



Steiner Education Australia

AUSTRALIAN STEINER CURRICULUM  
FRAMEWORK 2011

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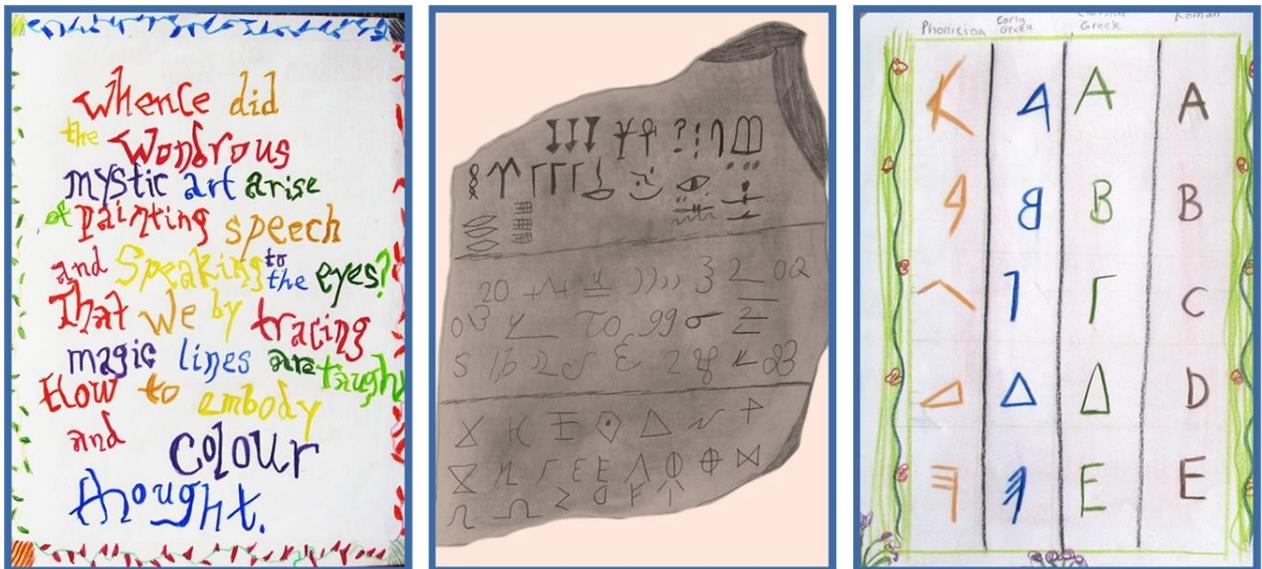
ENGLISH  
INTRODUCTION

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**Changes made in this version of the Document**

Sept 2014 Changes made to terminology relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as per ACARA guidelines



***The Art, Science and History of Writing:  
Class 4 Integrated Topic 4 .2 English / History / Technology***

# Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework

## ENGLISH

### General Introduction

This English Curriculum Framework is based on the extensive indications given by Rudolf Steiner and curriculum resource materials developed by teachers in Steiner Schools both in Australia and Internationally. It is being prepared in collaboration with Steiner Schools in Australia through a process of extensive consultation with learning area consultants and the advisory panel as well as opportunities for individual school and teacher response. This paper outlining the English Curriculum Learning Area should be read in conjunction with the Educational Foundations Paper and Academic Alignment Paper, the Child Development Paper and the Position Papers on Kindergarten, Primary and High School.

#### 1. RATIONALE

This English Curriculum is designed to be used by both new and experienced teachers to support and supplement their research, planning, teaching and assessment. It is informed by International and Australian Steiner Education Research and Curriculum Publications as well as broader recent science education research.

##### 1.1 Relationship to the Contemporary World

Students are born into a culturally and linguistically diverse nation and world. Rich expressive language and communication skills allow them to interact with clarity and empathy with others and to participate in and contribute towards local, Australian and world culture. A deep experience of world literature throughout the ages allows them to understand and participate in a society which is continually evolving through cycles of both developing consciousness and constant challenge. Through having perceived the human experience in its many biographical forms students are able to approach people with equity and openness. They value and respect the culture, heritage and literary contribution of all cultures including those of Asia and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

##### 1.2 English in the School Curriculum

Through studying English students learn to communicate in all modalities with increasing depth and sensitivity, clarity and enjoyment. They understand and appreciate the role of language in conveying meaning. This allows them to understand their identity, create relationships and make ethical and informed contribution to the world. Learning is developed in areas of language, literature and literacy.

