



Building Demand - What Works For Studies of Asia

Building Demand: engaging school educators

Kaizen: global connections in the Australian Capital Territory

In the Australian Capital Territory, the Lanyon Cluster of schools includes Lanyon High School, Charles Conder Primary School, Gordon Primary School and Bonython Primary School. Cluster schools have a history of working closely together.

The Cluster has received a *Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools* (BALGS) grant for its project *Kaizen: Global Connections*. It draws on the Japanese philosophy of *Kaizen*, which focuses on continuous improvement throughout all aspects of life, and change for a better society. For all cluster schools, one aspect of *Kaizen* involves studies of Asia and Japanese language.

Context

At the beginning of the project, all the cluster schools were at various stages of implementing or expanding their Japanese language programs. Student motivation and engagement were identified as issues: Students were experiencing a lack of continuity in the study of Japanese language (and studies of Asia more generally), as they didn't have access to continuous Japanese language programs.

To deal with this issue, action was taken to develop exemplary curriculum and provide professional learning opportunities for teachers. It was felt that student motivation would be improved as a result.

Eight exemplary units of work were produced, one in each of art, woodwork, food technology, English/literacy, history, geography and Japanese. Each embedded studies of Asia



and were made available online. The units were of particular benefit and interest to early career teachers, who had not previously been exposed to such material.

As well, a quality, cumulative Japanese language program from pre-school to Year 10 was planned.

Action research

As a further student engagement initiative, teachers made conscious efforts to incorporate a range of ICTs such as online texts and class wikis. It was felt that meaningful online learning communities would enhance language learning and intercultural understanding beyond the classroom.

The effects of these changes were investigated through action research. Action research focused on collecting data to show significant change. This included teachers collecting data focusing on specific students (28 in total), which was documented in a cluster wiki and in nine 'most significant change' stories as well as whole class data collection focusing on K-2 and Years 5 and 6.

***Kaizen: Global
Connections***
Local networking
engages teachers
in studies of Asia

This project focused on building a strong network of primary and secondary teachers of Japanese and studies of Asia, across the ACT's Lanyon Cluster of schools. Increased teacher enthusiasm in turn helped make the studies of Asia and Japanese language learning more engaging for students.

'I realised the importance of using practical subjects, which often engage underperforming students, to develop cultural understandings and other important life skills, including literacy and numeracy.'

Teacher, Lanyon Cluster school

Challenges

Charles Conder Primary School was unable to offer a Japanese language program due to staffing problems. A future language program is a possibility as one staff member has been supported to retrain as a teacher of Japanese. As part of the project, cross curriculum programs that focus on Asia content were shared within the cluster of schools. Charles Conder Primary School teachers embraced this process with enthusiasm.

Outcomes

Teachers involved in the project indicated they had developed new understandings of the value of embedding studies of Asia in their learning areas. Four teachers commented on how studies of Asia had increased the intellectual quality of their practical subjects. One said

'I realised the importance of using practical subjects, which often engage underperforming students, to develop cultural understandings and other important life skills, including literacy and numeracy.'

For students, change to attitudes and learning were often profound. One participant described it as a highlight when teacher scholars told individual stories of improved student learning at a cluster meeting.

Conclusion

According to the project leader, who is cluster deputy principal and based at Lanyon High School, *Kaizen: Global Connections* has made teachers and students more engaged with studies of Asia.

'Bonython and Gordon Primary Schools wanted to make weekly Japanese lessons more engaging and connected so that students could enjoy and value these lessons and to decrease behaviour issues; they achieved this. All schools wanted high quality curriculum and pedagogy documented and implemented to support all teachers, particularly the high number of early career teachers; they achieved this as well.'



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

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