

Achieving the Impossible: Effective Professional Learning for all Chinese Language schools

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Outline of the presentation

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 - 3. Achievements**
 - 4. Main issues confronting Chinese CL schools**
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1.1 Background

Community Language Schools Program, ED NSW

Requirements for establishing and running of a CL school:

Minimum number of students: 20+

Hosted by a public school

Registration with

NSW Fair Trading Dept

Australia Taxation Office

CL Schools Program, NSW Dept of Ed

Teachers must have Certificates from SICLE*

Funding for establishing and running of a CL school:

Establishment funding for the first year: \$2000.00

Per Capita Funding after establishment: \$130.00

Free use of classrooms and school ground

Hosting school is subsidized per classroom

Notes:

No requirements for the principal's qualifications

Schools can send their teachers to do Cert Course in SICLE after establishment.

No compulsory in-service teachers' professional learning.

1.2 Operation of a CL school

1. School Managerial Committee
2. Implementing an approved syllabus
3. Minimum 2 hours per week, 35-38 weeks
4. After-school or weekend programs
5. Mostly members of NSW Federation of CLS

In 2019, more than 37,500 CL students were learning 62 different languages from more than 3,000 volunteer teachers in NSW.



Chinese CL schools in NSW 2021

62 Chinese CL schools in 128 locations

11645 students and 713+ teachers

Average class size: 5 – 12 students

Covid - drop out rates between 35 and 100 %. Some small schools closed in Terms 3/4, 2021.

Many schools members of NSW Chinese Language Education Council



Generic trend of students' ages in NSW CL schools

Differences:
Many Yr 7 Chns students return to learn Chinese after sitting for selective tests. Some continue till Yrs11-12 for love of learning Chinese.

- **Established in 1992 and funded since 1993**
 - **Operating in 4 public schools + 3 after-school programs**
 - **Enrolment 2021:**
 - **Term 1: 600 students, including 20 uni students and adults**
 - **Term 3: 380 students for online classes**
 - **Term 4: 320 students for online classes**
 - **Temporary drop-outs: mostly K-Y2 /after school program students**
 - **35 staff members all have a Certificate (except 2 new teachers)**
 - **15 with Chinese language teaching background in China, incl 2 with mainstream teaching qualification**
 - **7 School Management Committee members, 5 with Education degrees, 2 with non-ed degrees**
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2. Analysis of Chinese CL teachers' qualifications and expertise

Most teachers have overseas quals, but not in language teaching:

- **Degrees in Teaching Chinese as L2 (1%?)**
- **Diploma or degrees in education (Chinese language)**
- **Diploma or degrees in education (not in Chinese language)**
- **Diploma or degrees in education (English - TESOL)**
- **Diploma or degrees in non-education disciplines**
- **Most Chinese CL teachers have a certificate from SICLE**

Note: Many of principals have no language education qualification

Many teachers lack sufficient English proficiency and experience of teaching in Australian mainstream school – a challenge for classroom management and interaction with the wider community

Chinese CL teachers are dedicated and experienced in teaching Chinese as a CL in its unique context – social & psychological perspectives

2.1 Chinese CL teachers' competencies

1. Unique language and social context – different challenges
2. Lack of language specific systemic support
3. Lack of IT facilities – have to improvise with limited resources
4. Students are free to enrol or quit anytime – teachers have to deliver good teaching or lose students **instantly**
5. No modules of teaching methodology to follow - teachers choose their own teaching methods. If they fail, they may be out.

Despite the above constrictions, many Chinese CL teachers

1. Closer contact (WeChat) and partnership with parents & community
 2. More involved with community cultural activities
 3. Many are creative and highly competent in working under a disadvantage condition
 4. Many are dedicated – only those, who “have a heart” for CL, would be happy to work for non-award wages for years.
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Zhang Laoshi, a retired associate professor , teaches Yrs2-3 students. She often arrives 30 m earlier to give some students extra help.



