

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## A wonderful opportunity

by Han Xi  
National Language Adviser : Chinese

---

The inclusion of "Learning Languages" as a separate learning area in the NZ Curriculum provides a good opportunity for the development of the Chinese language which, according to Ministry of Education statistics, is currently offered by fewer than 60 of New Zealand's 2700 schools. The rapid economic development and huge market in China, fast growing population of Chinese speakers around the world and its over five thousand years long history should be good reasons for New Zealanders to realize the importance of Chinese language. In fact, more and more school principals and parents have realized this and the number of the schools offering Chinese is increasing.

How to attract more New Zealand students' interest in learning Chinese? How to introduce the rich and prosperous culture to more and more New Zealanders? You can survive in the global village without speaking Chinese, but you definitely look much cooler and more interesting if you can understand Chinese culture. Understanding more about Chinese culture will instantly and dramatically shorten the psychological distance between Chinese and New Zealanders. It is much easier to make friends by knowing each other's culture. Realizing that culture and language can never be separated, I think that there is no better way to attract New Zealand students' interest in learning Chinese language than introduce Chinese culture to them first.

In the autumn of 2007, New Zealand played host to a group of fifty-five young performers and musicians from Beijing. The oldest performer of the Folk Art Troupe from Peking University Primary School is just twelve years old, and the youngest seven. Their skilful and colourful acrobatic performances in Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua and Wellington touched the hearts of many New Zealanders. Over five thousand students from 25 schools had the chance to enjoy face-to-face communication with their Chinese contemporaries. Language barrier between the children of the two countries disappeared. Instead, they showed interest to learn each other's cultures.

Perhaps the visit by the Folk Art Troupe has helped to sow the seeds of friendship in the hearts of the children. After the performances, some students asked their teachers if they could learn Chinese next year. Some even started planning a trip to China.

Fortunately, the two governments are very positive in supporting Chinese teaching and learning in NZ schools. Various programmes and initiatives have been set up to

support Performers from the Folk Art Troupe performing for the NZ audience.



Performers from the Folk Art Troupe performing for the NZ audience

Chinese teaching and learning in New Zealand. The programmes or projects supported jointly or separately by the two governments are as follows:

### Teachers of Chinese Scholarship in China

Each year, up to fifteen teachers of Chinese go to China to participate in a four-week immersion programme. They experience Chinese culture and improve their language skills. In January 2007, 15 teachers of Chinese went to Beijing to study at Peking University for four weeks and special programmes with different levels of language were offered to them. A further 10 teachers will take part in the 2008 programme and it is hoped that New Zealand teachers of Chinese will continue to benefit from these fabulous scholarships funded by the two governments.

### Visiting experts from China

The Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) will send experts from China to conduct workshops for teachers of Chinese annually. This year two experts in cultural activities will come to New Zealand at the end of October. They will offer workshops in such activities as paper cutting, paper folding, kite making, lantern making, Chinese knot craft and mask painting on egg in Auckland, Rotorua, Wellington and Christchurch. The workshops are designed for primary and intermediate school teachers and incorporate Chinese language learning into these activities.

### Principals' trip to China

Nine principals of New Zealand primary and secondary schools went to China for one week trip in April 2007. They visited universities, primary and secondary schools in Beijing and Shanghai. They also paid visits to NZ enterprises and Chinese government offices. This kind of principals' trip will be organized annually and we hope more and more principals will develop a better understanding of modern China, its culture and its potential.



NZ students interact with students for the performing Folk Art Troupe from Beijing

### New Zealand secondary students camp in China, December 2007 / January 2008

Nineteen students from Year 11, 12, and 13 plus one teacher will be able to apply for this award and spend four weeks in Beijing and Shanxi. A special programme will be provided for the group at a school in Shanxi province, including study of the Chinese language and culture as well as some sightseeing. The Chinese government funds the in-China programme and the students need to pay the international airfares.

### The Chinese teacher aide programme

Teachers of Chinese who teach Years 7, 8, 9, 10 using Hao kit will have the possibility of getting financial and material support from the Chinese government. This programme is to help the schools with financial difficulties to hire a native speaker teacher aide for the classroom teaching, to give teachers of Chinese more confidence in pronunciation and the knowledge of Chinese culture.

By supplying as much support as possible for the schools and teachers of Chinese, we hope that more schools and teachers will give serious consideration to offering and teaching Chinese.

### Regional language advisers' trip to China

Regional language advisers will be able to visit China in December 2007. This will be a

unique opportunity for them to experience the rapid economic growing in China and bring a greater understanding of China culture and language to their work with teachers.

[Click here for next article](#)