Alexandria Park Community School
Multicultural Education Policy
2011-2013

Rationale:

Contemporary Australian society is composed of more than 130 ethnic groups who speak over 90 languages. New South Wales is Australia’s most populous and multicultural state. Almost a quarter of the state’s population was born overseas, with 54% coming from Europe and 22% from Asia.

Approximately 18% of people over the age of four speak a language other than English at home with the languages most commonly spoken being Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Spanish and Indonesian. Even the original indigenous population displayed great cultural and linguistic diversity, with our state’s Aboriginal population, approximately 100,000 people, being the largest in Australia. Our Aboriginal students comprise about half of the school’s population while just under half the student population are of non-English speaking background. The major language groups are Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Indonesian, Tongan, Fijian, and Portuguese with 16 other language groups being represented.

The policy of Multiculturalism recognises, accepts and values the diversity of cultural, racial, religious and political origins of the multitude of Aboriginal and ethnic groups of English and non-English speaking people who have contributed to the development of Australia. By encouraging people to understand and appreciate the cultural diversity within Australian society, multiculturalism promotes harmonious coexistence and enhances the life options available to its people.

Definitions:

Multiculturalism is a social value that recognises cultural diversity as a positive and enriching component of society.

The concept of multiculturalism also recognises that both the independence and the interdependence of cultural groups are important for social cohesion. Similarly, equality among Australian cultural groups depends on the opportunity to participate equally in the economic, social and political life of Australia. Multiculturalism allows for national unity within which there is cultural diversity. Therefore, an individual’s affiliation with an Aboriginal group or ethnic group is seen as complementary to, not in conflict with, his or her Australian national identity. Individual affiliation need not detract from interdependence or mutual support amongst Australian peoples.

Ethnicity or ethnic identity results from an individual’s affiliation with the culture of a particular ethnic group. Ethnic awareness forms part of the self-concept of the child.

Multicultural perspectives to the curriculum concentrate on the cognitive domain, and become a process of awareness raising which encourages schools to place a cultural dimension within all subjects.

Intercultural education is that education which deals primarily with beliefs, attitudes and values and concentrates on the affective domain.
Organisation of Multicultural Education Programs:

All students need to be made aware of the cultural diversity that exists within Australia and is reflected in the multicultural nature of our school. All Australians have an ethnic identity whether they are from English speaking or other language backgrounds. Students need to see themselves and their background culture in a positive light and have an awareness of the worthwhile contribution being made historically and in the present by ethnic groups within Australia.

The promotion of knowledge and understanding of the various cultural groups through studies of their beliefs, values and attitudes will help to foster harmony amongst all students. The recognition and celebration of various ethnic national days, weeks and festivals related to the wide range of cultural groups throughout the school will provide a wealth of information and understanding for all. The literacy, library and H.I.S.E. programs will ensure that a variety of literature depicting people from varying cultural backgrounds is studied.

Organisation of the E.S.L. Program:

The E.S.L. program at Alexandria Park Community School is seen as a vital and integral part of the school’s functioning within the context of a multicultural society. The way in which it is implemented will reflect Alexandria Park’s goals, priorities and Departmental policies and practices. The organisation of the E.S.L. program at our school is one in which

- The E.S.L. teacher works in close co-operation with the mainstream teachers.
- Teachers jointly plan, implement and evaluate the class programs across content/subject areas (Key Learning Areas – K.L.A.’s) using Literacy Outcomes and the E.S.L. Scales.
- The student’s language needs (with the maintenance of the first language, where possible) are closely monitored and related to learning in the K.L.A.’s.

Organisation of the L.O.T.E. Program:

The general aim of the L.O.T.E Program is to assist native speakers in learning to speak, read and write Vietnamese and Indonesian and to provide language and cultural experiences for non – native students so that all students acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding of these particular ethnic groups within Australian society.

Links with Other Key Learning Areas:

Multicultural Perspectives incorporated into Units of Work in English, Science and Technology and Human Society and its Environment e.g. Family Studies, Contribution of the various language and cultural groups to the History of Australia, before and after European colonisation and technological advances.