



Asia Education Foundation

**Asia Literacy
Ambassadors**
Partnering Businesses & Schools

A different dimension

Nossal High School, VIC and Lina Koleilat, ANU

Nossal High School is Victoria's first fully academically selective coeducational Government High School. It was created in 2010 and has 400 students.

Originally from the Lebanon, Lina Koleilat has lived and studied in South Korea and Singapore. She speaks Korean and some Mandarin, and for the last couple of years she has worked for the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) in Melbourne. Her job encompasses two roles, working in the business management department and looking at the Asia priority in the new Australian National Curriculum.

Although she works for the organisation that runs the Ambassador project, her decision to participate was a very personal one. She says, "It adds a different dimension to my work. My involvement with Nossal High School has given me much more of an insight into what happens in the classroom."

Generating an interest in Asia

Rohan Bramley, Japanese domain leader, is delighted that she took on this additional role. He says, "Lina came and spoke to my Year 10s and one Year 9 student, the whole of the staff and executive. She was fantastic. She talked a little about her own personal history, talked about the AEF, with great visuals and activities for the students, and, at the end, one of the girls gave her a hug."

Prompted for more detail, he explains, "We have quite a few students of Asian background and they were able to speak a bit of Chinese with her. Staff were very interested in the Asia skills. You always get the people who don't say much at the time but come up to you later and say they found it useful. We had a robust discussion in the domain meetings afterwards and some teachers requested Lina's email address in case they needed to get in touch."

Asia Literacy: knowledge, skills and understandings about the diverse countries of Asia
ambassador.asiaeducation.edu.au



“Staff felt it was worth making the time, even though it was the last week of term, and an added bonus was Lina’s knowledge around the new National Curriculum.”

Overcoming distance

Web 2.0 technologies have been of practical benefit to this Ambassador project. Lina says, “The school is at least an hour from my office, so we were trying to think of a way of preparing things beforehand, without having to commute to the school frequently. We had two Skype meetings. The first time, Rohan carried the laptop around the building as a kind of virtual tour. It was great to use the technology to deliver part of the project efficiently.

“That was enough for us to work together to develop what we wanted to do. We decided we were going to have three main milestones. First, go to the school and (a) have a meeting with the students and interact with them, and (b) meet the teachers and the school community, school staff – all in one visit. Secondly, students would come to the AEF. In the lead up, they’d be asked one research question: ‘How do Asia skills set me apart?’ then they would come and meet with a few people, have presentations, tour the University and have lunch at an Asian restaurant.

“The third milestone was to set up a blog or a wiki space. Rohan is to manage it, students will put things online and they can ask me questions. We’re also looking at me Skyping into classes.”

Personal commitment

Lina feels that her commitment to the project is something that is a personal rather than a work commitment, however because of her connection to the AEF, she felt that the conversation with teaching staff veered away from Asia literacy towards the new National Curriculum, which is currently the prime topic of interest for educators today. The experience of communicating and sharing ideas with the school’s teachers and staff has been very valuable. “The interaction with the students has also been very positive. They ask lots of questions and are very insightful. There’s the click moment, when they get what you’re talking about. “

“You start with an activity, swapping chairs to move around and get them chatting. Then you ask, ‘What does Asia literacy mean to you?’ You get them thinking how diverse Asia is – the land mass it covers and where you draw the boundaries – the whole geo-political, social aspect. The kids really got the diversity of the landscape. They showed insight and I was impressed by their understanding. We have these kinds of conversations at work!”