**Language** is both formative and expressive. It helps clarify and express our identity. It allows us to communicate intention, purpose and meaning and to move beyond the isolation of individual human experience to shared understanding. It is language that is one of the defining capacities of our humanity. The study of the firm structure of grammatical laws builds inner scaffolding that is metaphorically as significant for the socio-emotional and psycho-spiritual development of the student as the strength of the skeleton is for bodily growth.

Language is the basis of the development of thought and helps us create our sense of the world. The richness of our vocabulary in part determines the degree of differentiation of our expressed thoughts. Language stands at the centre of human affairs, from the prosaic to the profound. Through language we can awaken and nourish a feeling for what is beautiful and true, to stir the imagination, to open the students' ears to mood, subtlety and nuance as well as to idea. It empowers us to seek to contribute to and change the world.

**Literature** can, through words, evoke deep feelings. Students need not fully understand the intellectual content of a poem or book to appreciate its essential meaning and its aesthetic qualities. Excellent literature and poetry is a source of infinite pleasure; a pathway to an understanding of humanity and the world; a vehicle for expressing the simplest or most subtle thoughts; as well as matters of profound and universal significance. Literature expresses the essence of humanity. Literary texts are selected in view of their potential for enriching student's lives and expanding the scope of their experience. These texts provide specific support and enrichment for the characteristic developmental stages through which the students pass. Through literature the child can complete an inner journey to be connected to the biography of humanity. In meeting the sagas and folk tales, myths and legends they hear embedded many truths of human striving and development. They also have a rich source for the development of their imaginative capacities.

## Literacy

Humanity has a rich history of oral language. The development of writing arose through art and then pictographs to make meaning, communicate and express ideas, feelings and intentions. The education of literacy skills from oral language to picture forms, then writing and reading is indicated by an historical overview as well as research. As literacy skills are a foundational aspect of communication and expression, the relationship of the individual student to language is central to their cognitive, socio-emotional and spiritual development. Literacy skills enable students to become widely acquainted with the world of ideas, to hone their ability to undertake critical analysis and to be effective communicators in the many contexts of family, community and workplace in which they live. The Steiner educational approach pays particular attention to the significance of imagination as a key aspect of literacy which informs the clarity, accuracy and fluency of authentic communication as well as a growing capacity for creative problem solving and an enlivened sense of moral awareness.

### 1.3 Education for the Future

The development of care for the environment, the sense of responsibility for the future, the feeling of empowerment to effect change, these all depend on a sense of connection to the world that goes beyond knowledge into the realm of initiative, inspiration and imagination. Where wonder, beauty and meaning can be experienced in the shared thoughts of others through language and literature then empathy and gratitude can evolve.

While the faculty of imagination appears to be in decline (Kearney, 1988; Greene, 1995) it is greatly needed for the global future development of humanity (Gebser, 1985; Wilber, 2000). The three strands of English teaching all contribute towards developing the capacity of imagination in students by encouraging them to form their own inner images and authentic pictures in a way that is not dependent on media images. This creative ability influences the development of thinking (Robinson, 2007) and is closely connected to all forms of problem solving (Egan, 2005; Eisner, 2009; Steiner 1947 [1919]). As empathy is understood to be dependent on the unconditional positive regard for the other person's inner world (Rogers, 1961, 1996), the ability to imagine how it is to be in the position of the other, is clearly closely related to the development of social consciousness and moral conscience. From an holistic perspective healthy 'soul' ecology on an individual level necessarily contributes towards global sustainability in the wider sphere (Gidley, 2009; Slaughter, 2004).

### 1.4 Contribution to the National Goals:

In the Educational Foundations and Academic Alignment paper a case is presented that demonstrates a strong alignment between the Melbourne Goals and the Steiner curriculum. The three categories of "successful learners", "confident and creative individuals" and "active and skilled citizens" are shown to relate to those of "head/thinking, heart/feeling and hands/willing" or cognitive, socio-emotional and active experiential learning in the Steiner context. A further correspondence is applicable in relation to the three strands of the English curriculum:

**Language learning** encompasses the theoretical and grammatical aspects of the English language. In this strand it is particularly relevant for students to strive to be "successful learners" so as to know the English language "as a coherent, dynamic, and evolving body of knowledge" and "how it works" (ACARA, May 2009).

