

Beacon Hill School

K-1 Teacher Survey about Chinese Language Program

Interviewed 6/4/2007 by Michele Anciaux Aoki & Kristin Calaff

Teachers: K: Nina Tomita Kato, Sheila Matsuda, Pam Bailey;

1st: Mary Emslie, Kelly Toland, Marianne Bratsianos (not present)

Mandarin Teachers: Rose Yang, Cindy Lin

<p>1. What do you like best about the opportunity for students at your school to learn Chinese?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good age for learning a language. (1st grade teacher) • Helpful for English speakers who don't have a second language. (1st teacher) • Children gain appreciation that people don't all speak like them (your language is not "it"). (K teacher) • Someday they'll find out that Chinese IS important. (1st teacher) • Potential empathy; understand what other children are going through when learning a new language. (K) • High population at the school of Chinese (though not Mandarin). (K) • Large population of Hispanic children. It's good for them to go through the process of learning Mandarin. (K) • It's good to learn a language like Chinese that is very different from English. (With Spanish, an English speaker can sometimes guess at the meaning by similarity of vocabulary.) (1st) • Children can develop an ear for the different sounds in Chinese and learn how to make them. (1st) • <p>Paper survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning a second or third language is always a plus.
<p>2. What are your concerns?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open concept classrooms make it hard to manage different activities in different areas (or even two Chinese classes in the same area). The language is loud, so it's disruptive. (K) (The Chinese teachers wanted a closed space, but it was not available.) (1st) • The population here has so many languages. For the ELLs, perhaps it would be better to focus on English (esp. if they are weak in their home language and already having difficulties academically). (K) • Mandarin is difficult, even for the Cantonese speakers. And one Vietnamese child sleeps during class because it is stressful. (K) • The Cantonese/Vietnamese speakers do better [in this class], but one doesn't participate. (1st) • What about children who get behind or new children who join the class? What can be done to help them? (1st) • How do you reach the ones who are not getting it? (Maybe pair them up; do more cooperative learning.) (1st) • Children need time to practice. (K) • When the teacher calls on the children one by one, she loses the others. They get no reinforcement. (K) • Chinese teachers seemed to feel compelled to provide explicit instruction on the tones at the beginning, but it was confusing. • Chinese teachers translate into English much of the time, so it's not like immersion. (Moreso in K, than in 1st.) Are teachers supposed to speak mainly Chinese? • How are teachers being hired and trained? • How will the Chinese program mesh with the new math

	<p>curriculum? If they're required to do 45 minutes of Everyday Math plus 15 minutes of Singapore (math practice), will Chinese add another half-hour of math?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need a set curriculum. • More supervision of the Chinese teachers is needed, and a clear way to relay concerns to them. • What is the role of the classroom teacher? Is it realistic for her to learn Chinese? [The young children pick it up fast; adults need more practice.] • 30 minutes/day has a big impact on the schedule. One teacher feels she hasn't finished her science units or math. It's hard to fit everything in. They have never had so many kids not at standard yet. • Concern about starting the program in Kindergarten. • If this was a pilot project, will everyone be involved in the final decision about continuing it? <p>Paper survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would prefer a different format.
<p>3. How well did the Chinese program go this spring?</p>	<p>____ Very well ____ Well <u> X </u> Not well ____ No opinion</p> <p>(Because of the difficulties and concerns, all of the teachers felt that they would have to say "not well" at this time. However, they did feel that they had good communication with the Chinese teachers and they were flexible when things came up, like field trips.)</p>
<p>4. What are your suggestions for next year?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching techniques for the Chinese teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - techniques for introducing language - role-playing, active involvement of students • More coordination of the program • Coaching by mentor Chinese teacher • Consider whether all students should be taking the class. (Some hate it.) • Consider the time of day. (When asked why they didn't want Chinese, the K students said they were tired. (class is 2:30-3:00)) • Perhaps start the program a month or two into the school year next fall. Have the Chinese teachers observe (and help?) in the classrooms so they learn how the teachers do things first. • Focus in on some specific curriculum that supports math, such as Calendar and Math practice (perhaps from Singapore math). • Use computers. Do more breakouts and centers. • It would be nice if this were PCP. <p>Paper survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on language not math.