



Asia Education Foundation

**Asia Literacy  
Ambassadors**  
Partnering Businesses & Schools

## Ambassador program makes waves

Albion Park High School, NSW and Milton Brown, SurfAid

*Albion Park High School is a coeducational government high school in a semi-rural suburb, just south of Wollongong, in New South Wales. The local population is mainly from an Anglo background and there are very few students of Asian extraction in the school.*

The Asia Literacy Ambassador program has worked well for both Milton Brown and Albion Park High School. It's a textbook case of like-minded people, in like-minded organisations, getting together to achieve a common goal.

Edward Kent, who teaches Japanese at the school, explains how it came about. "We have Japanese and Indonesian language classes running from Year 7 and I found out about the Asia Literacy Ambassadors from the Asia Education Foundation website, when I was working on the school's NALSSP (National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program) project – that's a government grant looking at ways to promote Asia in schools.

"At first it seemed like Asia literacy was tied to certain teaching areas, but as time went on, and through the NALSSP grant, it became a whole school thing. For example, everyone was behind our Bridge to Asia Day event."

### **Taking action**

Having heard about the ambassador project, Edward got in touch with the Asia Education Foundation and his school was matched with Milton Brown, from SurfAid International, a charity which aims to improve the health, wellbeing and self-reliance of people who live in isolated parts of Indonesia.

Milton, himself a former teacher of geography and Asian social studies, takes up the story, "SurfAid started in 2000. I got involved in 2002/2003 and I started the Schools Program in 2007. We're spreading Asia literacy around the world. We have 150

**Asia Literacy:** knowledge, skills and understandings about the diverse countries of Asia  
[ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au](http://ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au)



teachers in California; 150 in New Zealand; 50 from the UK and more than 700 in Australia. It's growing everywhere, with teachers putting a lot of energy into using Asia literacy resources.

"I found out about the ambassador program through a newsletter, and becoming an ambassador seemed a very logical thing to do, to get more people interested in our nearest neighbours.

### **Bridge to Asia**

"Our first event was Bridge to Asia Day, involving all Year 9, and the school also used it as Transition Day for the incoming Year 6, so it was a mix of participants – teachers, students and future enrollees. The older students acted as mentors for the younger ones and the Asia focus helped kids see the school in a different light. They were really positive about it.

"This was my introduction to the school. Now I can go back in and do something more specific. I got the impression about the school that there was definitely stuff happening but there was room for more. I think I could highlight some other connections with Asia in a unique and useful way. At the same time, my involvement with the ambassador program will help increase awareness and understanding about what SurfAid does and why we exist. It gives people another view of the whole aid issue. For kids to understand why we give aid, we've got to give them examples that show how it works."

### **Impacts**

Edward Kent has found that Asia literacy has taken root with his students. "Most come up to me now and talk to me about Japan. During the tsunami, they asked me if I knew anyone in the areas affected. It was starting to hit home how devastating the tsunami had been for the region.

"Asia literacy is affecting the curriculum units of work, finding its way into each of the three key learning areas. Teachers are coming up to me with new ideas. For example, the drama teacher found some Japanese dance moves, and the art teacher is working hard to include Asian art forms. We will also be asking parents of students studying Japanese to come to a performance of Japanese Taiko drums in two weeks' time and they will be invited to the Bridge to Asia Day we are planning.

"We are trying to integrate Asia literacy into the school and it currently has a very high profile. We have Year 9 for Japanese up and running with 14 students and we have got a Year 12 class with six students. I think there are a few, one or two in Year 12, looking at taking it on to further study.

"This is a great program for all schools. I do suggest that schools do get involved. Milton coming in and talking to students has helped them see how being Asia literate works and Milton is, in many ways, a good match. We have a high proportion of students who like to surf and a lot of families who holiday in Bali."