

# FLAP Grant 2008-9 Program Evaluation Report

## *Executive Summary*

### **Chinese Language Program Participation**

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 International School (Beacon Hill) that spring; one class in each grade participated at Graham Hill Elementary (Graham Hill); and two classes at each grade participated at John Muir Elementary (John Muir). In fall 2007, the program was expanded into 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at all three schools, and all K-1 students were included. In fall 2008, the program was expanded to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at all three schools; and grade K at Beacon Hill was reconfigured to have three separate K classes, one for Mandarin immersion, one for Spanish immersion, and one for English. Grades K and 1 students attended class for 30 minutes/day four days/week for a total of 120 minutes per week (K immersion students at Beacon Hill have their own schedule) and students in grades 2 and 3 attended class for 45 minutes/day 2 days/week for a total of 90 minutes per week.

As reported in April 2009, Table 1 below shows the distribution of students across schools and grades and the growth in the program over the past 3 years. Overall, the number of students being taught Mandarin in the three schools has increased from 277 students in Spring 2007, to 682 students as of January 2009. There is a negative percent change from 2008 to 2009 in a few grades, most notably, at Beacon Hill, for grades K because, as noted earlier, Beacon Hill went to an immersion model, so only one-third of the K students are taking Mandarin.

One hundred percent of kindergarteners were new to the program and by default in their first year of the program. Overall across schools and grades, 38 percent of the students were in their first year, 36 percent in their second year, and 26 percent in their third year.

### **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 for the three elementary schools participating in the Chinese language program during winter and spring 2007: Beacon Hill, Graham Hill, and John Muir. The plan for 2007-8 was revised based on the experience in year 1 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. Most recently that plan was updated based on results from spring 2008. The 2008-2009 updated plan was used as the basis for the program evaluation activities conducted in this final year of the FLAP grant.

### **Chinese Language Assessment**

#### **Pre-Assessment**

In September 2008, the Pre-Assessment interview was administered to new K, 1, and 2 students at the three schools. Most students, 91 percent, did not score higher than 7 points on the Pre-Assessment, as reported in the April 2009 FLAP grant report.

#### **Mid-Year Assessment**

K-3 students at all three elementary schools participating in the Chinese FLAP program were given Mid-Year Assessment oral interviews. During the last two weeks of January 2009, in place of the regular

classroom instruction, the Mandarin teachers met with each student one by one for a brief oral interview consisting of questions involving greetings, colors, numbers/sizes, fruits/likes & dislikes, shapes, and several conversational questions.

Kindergartners were given a slightly different assessment, which consisted of 8 questions, with a possible highest score of 16, while grades 1-3 were given an assessment with 11 questions, with a possible highest score of 22. The results from the assessments were summarized in a database and converted into information for a Mid-Year Progress Report sent home to parents in mid-February/early March. One student was not present for the assessment, so we have data for 681 of the original 682 students enrolled in the program.

The K students scored relatively high on this assessment, with 82 percent of Beacon Hill Immersion K students and 73 percent of Graham Hill K students, and 38 percent of John Muir K students scoring between 11-16 points (with 16 being the perfect score). Similarly grades 1-3 students scored relatively high as well, with 82 percent of Beacon Hill, 71 percent of Graham Hill, and 50 percent of John Muir scoring between 15-22 (22 being the perfect score).

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

This year again, some of the 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 spring 2009. Their experience helped them to apply these new skills in their ELLOPA/SOPA (Early Language Listening & Oral Proficiency Assessment) interviews with the Chinese students in May/June. During May, the teachers worked with Dr. Kristin Percy Calaff, who is 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/SOPA 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, as well as students who had taken the ELLOPA assessment last year.

## **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). As last year, because of the large number of students participating in the program, we decided to focus on the kindergarten students' ratings this year. Because Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) considers that at the Junior Novice levels in the scale, it is unlikely that students will produce enough language to allow the rater to differentiate the rating for Oral Fluency from the ratings for Language Control (Grammar) and Vocabulary, we simplified the TOM rating to focus on Oral Fluency (OFlu) and Listening Comprehension (LComp). The scale matched the ELLOPA scale, covering the four levels: Junior Novice Low (JNL), Junior Novice Mid (JNM), Junior Novice High (JNH), and Junior Intermediate Low (JIL). If the information we had indicated a student was a native speaker, we removed their name from the data in order not to skew the calculations.

