

# FLAP Grant 2008 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 that spring; one class in each grade participated at Graham Hill Elementary; and two classes at each grade participated at John Muir Elementary. In fall 2007, the program was expanded into 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at all three schools, and all K-1 students were included. A total of 216 students returned for year two and 319 students were new in 2007-8, with a total of 535 students participating in the three schools in the three grades as of April, 2008. The program is taught 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 program evaluation plan for 2007-8 was revised based on the experience in year one of the program and was reviewed with the principals of the three schools and Karen Kodama, International Education Administrator for Seattle Public Schools, several times during the year. That plan was updated based on results during spring 2008 and recommendations were made for the final year of the grant 2008-9. The program evaluation plan consists of three main components: Chinese Language Assessment, Program Evaluation, and Alignment to World Language Standards.

## ***Chinese Language Assessment***

### **Pre-Assessment**

The pre-assessment of students' Mandarin language skills at the beginning of the program was completed for all kindergarteners and new students in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Overall, 77% of the students assessed (205 out of 267) earned zero points, i.e. they could not complete any of the language tasks in Mandarin (greetings, counting, colors, etc.). Only 7 students (including 3 kindergarteners at Beacon Hill) showed any measurable language skills.

### **ELLOPA/SOPA Training and Preparations**

The four Chinese teachers were able to participate in the Online SOPA (Student Oral Proficiency Assessment) Rating course, conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) during winter and spring, 2008. They found the experience very valuable, and it definitely helped them to apply these new skills in their ELLOPA (Early Language Listening & Oral Proficiency Assessment) interviews with the Chinese students in May/June.

During May, the teachers worked with Dr. Michele Anciaux Aoki and Dr. Kristin Percy Calaff, who is also consulting on the FLAP grant, to adapt the ELLOPA script for use in the Chinese program and to schedule the oral interviews. Because of the large number of students participating in the program and the amount of time it takes to conduct oral interviews, we decided to limit the ELLOPA interviews to the subset of students who, we felt, would be most likely to demonstrate proficiency above the Junior Novice Low level on the SOPA/COPE Rating Scale. We focused in on students who had the highest scores on the mid-year assessment, which had included a few informal questions to help us gauge readiness for a full oral proficiency interview.

### **ELLOPA/SOPA Teacher Observation Matrix (TOM)**

The basic rating scale used for rating the ELLOPA interviews was also used by the Chinese teachers to rate their students' oral proficiency based on their classroom experience (vs. an on-demand interview), using the Teacher Observation Matrix (TOM). Again, because of the large number of students participating in the program, we decided to focus on the kindergarten students' ratings this year.

Across all three schools (and four instructors), the students rated higher on Listening Comprehension than Oral Fluency. This is consistent with Seattle Public Schools' experience with the ELLOPA in the partial language immersion program in Spanish and Japanese at John Stanford International School. Oral Fluency was rated between Junior Novice Low (1.00) and Junior Novice Mid (2.00). Listening Comprehension was rated close to or above Junior Novice Mid (2.00). The data from the TOM will be of greatest interest next year when it will be possible to compare how these students have progressed with an additional year of instruction.

## ***ELLOPA Interviews***

The Chinese teachers scheduled the ELLOPA (Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment) interviews during the two weeks following the end of the Chinese language classes on May 22. The students selected for the ELLOPA interviews were fairly evenly distributed across the grades (K, 1, 2), although John Muir had relatively more 2<sup>nd</sup> graders participating.

Across all three schools, the students rated higher on Listening Comprehension than Oral Fluency, as expected. The average ratings from all three schools were in the Junior Novice Mid range for Oral Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Listening Comprehension (2.00 to 2.86). At John Muir, over 50% of the students assessed were rated Junior Novice High or higher (Junior Intermediate Low).

## ***Progress Reports to Families***

Because we had prepared extensive individual Progress Reports to families based on the Mid-Year Assessment, for the End-of-Year Progress Report, we decided to provide a general newsletter from each teacher highlighting the accomplishments of the students in the Chinese classes, accompanied by a self-assessment from their child, developed from a model in LinguaFolio (<http://www.ncssf.org/links/index.php?linguafolio>). The Chinese teachers reported that the students were very serious when completing their self-assessments. They really wanted to reflect on what they could do in Mandarin.

## ***Program Evaluation***

### ***Attitudinal Results***

This year's Program Evaluation plan included both a Survey of Parents/Families and a Staff Survey. Both of these were conducted using paper forms.

#### ***Parent/Family Surveys***

The one-page parent/family surveys were sent home by the teachers with the end-of-year progress report newsletter and student self-assessments at the end of May. We provided translations of the survey for the two largest language groups, Spanish and Chinese. Overall, we had a good return rate from families representing many ethnicities. Specifically, 86% of Beacon Hill surveys indicated that the family spoke another language at home at least some of the time, along with 52% of Graham Hill surveys and 20% of John Muir surveys.

