

BER Factsheet

September 2009

Language Learning Centres

Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools (SLC) is a key component of the Building the Education Revolution (BER). Through the BER the Government will invest \$16.2 billion over three years under the Australian Government's Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan.

SLC is delivering a total of \$821.8 million to fund the building or refurbishment of science laboratories and/or language learning centres in secondary schools. A total of 280 science centres, 179 language learning centres, and 78 dual facilities have been approved.

This fact sheet has been developed to assist schools receiving funding for the construction of language learning centres make the best use of the opportunities afforded by the centres. It provides advice on how to design, equip and utilise the new centres to support modern approaches to language teaching.

21st Century Language Learning Centres

Language learning centres should be flexible learning spaces that can be easily adapted to suit a variety of activities for different sized groups, and support access to a range of learning resources, actual and virtual.

The centres should make optimum use of available technology pre-configured for languages and language learning. A language learning centre should support the teaching methodology used in delivering a language program, not direct it.

In designing language learning centres, and for schools to make the best use of the opportunities the centres provide, consideration should be given to:

- The physical possibilities and limitations of the school.
- The links to teaching and learning strategies and how the centre can best support these.
- Support and professional development for staff using the centre, including in pedagogical development and curriculum design and the use of ICT/technical equipment.
- The need to incorporate constant provision of expert technical advice, maintenance and upgrade support.

Features of a state of the art language learning centre may include:

- Flexible layout and facilities, allowing the centre to be used as a classroom, library, studio, workshop and/or theatre, depending on the nature of the language learning activities.
- A layout that allows for whole group, small group and individual work.
- Spaces for listening practice and recording, with acoustic design for noise reduction and soundproofing as appropriate.
- Furniture that can easily be moved into various configurations.
- Ease of access to a range of resources, actual and virtual, for learning the particular language. Resources may include:
 - » technical equipment such as computers, interactive whiteboards, data projectors, videoconferencing facilities, MP3 players, digital video cameras, microphones and recording equipment, and headphones; and
 - » language-specific resources such as software and curriculum materials.
- Secure storage for IT equipment and adequate space for storage of resources.
 - » Spaces for complementary activities supporting language learning and cultural understanding such as art work and/or cooking activities.

For more information on language learning centres:

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations:

www.afmlta.asn.au/

Asia Education Foundation paper:

www.educationau.edu.au/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/papers/AEF_lang-learning.pdf

For more information on BER:

www.buildingtheeducationrevolution.gov.au