

Aboriginal languages in schools - guideline

Curriculum, assessment, reporting and certification: early childhood to Year 12 policy

The Department of Education and Training (department) is committed to improving education outcomes for every child and student in the Northern Territory (NT) by optimising curriculum provision, using evidence-based curriculum planning, delivery and assessment practices, and ensuring integrity in all reporting and certification obligations.

The Curriculum, assessment, reporting and certification: early childhood to Year 12 policy (CARC policy), sets out the mandatory requirements for all NT Government schools and approved services in the delivery of curriculum, assessment, reporting and certification.

Aboriginal Languages in schools summary

The Languages learning area is a mandated curriculum area for learners from Transition to Year 8 and optional in Year 9 and 10.

The decision to teach an Aboriginal language must be made in collaboration with the community.

Schools teaching Aboriginal languages must use the [Northern Territory Indigenous Languages and Cultures \(NT ILC\) curriculum](#) as per the CARC policy, section 6.3.3. The NT ILC curriculum is aligned to the Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages learning area of the Australian Curriculum and supports schools to embed culturally responsive practices in line with the [Cultural Responsiveness Framework](#).

Scope

These guidelines apply to all NT Government schools teaching Aboriginal languages as a subject and set the baseline requirements for program establishment, delivery, assessment and reporting. Schools delivering bilingual education approaches must also refer to:

- Aboriginal languages reporting and monitoring - procedures
- [Bilingual Education - program statement](#)
- Bilingual education – guidelines.

NT Indigenous Languages and Cultures curriculum overview

The NT ILC curriculum is designed for all NT Government schools and was developed by a reference group led by Aboriginal educators from across the NT.

Aboriginal languages are taught through cultural knowledge and a language pathway. Cultural knowledge may be adapted to suit the local context. Schools negotiate the focus language and appropriate language learning pathway, as per the CARC policy, section 6.3.3, with the school community.

These guidelines may be read in conjunction with the [Keeping Indigenous languages and cultures strong policy](#) and the [Guidelines for the implementation of Indigenous languages and cultures programs in schools](#).

Establishing Aboriginal language programs

Schools should establish a Language and Culture Advisory Group, or where appropriate engage their local representative body that includes school and community members to guide the implementation of the NT ILC curriculum.

Where possible, schools should appoint a program coordinator to manage and support program development, including teaching, learning, assessment, and administrative tasks.

The [Guidelines for the implementation of Indigenous languages and cultures programs in schools](#) provide further detail.

Who can teach Aboriginal languages

An Aboriginal language program must be taught by an Aboriginal person who speaks the language.

They may work in partnership with other educators and community members to build skills to use the NT ILC curriculum in planning, teaching, assessing, and reporting.

On-Country learning

Aboriginal language programs create opportunities for students to participate in learning activities connected to Country and community. Programs that provide rich learning experiences delivered on Country enable students to use language in context and connect with the knowledges, cultural practices and environment of the language.

Reporting on Aboriginal languages

All schools teaching an Aboriginal language must use the SAIS Student Report – Indigenous Languages & Cultures when reporting to parents and guardians.

Schools may also use the ILC Monitoring Tool to monitor student progress in First Language pathways or Language Revival pathways.

The Aboriginal languages reporting and monitoring - procedure supports educators to monitor and report accurately.

Roles and responsibilities

In addition to section 9 of the CARC policy, there are roles and responsibilities specific to Aboriginal languages in schools.

Principals

Principals are responsible for:

- consulting with the community and its leaders about an ILC program

- allocating adequate funding, resources and time to program development and delivery
- managing program coordination or delegating to an appropriate staff member
- reviewing program performance in line with school improvement priorities.

Language and culture advisory groups

Language and culture advisory groups are responsible for:

- providing advice to the principal and the school body regarding implementation of the ILC program in the school including:
 - the choice of languages and cultures to be taught
 - the language learning pathway to be used
 - members of the community who will support the teaching of the languages and cultures
- providing advice and feedback to support the development of lesson plans and resources
- engaging with the community to ensure representation
- providing feedback on the performance of the program.

Aboriginal languages program coordinators

Aboriginal languages program coordinators are responsible for:

- coordinating the development and delivery of the program
- undertaking administrative tasks that support staff and Aboriginal language speakers and teachers to deliver the program
- collaborating with Aboriginal team teachers and Aboriginal language speakers and teachers to design and develop the language program.

Language speakers teachers

Language speakers teachers are responsible for:

- designing and developing the ILC teaching and learning program with support
- developing ILC program resources with support
- teaching the language and culture to students
- assessing and reporting on student learning with support.

Aboriginal team teachers

Aboriginal team teachers are responsible for:

- participating in developing the ILC teaching and learning program
- assisting with or, where appropriate, delivering ILC lessons.

Classroom teachers

Classroom teachers are responsible for:

- supporting the delivery of the ILC teaching and learning program
- reporting to parents.

Definitions

Refer to section 11 of the CARC policy for a list of definitions.

Related resources

Access the related guidelines, procedures and resources on the Policy and Advisory Library – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/curriculum>

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory
TRM	Territory Records Manager

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2	November 2022	Quality Standards and Regulation – Operational Policy	Administrative amendments to align roles and responsibilities to the structural alignment in effect from 1 July 2022, including NTG template and minor formatting
3	December 2025	Teaching and Learning Services	Updated in line with the CARC policy version 4.1 and with the Cultural Responsiveness Framework 2024.