Responses to the question of whether the family felt it was a good idea for their child to learn to speak Chinese (Mandarin) were very positive. It is noteworthy that only one family indicated "No." In fact, overall, 90% of families surveyed responded "Yes," with only 7% responding "Maybe" and 3% "I don't know." This indicates a very positive response to the program this year, even higher than the positive response last year (e.g., compare: Graham Hill 70% "Yes" in 2007 and 90% "Yes" in 2008).

The reasons for learning Chinese that families list are numerous. Here are some examples:

- *"Because learning other languages broadens her perspective and enhances her overall learning."*
- *"Sets the frame-work for language acquisition – a lifelong learning tool."*
- *"It challenges her brain to work in different ways and helps her learn about our world."*

- *“So she’ll become a citizen of the world. China’s growth will mean its language is important.”*
- *“She could speak three languages.”*

Overall, 70% of the families surveyed reported that their children thought that learning Chinese was “Fun,” and 49% thought it was “Interesting.” Only 5% of families indicated that they didn’t know because their child didn’t talk to them about it. Other comments included:

- *“He really enjoys learning the songs. We have learned some Chinese ourselves just from learning the songs from him. Even his 2.5 year old brother knows the songs.”*
- *“Learning about another culture, the confidence that being successful brings, the songs and games. Our son speaks more about learning Mandarin than any other kindergarten subject other than, of course, friends. He has learned an amazing amount in one year and loves everything about the Mandarin course.”*

The final question in the survey asked families if they had any questions or suggestions for next year’s Chinese language class. By far the most frequent response was to continue the program. There is concern about the future of the program when the FLAP grant is no longer able to provide extra funding. Besides continuing to offer Chinese in grades K-2, they want to see it expanded to the other grades. One parent said *“Please continue the program at all costs.”*

### **Staff Surveys**

The staff at all three schools recognized the value of providing an opportunity for students to learn Chinese beginning in elementary. Comments included:

- *“I like the fact that starting children at 5 or 6 makes it easier to learn. It gives them the opportunity to be truly global.”*
- *“It’s the ideal time to learn languages—Chinese is an important world language.”*
- *“It is a fantastic educational opportunity.”*

The staff at Beacon Hill felt that this year’s program went Well (63%) or Very well (13%) (vs. 19% No opinion). However, they were concerned about the continuation of the program, pedagogical style and classroom management, and teacher connection to the students. Suggestions included providing more training for the Chinese teachers and more time for preparation, as well as taking steps to ensure that the program can expand to the upper grades.

The staff at Graham Hill felt that this year’s program went Well (38%) or Very well (42%) (vs. 21% No opinion). However, they were concerned about making time for the class, given other demands in the core curriculum, and about student behavior/teacher classroom management skills. Some felt that to be worthwhile, the program should continue throughout the elementary years, although the frequency might be changed (for example, from two hours per week to one hour per week). Others suggest capping it at the primary years. Several indicated that the “kids love it.”

The staff at John Muir felt that this year’s program went Well (42%) or Very well (42%) (vs. 18% No opinion). However, they were concerned about scheduling time for the class, given other demands in the regular curriculum, and about student behavior/teacher training. They recommended extending the program to 5th grade and adjusting the schedule to be more manageable, such as including more time for “passing” between classes and more collaboration with the regular classroom teachers when developing the schedule.

### **Alignment to World Language Standards**

Although the focus of the Seattle FLAP Chinese program is math content, it was still important to align the program to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (our state’s Voluntary World Language Standards <http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculum/instruct/WorldLanguages/VoluntaryStandards.aspx>). We again used the template developed last year for teachers to reflect on how their curriculum through the year aligned with the standards.

## **Conclusions**

During the second year of the Seattle FLAP Grant Chinese program we have been able to build on the baseline for program evaluation and assessment established during year one of the grant. We have shown that the students can begin to demonstrate oral fluency and listening comprehension in the Junior Novice Low to High range. Assessment is a long-term commitment, so we will look for continued growth in future years. Our first experience with student self-assessment was very positive, and we expect to continue incorporating tools from LinguaFolio, when possible.

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. The families continue to support the program enthusiastically. They are concerned about whether it will be able to continue in coming years once the FLAP grant funding ends. The students themselves continue to demonstrate enthusiasm for their accomplishments and eagerness to take their new language skills out into the world.

While many of the staff concerns voiced last year were addressed, it is important to continue to communicate regularly with the school staff so that they understand the plans for the program, such as assessments and progress reports to parents.

In the coming year, we plan to compare the assessment results from the students in the 30-minutes/day program vs. the partial immersion program (2-3 hours/day). This should provide helpful information for planning future programs to have ambitious, but realistic goals for language proficiency.