



Building Demand - What Works For Studies of Asia

Building Demand: engaging school educators

Internationalising Education China Program

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Asia Education Foundation formed a partnership in 2010 to provide a range of overseas study programs to countries of Asia for Victorian government school educators. One of these is the Internationalising Education China Program (IECP) of the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). This involved trialling a new model of in-country study program that is seen as an impetus to internationalise education at the school.

Program objectives

The objectives of the program were:

- >> to build leadership skills of the participants and increase their confidence to teach about Asia and integrate global perspectives into the curriculum;
- >> to build school to school relationships with schools in China that can support future opportunities for student and teacher exchange and enhanced language learning at the school;

- >> to develop or deepen participants' understanding of the Chinese education system and increase their knowledge of contemporary Chinese culture;
- >> to strengthen Mandarin learning in the schools.

Making progress

The program was planned in detail in advance. There was a preparation phase before the first visit, an interim phase in between visits and a sustainability phase afterwards.

Some schools established a positive relationship almost immediately with the Chinese partner school, so the interim phase was a productive time for strengthening the partnership. Typically, this occurred in situations where the leaders of both schools were engaged from the beginning.

In other cases, more work was needed to build the relationship and in these cases, the return visit was invaluable.

School educators are highly engaged in Asia literacy through in-country experience

This program took in-country experience for educators to a new level. It combined a collegial approach, professional learning support before, during and after the in-country phase and a return visit to China to bring about high levels of enthusiasm for Asia literacy and sister school relationships among participants.



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Participant, International Education
China Program

According to one teacher at that time:

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In all cases, the return visit strengthened the relationships and allowed for clarifications and collaborative planning. During the visit, Memorandums of Understanding were signed, outlining future work of the partnerships such as an online project to connect students and teachers at each project school, continuing classroom collaboration and planning towards teacher and student exchanges.

There was strong agreement among project teams:

'... the return trip achieved a strengthening of the relationship between EMR schools and their Suzhou sister schools including ... a commitment from the sister schools to an ongoing relationship that for many of the schools would not have been achieved without a return visit and the opportunity to discuss matters face to face.'

Program outcomes

The enthusiasm of participants for their relationships with people in Suzhou is palpable, and is translating into action in terms of studies of Asia and also Mandarin language-learning in their schools.

The final report, April 2012, Evaluation of the Eastern Metropolitan Region Internationalising Education China Program, indicated that the program has met its objectives. It is:

'... building the capacity of participant schools to ensure that Asia literacy and global perspectives become sustained elements of student learning outcomes. In addition, the project is resulting in the achievement of purposeful sister school relationships, enhanced leadership capacity and a strengthening of Mandarin language learning.' (p. 47)

In terms of Mandarin language learning, the evaluation notes:

'Ninety six per cent of principals reported a significant or moderate impact on Mandarin LOTE programs ... In the case of one school ... the program has profoundly affected their perspectives on languages and how they plan to weave these new understandings into their language provision from now on. In addition to benefits arising from the initial visit to China, informal contact with other project schools that offer Mandarin had supported two schools in their decision to introduce the language in 2012.' (p. 19)

Conclusion

The IECP provides a good example of the impetus and enthusiasm for studies of Asia and Asian language learning that can be generated among teachers and principals when given the opportunity to interact meaningfully with people in Asia.

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

- >> Victorian DEECD Study Programs <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/deecdstudyprogram>
 - >> Short videos of teachers' own stories <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/emrstudyprogram>
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