Overall, across the three schools, the students scored higher on the listening comprehension than on the oral fluency. In addition, the Immersion K student at Beacon Hill generally scored higher, in the area of Junior Novice Mid, on both oral fluency and listening comprehension than the K students at Graham Hill and John Muir who scored in the area of Junior Novice Low.

## **ELLOPA Interviews**

The Chinese teachers scheduled the ELLOPA/SOPA interviews following the end of the Chinese language classes in May. They conferred with each other and Michele and Kristin by email when they had questions about the ratings. They also referred regularly to what they had learned in the Online SOPA Rating course from the Center for Applied Linguistics.

The following tables and figures summarize the results from the ELLOPA interviews of a subset of students: those who had the highest score (22 points) on the Mid-Year assessment and/or they had been given the assessment last year. The students selected for the ELLOPA interviews were fairly evenly distributed across the grades (1, 2, 3). In the Beacon Hill Immersion program, the K students were also given the ELLOPA for the purpose of future comparison, although the results are not included in this report, as the sample only included 6 students. Typically, grades K-2 are given the ELLOPA, which uses a 1-4 rating scale and higher grades are given the SOPA, which uses a 1-9 rating scale, assessing for more advanced levels of language proficiency. In the sample of students that were tested this year, students were largely assessed with the ELLOPA standard. In the case of Beacon Hill, whose population includes a prominent number of native speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese, and Toishanese, the teacher used the SOPA rating scale and we analyzed the data in two parts, to separate out the students who were native speakers from non-native speakers.

Across all three schools, the majority of students (not including native speakers) in Grades 1-3 scored at the Junior Novice High level, with a notable percentage of the students scoring at the Junior Intermediate Low level. In the sample of students from Beacon Hill, where the students spoke Mandarin, Cantonese, or Toishanese at home, a significant number of students scored as high as Junior Intermediate High.

## **NOELLA Assessments**

The National Online Early Language Learning Assessment (NOELLA) developed by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) for grades 3-6 was given to approximately 10 grade 3 students at each school, Beacon Hill, Graham Hill, and John Muir. These students were also assessed using ELLOPA/SOPA for future comparison purposes. We are still in the process of obtaining and analyzing the pilot results from the NOELLA

## **End-of-Year Student Self-Assessments**

Students were given a one-page Self-Assessment, which they took home to their parents, along with a Certificate of Accomplishment marking their journey in the program.

## **Alignment to World Language 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 <http://www.k12.wa.us/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.

## **Mid-Year Parent/Family Survey and Parent Meetings Summary**

In December 2008, Beacon Hill, Graham Hill, and John Muir sent home a one-page parent/family survey to parents whose children are participating in the FLAP Chinese Language Program. We provided translations of the survey for several languages, including, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Amharic, Somali, Vietnamese, and Tigrinya. Overall, families representing many ethnicities responded to our survey.

Specifically, 79 percent of Beacon Hill surveys indicated that the family spoke at least one other language at home at least some of the time, along with 53 percent of Graham Hill surveys, and 37 percent of John Muir surveys. The range of languages of these families was impressive, including: Cambodian, Chinese (including Cantonese), Pilipino, French, German, Ilocano, Hindi, Laotian, Mien, Maimai, Khmu, Norwegian, Oromo, American Sign Language, Somali, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Beacon Hill had the highest return rate at 31 percent, while Graham Hill had a rate of 30 percent and John Muir had a return rate of 26 percent. (Beacon Hill K students' families were not surveyed since they are participating in the partial immersion program, rather than the daily Chinese language program offered in the other grades.)

Families were asked if they felt it was a good idea for their child to learn to speak Chinese (Mandarin). Overall, 89 percent of families surveyed responded, "Yes," 3 percent responding "Maybe," and 2 percent "I don't know." Only 3 percent of the families responding indicated "No."

