

Introduction to Japanese

The redesigned Japanese as a Second Language curriculum presents what students are expected to know, do, and understand in Grades 5 through 12. It provides a framework for teachers to engage students in learning experiences through which they can become proficient users of Japanese, gaining new perspectives and engaging with Japanese-speaking communities.

Features of the Japanese curriculum

Integration of components

The Japanese curriculum represents an integrated approach to language acquisition. In this approach, the following components of language acquisition are viewed as interconnected rather than in isolation:

- **Reading, writing, listening, speaking, and interacting** — These essential competencies are the foundation of language acquisition. As they rarely exist in isolation in authentic communication contexts, they are integrated throughout the curriculum. Each element of the curriculum supports the simultaneous development of multiple competencies.
- **Grammar** — With a focus on the purposeful use of language to communicate meaning, the curriculum views grammatical instruction as playing a supportive role.
- **Culture** — Language is inextricably bound to culture. Culture is a vehicle for acquiring a deeper understanding of a given language, of others, and of ourselves. Authentic communication always takes place in a cultural context, and language acquisition activities in the classroom must therefore be situated within such a context. As students explore Japanese and the Japanese-speaking world, they simultaneously acquire both the language and an understanding of the many varieties of Japanese culture and the relationship between the two, contributing to their appreciation of other cultures as well as their own.
- **Language-learning strategies** — Language-learning strategies are seen as a vehicle for helping students succeed in their language acquisition journey and are integrated throughout the curriculum.

Flexible teaching and learning

The Japanese curriculum allows for instructional flexibility. For example, the curriculum components can be combined in different ways to provide a diverse range of learning opportunities. Within each grade, there are multiple ways to combine Content, Curricular Competencies, and Big Ideas to create lessons, units, and learning experiences. The curriculum encourages the use of a range of approaches that support language instruction and acquisition.

Use of a wide variety of texts

The Japanese curriculum encourages the use of a wide variety of text types. *Text* is a generic term referring to all forms of oral, written, visual, and digital communication. Oral, written, and visual elements can also be combined (e.g., in dramatic presentations, graphic novels, films, web pages, advertisements). Teachers are encouraged to use a varied selection of grade-appropriate text types in their classrooms.

Design of the Japanese curriculum

The Japanese curriculum follows the same format as in all other areas of learning and is based on the Know-Do-Understand model of learning. Students learn through Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand).

- [Learn more about the curriculum model](#)

Big Ideas

The Big Ideas are generalizations and principles discovered through experiencing the Content and Curricular Competencies of the curriculum — the “Understand” component of the Know-Do-Understand model of learning. Big Ideas represent the “aha!” and the “so what?” of the curriculum — the deeper learning.

From year to year, students discover new Big Ideas and also build on the Big Ideas from previous years. The example below illustrates how the curriculum grows with students and expands the scope and depth of learning as students progress through the grades.

Grade	5	7	9	11
Big Ideas	Listening and viewing with intent helps us acquire a new language.	Listening and viewing with intent helps us understand an increasing variety of messages.	Listening and viewing with intent strengthens our understanding and acquisition of a new language.	Listening and viewing with intent broadens our acquisition of a new language.

Curricular Competencies

Curricular Competencies are what students should be able to “Do” with their Content knowledge. Language acquisition is very process-driven, and “Doing” plays an important role. Through purposeful communication, learners develop competencies in Language Thinking, Communication, and Personal and Social Awareness, representing their ideas in Japanese with confidence and fluency, and understanding the connections between language and culture.

Students also build on their Curricular Competencies from year to year. The example below illustrates how the curriculum grows with students and expands the scope and depth of learning.

Grade	5	7	9	11
Curricular Competencies	Start to recognize different Japanese scripts	Recognize the relationship between Japanese characters and sounds	Recognize the relationship between Japanese characters, sounds, and meaning	Recognize how choice of words affects meaning

Content

Content is the knowledge students are expected to learn and apply through the Curricular Competencies. Content learning standards may support multiple Curricular Competencies.

Students build on their Content knowledge from year to year. Some Content learning standards appear over more than one year because they may take longer to fully acquire or they may support increasingly complex Curricular Competencies. When identical Content learning standards appear across multiple grades, elaborations further clarify how deeply the Content learning standard may be covered at each grade.

Elaborations

Elaborations have been provided (as hyperlinks) in many places throughout the curriculum. Elaborations offer additional clarification and support for teachers, including definitions, examples, and information regarding the depth and breadth to which topics should be covered at a given grade. Examples provided in the elaborations are not intended to be comprehensive lists of what must be covered in a given grade; they are simply examples. The examples below may be particularly useful to teachers who are new to teaching Japanese.

Grade	8
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common expressions in Japanese
Elaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common expressions in Japanese: e.g., everyday observations about weather, food, clothing, daily activities

Important considerations

Language of instruction

It is important that Japanese be used as the language of instruction for the Japanese curriculum. As Japanese is a minority language in British Columbia, opportunities for students to use the language outside the classroom are likely to be limited. Research shows that increasing exposure to and use of the target language is essential to increasing proficiency. Therefore, while it is also understood that students at times may need some discussion or examples in English, both teachers and students are encouraged to use Japanese at every opportunity.

Engaging with community

In language education, all aspects of learning are enriched when students engage with members of the target language community. Engaging with Japanese communities, people, or experiences can be unique within local contexts. It may include, for example, inviting community members into the classroom (in person or virtually); making connections with other Japanese classes and schools; attending festivals, films, concerts, plays, and other cultural and community events; frequenting stores, restaurants, and community centres where Japanese is used; and interacting with the online Japanese community through blogs and other forms of social media. Teachers are encouraged to provide a variety of these experiences for their students. Students, particularly in the upper grades, are also encouraged to seek and initiate engagement with Japanese communities, people, or experiences to help build their identity as Japanese speakers and to foster opportunities to continue their acquisition of Japanese after graduation.

First Peoples perspectives

The Ministry of Education is dedicated to ensuring that the cultures and contributions of First Peoples in British Columbia are reflected in all provincial curricula.

The First Peoples Principles of Learning have been affirmed within First Peoples societies to guide the teaching and learning of provincial curricula. Because these principles of learning represent an attempt to identify common elements in the varied teaching and learning approaches that prevail within particular First Peoples societies, it must be recognized that they do not capture the full reality of the approach used in any single First Peoples society.

The First Peoples Principles of Learning greatly influence the Japanese curriculum and are woven throughout. They lend themselves well to second-language learning, as they promote experiential and reflexive learning, as well as self-advocacy and personal responsibility in learners. They help create classroom experiences based on the concepts of community, shared learning, and trust, all of which are vital to second-language acquisition.

To support accurate and respectful use of First Peoples content and perspectives in the classroom, teachers are encouraged to seek the advice and support of members of local First Peoples communities. As First Peoples communities are diverse in terms of language, culture, and available resources, each community will have its own unique protocol to gain support for integration of local knowledge and expertise. Permission for the use or translation of cultural materials or practices should be obtained through consultation with individuals, families, and other community members.

For more information, consult the Ministry of Education's Aboriginal Education website: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/welcome.htm