**Literature learning** is oriented towards providing students with opportunities to become "confident and creative individuals" through finding "an enjoyment in, and informed appreciation of, how English language can convey information and emotion, create imaginative worlds and aesthetic and other significant experiences" (ACARA, May 2009).

**Literacy learning** "aims to develop appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy in English across growing and increasingly complex and unfamiliar settings." In particular this strand helps to "broaden students' knowledge of English language for later school learning, out-of-school experiences, and later participation in domestic, civic, and vocational life" (ACARA, May 2009, p.9). In this way the literacy strand is directed towards meeting the goal of "active and informed citizens."

**In summary the Steiner English curriculum meets the Melbourne Goals in the following ways:**

**Successful learners**

Language learning is valued for the element of structure which it introduces into the curriculum. In particular the learning of grammatical laws is understood to provide a strengthening ‘backbone of support’ for the students’ growing sense of self-identity (Steiner, Basle course; Sloan, 2007). Through their increasing confidence in self-expression, students learn more about themselves and their place in community.

**Confident and Creative Individuals**

An appreciation of the worldwide development of great works of literature nurtures the growth of individual aesthetic sensibility and multicultural awareness. The study of Literature forms part of the Aesthetics stream of the Steiner curriculum which is directed towards engendering an awareness of the significance of the gradual development of cultural awareness and expanding consciousness over the succession of stages of the great periods of history. The exploration of the history of aesthetics aims to assist students to grasp the correspondences between their own development pathway and aspects of cultural evolution; the overview focuses on providing a firm foundation on which students can build a meaningful connection with others and the community at large.

**Active and Skilled citizens**

By bridging the growth of rich inner attributes gained through the study of language and literature with the development of more outwardly directed skills, the capacity for literacy provides the essential grounding necessary for meaningful and fulfilling practical work in the world. A command of English language and literacy skills facilitates effective communication in all vocational areas. The ability to express thoughts and feelings clearly and fluently contributes towards the development of fulfilling and rewarding relationships. On a deeper level exposure to the inspirational world of literature provides the fertile soil essential for the growth of self-identity and the building of a meaningful connection to with the surrounding world. The conscious fostering of the imaginative capacity greatly assists with the development of flexible, resilient and enlivened thinking skills, problem solving abilities and the growth of moral awareness.

**2. AIMS**

The Australian Steiner English Curriculum aims to develop in students:

- an ability to **listen** with clarity and empathy and an appreciation of the beauty of the spoken word;
- the ability to **read** with fluency and understanding;
- a capacity for enlivened, imaginative and flexible **thinking** which contributes to problem solving abilities and growth of moral awareness;
- the faculty of clear, truthful and inspired **written expression** and effective use of language;
- enjoyment, confidence and independence in use of **English language** in personal, community, business, leisure and vocational contexts;
- the ability to **communicate** effectively, with empathy, compassion, clarity, insight and strength;
- clear, expressive and resonant **speech**
- a love of, enjoyment in and appreciation of **literature** written with beauty and meaning to enhance, clarify and deepen life experiences and connection to the world;
- an ability to form and express **identity** and deepen **relationship** through communication and artistic expression;
- a feeling for **truth** by working with accurate retelling of told/known stories;
- self-awareness and **identity** through clarity and faculty in the structural-formative elements of grammar;
- a strong **imaginative capacity** that develops flexible, resilient and enlivened thinking as well as strength in problem solving and deepening moral awareness.

### 3. ORGANISATION

#### Content Strands <sup>1</sup> NB Strands are fully integrated throughout the Curriculum Framework.

The Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework is written to include the three strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. These are embedded in the Main Lesson Content Areas for each year as well as outlined in their own Scope and Sequence. As a fully integrated curriculum there are content elaborations in other learning areas such as History, Mathematics and Science which will form part of the overall approach to English and are noted in the Curriculum Content by Year and the convergence charts.

#### Stage 1: Kindergarten to Class 3

##### Language

During these early years the language strand begins with a rich oral language environment in the classroom provided through verse, song, rhymes, chants, games and daily oral storytelling by the teacher. The strand follows the rich heritage from oral traditions of earlier times: story, myth and legend are filled with an allegorical quality of archetypal themes and richness of language.

