

Professional Standards Project

L A N G U A G E S

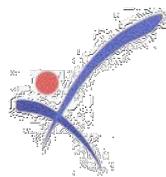


Teacher participant investigation

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Japanese, Prep to Year 6

Victoria



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
Mari Sato	Wodonga West Primary School Wodonga, Vic. Ph: (02) 6024 1188 Fax: (02) 6024 4257	Japanese	Prep to Year 6

CONTEXT

Wodonga West Primary School is located in Wodonga, rural Victoria. The school has an enrolment of about 500 students from Prep to Year 6.

The children are drawn from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds. There are small numbers of Indigenous students enrolled. The cultural make-up of the school is predominantly Anglo-Celtic students with a small number of Asian, African, and European students. The school has recently implemented its new school values (Respect + Integrity + Commitment = Harmony).

At Wodonga West Primary School a strong emphasis is placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Specialist programs offered are LOTE, Visual Art, Music/Performing Arts, and PE.

Japanese is the chosen language at Wodonga West and all students from Prep to Year 6 are involved in the study of the Japanese language and culture. The school has a trained native Japanese teacher and also hosts a native language assistant teacher regularly. Three lessons (two x 45 minutes and one x 1 hour) are taught during the school's 16-day timetable. The *Ohisama Connect* program (by M. Taguchi) has been used since 2007.

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

Aim:

- Engaging upper primary students more actively in Japanese.
- 'Why do some Year 5–6 students become less engaged in Japanese?'

Reasons for this investigation:

- A greater amount of time is spent on managing students' negative behaviours in Years 5–6 than in any other grades during Japanese.
- Fewer students are actively engaged in their Japanese sessions and their productivity decreases when they reach Years 5–6. What can be done to engage those students more actively in Japanese?

Planning:

- Find out more about them — *How much do I know about each student as individuals?*
- Find out their interests — *What can motivate them?*
- Become a more reflective teacher — not only *How did I go with today's lesson?* but also *How did the students feel about the lesson?/How well did the students respond to the lesson?/What can I do to make it better next time?*
- Teach students to become reflective on their learning.
- Improve the classroom culture — implement the new school values in Japanese.

Changes to my practice:

- Include reflection/feedback time at the end of each session.
- Provide activities to find out more about students as individuals.
- Clear goal setting.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE*How I did it (example of activities):*

- Circle time on their feelings towards Japanese, challenges/difficulties in Japanese, what students can do to make it better, what the teacher can do to make it better, etc.
- Attitude surveys.
- Knowing my students (students completed __ (me) expressing themselves).
- MYOS and individual goal settings.
- Reflection time at the end of each session.
- Feedback chart.
- Discussion on our school values in Japanese.

Changes I made:

- More hands-on and interactive activities (e.g. role-plays, pair/group work, film making).
- Peer-coaching to learn/practise Hiragana characters/words.
- Less time spent on the floor, more time practising/using phrases learnt.

Students' reactions:

- Circle time — opened up discussion, students commented positively about having the opportunity to share their feelings about Japanese.
- Attitude surveys — honest responses, will be done again in Term 4.
- Individual goal settings— positive effects on many students' motivation.

- Reflection/feedback — various responses depending on classes (not activities).
- Values in Japanese — successful discussion, but needs to be ongoing.
- Interactive activities — potentially very effective but more behavioural issues arise at this stage (e.g. noise level, disengaged students).

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

Data gathered:

- Notes recorded during the circle time
- Students' written attitude surveys
- Students' written grade/individual goal settings
- Notes from reflection blocks
- Feedback charts with students' stickers
- Y-charts on the school's values in Japanese
- Teacher's written observations.

Analysis of the data:

- Creating charts to analyse students' response
- Recording students' goals to cater for their differences as well as to follow up on their progress
- Creating display on the school's values in the Japanese room.

FINDINGS

What was discovered/evident:

- The students' surveys showed their various attitudes, both positive and negative, towards Japanese. Some students indicated that activities they do in Japanese are generally interesting; however, some others commented 'boring'. The surveys revealed that some students find Japanese difficult or think they are not good at it. What can I do to support those students? Why do they feel Japanese is difficult?
- During the circle time some students told me that they don't enjoy working on the floor, they would prefer to work at their tables. Some new students said they sometimes feel left out if they haven't learnt the language at their previous school.
- __ (me) activity showed that most students enjoy sports and/or music. Another significant finding is that many students see their friends as an important part of themselves. Only two students included where their families came from as a part of themselves. Other students described themselves as 'Aussies'.
- The outcomes of the students' feedback charts varied, depending on the class not on the lesson (i.e. classes responded to the same content lesson differently). The classes with positive feedback generally responded well to instructions and activities provided during the lessons.