Families listed numerous reasons for learning Chinese. There were a couple of less enthusiastic comments, including questioning the value of learning Chinese language versus another language and a concern that a child's English was not good enough to warrant learning another language before they solidified their English, "I really like it. However, my child's English is still very limited." But the vast majority of surveys were extremely positive, citing everything from benefits of early foreign language learning to brain and social development, to the benefits for children's future success in academics and life, and their ability to fit into a multicultural, globalized society. In fact, over 55 percent of the parents that responded shared their opinion by availing themselves of the opportunity to make additional comments.

Overall, 63 percent of the families who responded to our survey reported that their children thought that learning Chinese was "Fun," and 49 percent thought it was "Interesting." Only 9 percent of families indicated that they didn't know because their child didn't talk to them about it.

And across all three schools, 91 percent said "Yes," they would like to see the program continued, while 2 percent said "No," and 7 percent said "Unsure."

In addition to the Family Surveys, also in December 2008, as part of the effort to gauge the interest in the program and to learn how parents and the community feel about their children learning Mandarin in their classroom, we held two meetings for the parents of students who are participating in the program, one for Beacon Hill, and a second joint meeting for John Muir and Graham Hill. By and large, parents were extremely positive about the program and the opportunity their children have to learn Mandarin and improve on key academic and life skills.

Most parents willingly shared anecdotes and examples of skills that they saw improving in their children. The responses spoke to the various benefits of learning Mandarin and mirrored the comments made on the family surveys.

A detailed summary of the results from the parent/family surveys as well as notes from the parent meetings were provided to the school principals at each of the three schools and the Seattle Schools FLAP Grant team.

## **Staff Surveys Summary**

Staff were given a mid-year survey and asked to consider options for continuing the program in upcoming years and general opinions about the program. We received a total of 17 responses from staff at Beacon Hill, 9 from John Muir, and 15 from Graham Hill.

**Beacon Hill:** Most of those responding were not in favor of discontinuing the program, with 12 out of 17 saying they did not support discontinuing the program. As to what alternate approach they would support as a way to continue to have their students learn Mandarin, 11 out of 17 supported the idea of hosting a visiting teacher from China. One of those not supporting this idea indicated that they feared "less than

adequate classroom management skills.” Seven, less than half, supported the idea of the after school alternative of Powerful Schools. Eight out of 17, about half, supported the idea of their school raising the additional funds. One person however commented, that they “Do not support, unless grant funded. As long as support does not come out of our budget and does not require extra work to accomplish, I support it.”

**Graham Hill:** A little over half of those responding were not in favor of discontinuing the program, with eight out of 15 saying they did not support discontinuing the program. As to what alternate approach they would support as a way to continue to have their students learn Mandarin, five out of 15 supported the idea of hosting a visiting teacher from China and six did not respond. Nine, over half, supported the idea of the after school alternative of Powerful Schools. Nine out of 15, over half, did not support the idea of their school raising the additional funds.

**John Muir:** Four out of nine of those responding were not in favor of discontinuing the program, while three did not respond. As to what alternate approach they would support as a way to continue to have their students learn Mandarin, three out of nine supported the idea of hosting a visiting teacher from China and five did not respond. Six, over half, supported the idea of the after school alternative of Powerful Schools. And five out of nine, over half, did not support the idea of their school raising the additional funds.

## Conclusions

During this third and final year of the Seattle FLAP Grant Chinese program, we have been able to build on the baseline for program evaluation and assessment established during the first two years 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 with some students even reaching Junior Intermediate Low for Listening Comprehension.

The families continue to support the program enthusiastically. The students themselves continue to demonstrate enthusiasm for their accomplishments and eagerness to take their new language skills out into the world.

Although the FLAP grant is ending this year, the schools have indicated their intention to continue and expand the Mandarin language program. This year they have engaged three visiting teachers from China through the Hanban/College Board/National Council of State Supervisors for Language program to teach at the schools in grades K-4. One of the Chinese FLAP teachers, Pollyanna Wang, who is currently working on her teacher certification for Chinese immersion (K-8 Endorsement, plus World Languages – Chinese Endorsement), has been hired to coordinate program planning, training, and curriculum development with the three visiting teachers.

The expectation is that the teachers will continue to use a program evaluation plan similar to the one used during the FLAP grant. In addition to locally developed assessments, the visiting Chinese teachers have been trained to conduct ELLOPA/SOPA interviews and to use LinguaFolio for student self-assessment.