

## Australia Indonesia BRIDGE Project.

***Margaret River Primary has been successful in our application to participate in the Australia – Indonesia BRIDGE project.***

***The Asia Education Foundation has led work on Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships since 2008. BRIDGE stands for ‘Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement’.***

Across the globe school educators increasingly recognize that intercultural understanding is essential if we are to equip our young people to live and work successfully in the twenty- - first century. Intercultural understanding assists students to understand their own cultural traditions, values and beliefs and to engage with the experiences and ideas of others. It is a prerequisite to develop responsible local and global citizens in our interconnected world. The challenge for educators is how to best enable their students to develop intercultural understanding and how to develop their own skills and capacities to lead this work in schools. The Australia–Asia School Partnerships ‘BRIDGE’ Project (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement) has responded to this challenge by building a community of collaborative learners across Australia, China, Indonesia and South Korea. Both teachers and their students are putting the theory of intercultural understanding into action... and getting results. At the heart of BRIDGE is experiential learning supported by a structured process that increases teacher and student awareness of their own and other’s cultures, improves cross cultural communication skills and reduces cultural stereotyping – all achieved within the context of core curriculum in schools. A three– - week, reciprocal homestay and school visit program underpins experiential learning for BRIDGE participants. BRIDGE also utilizes Web 2.0 technologies to enable ongoing collaborative partnership between schools. A purpose built BRIDGE online platform enables teacher professional learning and student interaction (see [www.bridge.edu.au](http://www.bridge.edu.au)). Schools who participate in BRIDGE are drawn from government and non-government sectors.

BRIDGE aims to:

- Establish a community of learners across Australia, China, Indonesia and South Korea with scope to expand to other countries.
- Support this community through a teacher professional learning program based on experiential learning and innovative use of Web 2.0 technologies.

Since 2008, the Asia Education Foundation through the Australia–Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project has:

- partnered 164 Australian schools with schools in China, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand.
- facilitated professional learning to 520 teachers that builds Asia-relevant capabilities.
- supported 171 Australian teachers from 120 schools to visit their partner school in Asia.

BRIDGE schools participate in an in-country experience alongside their Australian/Asian partner school. This experience provides deep insight into the social, cultural, historical and educational aspects of the partnership country. It provides the opportunity to build personal and professional relationships and plan for partnership activity.

The program in each country consists of:

- an initial three days of workshops addressing intercultural understanding, contemporary Australian and Asian society, social media in education and building successful partnerships
- a seven-day homestay and school visit, which provides experiential learning opportunities that build knowledge and understandings of society, culture and education.

The reciprocity of the in-country program experience provides teachers opportunities to identify common ground, dispel stereotypes, challenge preconceptions, agree on project expectations and learn from each other.

'It's very necessary to see the partner's school as culture and education is so different between Korea and Australia. After I saw my partner's school and students I could see how to operate BRIDGE effectively.'

South Korean teacher, Australia-Korea BRIDGE Project

## **Recognition of BRIDGE**

BRIDGE has been recognised nationally and internationally for its innovation in supporting Australia-Asia School Partnerships:

- Included in the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper as a case study supporting the objective for ['all schools to engage with at least one school in Asia to support the teaching of a priority Asian language, including through increased use of the National Broadband Network'](#).
- Acknowledged as one of Australia's leading educational innovations at the [2012 Biennial National Education Forum](#).
- Recognized as a leading model of School Partnerships in the [Australia-Asia Education Partnerships Directions and Opportunities Discussion Paper for CISCO](#).
- Shortlisted (the only Australian entry) in the final 20 projects in the [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations—BMW Award for Intercultural Innovation 2011](#). Australia-Asia BRIDGE ranked 16th out of 400 entries across 70 nations.

### ***Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, School Education objectives***

10. Every Australian student will have significant exposure to studies of Asia across the curriculum to increase their cultural knowledge and skills and enable them to be active in the region.

All schools will engage with at least one school in Asia to support the teaching of a priority Asian language, including through increased use of the National Broadband Network.

11. All Australian students will have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to undertake a continuous course of study in an Asian language throughout their years of schooling.

All students will have access to at least one priority Asian language; these will be Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian and Japanese.

The Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE Project supports the development of intercultural understanding and ICT skills in participating schools to strengthen the bilateral engagement between Australia and Indonesia. The Project supports a number of Australian Government built Indonesian schools to improve teacher capacity and access to technology.

The Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project provides Australian teachers and students with the opportunity to engage with their peers in Asia through a blended model of face-to-face and online learning activities. The project consists of:

- a face-to-face 'establishment visit' of a teacher from Asia travelling to Australia and spending time in an Australian school community. These visits are then reciprocated.
- the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to support a range of online interactions between partner schools led by teachers and students.

Through BRIDGE School Partnerships, students engage with the history, cultures, societies and languages of their partner school. School Partnerships work collaboratively on curriculum programs that develop shared understandings and an appreciation of cultural similarities and differences.

BRIDGE School Partnerships are currently in China, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand.

Ms Janice Dunlop and Ms Belinda Symes will be travelling to Melbourne in May to participate in Professional Learning, and to meet our Indonesian teachers from our Sister School in May. Our Indonesia counterparts will return to Perth with us and commence our Cultural Exchange and Homestay program. We would like to thank Mrs Judy Durlick and Mrs Fran Keeley for hosting our guests during their two-week visit to our school and community.

