

Teachers of Critical Languages Program 2018-2019 Year in Review

At the conclusion of the 2018-2019 school year, TCLP staff calculated statistics from all teachers over the course of their year-long exchange in order to gauge the impact of the program as a whole across all levels and geographies. Monitoring and evaluation data came from monthly exchange teacher surveys, as well as post-program surveys that were distributed to teachers, students, and parents. The resulting information provides valuable insight into the individual experiences of students studying Arabic and Chinese. These statistics are used to measure the impact of the 2018-2019 teachers and to make informed decisions about monitoring and evaluation of TCLP for future years.

Collectively, the 2018 cohort of 28 exchange teachers taught over 4,350 students in their classes. This year's teachers garnered an impressive 4,917 hours of professional development and participated in a total of 2,180 hours of outreach in their respective communities and schools, reaching out to over 22,000 community members and building bridges of mutual understanding.

The feedback received from host schools was overwhelmingly positive. In addition to paving the way for the expansion of K-12 critical language programs in schools, TCLP is also making a tremendous difference in the lives of its U.S., Chinese, Egyptian, and Moroccan participants. 2018-2019 TCLP mentor teachers completed a post-program survey, in which they provided substantial evidence that TCLP is enabling many schools to expand their Arabic and Chinese language programs in long-term, sustainable ways. Of the mentor teachers surveyed, more than three-quarters said their school has increased motivation to develop its Arabic or Chinese language program as a result of participating in TCLP (Figure 1). Many schools followed up their intentions with action; over half of mentors reported that their schools plan to hire an additional Arabic or Chinese teacher (Figure 2). These figures emphasize TCLP's effectiveness at achieving its primary goal to increase the teaching and learning of critical languages in K-12 schools across the country. For many schools, 2018 was the first year of their Arabic/Chinese program and a critical period in which success was far from certain. Yet, nineteen out of twenty-five respondents (excluding those who did not know) said that their school will continue to offer Arabic or Chinese classes the coming school year.

As a result of participating in TCLP this year, does your school have increased motivation to further develop its Arabic/Chinese language program?

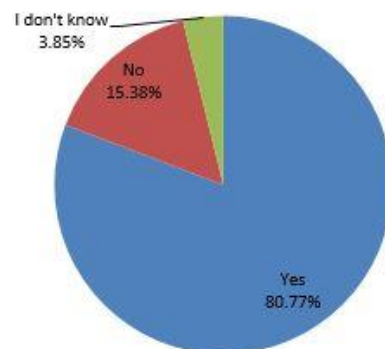


Figure 1

After your year with TCLP, does your school plan to hire an Arabic/Chinese teacher?

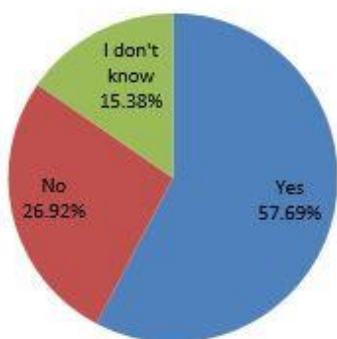


Figure 2

Finally, in order to evaluate the sustainability of the 2018 program year, mentors were asked how many new students they anticipated enrolling in 2019 Arabic/Chinese classes as a result of the school's year with TCLP. Host schools expected to enroll on average sixty-three new students in Arabic or Chinese next year thanks to TCLP.

Said one host school principal of their exchange teacher: "Gao Laoshi's impact cannot be measured. In a rural, predominately white community, students and educators have little firsthand experience with the Chinese culture. The education she has provided has created a cultural awareness that did not exist prior to her visit."

In a separate survey given in May 2019, students rated their Arabic and Chinese abilities in the four language skills (speaking listening, reading, and writing) at the beginning and end of the year with TCLP. Students reported dramatic gains in their command of the target languages across all areas, which suggest high teacher effectiveness (Figure 3).

