



Parents and the learning of Asian languages in schools

Tranby College, Western Australia

The school and its language programme

Tranby College is an independent, co-ed K-12 school, with an above average ICSEA value. It is located in Baldivis, a Perth suburb with a predominantly Anglo-Saxon population, including many residents born in England, New Zealand, South Africa and Scotland. According to the ABS, the vast majority of families (over 90 per cent) speak only English at home.

Tranby offers an Indonesian language programme from primary to senior secondary. It is mandatory in Years 1-8. From 2015 onwards, the College will additionally offer Mandarin or French, depending on demand, and these changes are linked to the implementation of the new International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum framework. Tranby has an [Australia-Asia BRIDGE school partnership](#) with a school in Surabaya, Indonesia.

What works and how?

Community engagement is a key domain in Tranby's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, and the College describes itself as a 'welcoming outward looking, family-oriented school that fosters positive and enduring relationships within and beyond the Tranby community'. The recognition of parents' important role in all stages of student learning is expressed in a variety of ways and features prominently on the College website.

The College's online portal, *Coneqt*, allows parents of middle and senior school students to access Tranby's learning management system and stay connected to their child's learning. The portal enables access to academic results, lesson outlines, online lessons, school notices and other school documents. The purpose behind *Coneqt* is

to equip parents with the necessary tools to show interest and engage in their child's learning.

According to Tranby's Principal, Matthew Ivulich, *Coneqt* has enhanced collaboration between the school and the home, enabling the achievement of more creative and higher-quality learning outcomes. Vicki Richardson, Dean of Teaching and Learning for Languages at Tranby, states that '*the majority of parents are very supportive of Coneqt*', and many parents consider it particularly helpful with respect to their children's homework. One parent at Tranby has commented:

Coneqt is mainly utilised to message teachers as required and view the students' timetables, forthcoming homework and grades received. It opens the communication a bit better between students and parents, as we can see what they have coming up even if they neglect to tell us.

According to Jenai Lee, Indonesian and Mandarin teacher at Tranby's Middle School, parents appreciate receiving feedback regarding their children's progress on *Coneqt*. The feedback enables them to '*support their children to improve their learning, regardless of whether they have background knowledge [in the language] or not*'. *Coneqt* is also used as an information-sharing platform to inform parents about various Asia-related cultural activities they can partake in with their children.

Vicki mentions a number of specific parental engagement initiatives—at Junior, Middle and Senior levels—focused on Indonesian language and culture. At Junior School level, parents are invited to attend the annual

As of February 2015, over 150 Tranby families have hosted SMAN5 students for two weeks since the inception of the programme. 'Having this amazing opportunity has given me and my daughter a wider understanding of Indonesian culture', said one parent who has hosted an Indonesian exchange student for three consecutive years.

"Each year has seen parental involvement increase to the point where parents are now very active participants and an essential part of making the markets run successfully."

Brooke Thompson,
Junior School Indonesian teacher
Tranby College, WA

Indonesian Market Day, and various other Indonesia-related incursions, together with their children. The Market Day is now in its eighth year and is held as part of 'Indonesia Week' at the Junior School. Indonesia Week typically coincides with the visit of Indonesian exchange students from Tranby's BRIDGE partner school (SMAN5 in Surabaya, East Java) and offers a range of special Indonesia-related events.

Brooke Thompson, Junior School Indonesian teacher at Tranby, has observed parents getting more and more involved in the Market Day. 'Each year has seen parental involvement increase to the point where parents are now very active participants and an essential part of making the markets run successfully', she commented.

In September 2015, parents will, for the first time, accompany their children on the College's Bali Cultural Immersion Tour. The trip is intended to build Asia awareness among parents and students. The Junior School is currently planning this five-day tour for 35 students, who will each travel to Bali with one of their parents. Parents have responded positively to this new opportunity, which shows the value they place on the Indonesian language programme.

At the Senior School level, Vicki draws attention to how parents' involvement in the annual exchange with SMAN5 in Surabaya has been successful in fostering parental awareness of Indonesia. As of February 2015, over 150 Tranby families have hosted SMAN5 students for two weeks since the inception of the programme. Parents who host the Indonesian students are actively involved in planning for the visits. 'Having this amazing opportunity has given me and my daughter a wider understanding of Indonesian culture', said one parent who has hosted an Indonesian exchange student for three consecutive years.

The exchange visits have also increased the school community's awareness about Islam and Muslims. As Vicki explains, 'The parents and students ensure they have the cultural knowledge to live with Muslims and adapt their lifestyles to ensure their host child feels comfortable in the Australian community.'

The Indonesian programme at Tranby has been highly successful, partly due to the parental engagement initiatives described previously. In 2015, there is a proportionately larger cohort of senior students studying Indonesian compared to previous years, and all Years 11 and 12 language students have expressed a desire to continue their language studies at university level.

The Year 9 Indonesian cohort is also growing. Year 9 students at Tranby have the option of studying Indonesian for one semester only, but many parents have lobbied for their children to be able to study Indonesian for the entire year. This lobbying has been successful, and language classes are now conducted over both semesters at Year 9. Eighty-five per cent of Year 9 language students have opted for whole-year study of Indonesian.

Why it works

Formalised leadership commitment to strengthening parental engagement in student learning is a major success factor for building successful family-school partnerships (Harris & Goodall, 2007; Kim, 2009; Family-School & Community Partnership Bureau, 2011). One way to formalise such commitment is to incorporate it into school policy documents, as demonstrated at Tranby.

Online platforms, such as *Coneqt*, enable parents to stay in the loop of their children's learning and progress and support them in their language studies. When parents are well informed about learning, there is a greater chance of them engaging in learning

Year 9 students at Tranby have the option of studying Indonesian for one semester only, but many parents have lobbied for their children to be able to study Indonesian for the entire year. Eighty-five per cent of Year 9 language students have opted for whole-year study of Indonesian.

About AEF

The Asia Education Foundation provides teachers, education leaders and school communities with innovative programmes, 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 and Training.

AEF leverages funding to support Asia literacy in Australian schools from a broad range of government, philanthropic and corporate partners in Australia and Asia.

conversations with their children. Such casual conversations have a positive impact on student achievement (Houtenville & Conway, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

The extra-curricular and out-of-school activities focused on Indonesian help build parents' interest in the target language and culture. This provides an opportunity for them to communicate positive views about the value of learning the language to their children (Gardner, Masgoret & Trembaly 1999). Though voluntary, these activities also enable parents to play a more active role in supporting their child's language learning (Gardner, Masgoret & Trembaly 1999), which is a key element to making a successful second language learner (Prescott & Orton, 2012).

What Works 8

>> This illustration was taken from *What Works 8: Parents and the learning of Asian languages in schools*, which can be found on AEF's Web portal at: www.asiaeducation.edu.au/whatworks8

Parents and the learning of Asian languages in schools, Illawarra Sports High School, NSW, 2015

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

© The University of Melbourne and Education Services Australia Limited – Asia Education Foundation, 2015

www.asiaeducation.edu.au