



## Mentoring Investigation Report

### *Mentoring for mutual benefit*

<p><b>Background information</b></p> <p>Mentor teacher(s) name: <i>Cathy Winston</i></p> <p>Mentee teacher(s) name: <i>Carmen Lao</i></p> <p>School(s)/site: <i>Blakehurst High School, NSW</i></p> <p>Language(s) (if applicable): <i>Chinese/Japanese</i></p> <p>Year level: 7 and 8</p>	
<p><b>School or class context</b></p> <p>My teaching load includes two Year 7 classes- one Japanese, one Chinese- and a Year 8 Chinese class.</p> <p>Our school has a significant international student population of mainly Chinese Mandarin speakers, and as a result we have a successful Higher School Certificate (HSC) Background Speakers course. However, in the junior school we have been trying to develop a successful Chinese Mandarin program. To facilitate development of this program I started retraining in Mandarin in 2010 with the NALSSP Asian Language Scholarship through the Department of Education and Communities (DEC). The number of Chinese classes has been steadily growing over the past two years.</p> <p>The main issues we face in relation to the program are attracting more non-heritage students to the study of Mandarin and developing differentiated teaching strategies to effectively engage the beginner, heritage and background speaking students in these classes.</p> <p>Carmen is currently job-sharing with me while I complete my language studies. She is in her second year of teaching. This is her first school position and is a temporary placement. Although she is fluent in Mandarin, as a new teacher she is learning how to manage large junior classes and familiarising herself not only with the resources available, but also in considering how to adapt these resources to different language levels.</p>	<p><b>Record of process</b></p> <p>Our mentoring relationship is one of an experienced teacher who is learning Chinese and a fluent Chinese speaker who is a new teacher.</p> <p>Each of us therefore has different challenges, one with improving language skills, the other with improving teaching skills. The mentoring relationship has a dimension of mutual support where we assist each other from our strengths.</p>

<b>Goals of mentoring program</b>	
<p>Language pedagogy</p> <p>In our initial discussions, Carmen has identified classroom management as the area she would most like to focus on. Therefore, my main focus will be to assist Carmen with developing effective management strategies for a multi-level language classroom.</p>	<p>Planning day notes, log entries</p>
<b>Design</b>	
<p>Mentoring focus on Year 7 Chinese and Japanese classes, as well as Year 8 Chinese class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- review learning needs of different language levels</li> <li>- classroom/behaviour management investigations</li> <li>- student engagement (in particular for advanced Chinese students)</li> <li>- use AFMLTA Standards: <i>Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures: Language Pedagogy</i> reflection questions to guide the investigation</li> <li>- modify Japanese resources to be used in Chinese</li> </ul>	<p>Emails, logs, Standards reflective questions, lesson observations, discussions of alternative ways to better manage classroom environment.</p> <p>Long term aims are to develop an advanced program &amp; resources for Chinese classes.</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	
<p>As we job share and do not work on the same days, we have communicated by email. I have at times come in on my days off to assist her with any issues, and we have also had discussions on days when she has worked casually at school.</p> <p>8 June- initial planning day- discussion of needs of mentee; planned Year 7 &amp; Year 8 Chinese excursion, including risk assessment.</p> <p>Early Term 3 – Developed unit booklet on ‘sport’ modified from Japanese resources.</p> <p>I was able to observe part of a Year 8 lesson, followed by some discussion regarding resources, working with advanced students, etc.</p>	<p>We intended to have another professional development day to discuss the project outcomes, but there was no time available to do so.</p> <p>We will follow this up in Term 4.</p>
<b>Data gathered</b>	
<p>Email communication (see sample below)</p> <p>Resources for Year 7 and Year 8 Chinese classes modified from existing Japanese resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PowerPoint presentations</li> <li>• smart notebook file</li> <li>• worksheets</li> <li>• sport booklet (see illustrated covers below)</li> <li>• resources for advanced student work</li> </ul>	

## Outcomes

From the initial planning day we concluded that although classroom management was the area Carmen felt the most concerned about, we determined that the issues involved in a multi-level class contributed to both of our difficulties in student engagement and consequently classroom management. The advanced students tend to be disruptive as the only work we can provide them is really reading comprehension. The result is that they are bored. We needed to find work that could effectively engage students at all levels in Years 7 and 8.

At our planning day we were able to familiarise ourselves with many of the resources I had ordered last year. Our aim was to identify resources that could be used with our heritage students. We found one text that used both simplified and traditional characters and seemed to be suitable. It also came with a DVD of short video clips on various aspects of Chinese life that could be used for all students. I also came across a Japanese resource for Year 7 at the annual Japanese Teachers Conference which inspired us to create a similar version for the beginner Chinese students. It focussed on the topic of sport and it coincided nicely with the Olympics. There was also a similar topic in the heritage text, which meant the majority of students were studying the same topic.