- Most students were aware of where they are at with their Hiragana learning. They were able to set appropriate goals and to discuss their progress with their peers and the teacher.

To master all the Hiragana and join the 46 club.

To learn 10 Hiragana characters.

To learn to read more challenging words.

To pass the level 2 test.

- The class Y-charts on the school's values showed that most students were able to identify positive attitudes which show *respect, integrity, commitment, and harmony* in the Japanese classroom. However, any improvement since the discussion is not evident. The values are now on the display wall in the room. I should draw the students' attention to the display and remind them of our values frequently to create a positive class culture.

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

Applying to my practice/teaching and learning context:

- Plan activities that can cater for the students' interests and learning abilities. The program should also cater for those new students who do not have any previous experience in learning the language.
- Consider ways of encouraging the students to see a bigger world than just their own world. This came from the fact that few students mentioned other countries than Australia during the __ (me) _ activity.
- Continue to give students the opportunity to set their individual goals and to reflect on their progress. The peer teaching should also be encouraged.

What happened:

- Most responses on the students' surveys were predicted. It showed me that the students' attitudes towards learning Japanese can affect their attitudes in the room.
- I did not expect that outcome of the students' feedback on a lesson. Classes responded to the same content lesson differently. This pattern continued during the term.
- I expected that more students might consider their families' backgrounds as a part of themselves.
- I anticipated that some students might be less motivated to set their individual learning goals; however, most students took it very seriously and they have been able to talk about their progress.

Problems in my investigation:

- Various data were gathered and I have made some changes in my practice and activities; however, the behaviour issues have not been solved yet.

Have I made the right changes?

Have the changes met the students' interests or needs?

Was my investigation too broad?

Has my investigation found an answer/answers to the question why some Year 5–6 students become less engaged in Japanese?

- Some students' reasons for their answers on the students' attitude survey were not directly related to Japanese (e.g. *I'm bored because I'm tired. I feel happy because I'm with my friends*).

Collection of the data:

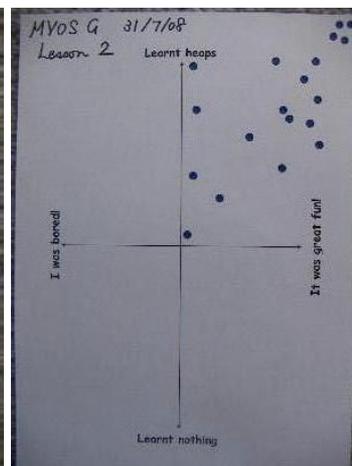
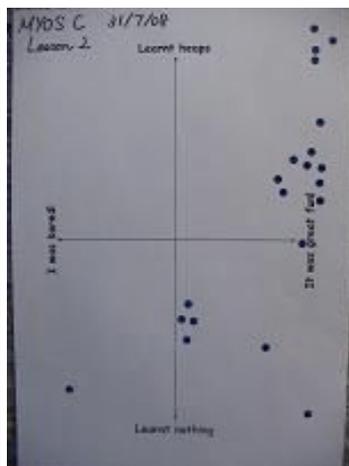
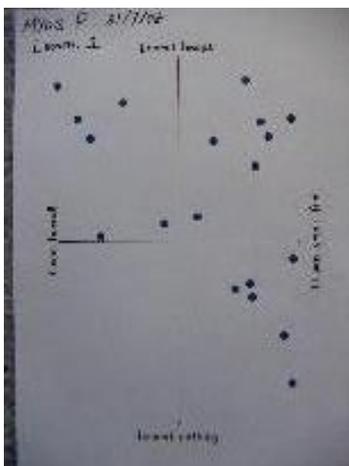
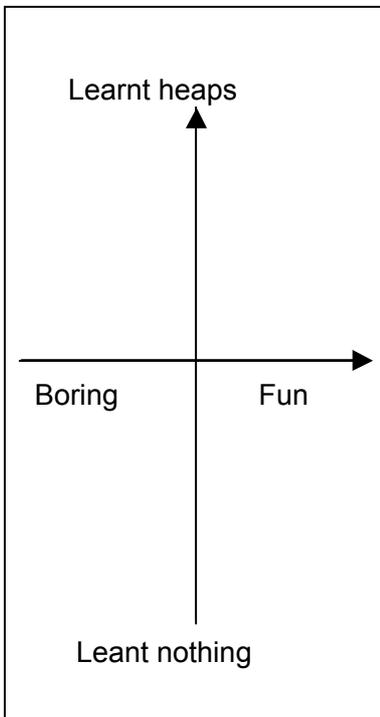
- Circle time should have been held in all Year 5 and 6 classes.
- More information on why those students feel bored/sad during Japanese.
- The responses of the students' attitude survey should have been compared to their responses from last year to see any changes.