In Kindergarten listening and opportunities for meaningful social communication in child-directed play and class-based activities are fostered. Participation in and presentation for regular festival celebrations begins. Morning Circle rhythmic work each day immerses the children in nuances of sound, rhyme and rhythm. Teacher led dramatisation and puppet plays develop imaginative expression which culminates in a class presentation of a story tableau with song and speech in chorus.

In Class 1 to Class 3 story recall, written work in the Topics cover all Learning Areas and the development of Main Lesson Books (Daily record of learning over a whole Topic with illustrations and written work) is added to the rich oral work. Each year a play or tableau built from one of the literature themes is produced. Language skills and understandings are developed out of the writing down of the stories, verses and songs listened to as oral texts: the introduction of the written alphabet, then words, then sentences is introduced through the students' imaginations or visual literacy.

##### Literature

The literature content is from nature stories and the Folk Tale realm before leading on to the Legends of the World including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dreaming Stories, those from Asia Pacific and Celtic and Hebrew Mythologies. Each year there is also the inclusion of festival stories and pedagogical tales. In Stage 1 the imaginative and archetypal elements of literature are experienced and integrated through artistic expression, drama and recall of images. It is important that analysis comes at a later stage and that the imaginative process is fully experienced without being consciously brought to conceptual awareness at this time.<sup>2</sup> Each day there is the telling by the teacher of a story presented as an oral text which is then visually represented through illustration, followed by writing and reading activities in student created books. The multimodal experience of literary texts from cultures around the world, and especially from Australia and Asia, leads to a deep learning and sense of cultural diversity.

##### Literacy

From drawing, painting and oral literacy in Kindergarten, the children move to the straight and curved forms necessary for writing and then to imaginative picture images of letters in Class One. This continues as the children progress to writing letters and sentences and reading their own "books" consolidating letter/sound relationships. The continuation in Class Two strengthens and builds strongly upon skills in reading, sentence structure, phonics and punctuation in Class One.

In Year 2 the students are introduced to teacher-created books and simple printed readers which present stories, verses and other material that are already familiar to the students from prior classroom activities eg they read verses and rhymes they already recite in class; stories they know already presented in texts with a significant number of high frequency sight words, many words based on common word families, simple standard punctuation as well as illustrations that support and extend the printed text. The reading is prepared and familiar, and is supported through pair, small group and class reading activities. From familiar material the students then progress to independent reading of texts that are increasingly unfamiliar to them in an independent reading program.

By Class 3 the children write longer stories and reports and begin grammar in a more structured way as well as developing cursive script.

<sup>1</sup> Child development profiles are included in the English curriculum for each year level.

<sup>2</sup> For further explanation of this aspect of the approach see the Child development paper

## Stage 2: Classes 4 – 6

### Language

Oral language, social communication in play and presentation of speech and drama continues with opportunities to perform at festivals, assemblies, community gatherings and in class plays. Debating begins in this stage. The Morning Circle each day brings verse, song and recitation, integrated with movement. The Class Play moves from working in chorus to individual parts of greater presence and complexity of theme. Language skills and understandings are built in age appropriate ways to enable students to communicate effectively their ideas to a range of audiences. Over these years they learn to understand and use word and sentence level grammar appropriately, they learn to spell using all spelling rules, phonic patterns and recognition of sight words. Through Years 4 to 6 they learn to recognise and write sentences with increasing complexity, using clauses to give flexibility in structure and depth in meaning.

### Literature

Literature moves through a rich curriculum of indigenous Australian, Asian, Nordic, Ancient Indian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman studies. Students are independent readers and read a variety of genres as well as non-fiction books. They learn to respond personally to a range of literary texts and to share their responses with other students: they build a framework for assessing qualities of literary texts which they can articulate to others. Above all they appreciate a breadth of quality literature which they experience both in the classroom and personally in a wide reading program. They participate in class plays which present dramatically the themes of the literature they experience in the classroom.

### Literacy

In this stage students consolidate their reading fluency and accuracy and build a range of comprehension strategies that enable them to understand literal and inferred meaning in texts. Grammar becomes a conscious study which includes parts of speech and correct sentence construction. Independent composition skills in paragraphing, story development and characterisation as well as the working with tense, place, active or passive voice and mood is refined. Students learn to research and edit their own work, using a range of research skills and information gathering techniques.

