NSW Schools To Play Key Role In Ties With Asia

June 15, 2009

The Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth today announced that from next year, four NSW public schools will offer their students a bi-lingual education.

The new bi-lingual program is included in the 2009-10 NSW budget through a commitment of $2.25 million over four years.

Schools will apply to join the program and the first four bi-lingual schools will be announced in the near future.

"Asia is on our doorstep and this program is vital to the future economic and social prosperity of New South Wales," said Ms Firth.

"We are preparing the future workforce to be fluent in key Asian languages including Mandarin, Korean, Japanese and Indonesian.

"Research shows that the best way to learn a second language and to master fluency is to start early.

"Students will be immersed in the languages for one and a half hours each school day, from as early as kindergarten.

"New languages will be taught directly and through integration in other subjects.

"For example, students will learn the grammatical components of Mandarin and will also be taught other subjects such as creative arts, health and technology in that language.

The program will be delivered by specialist language teachers (native or near-native speakers trained in primary education. Native-speaking volunteers such as graduate education overseas university students will also assist under the supervision of teachers.

The bi-lingual program will start with two classes from kindergarten to Year 2 grades at each of the four schools, with two classes being added in each year up to Year 4, and one class in Years 5 and 6.

"We are committing extra resources for schools to excel and these specialist language teachers will be employed in addition to normal staffing allocations," said Ms Firth.

Schools will also offer a non-bi-lingual stream.