Personal response to the findings:

- All the findings are valuable in order to reflect on my teaching.
- It is a very interesting finding that the outcomes of the students' feedback charts depended on the class, not on the lesson. What now?

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

Findings 1: Students' feedback on a lesson



Findings 2: Student attitude survey



The students were asked to colour in one person that shows their feeling towards Japanese then explain why.

Room 25	Happy	I am good at Japanese.	25
		I like the activities we do.	
		I like the teacher.	
		It is fun to learn the language.	
		It is fun to learn the culture.	
	Others		
Sad	I'm not very good at Japanese.	2	
	Others		
Bored	I'm not very good at Japanese.	1	

Room 26	Happy	It is fun to learn the language.	15
		I like the activities we do.	
		I like the teacher.	
		Others	
	OK		1
	Sad	I'm not good at Japanese.	4
	Angry	It is too noisy.	1
	Bored		2

Room 28	Happy	I am confident/good at Japanese	11
		It is fun.	
		Others	
		I like helping others.	
	OK	Others	2
	Sad	Because they are killing whales.	5
		I don't like it.	
	Bored	I don't think I will go to Japan.	5
Others			

Room 30	Happy	I am good at Japanese.	15
		I like the activities we do.	
		I like the teacher.	
		It is fun to learn the language.	
		It is fun to learn the culture.	
		Others	
	Sad	I feel left out.	2
		I don't like it.	
	Bored	Activities are boring.	6
		Too difficult.	

Japanese is really fun because you get to learn another language.

At Japanese I'm happy because we get to do fun things like making things.

I enjoy Japanese but now I don't because I can't get all the work done and it is too noisy.

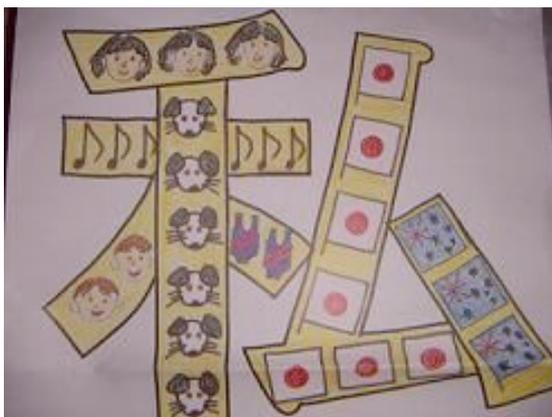
I feel sad because I used to know a lot about Japanese but now I have lost some of it.

I don't like it because they are killing whales.

I feel happy about Japanese because I have a good understanding about it.

I like when we get to do things not just sitting there and just listening.

Findings 3: __ (me)_activity



Findings 4: Our school values in the Japanese room
 Respect + Integrity + Commitment = Harmony



EVALUATION

During this investigation I have realised how little I knew about my students as individuals. I believe that knowing about the learners is a crucial part of teaching and I have become more aware of its importance through this investigation.

Discussing the students' feelings towards Japanese, challenges and difficulties with Japanese, and any other issues during the circle time was extremely valuable and I felt the session has made our relationship more positive and supportive. I now think my investigation could have been scaled down and possibly focused on having circle time with all Year 5 and 6 classes to find out more about the students and their feelings towards Japanese.

I believe that this investigation has also been valuable for my students. The students are more encouraged to reflect on their learning and many students are now able to discuss their individual goals and learning progress confidently. The students also had other kinds of reflective activities such as lesson feedback charts and discussions. I hope these reflective tools can assist the students' learning not only in LOTE but also in other learning areas.

The investigation was done in a short period and I feel that I have rushed to carry out too many activities. I would like to spend more time on each activity and create a more positive and supportive learning environment. Implementing the school values in the LOTE room will also be my next focus as I believe that it is important to have the same agreed values throughout the school.

REFLECTION

It has been a great journey of learning to become an effective and reflective teacher.

This investigation has given me a valuable opportunity to face the issue, to look for the causes and possible solutions. I have struggled to keep my investigation small; however, I have developed some effective strategies to become a reflective teacher as well as to teach students to become reflective learners.

Learning about my students was another part that I have thoroughly enjoyed during this investigation. I would like to develop more skills to provide activities that can cater for their varied interests and learning abilities.

Although I found it challenging to provide more hands-on sessions and group projects because of the increased noise level and some disengaged students, most students responded to their film project with great interest and enthusiasm.

I think it is a great step forward and I would like to continue reflecting and improving my program after this investigation.