

MEDIA RELEASE

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Asia warning for Wellington principals

The Asia New Zealand Foundation, in association with the Ministry of Education, is holding the latest in a series of Principals' Forums in Wellington on Thursday 14th May.

The vision is to educate and prepare young New Zealanders for New Zealand's inevitable and increasing dependence on Asia.

Asia New Zealand Foundation education director Vanessa Lee urges school principals in the Wellington region to attend this forum to ensure that all students are given opportunities to be confident in engaging with the countries and peoples of Asia.

"It is critical that school principals attend. They are New Zealand's change-makers and are the key drivers to ensure that there is a focus on Asia in their schools. This will mean that students leave school equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to be global citizens, especially with our Asian neighbours."

Ms Lee said there were many indicators that already highlight the importance of the Asian region and these were likely to become more marked in future. For example:

- Asians also make up about ten percent of the New Zealand population and this proportion is reflected in the increasing ethnic diversity in New Zealand schools
- The New Zealand school system depends on students from Asian countries. In 2008, there were over 8,000 international students from Asian countries enrolled in New Zealand high schools.
- The majority of foreign fee-paying students in our schools come from Asia. In 2008, that figure was 86 percent, of which 45 percent come from South Korea, 12 percent come from Japan and nearly 14 percent came from China.
- Asia is the region that has been identified by New Zealand government, policy makers and business leaders as the single most important region to New Zealand's future prosperity. Currently, ten of our top 20 export markets are in Asia



- New Zealand has free trade agreements with China, Thailand, Singapore and ASEAN and is pursuing others with Malaysia and South Korea.
- Tourism from Asia is a significant driver for our economy. In the year to March, nearly 14 percent of all visitor arrivals or over 400,000 people came to New Zealand from Asia.

But are our schools are doing enough to educate and inform our young people about Asia?

“Are Asian languages like Mandarin readily available for young people who want to prepare themselves to what has been described as ‘Asia’s Century’?” Ms Lee said.

“Are our young New Zealanders prepared to live in an increasingly multi-cultural society where every New Zealander is likely to have contact with Asia in some way or another in future, even if they never leave their home town?”

She says this forum is a good opportunity for school principals to assess if they are doing a good job with regards to Asia. The Wellington forum is the latest in a series of similar events that have been held in other centres such as Christchurch, Dunedin, Auckland, Tauranga and New Plymouth.

All Wellington school principals are invited to attend this forum, which is free. It starts at 4pm and concludes at 8.30pm and includes an Asian banquet. The venue will be the Bell Gully offices, HP Tower, 171 Featherston St, Wellington.

Please register with Paula McLaughlin at emailing pmclaughlin@asianz.org.nz or by phoning 04 470 8700.

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