



Building Demand - What Works For Studies of Asia

Building Demand: providing students with quality programs

A range of initiatives at The Southport School, Queensland

The Southport School (TSS) is an independent boys school on the Gold Coast, Queensland. With the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, Asia literacy is a priority across all subject areas. A concentrated 12-month project to accelerate Asia literacy is being managed by the Head of Teaching and Learning and the Head of Languages through the school's Studies Committee. The project is supported by the Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (BALGS) program.

There is a whole-school focus on China through the Chinese Language, Living and Culture (CLLC) program. The coordinator mentors colleagues, assists with resource acquisition and seeks opportunities for staff and students to participate in exchange visits with TSS' partner school in China facilitated through the Australia-China BRIDGE program.

As a result, demand for post-compulsory Mandarin language is increasing. A school priority is further building student numbers who choose to continue their study of Mandarin in the Senior School.

Program details

BALGS project leader and head of languages, Lisa Miller, describes the project as an Asia skills juggernaut. The range of juggernaut strategies includes:

- >> professional learning and peer-to-peer collaboration for Heads of Departments and teams of teachers to extend the CLLC program across the entire senior school;
- >> curriculum mapping, writing, review, evaluation, rewriting and continuous improvement over 12 months, plus resource acquisition across a variety of subject areas;
- >> use of innovative online learning resources (such as those available through the Asia Education Foundation) and the development of Mandarin language and Asia literacy skills applications for mobile devices;
- >> supporting sustainable partner school relationships, including Web 2.0 communication, staff and student visits to China, and cross-cultural exchange and cooperation;
- >> researching and designing the Lighthouse Program in Years 7, 8 and 9 that will culminate, in 2013, in an extended study experience and learning project in China for Year 9 students;

China skills juggernaut builds demand for Mandarin

Since 2008 The Southport School's Chinese Language, Living and Culture program has provided students with a range of opportunities to develop Asia literacy, with a focus on China. Currently, a range of new initiatives is accelerating skills acquisition and increasing student demand for Mandarin.



'He showed us that what he had been able to do, like work as a lawyer in Shanghai and now host Chinese Getaway, is all because he continued learning Chinese all the way to Year 12'

Student, The Southport School, QLD

- >> taking 30 boys to Beijing to visit our Australia-China BRIDGE partner Tsinghua Middle School Chaoyang;
- >> promoting and celebrating Asia literacy in the community through various events, supported by Asia Literacy Ambassadors;
- >> supporting five teachers to travel to China as part of study tour in 2011, (partly funded by the Independent Schools Association of Queensland);
- >> supporting a cross-curriculum group of teachers who have never been to China to attend the TSS Beijing Sojourn in Term 4, 2012.

One strategy having immediate impact on the demand for Mandarin language is a competition for students to design China skills apps for mobile devices. The competition and the applications are targeted at members of the school community who have not learned Mandarin.

Another is the creation of an iBook for the Beijing Sojourn. This is being designed so that all cross-curricular tasks, itinerary, Mandarin phrases and other essential information will be available in digital format for students and staff who join the program in 2012 and beyond.

Building demand through Asia Literacy Ambassadors

The school looks for opportunities to bring real-life uses of Mandarin to the students. One example is having Cameron Andersen visit for two days in March 2012, as an Asia Literacy Ambassador.

Cameron is a past student and a Bond University law graduate.

Cameron is also a fluent Mandarin speaker and spectacular martial artist. These days he is the host of *Chinese Getaway*, a travel program on Shanghai International TV.

He held workshops for Years 8 and 9 students about popular Chinese getaways, and for Year 10 students about doing business in China. He also spoke in Chapel about love and marriage in the Peoples' Republic of China. At question time, Cameron delighted the boys by doing back flips in the theatre. He also mentored non-native speaking students studying Year 11 and 12 Chinese.

One current student said that Andersen's visit to the school had inspired him to keep studying Chinese even beyond Year 12:

'He showed us that what he had been able to do, like work as a lawyer in Shanghai and now host Chinese Getaway, is all because he continued learning Chinese all the way to Year 12.'

Outcome

In Cameron Andersen's graduating year, 2000, only two students of non-Chinese background were studying Mandarin in Year 12. In 2012 there are 10, along with 10 students of Chinese background. It is hoped that post-compulsory Mandarin language student numbers will increase further as students in the middle years get real world experiences of China and Chinese culture.

Conclusion

Clearly, a focus on Asia literacy combined with real-world experiences of the use of Mandarin have an impact on student demand for the language at TSS.

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
 - >> Asia Literacy Ambassadors www.asiaeducation.edu.au/ambassadors
 - >> Australia-China BRIDGE www.asiaeducation.edu.au/bridgechina
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