## Stages 3 and 4: Years 7 – 10

### Language

During this stage language lessons support the aims of the two other English strands as well as those of the Aesthetics stream which centre on the study of poetics, metrics and the elements of style in English usage. Students are given opportunities to extend their understanding of how language works and learn to transfer understandings of language to different contexts (ACARA, version 1.1.0). Lessons focus on consolidating and further expanding skills learnt in the earlier stages: spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, word usage and syntax. In particular subjective descriptive essays as well as objective reports and general essays are practised. This includes the discussion and representation of opposing points of view in both written and oral presentations (Rawson & Richter, 2000, p.121).

### Literature

Students are introduced to the increasingly sophisticated analysis of the differences between various genres, modes and kinds of literary texts. A wide range of texts chosen from classical, historical, popular-culture, and everyday sources are used. The notion of 'valuing' of certain texts as 'literature' is discussed. Students develop understandings of how such texts can be discussed and analysed in relation to themes, ideas and historical and cultural contexts. They are encouraged to read texts of their own choosing, and to explain the reasons for their choices (Rawson & Richter, 2000, pp.120 - 122; ACARA, version 1.1.0).

### Literacy

Students continue to be given opportunities to create increasingly sophisticated and multimodal texts in groups and individually. They re-enact, represent and describe texts in order to display their understanding of narrative, theme, purpose, context and argument and to defend their ideas in written and oral modes (ACARA, version 1.1.0).

## Stage 5: Years 11 – 12

At this stage students reach a level of maturity which enables them to bring to full fruition the knowledge and skills developed in K–10 and to demonstrate the key elements which underpin the English curriculum as a whole.

### Language

Language is both formative and expressive; effective use of language allows students to clarify and express their sense of self-identity with confidence. Knowing how the English language works and by understanding it as a coherent, dynamic and evolving body of knowledge (ACARA, version 1.1.0), allows students to move beyond the isolation of their individual experience towards clear and fluent communication with others and shared understanding (Sloan, 2007). Students are encouraged to investigate the way texts cohere and to use appropriate metalanguage to explore language and text (ACARA, version 1.1.0). Students build on the foundations already laid in the earlier stages as they further practice writing description, dialectic essays, analysis of poetic and other texts, and style exercises (Rawson and Richter, 2000, pp.122-123).

As language forms the vehicle for the development of thought English lessons provide students with the opportunity to expand their problem solving acumen and their capacity for imaginative and creative thinking. Similarly, as the richness of vocabulary is instrumental in determining the degree of differentiation in the way students express their thoughts, the English curriculum focuses on the effective use of vocabulary in a range of settings such as personal, social, academic and workplace (ACARA, version 1.1.0; AWSNA, 2004).

### Literature

The literature curriculum is linked to the Aesthetic stream of lessons in the wider course which provides a worldwide overview of the cultural development of humanity. Literary texts are selected in the light of their potential for enriching students' lives and expanding the scope of their experience. At this stage themes are chosen on the basis of their resonance with the students' quest for self-identity and their orientation towards their future tasks and work in the world. A core aspect of literature learning focuses on educating the imaginative capacities of students and on offering them the chance to develop an "informed appreciation of how English language can convey information and emotion, create imaginative worlds and aesthetic experiences" (ACARA, version 1.1.0).

Literature lessons focus on providing students with opportunities for understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature. Students read, view and listen to a range of texts (including prose fiction, drama, poetry, non-fiction, multimodal, digital, multimedia and texts in emerging technologies) for enjoyment; to appreciate the different ways literary texts may be interpreted; to evaluate texts and the ways in which authors construct meaning; to create sustained, well-crafted, engaging literary texts; and to adapt literary texts for different audiences, purposes and situations (ACARA, version 1.1.0).

### Literacy

The literacy curriculum aims to instil a love of language and an appreciation of the social quality of language, its beauty and the essential role it plays in the human journey. Literacy learning therefore pays attention to the application of knowledge about language to "practical and purposeful work" in the world, based on the understanding that "imagination and creativity are crucial to authentic communication" and so are "clarity, accuracy and fluency" (ACARA, May 2009).

At this stage the students' skills levels in the Literacy strand reflect "the breath of repertoire and depth of mastery gained through applying an increasing understanding about the English language" (ACARA, May 2009) which has been developing over the course of the earlier stages. Students continue to improve and build on their "growing repertoire of English usage" which includes "the ability to understand and produce the English language accurately, fluently, creatively, critically, confidently and effectively in a range of modes, and digital and print settings, and in texts designed for a range of purposes and audiences" (ACARA, version 1.1.0).