Grant High School
A learning map

<table>
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<th>Summary</th>
<th>Japanese students are explicitly shown through a chart how their work activities demonstrate SACSA Outcomes and how this links with their bigger learning journey.</th>
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<td>Band</td>
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<td>Context</td>
<td>At Grant High School, students have a choice of Italian and Japanese, with more students opting to continue Japanese. Some students have studied Japanese at Primary School; however, others will only be at Standard 2, as they are beginners in Japanese. By the end of 2nd term most year 8 students are at the same level in this popular Japanese program.</td>
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| Educators| Ross Maguire  
            Michelle Forrest  
            Fiona Mitchell |

The Vision
The languages team at Grant High School passionately promote a Japanese program that is relevant, teaches respect for other cultures, and 'prepares students for a future that involves global friendships, work and travel'.

Learners are actively invited to see languages as part of a lifelong journey, beginning with their own language as young children. Adopting this perspective, promotes a greater commitment to learning and a shared responsibility.

Learning about language and culture therefore acquires an added relevance and supports the school's strong multicultural stance, reinforced by the sister school program and the Japanese teaching assistant program.

This broad ranging focus is reflected in the Japanese program, which integrates learning from other curriculum areas with language learning.

Making explicit to students their learning journey through constructivist principles and the SACSA Framework is of high importance, particularly as students can track their progress and take responsibility for their own learning. The languages team envisage that this approach could be integrated into all programs across the school.

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The Journey
Broadening the focus of language teaching to one of an enriching cultural experience has been a vision of the Japanese teacher at Grant High School for many years. Realising the vision has brought long term benefits to the whole school community, and has culminated in school statements on multiculturalism and reconciliation.

Languages has thus played a significant role in shaping the school ethos and values, where unity and diversity are clearly valued. Within the school, this has still wider implications for promoting tolerance and countering prejudice, bullying and harassment. Simultaneously, languages have been given a high profile and a rich context within the school curriculum.

A popular program
Whilst many teachers find challenging the teaching of year 8 students who are in language classes compulsorily rather than through choice, Japanese has become a popular option at Grant High School, both in year 8 and beyond. There has been a threefold increase in the continuation of Japanese beyond the compulsory years. Over the last three years, year 12 Japanese has maintained numbers of 15–17 students, making it one of the most popular PES subjects in the school. Last year 18 of the 24 students in one year 8 class taking Japanese elected to continue into year 9, choosing Japanese over other elective subjects, such as drama and art. This dramatic increase is attributed to the explicit way in which learning language has clearly defined goals, where students can track their own progress and adopt an exciting and challenging work ethic.

Adding rigour
The introduction of the SACSA Framework has required greater rigour in the teaching of languages. Traditionally the focus has been on the communication strand; bringing in the understanding languages and understanding cultures strands has required teachers to challenge their own understandings and skills around language teaching.

Many teachers would not have taught either of these strands in a structured way and there are few resources to support them. The teacher at Grant High School relies heavily on his experience of living in Japan, together with his limited socio-linguistics studies. He states, however, that it has given the Learning Area considerably more rigour and gives learners a greater understanding of language, its background and links to culture.

_Explaining to this degree helps you to add flesh to the bare bones of language learning—languages come alive._

Language teachers have needed to deeply engage with the SACSA Framework in order to gain greater understandings and conceptualisations of these strands in particular. By writing these strands into their programs, they have highlighted areas which have traditionally been missed. For example, teachers had always taught how
to write, read and speak another language, but had not covered or questioned the evolution of language, or made explicit the relationship between language and culture.

**More than just 'another language'**
In making these relationships clear, Grant High School programs include looking concurrently at our own language and its relationship to culture. For example, looking at the moral and ethical underpinnings represented in myths and fairytales in both Japanese and English can have significant implications for cultural understandings, not just of Japanese language and culture, but also of our own.