We also discussed developing better comprehension questions for the texts we were using with the native-speakers.

## Interpreting the data

Effective communication of information and ideas is essential in our working partnership. As seen in the email excerpts (below), we try to keep each other informed not only on the progress of lessons, but about students and other matters relevant to a smooth teaching partnership.

I have encouraged Carmen to take control of the advanced students, and she has become more confident in her professional agency by being able to suggest possible learning strategies for the new native speaker, modifying my IWB resources and by directing the work to be completed by the advanced students. We have developed a better system for organising work for advanced students by having distinct folders for Year 7 and 8.

The new resources identified for the heritage students, additional comprehension questions for the native speakers and the unit booklet has helped with the classroom management.

### Resource modification and enhancement (before- without tones; after, with tones)



Carmen has helped me with modifying current Japanese resources into Mandarin, as well as enhancing resources (as seen above). My initial IWB did not include the tone marks for the pinyin and she took the initiative to improve it.

I asked Carmen for her opinion on the changes made in her pedagogical practice and her responses are below:

In regards to the work of the advanced students:

*I feel that the majority of advanced students are good kids and they will do what we ask them to do. However, I don't feel they are engaged with the work a lot. This is partially my fault as I don't spend enough time with them as the beginners' students. I have added more instructions of what I want them to do on the worksheets but they do still need me to reinforce the instructions.*

I do agree that the advanced students may not be as engaged; however, compared to before the investigation they are now engaged to a greater extent as a result of providing the additional worksheets and instructions which have helped to guide their studies. This is still an area we have to develop further, and we are trying to find activities that will involve the entire class. That being said, having observed parts of her lessons, Carmen has developed a very good rapport with the background and heritage speakers. It is a relationship I find difficult to develop because of my limited Mandarin ability.

In regards to the beginners' booklet:

*I liked taking bits and pieces from different resources to form a sport booklet rather than just working from the textbook. I think the students are a bit more interested as they have a better idea of what we're going to learn in the future. And also there would be a variety in the work for the students. The Olympic task was really good as it ties in their learning with what's happening in the real world, the students seem to enjoy researching the athletes.*

I enjoyed working with Carmen to put this book together. It definitely needs to be revised, but I was able to source the material from various texts and Carmen organised and edited it. It has made organising lessons between us much easier, and demonstrates how we are working together to design new strategies and materials to suit our classes.

In terms of classroom management:

*You gave me a lot of suggestions that help me to improve my teaching strategies and technology assistance especially in smart board software....I do find it easier to manage the classes now as I know the students better. I find communication with the parents (or threats of doing that) is really good because some parents reinforce the behaviour management and it help the parents to know what work the student needs to do i.e. finishing off homework and assignments.*

It is also important to mention that in Term 2 at the beginning of this project, I was supervising a pre-service Mandarin teacher, also a native speaker. Since we are job sharing, this meant that Carmen also needed to participate in this process. I believe the experience of giving feedback to our practicum student allowed Carmen and me to reflect on different ways to manage the different student levels. Carmen benefitted from some of the basic school policy information I needed to show our student, such as excursion risk assessments. I benefitted from observing both of them using authentic language materials to engage the students.

### **Summary reflection**

I was interested in this project as I was with the NALSSP program. I have benefitted greatly from participating in a mentoring relationship. The opportunity to explore mentoring has allowed me to reflect on my current teaching practices and how to best communicate my thoughts and ideas to someone else in order to have an open dialogue on this Mandarin-specific issue of a differentiated classroom. However, with the constraints of work, university studies and my personal life, I feel I was not able to devote enough

time into exploring it in sufficient depth.

My communication with Carmen for the most part has been limited to emails regarding lessons and organisational matters. The days when we have both worked have been busy and left little time for us to discuss this project or developing her professional learning in depth. In many ways I feel it was a sporadic approach to mentoring. My hope is that in Term 4 after university exams, there will be a little more time available to explore other elements of being a lead language teacher.

Although we have looked at this from the perspective of me mentoring Carmen in terms of teaching experience, in actuality, we have developed a shared partnership. Her knowledge and understanding of not only the language but also the cultural activities in China have helped me immensely. As a result, the changes we have made to the resources are having a positive effect in the classroom and our students have started to benefit.

## **Appendix**

*Sample pages from the sports booklet developed are provided below.*



# 中国日新闻

## ZHONGGUO RI XINWEN

à o lín pǐ k è yùndòngyuán

Design and produce a 4-page **奥林匹克运动员** lift-out for the China Daily newspaper.

