



Building Demand - What Works

The Studies of Asian languages

>> Removing structural impediments

Building Demand: providing students with pathways

The *School to School* project: Brighton Cluster, South Australia

The *School to School* project aimed to introduce students to studying Japanese in Year 7, their last year of primary school, by giving them a taster course, with a view to them electing to study Japanese in Year 8 at high school.

The School to School project was one of four South Australian clusters established to improve languages pathways from primary to secondary school.

The intended outcomes of the work of the clusters included:

- >> increasing demand for Asian languages as reflected in enrolment and retention numbers;
- >> the attainment of higher levels of proficiency by some students;
- >> schools being enabled to maintain and extend their Asian language programs.

Peer to peer conversations make the difference

Brighton Primary School had not taught an Asian language for some years.

It has a specialist unit for hearing-impaired students and has been teaching Auslan across the school to enable communication between the students.

It was planned that Year 9 students from Brighton Secondary School would conduct activities with the Year 7s at the primary school and incorporate an ICT focus by using iPads. Oral language was emphasised to suit the needs of the Year 7 students. Separate discussions were initially held with Year 7s and Year 9s. The Year 7 students were concerned that Japanese might be hard, while Year 9 students were more concerned about management of the Year 7s.

An introductory visit by Japanese exchange students who happened to be there as the project started provided an icebreaker.

Subsequently, visits to the primary school took place each week for twelve weeks and Year 9 students conducted half-hour activities for three separate groups of Year 7 students. A Japanese-themed break up party provided a celebratory end to the project.

Other primary school staff supported the program by focusing on Japan in other areas of the curriculum. School newsletters were used to provide information to parents.

Taster course at primary school builds demand at secondary school

In this NALSSP project, Year 9 students from Brighton Secondary School worked with final year primary students at Brighton Primary School in a 12-week Japanese Taster program rich in conversation and ICT. Japanese enrolments at Brighton Secondary School the following year increased significantly.



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Teacher

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.

Significant increase in demand for Japanese

Enrolments in Japanese at the secondary school increased from three classes in 2011 to four in 2012. The additional 25 students were all from Brighton Primary School. A teacher quoted within the project evaluation said:

"... it has changed their attitude towards the language ... because they had this vision of it being way too difficult ... and I think it's good that they've got a positive attitude towards languages out of it, like if they picked a different language, at least when they start they'll be thinking: Ok, it's not necessarily going to be scary."

Given the low cost of this program and the short period of time over which the program ran, this was a significant level of impact.

Teachers suggested that the students' positive experiences within the program, as well as knowing the Japanese teacher at the high school, both contributed to this outcome. They also believed that using a conversational basis contributed to the program's success because students could see a purpose for learning.

"a lot of the kids ... have been put off language ... and I can see why ... they didn't see any purpose. Whereas the minute it was conversation ... where's the toilet, good evening, how are you ... suddenly it had a purpose."

Primary teachers also believed the program helps their students with the transition to high school (at least for those going to Brighton Secondary School).

There are always challenges

For the high school teachers, two challenges were finding time for planning the weekly activities and managing the technology. The primary teachers noted similar time pressures. Extra demands were made on the Year 9 students who had to complete their normal work in addition to completing the 12-week program for the Year 7s. However, part of their own assessment did relate to that work.

Conclusion

The program generated language-learning outcomes among the Year 7 students and an increased confidence about learning languages. It also built demand for Japanese, resulting in significant increases in language enrolments in the high school, for a relatively low cost.

According to the project evaluation:

'The provision of taster courses was clearly effective for introducing languages into a school and for generating enrolments in the language taught for the subsequent year. This strategy can also influence choice of Asian languages over European languages where multiple languages are offered. Sustainability of outcomes will require repetition of the strategy each year, which will require staff allocations from both schools, coordinated timetabling, and some administrative funding for transport costs where required.'

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