



Asia Education Foundation

**Asia Literacy
Ambassadors**
Partnering Businesses & Schools

Beyond the School Gate

Whites Hill State College, QLD and Stephanie Loh, PwC

Whites Hill State College is just eight kilometres from the centre of Brisbane at Camp Hill, with 800 students from Prep to Year 12. It is an accredited Asia Learning Centre and has developed strong links with the broader community including service clubs, local businesses and industry, universities and other educational providers.

Whites Hill State College has a reputation as a forward-thinking and innovative school, seeking out opportunities to make connections with other organisations that will bring benefit to its students. So, when Mark Laraghy, the manager of International and College Development, discovered the Asia Literacy Ambassadors program, he was keen to pursue the idea.

The school's first ambassador, senior businessman Bill Nott, was involved in 2010, but had to pull out for family reasons after a couple of initial planning sessions with Mark. His successor Stephanie Loh, who works for PwC, had her first visit to the school on 6 May, 2011, when she was 'Principal for a Day'.

Stephanie said, "I got involved because I am interested in Asia and I wanted to share that interest with the younger generation. A lot of my family are from the region and Asia is a priority for PwC. We're putting in a business development manager to develop our China desk in Brisbane.

"I started by talking to the younger students, then I walked around and visited a couple of classrooms, where I talked to students about my role with PwC. The response was good. I think that's partly because I'm fairly close to their age group and so they can relate to my experience."

Ambitious Plans

At the time of the interview, Stephanie and Mark had ambitious plans for extending the program. They were working on plans for Asia Week at Whites Hill; a focus on building

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



students' career aspirations more generally, through mentoring links with companies; and making the link between these two activities with exchange programs and work experience.

Mark explained, "It's quite an ambitious program but it's about saying to young people, 'when you think of jobs, don't think just about the Brisbane River. You can think more broadly, you can be equipped for something more. You may not be a good linguist, but at least you can embrace the culture of other students and gain benefit for yourself.' I can see students starting to wake up to this idea already."

Mark has taken the Asia literacy message beyond the school gates. He organised an event at Carindale Library, 'Consider your Future with Asia' on 10 May, 2011, with five high profile speakers, all with strong Asia connections. Stephanie was there to co-host the event and original ambassador Bill Nott was one of the five presenters. The audience of about 40 was made up of staff, parents and senior students from schools in the local community.

Asia aware in Brisbane

It was part of the College's profile-building, positioning Whites Hill as the school for parents who want their children to be equipped with the skills that will make them Asia aware and Asia literate.

Mark is now looking at setting up a group of Asia ambassadors, with experience of working with China, to work with schools around Brisbane.