A Collaborative Thematic Approach to Transfer Skills in Immersion Classrooms

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Objectives for the session

• Share the experience of our project.
• Give examples of how we used collaborative approach to teach cross-curricular lessons in English and Chinese.
• Help participants brainstorm how they use this approach in their own school.
Program at A Glance

- K and 1st grade: Full Chinese Immersion
- 2nd grade: Begin formal English instruction for 60 minutes per day
- 3rd grade: 60 minutes English instruction per day
- 4th and 5th grade: 90 minutes English instruction per day
Challenges:

English Teachers:
• Not enough time for content instructions
• Not enough English vocabulary for acquiring content knowledge

Chinese teachers:
• Not enough Chinese vocabulary for deeper understanding
• Not enough time for preparation of Testing
MCA-II Assessment
Minnesota State Testing

- State-wide math and reading tests
- Beginning at 3rd grade
- Conducted in English
2009 – 2010 test results:
The first Kindergarten Immersion students

98% of our 3rd grade students scored proficient or higher in math.

87% of our 3rd grade students scored proficient or higher in English reading.
What does this data tell us?

• Students do learn!

• Between learned Chinese and English: Knowledge and skills are transferrable.
How can we maximize students’ learning with the challenges in Chinese and English instruction?

• Theme based curriculum design
• Maximum cross-curricular integration
• Collaboration between Chinese and English teachers
Pilot Study in 2nd Grade Classrooms

- Choose a theme and units
- Decide the objectives for the units
- Design methods and tools for assessing transferrable knowledge and skills
- Create lesson plans and reflections
Growing Up

- Chinese-English integrated unit with content in science, literature, and language arts
Vocab, changes, writing dialogue, timelines
Let’s Go to Japan
Let’s Go to Japan

- Chinese Skills
  - Clothing vocabulary
  - Grammar
  - Where is Japan?
  - Japanese cultural traditions
  - Performing a play

- English Skills
  - What is Art?
  - Using a map legend
  - What is a capital?
  - How to use chopsticks
  - Using reference materials
  - Writing
Let’s Go to Japan

- Students made and packed a paper suitcase with items they would need on a trip to Japan
Let’s Go to Japan

- Students learned about Japanese geography
Let’s Go to Japan

- Students learned Japanese art
Let’s Go to Japan

- Students learned about culture through art
Let’s Go to Japan

- Academic Performance ~ Let’s Go to Japan Play
Let’s Go to Japan

- Practiced using chopsticks in English class
Let’s Go to Japan

- Explored the big idea: What is Art?
Let’s Go to Japan

- Students worked in groups to research aspects of Japanese culture.
How Did We Do It?

- Weekly Planning Times
How Did We Do It?

- List possible skills that could be transferrable

- Decide which skills should be taught in which language/class
How Did We Do It?

- Get organized
  - Can’t do it all in one day
  - Go over completed lesson plans together
  - Set weekly goals
How Did We Do It?

- Follow-up and Reflection
  - Daily email check-in

- Reflection log
How Will YOU Do It?

Discuss how you could integrate an English/Target Language unit at your school
Thank you very much!

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