The **CHINA DAILY NEWS** is covering all of the action that has been happening at various sports competitions and awards ceremonies. You are a journalist for this famous Chinese internet magazine and have been assigned to profile six athletes from across the world at the London Olympic Games.



tājiàoshénmemíngzì

他叫什么名字?

tājiào

他叫Michael Phelps.

jīnniántājìsuìle

今年他几岁了?

jīnniántāèrshíqīsuìle

今年他二十七岁了。

tāshìnǎguó rén

他是哪国人?

tāshìměiguó rén

他是美国人。

tāxǐhuānshénmeyùndòng

他喜欢什么运动?

tāxǐhuānyóuyǒng

他喜欢游泳。

zài lǒngdùn ào yùn huì tā yíng le sì méi

liǎng méi yín pái

在伦敦奥运会他赢了四枚金牌 两枚银牌

# Task Checklist

- Find **SIX DIFFERENT ATHLETES** - one from China, one from Australia and the rest from different countries.
- On a **WORLD MAP**, locate the home country of each athlete. You must include a **KEY** so newspaper readers can understand the colour-coding for each country. Country names are to be written in Chinese!
- Use known questions and sentence structures in Chinese, write out a small profile for each athlete. Include structures about their **NAME, AGE, NATIONALITY, WHAT SPORT THEY LIKE** and **WHAT MEDALS THEY HAVE WON IN LONDON**. You may add additional information.
- WRITE UP** and present each athlete interview in either **HANZI** or **PINYIN**. This must be handwritten!
- Be sure to include appropriate **SUPPORTING PICTURES** from newspaper clippings, magazines and/ or the internet. You may also include appropriate cultural symbols that relate to each athlete's home country.
- On the back page of the lift-out, you must include a **BIBLIOGRAPHY**.
- USEFUL VOCABULARY:

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**DEADLINE:**  
**2012年8月\_\_日**  
**\_\_\_\_ AUGUST 2012**  
**PENALTIES FOR LATENESS**  
**WILL APPLY!**



## Email exchange excerpts

The following excerpts from our email exchanges demonstrate the relationship between job sharing teachers, and also as teachers now concerned with a mentoring relationship and looking reflexively at our practice, together.

### Cathy:

#### Thursday, 2 August 2012

Year 8 - a few away due to the maths competition. We looked into the Olympics today. Introduced countries and some colours (just the Olympic rings: blue, black, red, yellow, green and white). I left the flag worksheet on my desk. We looked at the Olympic website as well and tried to name the countries. If you can, please let them know how to say Romania, Portugal, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine (random, I know, but they asked! I think there is another, but can't remember it!). Tomorrow, introduce all of the colours and maybe nationality? Otherwise, do the sports. I used the sports worksheet from the MLTA Victoria Olympics resources with 7H today, so maybe similar with Year 8? 'Brett' handed in his book. He finished his work. I gave him the new booklet. I also gave 'Patty' her new booklet.

#### Thursday, 9 August 2012

Y8 - I handed out the sport booklet and used a smart notebook presentation to go through sports and using xihuan. I also got them started on the Olympic task. Copies are in the Year 8 box. I've also got the advanced students to do the same task, but bilingually. Please follow up with them as they were quite resistant (particularly 'Che Che')! I've booked 15 laptops from the library since the library itself was booked out. Have some of the boys go and collect them at the beginning of the lesson. Haven't set a due date, but think next Friday? See if you can swap rooms with 'Rhonda' - that way you should have enough computers for everyone.

...I'm also attaching the Chinese version of the smart notebook file.

### Carmen:

#### Tuesday, 7 August 2012

Chinese Advanced students - I left work for them in the folder, can you please remind them that I want to collect their books to check their work on Friday so make sure they bring all of their previous worksheets that I haven't looked at yet. Also make sure they write their answers in the exercise book because I've warned them if they don't I am going to make them redo it. New student in 7K, 'Xia', she does not know any English at all. I was thinking either make her do alternative work which is same as what 'Lina' is doing or should we make her do what the rest of the class is doing but concentrating on learning English other than Chinese? What do you think?

#### Friday, 10 August 2012

Yr 8 - We did research but it seems to be going slow - not all of the computers are working. Next Friday Yr 8 seems to have a maths test, shall we make them hand it in on Monday or Tuesday of week 6 to give them an extra weekend to do it? Five students (named) were absent due to debating and illness.

Yr 7K - Used the notebook presentation to go through the sports and handed out the assignment, the class was really not settled today and Jack was not helping, threatened to call home if he continues to misbehave. Two (named) students were absent.

I've attached the Olympics presentation with the tones...