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E-Language

WOLLONGONG LAUNCHES NEW COMMUNITY LANGUAGES SCHOOL MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

What a Partnership!!

The Community Languages Materials Project was officially launched by Hon. Linda Burney, Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Youth, and Minister for Volunteering on Wednesday 13th February at the Wollongong City Art Gallery.

The Project is a partnership between University of Wollongong and Illawarra Community Languages Schools

The venue was full of parents, community leaders, Chair and members of the NSW Community Languages Board, Departmental officials and most importantly children

It involved nine community languages schools:

- Illawarra Serbian School
- Wollongong Turkish Society School
- Cringila Arabic School
- South Coast Chinese Language School
- Wollongong Mandarin Chinese School
- Maltese Language School
- Cook Island Maori School
- Macedonian Language School.

Prof. Paul Chandler, Dean of Education was MC for the evening .He highlighted the importance of partnerships in education and how proud he was of the outcomes.

In launching the materials The Hon. Linda Burney, MLA, highlighted the importance of languages, the contributions communities make and the strong partnership that exists with the University of Wollongong. She encouraged teachers to continue with developing innovative materials.

It should be noted that The Minister made a dash from Canberra where the Federal Parliament had listened to the National Apology to be at this event.

Prof. Rob Castle Deputy Vice Chancellor responded how proud the University was to be part of the program and on the great work that was achieved due to the commitment of various stakeholders

Stefan Romaniw Executive Director Community Languages Australia spoke about the importance of linguistic and cultural maintenance in

- The Community
- The Family
- Australia

He also congratulated all developing this partnership model.

Mr Romaniw also commented that it was important for Department of Education to understand the contribution community languages school make to education. Community Languages Schools undertake Quality Assurance; they put themselves up to educational scrutiny and strive to provide quality outcomes.

The Cook Islands students provide the entertainment.

THE PROJECT

The previous and present Project Officers for the Illawarra Community Languages Schools (Sue Buckle and Sabine Hauth) approached the UOW Education Faculty for help in servicing teachers and running workshops. From this came recognition of need for continuing support – priority was developing materials and resources.

Ken Cruickshank and Lisa Kervin, from Education Faculty were drivers of the project.

PROCESS

24 teacher education students volunteered to work with schools. Students and teacher met over 2007 and agreed on and worked together to develop resources. These resources will be used in the schools and will also be available to all other schools in Australia.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Each group took a 'problem solving' approach and worked on materials that could be recycled in class; materials which also reflected current teaching approaches. Some examples were:

- **Classroom in a box.** One of the Chinese schools had problems with no place in the school where they could store materials. Our students designed and built the 'classroom in a box' which holds all the materials but doubles as a feltboard/whiteboard and big book holder.
- **Weather chart.** In the Turkish and Cook Island Maori schools, teachers spent much time each week writing up the day, date, weather and month on the board for students to recite. UOW students made wall charts to allow students an interactive session at the beginning of each class.
- **Big books.** Teachers were constantly photocopying stories for students. UOW students developed big books in different community languages, often organising translations to go on top of commercial English texts.
- UOW students developed on average ten resources for each school. Other ideas included:
 - reward certificates to help classroom management
 - poster of class rules in Chinese
 - electronic book in Turkish
 - **CDRom** of Turkish alphabet
 - Macedonian cultural big book
 - Cook Island Maori song book with accompanying CDRom
 - **Games and quizzes**
 - Flashcards

MAIN BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

Graduates from UOW enter an increasingly diverse workforce – much travel and work overseas. This project builds the flexibility and cross-cultural skills needed in today's work environment;

Several students going on to do honours research projects on the schools;

Planning follow-up project with community school teachers on professional development – developing continuing links;

- Encouraging community schools teachers to undertake further study through the university.
- The resources are developed to meet specific needs. For example, the Cook Island Maori School is the first of its kind in Australia. Teachers had no materials for songs in the language – with the students they have developed posters and teaching materials and will go on to make CDs of community songs.
- **The resources are interactive and motivating.** The materials were designed to look professional and to involve students. They reflect teaching methods from the day schools, involving games and students using the language. One example are the big books developed for Chinese and Macedonian schools: translations of books like The Hungry Caterpillar were overlaid onto English versions for use with community languages.
- **The materials are recyclable.** There are charts in Turkish and Cook Island Maori for teachers to begin lessons with talk about the weather and other events.
- In the past having a second language and culture was seen as a 'problem'. Now we know and recognise the benefits of being bilingual and bicultural – academic, societal, vocational and personal benefits of having two languages and cultures.
- **Most important reason is for children's self-concept and knowledge of who they are.**
- Jane Henry from Cook Island Maori School gave the story of children who would never admit what their background was. Now she has students who will stand up at their day school assemblies and tell everyone that they have a Cook Island Maori background. Teachers and parents see the importance of children maintaining and developing language and culture often in the face of pressures from peer groups to 'fit in'. It is especially difficult in regional Australia, where communities are smaller and more isolated.

Best wishes to all involved and great project and great night!

**Photo Paul Chandler., Minister Burney, Stefan Romaniw, Edna McGill Ken Cruickshank,
Children from Cook island School**