



Presentation to the China-New Zealand Education Forum/ China Education Exhibition

3 November 2005

“Introducing the Chinese Language Foundation”

Speech by Maylene Lai, Founding Trustee and Vice Chair

Who are we?

Incorporated as a charitable trust in May 2004, the Chinese Language Foundation's objective is to encourage and enable the learning of Chinese in New Zealand schools and businesses. We aim to make New Zealand more China literate and to equip all New Zealanders with an understanding of the culture and language of a country which will increasingly impact, socially and economically on our future.

What do we do?

The Foundation has established a Schools network and is supporting the 2005 Chinese language programme in 6 schools in Auckland. In 2005, we facilitated a teacher training workshop for the effective teaching of Chinese in these schools and will organise a language and culture camp for these schools in December. We continue to build teacher support networks, explore ways of resourcing schools, build on teacher development, recruitment and training. We support comprehensive research into the effective delivery of Chinese language learning to young Nzers and assist with teacher and student exchange programmes in China and New Zealand.

We help sponsor the annual NZCLA speech competition held in Auckland and co-ordinate the national China Bridge speech competition. We also support Chinese language teaching in Rotorua through annual awards for best students. We are building a resource base of international best practice models in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and adapting this to New Zealand requirements.

Who do we work with?

In seeking to provide effective leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning of Chinese, we work closely with NZ educators, the Ministry of Education and education authorities in China. We are building partnerships with educational institutions and businesses both in NZ and the PRC who see the work we do as beneficial to their strategic aims. We have the support of the NZ Chinese community, the Chinese language teacher network and established NZ-China trade and friendship associations as well as Asia:NZ Foundation.

We have strong links with the PRC embassy in Wellington and its consulate office in Auckland, as well as the PRC Ministries of Culture and Education, and the China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. We also maintain contacts with the wider Chinese speaking world.

What are our challenges?

For the teaching of Chinese language as a second non-native language to develop in New Zealand schools, a pool of trained teachers will be required. There is an increasing demand from schools that is not being met and a growing appreciation that we require specialist training for Chinese language teaching in the New Zealand context.

Encouraging and Enabling New Zealanders to Learn Chinese



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The figures for Chinese language learning in New Zealand are dropping. The number of students in Years 9 to 13 and the number of schools offering Chinese have fallen in the last year. We see our role in giving practical support in the Years 1 to 8 sector so that the serious learning in the language can continue at secondary level as an important one.

What can you do?

International students from China are a bonus to New Zealand. They help create a language environment for our Chinese language students so that they can experience China without having to leave the country. International students are ambassadors for China and can foster international understanding, cultural exchange and language support in our schools. We urge schools to see international students as bringing much more than just monetary contribution but are an enormously valuable resource which we neglect at our peril.

A genuine relationship of mutual respect, understanding and exchange can only take place if we are open to each other's cultures and languages and are able to share them.

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