

An ALLiS Coordinator's Experience

by Courtney Lousley, Otakou Mandarin Cluster, 2017



The Otakou Mandarin Cluster grew out of a desire to establish language learning pathways across year groups and across schools in our area. The pedagogy behind what we do comes from the professional development (TPLT, formerly known as TPDL) undertaken by a couple of our teachers.

The Otakou Mandarin Cluster therefore focuses on a task based learning approach. The enthusiasm and desire to learn Mandarin Chinese is clearly visible from our student participants. We are seeing a shift in cultural understanding, cultural tolerance and a development in empathy towards new cultural interactions. We are focused on being part of the Asian Century and aim to provide our students with the best opportunities to be successful participants within that setting.

Our Mandarin programme is focused on elements of the *Tasked Based Language Learning* approach. Each of the units has a focused outcome task that the students will play in the target language of Mandarin Chinese. Over the course of the units we teach students counting, character writing, tone, greetings, everyday language, classroom objects, formulaic expressions and focused game language. The lessons aim to *maximise student output* and to promote fearless participation in language learning. We have created thousands of resources to support the students in their learning. The creation of these resources is ongoing as our students build capability and as we add new units of work to the programme. The digital element is gaining momentum as we also provide a learning tool for every student to support their language learning (it has numerous languages).

In our area, we are working with a largely monolingual group of educators who lack experience, confidence and even exposure to languages other than English in the education setting. To support our growth and the sustainability of the teaching of language and culture we are beginning to incorporate Te Reo Māori alongside the Mandarin programme (inspired by *Elizabeth Crutcher of Rarimu Primary, Whangarei Cluster*). This extension includes sign language of which planning is being developed and provided to our teachers.

Our cluster of 37 classes across 12 schools comprises 947 students. We continue to grow this as we gradually establish language pathways across multiple year groups.

Role of the ALLiS Coordinator:

At the heart of the whole process is our ALLiS Coordinator. The ALLiS Coordinator works full-time to coordinate and drive the Cluster's work. The Coordinator is responsible for the logistics, timetabling and resourcing of our 37 class 967 Cluster student body. This also includes PD for our 37 teachers involved.

One of the keys to the programme is community buy-in and growing understanding and appreciation of the fact that we are entering the Asian Century. Promoting and fostering community engagement has been a key focus of the Cluster Coordinator. Supporting teachers in their development and nurturing belief in the need to provide Mandarin Chinese Language Learning to the children of our communities is critical to its success. The Coordinator is also the link between students, teachers, external organisations and school principals.

The Coordinator operates within a Strategic Plan and has a very clear focus with the ability to adapt provision to the needs and specific requirements of Cluster schools. We are adaptable and able to have community engagement across a sizeable geographic and demographic space. The Cluster Model allows us to meet those needs.

Having a full-time ALLiS Coordinator provides our cluster with the capacity to be able to develop and work towards a clear strategic vision for the continued implementation of our language programme. The Otakou Mandarin Cluster aims for consistent delivery of high quality content and the ability to provide service to the Cluster members with speed. We can respond to change and needs of our schools quickly and provide them with cultural activities such as Tai Chi, Tai Ji and Martial Arts.

The Coordinator also provides pre-service training to our MLA for the New Zealand classroom and New Zealand pedagogy. Other responsibilities include ongoing PD, class observations, and MLA reflections on how their class experiences are tracking. We also provide pastoral care, homestay liaison and are available to assist with any needs our MLA might have.

Development and continual adjustment of unit plans and lesson plans are another important part of this role.

To best establish pathways across multiple year groups, the Coordinator must be able to relate with professional acumen from Year 1 right through to Secondary Education. We must be conscious of establishing teacher capability to support the growing learning expectations of our tamariki during their learning trajectory. *"Students who will leave our schools with Asian language skills will have unprecedented opportunities". (Matt Dennis, ALLiS Coordinator Whangarei Cluster)*

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North South Cooperation:

A significant advance during our second year of ALLiS funding has been to reach out to, make contact with and establish working relationships with other ALLiS Clusters throughout the country.

The models being developed and delivered by our own and other clusters could be all be used to enable a nationwide roll-out of Mandarin learning. This would go a long way towards meeting the goals of a national strategic language plan.

We are establishing and building connections with a number of groups ranging from the *Whangarei Asian Language Cluster*, Auckland Eastern Bays Group, Epsom / Remuera Group, Pakuranga Group, Hillcrest Group, Asia New Zealand, Otago University, Otago Polytechnic, Education New Zealand, Te Tai Tokerau Strategic Planning Group, Confucius Institute, Dunedin City Council and AIMS. This range of networking continues to grow. Consistent within this group of professionals is a commitment to the continuation of ALLiS for the long term.

We have chosen this path of collaboration and networking to establish partnerships throughout the country that support our conviction to develop and build on a set of expertise so that our kids can succeed in the Asian Century. We have 967 kids who are loving this opportunity and we are so very keen to see this level of engagement continue within this vital part of their education.

This new opportunity to work in a Nationwide Collaborative Space is motivated by a desire to drive and grow Asian Language Learning in schools in New Zealand. We are working with others to share best practice. We are looking to create a National Network of ALLiS Coordinators that can create, drive and implement a Strategic Plan that delivers World Class Educational Strategy foundations for all regions.

Initial collaboration and sharing from the *Whangarei Coordinator Matt Dennis* and *Lead School Principal Gerald Koberstein* (Onerahi Primary School) has been instrumental in igniting action. This platform was established as a result of discussions at the ALLiS Ministry Conference in early 2017 in Auckland. Pivotal to those discussions were *Mr David Owen* (Tahuna Normal Intermediate), *Elizabeth Crutcher* (Rarimu Primary), *Principal Tony Hunter* (Tahuna Normal Intermediate) and *Madlen Kunath* (Teacher Development Adviser - ALLiS and Internet Learning). Growing out of this has been the beginnings of a *nationwide collaboration group* created by *Mr Matt Dennis* and myself, *Mr Courtney Lousley*. We see numerous opportunities to continue to grow.

Future Funding:

The Otakou Cluster (*First Round Funding Cluster*) seeks to continue to build on delivering *World Class* quality programmes that are already seeing traction in generational shift and social change. In order to do this we need to continue the level of funding as we are certainly not at a point where we can be self-supporting nor able to be sustainable at this early stage. We are very focused on sustainability while also being very conscious that this is part of a gradual, ongoing, long-term process. There is a fantastic opportunity to embed language learning in our society and this requires long-term commitment by all parties. We certainly expect it to require a number of years of continued support to achieve this.

This level of change takes time and the two year period we have enjoyed is just a start in sustaining and cementing this level of change. We are only just getting started. Without continued funding we will not be able to sustain our programme in its current form and our fears are that it will wither and die. Certainly there will be no option for continued growth in student numbers, pathways and teacher capability.

We want to have fluidity and to be able to have pathways that are organic. To establish this will take time and a continued financial commitment. A ten million dollar investment has proven to be vital initial seeding and in order for continued growth, funding on a national scale will need to continue if we are to normalise language learning.

The Otakou Cluster's convictions are echoed throughout our *nationwide collaborative space*:

"We do look forward to seeing what our own Ministry of Education offer around continuing to fund the sustainability in Asian language and cultural learning for our schools into the future." (Matt Dennis - ALLiS Coordinator Whangarei)

We are very appreciative of the funding and support that has been provided thus far across a range of bodies associated with the ALLiS programme.