3. Achievement

1. Parents and students have high expectations
2. Medium and large Chinese CL schools are able to
 - 1) Stream classes according to proficiency, not age
 - 2) Run 3 - 12 small-size classes
 - 3) Combine textbooks and extra resources
3. Mobilize more parental involvement and support (family language environment, community context)
4. Participate more easily in community cultural and competition events (Australia Chinese Language Eisteddfod; Children's Festival; China trips)

Evidences of achievement:

1. Students, having learnt 3-6 years, acquire native-like fluency
 2. Yrs 10-12 students pass Chinese Proficiency Test, level 6
 3. Families narrow down generation gap
 4. Most students achieve better in mainstream school (ATAR 99)
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4. Main issues confronting Chinese CL schools

1. Independent operation – lack of L-specific systemic and network support
 2. Major challenges – “Selective drain”, compared with other states; unique psychological and social perspectives of teaching Chinese as a CL in NSW
 3. Urgent need to upgrade teachers’ competencies, esp. in use of IT and English proficiency

Most teachers lack English proficiency to operate in Australian context – over 65-75% students were born in Australia. It is not effective for them to attend non-language specific conferences.
 4. In-service teachers’ professional learning – not compulsory
 5. Lack of language specific TPL programs
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Number of Australian Selective Schools by state



THE FEED

The number of selective schools in NSW outnumbers the rest of the country combined.

Source: The Feed/Patrick Forrest

ACT	NT	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
No	No	49	3	No	No	5	No



5. Recommendations

1. **School leadership training**
2. **School-based professional learning**
3. **Language specific professional learning**
 - 1) **Language specific conferences / forum in a conference**
 - 2) **Target Chinese L unique features: tones, scripts, local context resources, etc.**
4. **Interschool cooperation – Associations need to play a more active role**

Objectives: enhancing teaching expertise and raising in-depth understanding of the values of CL



5.1 School leadership training

1. Many school principals lack teaching qualifications
 2. Teachers have to complete a Certificate course while there is no **compulsory** training course yet for principals
 3. Principals need expertise in staff development, not just in the enrolment and fund-management
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5.2 Why school-based professional learning?

1. The weakest link

- 1) School needs vary. “Local issues need local solutions.”
- 2) Many school leaders **not aware of effectiveness of school-based PL programs and lack strategies.**
- 3) Many teachers **too modest to share**, but there are highly experienced & successful teachers. They need **opportunities & encouragements.**
- 4) Success stories have proved that **teachers enjoy school-based training days.**
 - 三人行必有我师 If three of us travelling together, at least one of the two others is good enough to be my teacher.
 - Marginalized for years, teachers need encouragement to acknowledge their expertise and share their effective teaching strategies.

2. Apart from the conference of Federation of CLS and courses by Dept, **Chinese CL schools associations rarely runs PL programs.**

3. A lack of inter-school cooperation, so **schools need to work more on their own.**

What expert says -

The most potent and meaningful learning experiences occur in the school, where teachers can address the immediate problems and challenges of learning and teaching.

Professional development can also occur in informal contexts, such as discussions among colleagues, independent reading and research, observations of a colleague's work, or other learning from a peer.



School-based Professional Learning at Datong Chinese School

- **Teacher professional learning meeting, at least 3 times a year**
 - **Needs analysis to prioritize needs**
 - **Use of smart board and interactive classroom monitors**
 - **Zoom classroom**
 - **Online resources – searching for and downloading**
 - **Encouragement for teachers to share expertise and strategies**
 - **Guest speakers if necessary**
 - **New teacher on-site training program with experienced teachers as mentors**
 - **Grade/Level groups to encourage cooperation and share of experiences**
 - **Visit to host school Chinese classes**
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Various forms modules of school-based teachers PL



5.3 Language specific programs

There is a need to balance between generic and specific programs through the following strategies:

1. Acknowledge the commonality and different features of all languages
2. Encourage schools or groups of schools to run their own language specific training program
3. Annual conferences need to cater the needs of specific CL programs

Example: A unique features of Chinese language is its 4 tones

Without realizing this important feature of the Chinese language, people tend not to understanding **why the Australian Chinese Language Eisteddfod** has contributed a great deal to the teaching and learning of Chinese in NSW.

5.4 Interschool cooperation

CL schools operate **both as schools and competing small businesses**. Hence the need of systemic encouragement for

- A. CL schools to run teachers training program together
 - B. CL schools can also arrange a visit to their host school language class
 - C. CL schools join mainstream schools' conference?
 - D. Associations, **such as NSW Chinese Language Education Council & Aus.Chns CL school Principals' Network**, need to play an active role in teachers' professional learning
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