*SACSA has deepened our awareness of language, given it a greater rigour and added a new dimension to what was before a minimalist approach to teaching languages. Kids appreciate rigour. The reason why many kids never found learning exciting before was because it wasn't challenging or relevant.*

**Clarifying the learning journey**
The benefits of seeing the learning journey through the SACSA Framework have not only been realised by students. By reading the Framework and the Outcomes, teachers now know which Outcomes students have gained prior to high school and can therefore program by building upon this systematically. Furthermore, the Japanese teacher comments:

*I never knew in the past what I should be teaching kids in year 8 to mesh with required knowledge at year 12. The Outcomes have provided that map; the Framework allows flexibility but provides a complete learning map.*

For the last two years Japanese students have tracked their progress on a teacher-constructed SACSA Outcomes chart. Students have demonstrated greater accountability for and commitment to their learning; they are aware that they cannot progress to the next Outcome level until they have achieved the previous one. This has injected considerably more rigour into the learning, with students seeing a greater value accorded to their learning. Simultaneously, by continuous reporting to them of their progress, they are able to see their achievements as part of a lifelong journey. At Grant High School, further incentives are provided to encourage the learning journey:

*We do fun things. The teacher will ask questions and, if you get the answer right, he hands out raffle tickets and at the end of the class there's a prize, so you really want to get the right answers.*

Year 8 student

Negotiated assessment has become another feature of the program to ensure equitable opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and achieve Outcomes: some students may be failing to demonstrate their knowledge because they don't have the skills for the chosen assessment method. As a disinclined but successful Japanese learner stated:

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I don't work so well in other subjects, but I really enjoy what we do here.

The SACSA Framework offers the opportunity to invite all Learning Areas to work in collaboration. In the Japanese program, students are integrating learning across many Learning Areas in their Japanese program. Currently they are achieving only language Outcomes for their evidence. However, there are opportunities to achieve Outcomes in other Learning Areas through the evidence produced in Japanese classes. For example, the circuit boards which learners are creating to embed their understanding of Hiragana demonstrate learning in technology as well.

Thus, a logical next stage in implementing the SACSA Framework would be for teachers to embrace the notion of meeting Outcomes in a cross-faculty manner. This would demonstrate constructivism and demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach to meeting Outcomes; by linking everything together it would demonstrate to learners the connections in their learning and that all learning has a context and relevance. For languages it would demonstrate that their learning is not isolated, but that it relates to the world of work.

We (teachers) are professional and if we see it makes for better teaching and learning then we'll do it. So let's link, not because it is SACSA, but because it results in better teaching and learning.

**The Program**

**Programming with the SACSA Framework**

The teachers began by increasing their familiarity with the SACSA Framework and the Outcomes in order to plan their program for the term.

The strands understanding culture and understanding language have been particularly challenging for many schools. Because the language teacher at Grant High School has lived in Japan and visited it a number of times, he has knowledge of the culture which would otherwise be difficult to gain from a textbook. Furthermore Grant High School has used understanding culture as an opportunity for students to question not only a new culture, but also to reflect on their own familiar culture.

*I relate what I do to the constructivist theory for better teaching and better learning.*

For example, for understanding language, the class have been looking at where Kanji (one of the Japanese scripts) comes from, what is its history and why Kanji is used less now than it used to be. Students look at why the different scripts were created, in what situations you would use them and how to use the alphabet to look up a Japanese dictionary or type on a Japanese word processor. The use of context to determine

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meaning is stressed, but it is stressed that this also occurs in English, for example, when using homonyms.

Again, comparisons to a familiar culture are used extensively in understanding culture, inviting students to unpack their own culture whilst looking at Japanese culture. For example, students explore why some numbers are considered unlucky and how this influences how numbers are used in different cultural situations. In Japan, the number nine is associated with pain and four is associated with death, so these numbers are not used to number rooms in Japanese hospitals. Students consider this fact together with the superstition in Australian culture around the number 13 and they investigate why this number is considered unlucky.

Similarly, by looking at myths and fairy tales from Australian and Japanese culture, students can explore whether values are different in the two cultures and the reasons for this difference.

Understanding culture and understanding language evolve naturally from the teaching of language topics. Students complete booklets in which they must research and record information; at the end of the year their test results determine whether they have met the Outcomes.

Integration of other Learning Areas with Japanese

Teachers are very aware that languages have in recent years not been a popular choice for students, particularly boys. They have therefore sought to introduce activities into the program which are outside the traditional syllabus. These have included cooking, maths, agriculture, computing and art.

Instead of just throwing things up on the board, we do other things, fun things and making things, to help us understand it.

Year 8 student

If I don’t see something of value educationally, if I’m just jumping through hoops for people in the department, these things have little impact on my teaching. SACSA, however, makes sense.

