

FLAP Grant 2007 Program Evaluation Report

The Seattle Chinese FLAP program was launched in three elementary schools in grades K-1 in February/March 2007. All four classes of students in K-1 participated at Beacon Hill Elementary (total 129 students) that spring; one class in each grade participated at Graham Hill Elementary (total 52); and two classes at each grade participated at John Muir Elementary (total 96). A total of 277 students participated across the three schools. The program taught math content in an immersion style, with students attending class for 30 minutes/day four days/week, for a total of 120 minutes per week.

Program Evaluation Planning

The initial program evaluation plan was outlined in the FLAP grant submitted by Seattle Public Schools in June, 2006. Based on the plan as outlined in the grant, Michele Anciaux Aoki, a consultant working with the school district on the FLAP grant, drafted a three-year program evaluation plan and reviewed it with the principals from the three elementary schools and Karen Kodama, International Education Administrator for the Seattle Public Schools in April, 2007. The program evaluation plan consists of three main components: Chinese Language Assessment, Program Evaluation, and Alignment to World Language Standards.

Chinese Language Assessment

Mandarin Pre-Assessment

The FLAP grant called for a Pre-Assessment of students' Mandarin language skills at the beginning of the program. A brief oral interview was designed that was conducted by the Mandarin teachers with their own students at each of the schools soon after the classes began in February/March. Most students did not score any points on the Pre-Assessment. Only a few of the 277 students participating in the program demonstrated any prior language knowledge by scoring at least 50% on the Pre-Assessment.

ELLOPA/SOPA Overview Training with CAL

In anticipation of the oral proficiency assessments that would be conducted each year to measure students' development of oral fluency and listening comprehension skills, the grant included time for training the Chinese teachers in the Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment (ELLOPA) and the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA), developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC. A one-day overview training was held in Seattle on May 22. Approximately twenty Chinese teachers attended the training.

Ultimately we made the decision to delay using the ELLOPA and SOPA assessments until the second year of the program because, based on the Pre-Assessments, it was unlikely than any of the students would be able to demonstrate Mandarin oral proficiency skills higher than Junior Novice Low (the lowest level on the ELLOPA/SOPA scale). However, the interviewing and rating skills that the teachers learned during the training were put to use during the Post-Assessment developed specifically for this program.

Post-Assessments, Teacher Observations, and Progress Reports

The Chinese teachers, working with consultant Dr. Kristin Calaff, developed a brief Post-Assessment interview similar to the Pre-Assessment that could be administered one-on-one with each student. The Post-Assessment focused on areas of language and math that the children had experience with during their half-hour a day Mandarin classes, including greetings, numbers, counting, colors, fruits, and shapes. A Rating Scale, or rubric, was designed to measure students' results on each item.

The Post-Assessment interviews were completed during the second week of June. In addition to the regular Chinese teachers at each school, a number of the other Chinese teachers who had participated in the ELLOPA/SOPA training in May were able to assist with the interviews so that the assessments could be completed in a timely fashion.

More than 60% of the students at each of the schools earned 20-24 points on the Post-Assessment (out of possible 24), demonstrating mastery of the math content and language skills taught in the program. Overall, students performed better on tasks involving counting, singing, colors, greetings, and fruits. The poorest performance was on mathematical tasks involving geometric shapes and comparing groups (more/less).

On page 2 of the Post-Assessment, we included items for teacher observation regarding classroom behavior and participation that each Chinese teacher could check off for the students' Progress Reports to be sent home. We used the results from the Post-Assessment to generate Progress Reports for each student. These were printed at the schools and sent home to families on the last day of school. The Progress Report forms were translated into the major languages of the families of students participating in the program.

Student Comments

We did not take time this year to have the students complete a separate self-assessment at school during class time. Instead, we included questions about student comments on the parent/family surveys. To the question, "What does your child like about learning Chinese?," from 54% to 72% of students said it was Fun; about 50% said it was Interesting; and from 16% to 39% said it was Different or Challenging. Here a few of their specific comments:

- My child loves learning Mandarin. She sings the songs every day and teaches us new words.
- When we go to Chinatown and go shopping he is able to understand and speak to them and it astonishes them and it truly makes him happy.
- That she can also learn about other things because of her knowledge of the language.

Program Evaluation

Attitudinal Results

As part of the Program Evaluation plan, we agreed to conduct a survey of parents/families, survey of teachers at the schools, and focus groups with the K-1 teachers (to get more in-depth view of their experience).

The parent/family surveys were translated into the major languages of the families of the children in the FLAP Chinese program. In addition, we offered an incentive to encourage families to turn their surveys in by June 15. (Students received a red bookmark with the numbers 1-10 in Chinese.) The response rate was quite high (84% from Beacon Hill, 46% from Graham Hill, and 64% from John Muir), and we collected some excellent comments, questions, and suggestions. When asked, "Do you think it's a good idea for your child to learn to speak Chinese (Mandarin)?," there was resounding agreement that it was. At Beacon Hill, 91% of families surveyed said "Yes" and 5% "Maybe." At Graham Hill, 70% said "Yes" and 22% "Maybe." And at John Muir, 87% said "Yes" and 8% "Maybe."

The survey of teachers and staff at the school was also very enlightening. Most comments came from teachers at the staff meeting that Michele attended; some paper surveys were turned in, as well. The meetings with the K-1 classroom teachers at each school pointed out the main issues that need to be addressed so that the program can run smoothly in the future. Overall, the impressions were positive; teachers and staff would like the program to work. Perhaps the biggest concerns were time and scheduling. It is not easy for the K-1 teachers to give up half an hour a day for the Chinese program.

Alignment to Standards

Although the focus of the Seattle FLAP Chinese program is math content, we still felt it was important to align the program to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (our state's Voluntary World Language Standards). We developed a template for teachers to use to reflect on how their lessons aligned with the standards. The teacher from Graham Hill, Pollyanna Wang, used the template to evaluate her program. The curriculum would be similar at the other two schools.

Conclusions

During the first year of the Seattle FLAP Grant Chinese program we have been able to establish a baseline and a strong foundation for future program evaluation and language assessments. We have demonstrated that students can make measurable progress in Chinese language even in just four months of half-an-hour daily Chinese lessons when those lessons are rich in content and culture. Our data from schools with diverse populations demonstrate that English Language Learners can be just as successful in the Chinese language classroom as monolingual English speakers; in fact, they may be even more successful and highly motivated. Their families overwhelmingly support providing this opportunity for their children to become trilingual. The students themselves demonstrate enthusiasm for their accomplishments and eagerness to take their new language skills out into the world.

Our program evaluation plan has allowed us to tap into the concerns of teachers and staff in the schools as this new program is developed. We have already been able to act on some of the recommendations, such as sending the Chinese teachers to attend the District trainings on the new math curriculum.

We look forward to moving ahead into Year 2 of the Seattle FLAP Grant. Next year we expect to expand language assessment to using the ELLOPA (Early Language Learning Oral Proficiency Assessment) to assess students' language proficiency on a nationally recognized scale. Our teachers have already completed introductory training on the assessments and will have ample opportunity to practice interviewing and rating over the next year.