

Open Road Conference 2008

*Engaging the Language Learner
in the Multicultural World.*

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Overview of Open High School

Open High School is a Distance Education school specialising in the quality Teaching and Learning of Languages. The school offers 11 Languages in over 38 courses. The school was established to ensure that students had the opportunity to study the language of their choice, when it could not be offered in their home school. Furthermore, students with a family history of the language were able to develop and immerse themselves within their culture. Open High School (OHS) offers the following languages:

- * Chinese
- * French
- * German
- * Indonesian
- * Italian
- * Japanese
- * Korean
- * Latin
- * Modern Greek
- * Russian
- * Spanish

Over the years OHS students have been taught using a variety of delivery methods. These have included: learning via print based materials, telephone lessons, audio cassettes, face to face lessons, study days and excursions. Students quickly adapted to the routine of receiving their lessons in the form of work packages containing a number of Cover pages. Cover pages included the set work to be completed during the week and contain predominately print based materials.

The increased emergence of technology and its use in education has greatly improved the teaching and learning of Languages at Open High School. As such, we are currently in the process of digitally migrating our print based and analogue recordings. Our methods of teaching and learning are changing rapidly to meet and improve the needs of our students, learning languages in a digital world. We will now examine the ways in which our school promotes and supports the study of languages as a partnership between students, teachers, parents and the community.

At Open High School, we strongly believe in the need for interactive learning and the incorporation of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in all of our language courses. This has largely been achieved through the use of our online learning management system (Moodle), our school Website and the school Intranet.

Moodle is the learning management system operating at Open High School. Moodle is an Open Source software package allowing educators, businesses and communities to provide and develop through online learning communities. Moodle has a community with over 330,000 registered users, speaking over 70 languages in 196 countries.

Moodle provided a way for our students to feel that they were part of a class and could socially interact with their peers. The nature of Distance Education usually sees the student waiting weeks before their work is responded to. Moodle provides students with much needed instantaneous feedback and recognition for their work. Moodle allows for the collaboration and celebration of languages through the online learning community that has been established.

A demonstration of the Open High School Moodle Site will be given. This will include:

- ♣ The use of self correcting quizzes which allow students to improve on their results immediately.
- ♣ The use of photo stories and oral narratives to emulate the cultural and real life experiences in the country in which the language originates.
- ♣ The use of videos and photos taken on field and study trips to articulate geographical areas, famous landmarks and attractions.
- ♣ The function of integrating sound files in allowing students to hear the pronunciation of words at that immediate point in time.
- ♣ The use of Moodle as a diagnostic tool for teachers.

A demonstration of the Open High School Website will be given.

- ♣ In this section we will show how our website is being used as a means of communication between students, parents, supervisors and the community.

- ♣ In addition we will sample a podcast that has been developed to provide information and communicate with prospective parents and students.

In the era of multimedia learning, instruction is largely dependant on visual instruction and presentation. Online instruction tends to be more focused on attracting the learner to buy their product, and as a result software designers are more concerned with graphics and how visual appealing a product is to its consumer.

Whilst the use of technology has been very beneficial for our staff and students, we would also like to discuss the issues and processes involved in changing to a 'Digital' school. These have included:

- ♣ *The provision for training staff in regards to ICT.*
- ♣ *Instructional design. Making sure that all online lessons are not just a replication of print based materials.*

Throughout our presentation we will provide a practical and critical demonstration of Language learning in a digital environment.