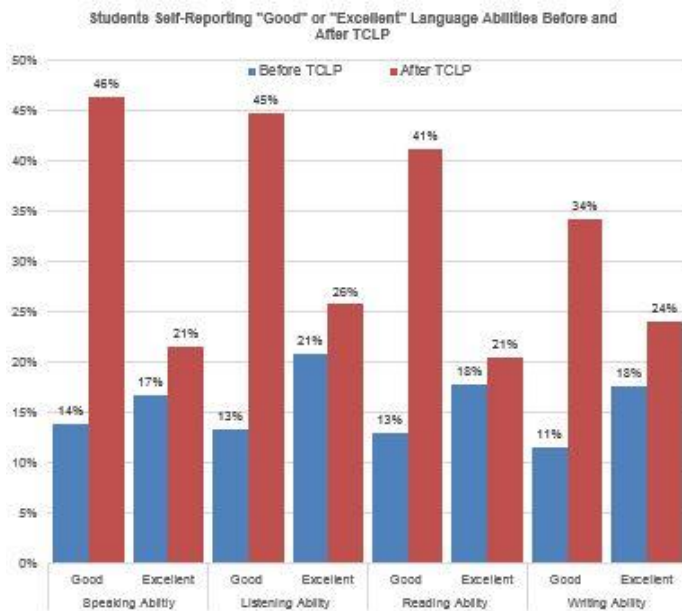


Figure 3

Students also self-reported their understanding of various areas of Chinese, Egyptian, and Moroccan culture. The survey revealed a relatively low baseline at the beginning of the year, with most first-year language students saying they knew "a little" about areas of Arabic and Chinese culture. Students reported that the biggest jump in their knowledge at the end of the year was of traditions, festivals, and holidays; countries where Arabic and Chinese are spoken; and modern life (Figure 4).

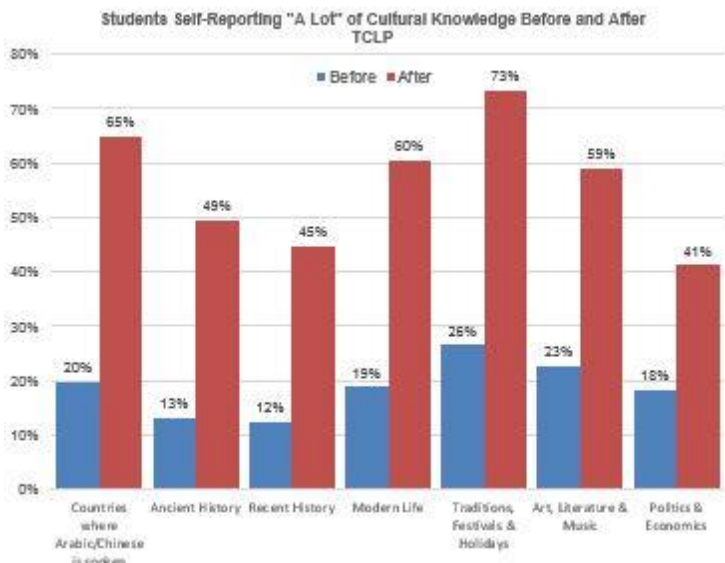


Figure 4

What Students and Parents Are Saying

"It gave me a new perspective on a culture I didn't know a lot about before and helped me understand the language more because she is fluent."

– 11th grade student, Massachusetts

"Opened their eyes to other cultures and allowed them, especially my daughter, to show aptitude and passion for language."

– Parent of a 3rd grade student, Ohio

"I love the language and I plan on continuing in the field of study in my personal time."

– 11th grade student, Tennessee

"I hope that my child's elementary school continues to have Chinese class for its students. It has been a very meaningful and enriching experience. I wish the students were able to spend more time in Chinese class per week."

– Parent of a 2nd grade student, Texas

"Personally, I feel like I have learned a lot about China, how things work there, how it looks, how people greet each other, and what they believe and it was a great learning experience that I would not have gotten elsewhere."

– 9th grade student, Pennsylvania

"My most successful and memorable Chinese moment was the Chinese New Year celebration. [Participating in the celebration] really helped me learn Chinese numbers because I was in charge of the numbers activity station. I also learned so much more about the Chinese culture."

– 6th grade student, Florida

TCLP also evaluated how the exchange teachers affected student attitudes toward language learning, measuring student satisfaction at the end of the school year through both direct and indirect means. When asked directly, “How satisfied have you been with the TCLP teacher’s class overall this year?” forty-three percent of students answered that they were “very satisfied” and thirty-two percent responded that they were “satisfied” (seventy-five percent combined). Most students also reported that their teacher treated all students fairly, showed passion for teaching, cared about student progress, set clear expectations, and was well-prepared (Figure 5).

