288 ext. 222

E-mail: [edu@ItalianConsulate.bc.ca](mailto:edu@ItalianConsulate.bc.ca)



- **BC Society for the Advancement of Korean Studies**

Leslie Fields, Senior Development Officer

Faculty of Education, UBC

Tel: 604.822-0566

- **Vietnamese Language - Grade 10 Curriculum**

Dung Nguyen: [ngocdung07@gmail.com](mailto:ngocdung07@gmail.com)

# Additional BC Ministry Resources...

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## International Languages Integrated Resource Packages

- [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp\\_lang.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp_lang.htm)

## Languages Template

- [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/langtemp/langtoc.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/langtemp/langtoc.htm)

## Template Developed Provincially Approved Second Language IRPs

- [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/second\\_lang\\_irps.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/second_lang_irps.htm)

