

Professional Standards Project

L A N G U A G E S

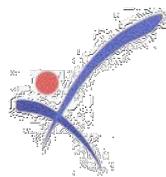


Teacher participant investigation

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Japanese, Prep to Year 5

Tasmania




UniSA

Research Centre for
**Languages
and Cultures**

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TEACHERS' CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATIONS

Welcome to the examples of teachers' classroom-based investigations that have been drawn from their work in the Professional Standards Project. Teachers were asked to conduct an investigation into their own practice based on their work with the Standards.

A range of investigation topics and processes from across the states and territories of Australia have been chosen, although not all investigations that teachers provided have been posted on this website. These examples are provided for you to consider and use, while expanding your own understanding of the Standards and their use in the teaching and learning of languages.

However, you will not find examples of programming or practice that you can instantly adopt and use in your teaching. That was never the intention.

Furthermore, you will not find 'best practice' or exemplars of definitive investigations of languages teaching and learning.

So, what kinds of materials can you expect?

- You will find ideas about practice that teachers have investigated. You can use these ideas to stimulate further thinking when working in your own context.
- You will find some outstanding approaches to thinking about practice that advance our understanding of how to make teaching and learning languages a rich and effective learning experience for students, and a satisfying professional experience for teachers.
- You will also find professional educators striving to make sense of their work in teaching and learning languages. You will find a great deal from which you can learn.

What these programs show are 'teachers at work', examining their practices and pedagogies in relation to the Standards. The teachers responded to their particular contexts, the curriculum and assessment frameworks in which they work, the particular demands they and their students face in languages education, and their own 'learning-by-doing' from using the Standards in teaching and learning languages. The details about the specific context and the elaboration of the teachers' investigations give professional insights into the interaction of thinking and practice.

Reading across the full set of investigations you will get a sense of the ideas and issues that the Standards raise about languages teaching for teachers, for students, for whole schools, and for communities, across languages and age groups, and in the range of contexts in which languages are taught in Australia.



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment
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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS PROJECT CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

TEACHER	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE	YEAR LEVELS
Jill Bignell jill.bignell@education.tas.gov.au	Bothwell District High School, Bothwell, Tas. 7030 Phone: (03) 6259 5518	Japanese	Prep to Year 5

CONTEXT

- Small K–10 rural district high school in the remote central highlands of Tasmania.
- This is a low socio-economic area with low employment.
- Population of the area is approximately 800 people.
- The main industry is farming. This brings Japanese people into the district because of fine wool and wasabi production as well as fly fishing trips.
- The total student population is ninety-two.
- Breakdown of class numbers:
 - K = 10
 - Prep/1 = 18
 - 2/3 = 15
 - 4/5 = 17
 - 6/7 = 15
 - 8/9/10 = 17
- Students from Prep to Year 5 study Japanese. It is offered as an optional subject in the higher classes and is number-dependent.
- Lesson times are for one session per week:
 - Prep/1 45 minutes
 - 2/3 55 minutes
 - 4/5 45 minutes
- In 1993 the Japanese program began at Bothwell and in 1997 the School Review showed approximately 74% of parents regarded Japanese as a valuable part of their child's education.

- The Japanese teacher is provided over and above the staffing allocation to the school as part of Primary Languages Implementation (PIP). When (PIP) began in 1996 it was funded from the NALSAS initiative of the Federal Government. The Tasmanian State Government has funded PIP since the end of NALSAS in 2000.
- One teacher has taken the Japanese classes for most of this time, except for a period of 2 years.
- The teacher is a trained teacher of English and SOSE, and has retrained to teach Japanese under an initiative of the Department of Education and was awarded a Graduate Certificate of LOTE Teaching in 1998.
- The teacher is also the Languages Coordinator for Learning Service South East.

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

Focus Standard: Professional Relationships

Accomplished languages and cultures teachers are part of a professional educational community and they establish professional relationships with other languages and cultures teachers, with teachers in other disciplines, with students, with parents, and with school communities.

Reflective question:

How do you work with colleagues, parents, and community members to develop the quality of teaching and learning in the school?

Having been away from the school for 2 years, I found the need to rebuild my connections with the parents of my students as I no longer knew many of them. With this in mind, my investigation focus was making connections with parents by using LOTE@HOME kits.

The LOTE@HOME kit comprises a set of resources to use in the home environment to promote language learning. The kits are available in a large selection of languages from www.lote-at-home.com.au. These include a calendar, conversation and recipe cards, packs of cards for parts of the body and items in the home, blu tac, ideas for games using the cards, and a sturdy bag.



My hope is that by using this strategy parents will engage in and support their child's learning of Japanese more readily. Learning a language is often perceived by parents as a 'less accessible' part of their child's schooling. I see the resources in the take-home kit encouraging the child who is a learner at school to be the teacher at home. I would like to see my students become more engaged with their own Japanese learning too as they will need to be the teacher at home. I would also like to see support for and valuing learning a language strengthened in our school community.