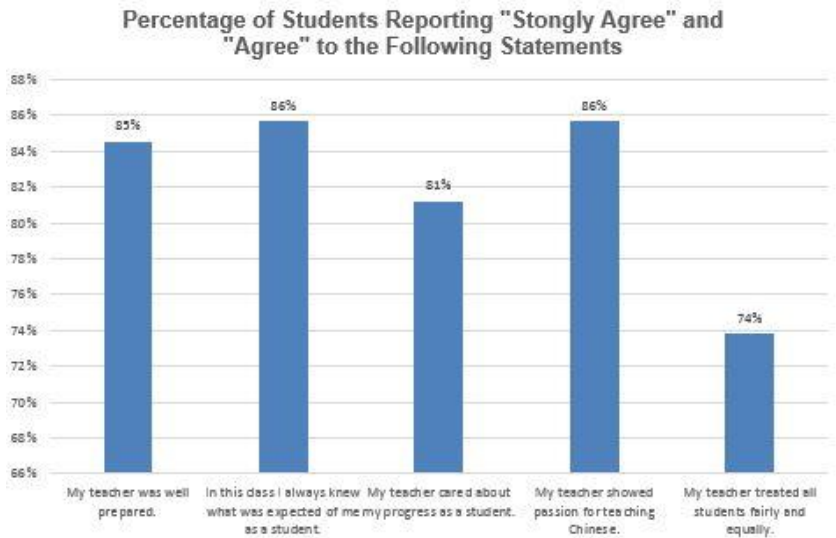


Figure 5

As students ended the school year with such positive attitudes towards the study of Arabic and Chinese overall, there was a corresponding confidence among exchange teachers that their host schools’ critical language programs would continue. Additionally, ten out of twenty-eight exchange teachers started new programs at their U.S. host schools and worked on developing new curricula that their host school will be able to use in future years.

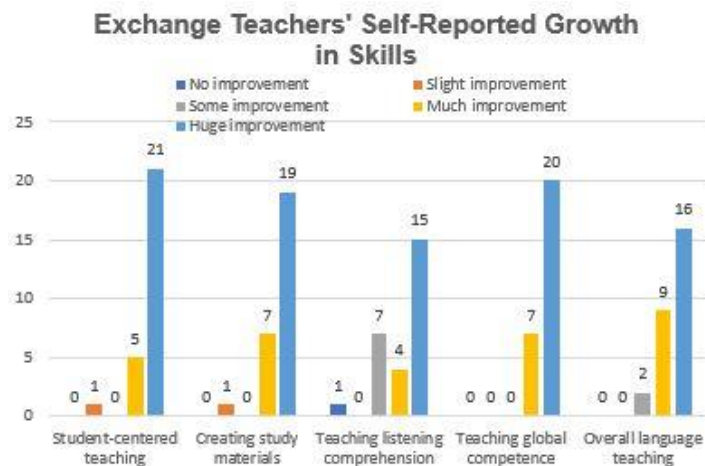


Figure 6

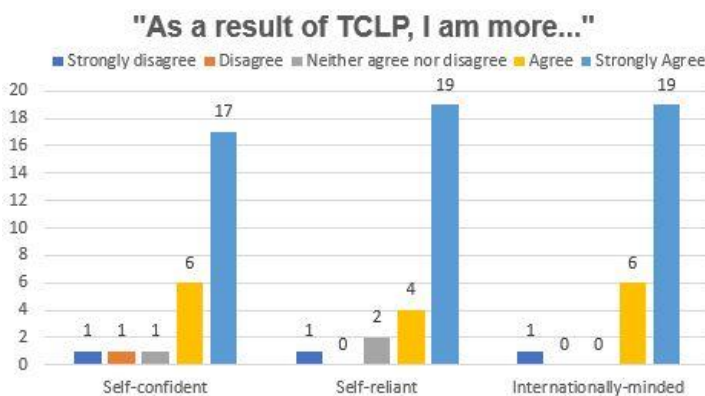


Figure 7

In developing or expanding language programs at their host schools, exchange teachers simultaneously experienced significant gains in their language teaching abilities. Of the twenty-seven responding exchange teachers, twenty-six reported at least some improvement in the following areas: student-centered teaching, creating study materials, teaching listening comprehension, teaching global competence and overall language teaching. Most notably, ninety-two percent of TCLP teachers noted much improvement or huge improvement in their overall language teaching skills (Figure 6).

