

Auckland Chinese Teachers Network Meeting 12 March 2006

On Sunday 12 March, The Chinese Language Foundation hosted an afternoon tea for all Chinese language teachers in the Auckland region. It was a chance to introduce the work of the Foundation to teachers, to find out how they could further support and encourage teachers to promote the teaching and learning of Chinese in New Zealand and to encourage Chinese Language teaching as a viable and rewarding option in New Zealand.

More than sixty teachers from the local Auckland area attended the afternoon meeting. These included primary, intermediate and secondary teachers, community school teachers, qualified and training teachers, teachers currently without work and community tutor teachers.

A number of key people were invited to speak. John Graham, the Vice Patron of the Chinese Language Foundation is an educationalist who has recently retired from the position of Chancellor of Auckland University. He spoke about the crucial need for Kiwi's to understand and learn the Chinese culture and language as China expands globally and is linked to New Zealand as part of the Asian Pacific Region. Dr Han Xi was also present to explain the work of the National Chinese Language Advisor and the support that she can offer to schools and teachers. Silvia Insley, an Educator for Learning Languages at the Faculty of Education at Auckland University outlined the teacher training programme at the University of Auckland and emphasised the three main areas of learning – teaching pedagogy, language specific learning and associate teacher support. Lily Lee a trustee of the Chinese Language Foundation spoke about her experience of policy implementation on the Ministry of Education and talked about the Chinese Language Foundation's hope to develop quality teachers, support quality schools and provide quality programmes and their challenge to tackle all strands in a sustainable fashion. Gary Pearce, the principal of Parnell Primary School spoke about the Chinese programme that his school offered and his intention to raise awareness amongst the principals networks of the importance of Chinese for social cohesion and cultural understanding. The final speaker was Chris Tremewan, the Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Auckland. He introduced the Confucius Institute that will be set up in Auckland as a national center for New Zealand in partnership with the University. This Confucius Institute is one of about forty seven international centers throughout the world set up for the teaching of Chinese Language and Culture.

After the speakers, the teachers were divided into groups and asked three focus questions about ways to encourage, support and help each other to promote and teach Chinese. The teachers entered into some very lively discussions coming up with some excellent suggestions to encourage New Zealanders to learn Chinese. These included:

- Promoting the importance of Chinese language to principals and senior managers of schools and encouraging schools to include Chinese in their strategic plans/goals
- Lending the high school teachers to feeder intermediates to begin a pathway to high school
- Cultural groups/performances visiting schools
- Build a positive image through media and advertisements
- Promoting Chinese to businesses and to career centers
- Chinese Language and Cultural Camps
- Passing on free invitations to cultural events to schools and teachers
- Having a teachers website

Barriers to the above suggestions were also discussed in detail and the groups were asked to think about ways we could work together as a group to overcome them.

Teachers came away from the meeting feeling enthused about where Chinese Language was going in the future and reassured that there was an organisation willing to listen to and work towards supporting teachers needs.

It is important to have these opportunities to firmly establish good networks of communication between teachers, knowing that this is only the beginning of working towards common goals.

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