Japanese teacher

A PowerPoint presentation on the website gives a good indication of the range and breadth of activities offered in Japanese.

The circuit boards have encouraged boys in particular to demonstrate a new commitment to languages. A number of boys were not motivated to learn the Hiragana letters; by setting them a challenge of creating circuit boards where they must wire the connections between Hiragana and English sounds, new learning
became exciting and more relevant for them. Furthermore, they brought in enterprise skills and marketed the finished product to other schools.

Progress amongst students is extremely high, due in many instances to the incentives the teacher provides for students which make the lessons enjoyable. Despite the fact that some students have studied Japanese at primary school, by the end of 2nd term most year 8 students are at the same level.

*When I started I had never done Japanese before and by the end of the year I was the same standard as the others who had done it in primary school. Because he makes it fun for you, it helps because then you want to learn.*

**Year 9 student**

**Assessment and reporting**

The Japanese teachers have been explicit in demonstrating to students the learning map which the SACSA Framework provides from primary to high school.

*I say to kids 'We're on a journey and we need a map. It shows us where we've come from and where we're going'.*

A chart with stickers demonstrates to students

- where they are going and
- how well they are going.

This strategy shows learners in a very transparent way how they are achieving their grades.

**A learning map**

Making explicit SACSA Outcomes to students provides for them a learning map of where they have been and where they are going in their learning journey. Each activity is explicitly linked to a SACSA Outcome, so that students can see the relevance of the task.

*The feedback is really good. I definitely feel much more in control of my learning using the chart. It helps us to push ourselves to get the stickers because we know exactly where we are in terms of passing or not getting something right.*

**Year 8 student**

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Now I can say to them 'This is your A and this is why you got it', which I couldn't demonstrate to them before.

The chart is used as follows:

- Each task is plotted against the relevant SACSA Outcome. Outcomes are listed horizontally across the top of the chart under the different topics to be covered.
- In the left hand column are the students' names in Katakana. This form of Japanese script is not familiar to students until year 9, so the only name they are able to read is their own. In this way anonymity is maintained, whilst still allowing students to monitor their own progress.
- Students who achieve 80% for assignments are considered as being competent. This is reported on the chart against their name with an orange sticker.
- Those students who consistently maintain 80% or above are considered to have achieved the Outcome associated with the designated task and are therefore working towards the Outcome at the next Standard level. They receive an orange sticker with a +.
- Those students who achieve between 50–80% receive a green sticker, indicating that they are working towards this Outcome.
- Students who receive less than 50% receive a red sticker, indicating they are still on a previous Outcome.
- Yellow stickers indicate that they have yet to hand in a homework assessment, or they were absent from the class on the day of a test. Students demonstrate a high level of commitment by making up missed work and turning yellow stickers into a colour reflective of their abilities.

Students comment:

The good thing about having a chart is that you know where you're at and how you can improve.

We're all going for an A+.

The teacher adds:

Boys in particular like the learning map, and knowing what the goals are and how to achieve them.

Assessment offers students an opportunity for negotiation; by making explicit to them what is required from them in terms of assessment methodology, students who feel the assessment opportunity will not demonstrate their learning can negotiate other means of assessment. However, once an agreement has been reached, students are then responsible for demonstrating their learning through the method of assessment they have opted for. This allows for mutual agreement, respect and commitment on behalf of students, leading to more ownership of their learning by students.

You know how much you need to learn for a certain time and when you do well you can be proud of yourself.
To round off the program and offer all students a cultural experience, the languages faculty has for the last five years organised a Kaleidoscope of Cultures Day. Here exchange students, language teachers and others who have travelled abroad, talk about their experiences overseas and engage students in activities that include song and dance, craft and cooking.

*Cool ... really good ... excellent ... wicked*

Students describing Kaleidoscope of Cultures Day, 2003

Each presentation lasts for 30 minutes, with home groups moving around the different workshops. The languages and culture day used to be for year 8 only, but has been extended by popular demand to include year 9 students. Once again, this is an example of integrating language and culture across the school.

*I think that the real value of such days is building community at school, and linking students with the bigger, global community. They are fun days, but then studying language and culture, meeting friends from other countries, and travelling abroad yourself is lots of fun.*

Japanese teacher and student counsellor

*Multicultural days symbolise the school’s stance on inclusivity, tolerance, and valuing difference.*

School principal

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