In addition to skills that are directly related to foreign language instruction, exchange teachers reported an improvement in cross-cultural and interpersonal knowledge. Out of the twenty-seven responding exchange teachers, the vast majority agreed that their participation in TCLP resulted in higher degrees of self-confidence and self-reliance. All but one of the twenty-seven teachers maintained that they are more internationally minded as a result of the program (Figure 7).

Exchange Teachers Reporting Themselves as "Very Knowledgeable" or "Extremely Knowledgeable"

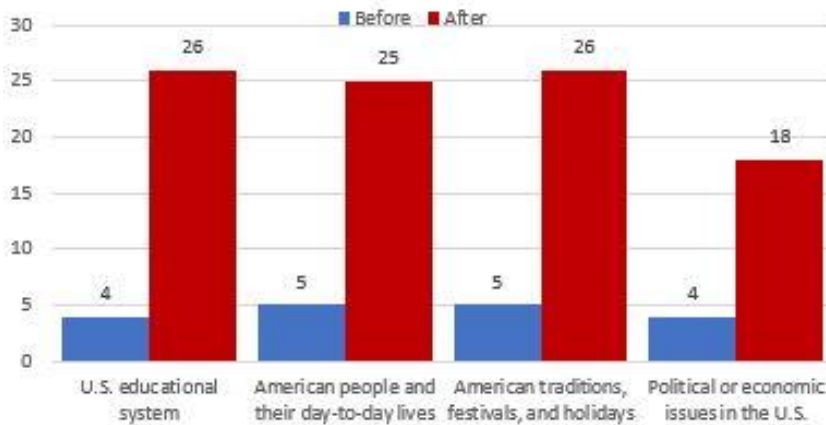


Figure 8

International participants additionally reported that their understanding of American culture improved as a result of living and working in the U.S. (Figure 8). Only five teachers qualified themselves as very knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable about American people and their daily lives at the beginning of the program. By the end of TCLP, twenty-five teachers qualified themselves as very or extremely knowledgeable in this area. This increase is particularly significant when considered alongside data collected on participants' post-program plans. All teachers surveyed indicated that they are likely to implement more globally-focused activities in their home classrooms, schools, and communities.

Sixteen teachers expressed an interest in developing a sister-school relationship with a U.S. school following the return to their home countries and seven teachers began sister-school partnerships between a U.S. school and their home schools in China, Egypt, and Morocco while still in the U.S. So far, these sister-school relationships have included international travel in addition to virtual classroom exchanges. One exchange teacher led her U.S. students on a trip to China where they visited students at her home school. Another exchange teacher facilitated virtual meetings between her host school principal and her home school principal who had the opportunity to meet in person when the U.S. principal traveled to China. During his visit, he met with his Chinese counterpart and together they signed a memorandum solidifying the sister-school partnership. Many of these sister-school projects are ongoing and will expand to include more student travel opportunities in the future. This speaks to the enduring value that exists in teacher exchanges; specifically, that program's conclusion does not translate to the end of the cultural exchange. Participants are able to apply their experiences in the U.S. to their teaching at home to educate students and colleagues about the United States.

Exchange Teachers Share Their Future Plans

"I've learned many new teaching methods and some different teaching concepts. During the first year, I plan to implement what I learned into my classroom and share them with my colleagues in home school. Over the next 5 years, I plan to promote the exchange visits between host school and home school." – Chinese Exchange Teacher

"I plan to facilitate virtual sessions between my students in Egypt and my students in U.S.. I [also] plan to conduct sessions of professional development for my colleagues in Egypt so that I can transfer what I have learned to as many teachers as possible." – Arabic Exchange Teacher

American Councils staff also used participant feedback surveys to determine whether TCLP is accomplishing its greater mission. Out of the twenty-seven responding exchange teachers, twenty-six teachers felt that their exchange helped them to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the U.S. and their home countries, promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement, and strengthen ties between the people of the United States with people of other countries (one teacher did not respond to this question). All twenty-six teachers said that their participation in the program made dramatic or significant contributions toward these program goals (Figure 9).

Mentor teachers from U.S. host schools similarly experienced personal and professional development as a result of taking part in TCLP. The most notable achievements mentor teachers shared included increased understanding of a different language and culture, as well as increased opportunities to network with international educators.

