



# ALMA News

## September 2011



ALMA wishes all its members and friends a happy Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋節), which fell on 12 September this year. This festival, also known as the Lantern or Mooncake Festival, is celebrated by many as a time to look up at the full moon, enjoy life and family, and remember relatives and friends who may be far away.



### UPCOMING EVENTS 活动预告

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 22 October, 2.30-4pm

Chinese-Australian Early Childhood Centre, 50 Ainsworth St. Mawson

- Find out more about what ALMA does
- Meet other ALMA members and the ALMA committee
- Take the opportunity to visit ALMA's bilingual childcare centre
- Hear an update on negotiations about ALMA's second bilingual Mandarin/English childcare centre

For more information, contact Mandy on 0408 089 235 or email [canberraalma@gmail.com](mailto:canberraalma@gmail.com)

#### Visit to the Humble House Gallery

Wed 19 October, 6pm.

The ACT branch of the Australia-China Friendship Society is arranging a visit to the Humble House Gallery and shop in Fyshwick to see and find out more about

Chinese furniture and art. For more information contact [cjkeil@proforte.com.au](mailto:cjkeil@proforte.com.au)

### REPORTS ON ALMA ACTIVITIES

#### From the ALMA President

#### 会长的话

The Chinese-Australian Early Childhood Centre (CAECC) has had three major events in the last few months. The first was the official opening of the extension to the centre in May by Ms Joy Burch, MLA, Minister for Community Services and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Other distinguished guests included Ms Gai Brodtmann, MHR, Federal Member for Canberra, Ms Meredith Hunter, MLA, Mr Steve Doszpot MLA, and community leaders including Mr Sam Wong AM, Chair, Canberra Multicultural Community Forum and Dr Li Fuxin, Founder and Principal of the Australian School of Contemporary Chinese. The presence of these guests is a very pleasing indication of the regard with which the CAECC is held within the wider Canberra community. The children put on a splendid display of singing for our guests.

The second event, in June, was an unannounced spot check by a validator from the National Childcare Accreditation Council. Such checks are part of the new National Quality Framework which is being progressively introduced for the childcare sector. The Centre passed with flying colours, providing assurance to families that not only are their children being introduced to a language which is going to provide wonderful opportunities for them in the future, but also that they

are receiving education and care of the highest quality according to criteria established for all childcare centres in Australia.

Congratulations to Judy and her team!

The third event was a visit to the Centre in August by a distinguished group from the Chinese Embassy, headed by the wife of the Ambassador, Counsellor Bai Xiaomei. See the report from the CAECC below for more details, and visit <http://au.china-embassy.org/chn/sgfyrth/t845378.htm> for an account of the visit written in Chinese and some wonderful photos.

On 7 September, I attended with the Director of the CAECC, Judy Kuzma, a round table forum organised by ACT Children Services and convened by the Minister Joy Burch. Most of the attendees were from long-day care centres such as the CAECC.

The meeting's purpose was to find ways to address the chronic shortage of qualified early childhood educators in Canberra, a shortage which is particularly pressing in view of the upgraded requirements for staff qualifications being introduced in the next few years. The CAECC is extremely well placed in this regard as almost all of our staff already have, or are progressing in their studies towards, the required qualifications.

ALMA continues to pursue options for a second childcare centre in the north of Canberra on the campus of the University of Canberra.

Earlier this year, ALMA made a submission to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in relation to the development of a national curriculum for languages in Australian schools.

In a draft "shaping" paper, ACARA proposed increased opportunities for children to learn languages in primary and high schools. ALMA supported these proposals and encouraged those drafting the national curricula to allow sufficient flexibility for children who enter school with multiple language capabilities to

access curricula which challenge their abilities and meet their needs. This recommendation applies particularly to children from the CAECC, of course!

The two languages for which national curricula are being developed first are Chinese and Italian. We look forward eagerly to see what the curriculum writers come up with for Mandarin.

