



# Asia capable teacher

Asquith Girl's High School NSW

## Cheryl Key

*Asquith Girls' High School identified a need to teach more Asian Ancient History and to move away from the more Euro-centric studies. All of Year 7 studied Ancient China in their History class, and the same unit of work was taught to Year 8 in Term 3, 2012. This unit increased students' knowledge of Ancient China and Chinese civilisation.*

Cheryl Key, BALGS Project Leader, Asquith Girls' High School, NSW

Of the eleven schools involved in What Works 3, five of them use Additive approaches to engaging with Asia perspectives in English and/or History. The dominance of Additive approaches amongst the What Works 3 [*Achieving intercultural understanding through the teaching of Asia perspectives in the Australian Curriculum: English and History*] schools is reflective of where many Australian schools are at when it comes to developing their students' Asia-relevant capabilities.

It is thus possible to hypothesise that for any group of Australian schools committed to Asia literacy, most of them are likely to be functioning within the Additive space along the intercultural education continuum. This is an important development and one reflective of progress in the field.

Contributions approaches — also, content integration (Banks, 2004) — have dominated the intercultural understanding and Asia literacy landscape in Australian schools over the last decade (see Leeman & Ledoux, 2003). In an attempt to make sense of growing diversity within schools and the broader society, teachers have tended to integrate content about different cultures into the humanities, social sciences and languages, or as part of extra-curricular learning (see, among others, Hassim & Cole-Adams, 2011), albeit slowly expanding the repertoire of texts with which to do so.

While a necessary starting point for many schools, the outcome of this approach is likely to be selective cultural awareness rather than genuine intercultural understanding. The What Works 3 schools show that Australian schools have begun taking the next step along the continuum. Beyond simply incorporating relevant content about different cultures into classroom teaching, many schools are now using resources by and about diverse peoples to add intercultural content, concepts, themes and perspectives to the core curriculum.

This progress is reflective of a maturing process within Australian education, supplemented further by the increased availability and awareness of authentic materials for engaging with Asia perspectives in the classroom. The increased maturity also reflects the shift in the current discourse from 'Asia literacy' to 'Asia capabilities' — as reflected in the Australian in the Asian Century White Paper (Australian Government, 2012).

As part of its commitment to developing Asia capable students, Asquith Girls' High School (NSW) adopted an Additive approach to the development of units of work in History.

Cheryl Key, Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (BALGS) Project Leader at Asquith, said that students gained unique insights into the peoples and countries of the Asia region as a result of the units, through immersion in a range of Asian cultural perspectives with the aid of authentic materials and student-driven learning. Cheryl indicated that:

*Students grew to appreciate the uniqueness of each culture and to understand differences between cultures. [They] learned specifically and in-depth about different cultures and drew links to students in the school of the same culture.*

*The Year 7 cross-curriculum unit of work 'Virtual Travel to Asia' has a History focus on Ancient China. The unit of work is ... engaging students with a more hands-on approach. Students have the choice of many activities, completed from a Bloom's Taxonomy and multiple intelligences grid, to choose that they are interested in.*

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*All of Year 7 studied Ancient China in their History class, and the same unit of work was taught to Year 8 in Term 3, 2012. This unit increased students' knowledge of Ancient China and Chinese civilisation. A substantial amount of resources have been purchased to support this unit of work. These include Ancient Chinese costumes and mahjong sets.*

From What Works 3: Achieving intercultural understanding through the teaching of Asia perspectives in the Australian Curriculum: English and History