



Building Demand - What Works

The Studies of Asian languages

>> Removing structural impediments

Building Demand: providing students with pathways

A language hub: Mount Lawley Senior High School

Mount Lawley Senior High School (SHS) in Perth is a specialist high school, offering a range of languages including Chinese and Indonesian. Chinese is also available as a special GATE program for gifted and talented students. The school is a designated language hub, which means that it is involved in building bridges with local primary schools to ensure continuity in students' language studies. Supported by a Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (BALGS) grant, the school set out to review current practice and further develop its links with local primary schools.

A demonstrated need

A curriculum audit identified that there was insufficient focus on the years of transition between primary and secondary schools and that language pathways were not clear. As well, studies of Asia appeared in only three of the eight learning areas at Mount Lawley SHS, meaning there was a need for further integration.

It was felt that supporting the GATE Asian languages of Chinese and Indonesian in the primary schools was the best way to improve transition, as well as provide attractive pathways for students.

As the project leader explained:

'Mount Lawley Senior High School had a foundation built on language development and needed to expand this beyond our immediate borders. We were able to do this by cultivating support for the primary schools in terms of both personnel and environment.'



Taking action

Mount Lawley SHS worked with its partner primary schools to:

- >> implement professional learning for all staff involved partly to assist the curriculum audit;
- >> improve language curriculum design at the primary level;
- >> deliver online learning;
- >> establish technologically innovative links between the schools;
- >> create opportunities for primary school students to be immersed in cultural activities (such as festivals and performances) at the high school.

Coordinated action across primary to secondary transition creates logical student pathways

Mount Lawley Senior High School works in partnership with local primary schools to provide integrated language pathways for students. Immersion in Asian language and culture further stimulates demand.

'Coordination across the various schools was sometimes an issue. Skilling of staff and students in ICT was a process that took many hours of commitment. Development of age-appropriate resources is also a continuing challenge.'

Project leader,
Mount Lawley Senior High School, WA

These in turn promoted cultural understandings and facilitated a smoother transition from primary school to high school. In the process, apart from making pathways clearer, students came to see language study as a normal part of school life.

Moreover, Mount Lawley SHS took action, post-audit, to ensure that all learning areas embedded Asian perspectives.

Conclusion

Language hubs that establish Asian language pathways between primary and secondary schools have obvious benefits in terms of maintaining student interest in, and demand for, Asian languages.

Challenges

The project leader found that coordination across the various schools was sometimes an issue. Skilling of staff and students in ICT was a process that took many hours of commitment. Development of age-appropriate resources is also a continuing challenge.

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

- >> Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools www.asiaeducation.edu.au/balgs
- >> GATE languages, Mount Lawley Senior High School website www.lawley.wa.edu.au/view/languages

Contact Asia Education Foundation P: +61 3 8344 4800 E: aef-support@asialink.unimelb.edu.au