Before I saw the kits at the AFMLTA Conference in 2007, I was aware of some parents in the community who had learnt Japanese during their schooling and I thought it would be great to garner their support for their own child's language learning.

The obvious benefit of this would be greater support for the learning of Japanese language in the school and the further embedding of an intercultural disposition in the school community.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

- Data will be gathered from families through the survey about their contact with people who speak another language and their interactions with different cultures.
- Future data will be gathered from students on how the kit has changed their interest in learning Japanese.
- In each lesson there is a LOTE@HOME time to discuss what is happening at home with the kit, what resources are being used, help with pronunciation, and ideas on how to use the resources.
- In November I will interview three families to find out how worthwhile they found the LOTE@HOME experience.
- Data will be collected through a combination of written responses, informal questioning, and face-to-face interviews.

FINDINGS

- It is evident that there has been a mixed response to the LOTE@HOME kits at this early stage.
- I believe that the uptake will continue to increase as students share what they are doing with the resources in their home environment.
- Here are some student responses from informal questioning by the teacher in the classroom:
 - *I am teaching my baby brother some of the words* (highly engaged girl)
 - *Mum has put the calendar up in the kitchen. Yeah!* (said to another student).
And she uses it (very reluctant boy with learning difficulties).
 - *I've been using the body part cards to learn the words* (motivated girl student with strong parent support).
 - *Mum and I have been trying to work out which recipes we could try cos we'll need to buy some of the things in Hobart* (motivated girl student with strong parent support).
 - *Mine's at home behind the couch* (popular boy who usually engages with language learning; good parent support).
 - *Mine's in the cloakroom!* (disengaged boy).
 - Teacher: *Do you think you could take it home today?*
 - Student: *Yeah.*

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

The survey data will identify those families who support language learning and those who don't. I can then use this information for future planning and for selecting strategies to engage them, for example, personalising language learning, celebrating their child's success with language learning through presentations and awards.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

Engage magazine

http://www.education.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/226815/Engage-Finalised-Version.pdf

EVALUATION

- Although disappointed by the number of parents at the parent session, I can see that a combination of bad timing and poor preparation undermined the event. For example, having it on a Wednesday would have given more time to remind students, increasing student involvement would create more interest at home, perhaps doing it at a school assembly would have been more successful.
- I am heartened by the way a third of the class is using the LOTE@HOME kits.
- For those engaged students not using it, I will conduct an informal face-to-face interview to try to uncover why they are not using it — lack of confidence, lack of family support, role of older siblings, etc.
- For the disengaged students, I will find ways of celebrating their successes and have informal chats during work time in the classroom.
- The kit is an effective way of focusing on language learning at home. I have always placed an emphasis on students having a Japanese work book to take home at the end of the year to share with parents and grandparents. Students tell me they enjoy looking back through their Japanese books from previous years.
- I can see the power in sharing the students' experiences of using the LOTE@HOME kits in their homes with each other. For some students it gives them confidence, for others it provides ideas, for others it provides a focus for mother-daughter activities.
- The one thing missing from the kits is an activity for the fathers to do with their children (e.g. making a toy or playing a game).
- The kits cost around \$30 each. In future I think I would like to build a kit with my students over their years of schooling — much like the work books. They could decorate a calico bag and take things home to build up a collection of resources — vocab cards, games, cultural items, awards, make a calendar, etc.
- A parent of a Year 3 student requested a kit for her son. He had been visiting the home of a Year 5 student and had seen the kit. Together they had explored its contents and played some games with the cards. This student displays excellent language learning skills and I thought it might be useful to see the problems and successes this family had with using the kit.
- I planned a celebration of the project at the end of the year and invited some Japanese people to interact with the families, to tie it in with the International Year of Languages.

REFLECTION

- I believed participating in the Professional Standards Project would be a really worthwhile experience, and I was right, *but*, at the time I was very time poor. In order to overcome this, I decided to add another dimension to a project I was already committed to — my LOTE@HOME project, as part of an Innovative Languages project. This proved to be a successful strategy.
- I particularly enjoyed the thinking around my project prompted by the standards. The user-friendly format meant it was easy to access the ideas presented in the standards and to see how to apply them to my classroom practice.

- It was invaluable to be able to share and receive feedback from my course colleagues as well as our outstanding facilitators who offered their support in a most generous and timely manner.
- I am very excited by my investigation. It has allowed me to take an identified concern and see a way to take it forward. I can now plan strategies to achieve my outcomes. This provides a focus for my thinking and underpins my decisions about teaching and learning in the classroom for this cohort of students. I now have the confidence to be a better teacher because I know the direction in which I need to head and I have the tools to make it happen. I know that reflection is an important part of the process too. This is most exciting!