Ian Maclean  
President



In August our centre was privileged to host a visit from Ms Bai Xiaomei, Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy and wife of the ambassador; Mr Zhang Jide, Second Secretary, Education Section; Ms Wu Ting, the Ambassador's secretary; and an embassy media person.

It was a beautiful morning and the children stood outside and sang to welcome the special visitors. Once inside, the children performed again and presented Ms Bai with a gift created by the children and Yongmei (room teacher). This was followed by a lovely morning tea provided by the centre's cook Eva.

The visitors kindly donated some gifts of books and posters. One of the posters showed the words and music of a Chinese folk song, and came with a small handheld plastic instrument which could sing the song for you, commencing at the place where the machine was placed. If held over individual words, the machine could also pronounce them for you. This amazed adults and children alike!

Beginning in October, the toddler outdoor play area is to undergo an upgrade. In July we were successful in a submission to ACT Community Services Directorate for a grant of \$10,000. The play area will be expanded to accommodate some natural



Chinese language program at the primary level. Students from Years 3 to 6 can choose to participate in the program, and then study their subjects in Chinese for 2 days per week. The program has shown great success in developing students' language competence and proficiency levels, especially in listening and speaking.

This year, the Chinese government has provided the school with a language assistant to help our teachers and students in their teaching and learning. Students really enjoy having conversations with Jan, and have improved their speaking and listening communicative fluency. Strong support from the school community is also a crucial force in making this program successful.

This term, students have been learning about and researching Chinese historical and contemporary architecture. They completed a project at the end of this unit, and produced some fantastic PowerPoint presentations, posters and models of significant Chinese architecture. They displayed their work at a school assembly, and some will be entered for the Panda Competition this year.



### Free Online sites to help you learn and practice Mandarin

**YELLOW BRIDGE:** Have fun with free dictionaries, a guide to writing characters, lists of words that share the same head or tail word, derived words, and words with similar pronunciation.

[www.yellowbridge.com/chinese/](http://www.yellowbridge.com/chinese/)

**CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE ONLINE:** Free Listening and reading materials for all ages from kindergarten up

[http://learning.chinese.cn/en/?gclid=CP\\_k45-5\\_qoCFUNLpgodhBV\\_zg](http://learning.chinese.cn/en/?gclid=CP_k45-5_qoCFUNLpgodhBV_zg)



### Canberra Grammar shines in Chinese Proficiency Competition

Eoin White from Canberra Grammar School won this year's Hanyu Qiao

(Chinese Bridge) Mandarin-speaking competition for high school students of non-Chinese background in high schools in WA, NT, ACT, and SA. He and a student from Western Australia will represent Australia at the international competition held in China in the next few months.

All three representatives of the ACT this year came from Canberra Grammar.

Well done Eoin and CGS!!



### Interesting Findings about Young Children and languages

Patricia Kuhl, a professor of Speech and Hearing Sciences speaks about the importance of starting languages at a very young age.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia\\_kuhl\\_the\\_linguistic\\_genius\\_of\\_babies.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies.html)

Three leading psycholinguists speak to Natasha Mitchell about their research on the fabulous bilingual brain on ABC radio's 'All in the Mind' program

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/allinthemind/stories/2011/3164263.htm>

A survey involving 97.5 % of five-year-olds in Australia shows that children who are proficient in English and speak another language at home are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable on most of the Australian Early Development Index AEDI domains compared to all other children.

[http://video.wch.org.au/aedi/National\\_Report-March\\_2011\\_Reissue\\_final.pdf](http://video.wch.org.au/aedi/National_Report-March_2011_Reissue_final.pdf)



**CONTRIBUTIONS TO ALMA NEWS AND UPDATES WELCOME**

Please email [canberraalma@gmail.com](mailto:canberraalma@gmail.com) by 31 October 2011.

*NOTE: Decisions on publication remain at the discretion of the editor*

For more information about ALMA and to see past ALMA newsletters visit our website at <http://alma.anu.edu.au>