

Alberta Chinese Language Consortium

May 5, 2011

To: Janice Park
Director: ACAT Secretariat
Campus Alberta Partnerships
Advanced Education and Technology
11th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 – 102 St.
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5

From: Alberta Chinese Language Consortium

Subject: Articulation of Secondary and Post Secondary Language Programs

Dear Ms. Park:

At a recent meeting of the Alberta Chinese Language Consortium (composed of representatives from secondary, post-secondary and community stakeholders from across Alberta) a discussion ensued about work being done to improve the number of students entering post-secondary programs and continuing to pursue study in a language other than English.

During the discussion it became apparent that several other language consortia (those dealing with German, Spanish and French) have also been working on improving articulation of language courses between secondary and post-secondary. Most of this work seems to be focused on the availability of post-secondary courses that articulate with the varied language proficiencies coming out of different secondary language streams (e.g. 3 , 6 and 9 year second language programs, as well as the 12 year bilingual and immersion models).

The challenge faced relates to the fact that in some languages, particularly Chinese, German and Spanish, students are faced with selecting a beginner program (below their level), or very language-demanding courses in advanced literature. There are very few if any courses at an appropriate language level, which can be useful in developing and enhancing the overall language capacity of Alberta post-secondary graduates. Thus students in programs such as Business, Engineering, Science and Education will often select an Arts option rather than continuing the study of a second language.

Post-secondary institutions struggle with identifying the language proficiency levels coming to them in student populations, and thus some tools are needed in order to begin to address the challenge at hand. Currently there are only three apparent options:

1. Alberta Education create grade 12 exams for each of the languages and each of the programming streams (this is decidedly unlikely to occur in the near future)
2. Post secondary language placement assessments (This can work but can lead to inconsistency across the province)

Alberta Chinese Language Consortium

3. Development of a rating scale of language proficiency that could correlate successful completion in a grade 12 language course, based upon analysis of stated curricular outcomes. Such scales exist, such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), already correlated to several internationally recognized language assessments such as: DELF (French), HSK (Chinese), DELE (Spanish), Sprachdiplom (German).

Thus the Alberta Chinese Language Consortium would like to respectfully suggest that ACAT consider participation in a project that would lead to the creation or adoption of a rating system that would reflect language proficiencies resultant from various secondary course streams. This would be invaluable in assisting post-secondary institutions to develop, where needed, courses to meet enrolment demands, and to encourage additional language enrollment.

We would be delighted to respond to questions on the above or provide additional information or explanation as requested.

Should a project, such as described above, be deemed useful and appropriate, the Confucius Institute in Edmonton would be prepared to contribute resources to support such an initiative.

Sincerely,

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Chair: Alberta Chinese Language Consortium

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c.c. Members of the Alberta Chinese Language Consortium