Said one mentor teacher: “By participating as a mentor teacher with TCLP, I build patience and empathy and continue to develop my communication skills every year. My perspective broadens and I have a greater understanding of not just a different culture, but how to relate to one another as humans living in a global society. My leadership skills continuously develop and I learn how to give meaningful, thoughtful, and productive feedback to others.”

Some U.S. teachers who served as mentors in the program also noticed positive impacts in areas beyond those traditionally associated with international exchange, including curricula design and setting performance targets (Figure 10).

“The best part [of the TCLP program] was making a lifelong friend and colleague who has taught me more than I ever could have hoped for. I thoroughly enjoyed our weekly meetings to discuss issues, difficulties, progress, and successes,” said one respondent of their experience.

Additional remarks about TCLP from exchange teachers and mentor teachers are included on the following page.



Figure 9

As a result of your relationship with the exchange teacher, how were your skills in the following areas affected?

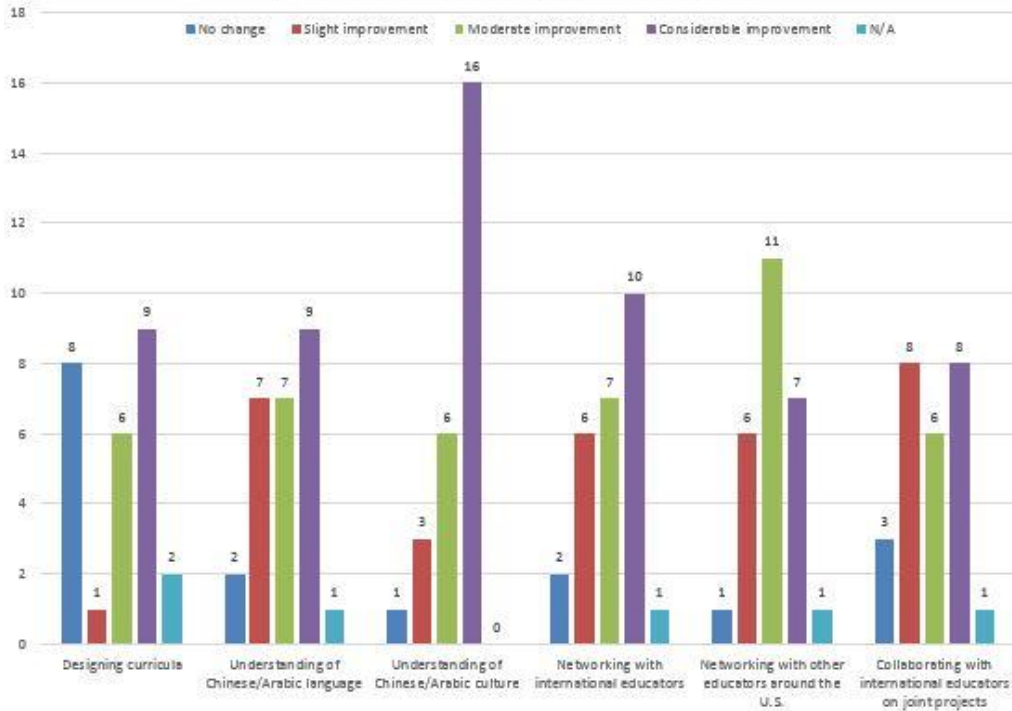


Figure 10

Feedback from TCLP Exchange Teachers and Mentor Teachers

“[Our TCLP exchange teacher] became an integral member of both our elementary and middle school foreign language program. She taught nearly 200 [students], created a middle school Chinese club, and offered multiple outreach events over the course of the year... Her enthusiasm and cultural diversity enriched our community members old and young.” – TCLP Mentor Teacher

“TCLP provides us with rich resources for our professional development. [The TCLP staff] cares about the connection among us... and everyone is kind and patient” – TCLP Exchange Teacher

“This year our exchange teacher contributed to our program by building upon the foundation established by our first exchange teacher... In addition, she helped build our sustainability. Because of this program, our district was able to see the positive impact a language program had on our students, staff, building, district, and community and created four sections of world language at the elementary level for next year!” – TCLP Mentor Teacher

“Chinese 1 will expand next year. The number of students who registered for Chinese 1 has made a big leap from 30 to 75 after one year with TCLP.” – TCLP Exchange Teacher

“This program benefits schools, students, teachers, communities in both countries. I really hope TCLP will last forever.” – TCLP Exchange Teacher