



Asia Education Foundation

Building Demand - What Works

The Study of Asian languages

>> from students

Building Demand: providing students with purpose

Asia Literacy Ambassadors: businesses partnering with schools

The Asia Literacy Ambassadors project facilitates the establishment of partnerships between businesses and school communities to stimulate student and community demand for Asia literacy and Asian languages. It is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

By early 2012, 295 secondary schools have been involved and 305 Ambassadors from business and industry registered. More than 13,000 secondary school students have been impacted by the project.

The 2012 *Asia Literacy Ambassadors: Partnering Businesses & Schools: an evaluation* (ALA Evaluation) found that the project had been 'remarkably successful in a very short space of time'. (p. 44)

Detailed aims

The project facilitates school—business partnerships in order to:

- >> inspire and motivate students, teachers and parents in the teaching and learning of Asian languages and studies of Asia;
- >> support the development of Asian languages and studies of Asia programs in schools;
- >> broaden awareness of the types and variety of careers and opportunities that are available to those who are familiar with the languages and cultures of Asian countries;
- >> enable those working with the target countries to act as mentors or role models for those students wishing to pursue careers that require knowledge of Asian languages and cultures.



Who are the Ambassadors?

Ambassadors are skilled professionals who have experience working and living in Asia. They volunteer to engage with schools because they want to help students see the career and life opportunities associated with learning Asian languages, and Asia literacy more generally.

The work of Ambassadors and schools is planned in advance by those involved. Usually, Ambassadors participate in at least three face-to-face interactions with students, school leaders, teachers, career practitioners and school councils over a six to eight month period. That said, however, the pattern of interactions and when they occur depends very much on the availability and goals of the Ambassadors and schools.

Operation of the project

In practice, Ambassadors and schools participate in a range of activities:

- >> *One-to-one partnerships* between a school and an Ambassador. These ongoing partnerships are supported by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) and encompass a variety of interactions and audiences, predominantly aimed at engaging students.

Student demand for Asian languages built through interaction with business people

The Asia Literacy Ambassadors project brings secondary school students together with business people who have experience living and working in Asia. Several patterns of partnership are available and the project has to date reached over 13,000 students. Outcomes include substantially increased demand for Asian languages among participating students.

'I know now about how Asia skills can help me in my career choice and open a new and exciting door into the workforce.'

Student, Le Fevre High School, SA

- >> *Speakers Bureau.* AEF maintains a database of Ambassadors that schools can search by state, country of interest or business sector. This allows them to find an appropriate person for a presentation to a school assembly, a one-off workshop with students, involvement in a careers evening or a presentation to a school leadership team.
- >> *Opening a Door into Asia* events at universities. These consist of lectures, workshops and other activities run annually in all states and territories.
- >> *Workplace visits.* Through the Ambassadors project, school groups visit Australian businesses to see what an Asia-skilled workplace looks like. Activities can include workshops discussions, interviews, organisational briefings and tours.

Inspiring and motivating students

The ALA Evaluation provides a range of evidence, based on extensive survey data, of the extent to which students were affected by their experiences working with Ambassadors. It concludes that, of schools represented:

'... nearly 70% reported increased interest in Asian languages and cultures among their students. Half reported increased enrolment in Asian language study which, in this environment, is a most positive outcome.' (p. 48)

As well, it reports that, of student participants in the *Opening a Door into Asia* events:

'... two-thirds said the experience had broadened their mindset and that their intercultural understanding had improved.'

And that several teachers involved in the workplace visits program

'... commented that their students could now see the importance of having Asian language skills as part of a larger relevant skill set.'

A typical student comment, from the Northern Territory, was:

'I now know how important it can be to learn an Asian language, as it can broaden your mind and can open doors for you.'

One student from Le Fevre High School in South Australia who attended the workplace visit at Santos said:

'I enjoyed learning and hearing about what jobs I could do in the future because I know another language.'

Another commented:

'I know now about how Asia skills can help me in my career choice and open a new and exciting door into the workforce.'

Conclusion

As the Ambassadors project developed it became clear that one size does not fit all. Various patterns of involvement of Ambassadors with schools are required, to meet the needs of all partners.

Ongoing one-to-one partnerships may appear to be optimal, and certainly have a deal of potential, but other arrangements can also be very effective.

About AEF

The Asia Education Foundation provides teachers, education leaders and school communities with innovative programs, curriculum resources and networks to support the achievement of Asia literacy for every young Australian.

AEF is a joint activity of Asialink at the University of Melbourne and Education Services Australia. It receives core funding from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

AEF leverages funding to support Asia literacy in Australian schools from a broad range of government, philanthropic and corporate partners in Australia and Asia.

Related links

- >> Asia Literacy Ambassadors: Partnering Businesses & Schools: an evaluation
- >> Ambassadors project webpage <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/schoolbusiness>
- >> Ambassadors' stories and video from the 2011 AEF Summit http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/summit_stories
- >> *Opening a door to Asia* at the University of NSW

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