



Asia Education Foundation

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For immediate release

Asia studies scheme reaches 70,000 students

***Major changes in the world are placing new demands on Australian education...
Australians need to become Asia literate, engaging and building strong relationships with
Asia.***

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, Ministerial Council on
Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, December 2008

Australia's geography has never been its strong point: a far-flung nation of Western traditions hampered by the "tyranny of distance". Now Australia is geographically inspired – right in the neighbourhood of the fastest growing economies of the world – and yet still we face an enormous challenge. Are our schools equipping young Australians to take up the opportunities that the "Asia Century" presents?

The Asia Education Foundation's *Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia* (L21CS) project is a major element in the strategy to meet this challenge. Launched in 2008 by the Hon Julia Gillard, Minister for Education, it has reached 6000 teachers and 70,000 students. It is inspiring new approaches in education, creating opportunities for leadership within schools and strengthening the resolve of school communities to work towards global understanding.

The AEF L21CS Forum, opening today in Canberra, will showcase the work of some 60 school leaders - principals who lead the development of studies of Asian languages and cultures in their schools. They will share progress and hear from leading Asia and education experts, and youth leaders.

Forum Keynote Addresses include: HE Mr Primo Alui Joelianto, Ambassador of Indonesia; HE Dr Woosang Kim, Ambassador of Korea; and Minister Counsellor HONG Liang, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the People's Republic of China

Andrew Blair, President of the Australian Secondary Principals Association, says school community leaders and principals will drive a greater Asia focus in the education of Australia's next generation. "We need cultural literacy, we need Asia literacy and our challenge is to make engagement with Asia sustainable from this point on," he says.

The L21CS project has reached over 6,000 teachers and nearly 70,000 students across Australia.

Participating school principals have reported that as a direct result of the program:

- 98% had increased in their understanding of why the study of Asia in schools is important
- 96% had increased their capacity to lead school change
- 98% had significantly increased their awareness of resources
- 87% had significantly increased their awareness of processes that support studies about Asia in schools
- 50% had increased their knowledge of Asia generally

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