

Teachers of Critical Languages Program 2014-2015 Year in Review

At the conclusion of the 2014-2015 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 2014-2015 teachers and to make informed decisions about monitoring and evaluation of TCLP for future years.

Collectively, the 2014 cohort of exchange teachers taught over 3,101 students in their classes and spent over 9,379 hours planning lessons and designing Mandarin/Arabic curriculum. This year's teachers garnered an impressive 2,294 hours of professional development and participated in a total of 781 hours of outreach in their respective communities and schools, reaching out to 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, and Egyptian participants. Eighty-five percent of all 2014-2015 TCLP mentor teachers completed a post-program survey, in which they provided substantial evidence that

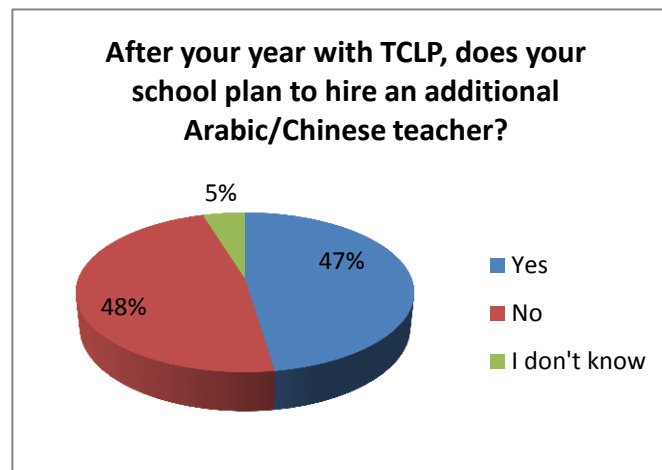


Table 1

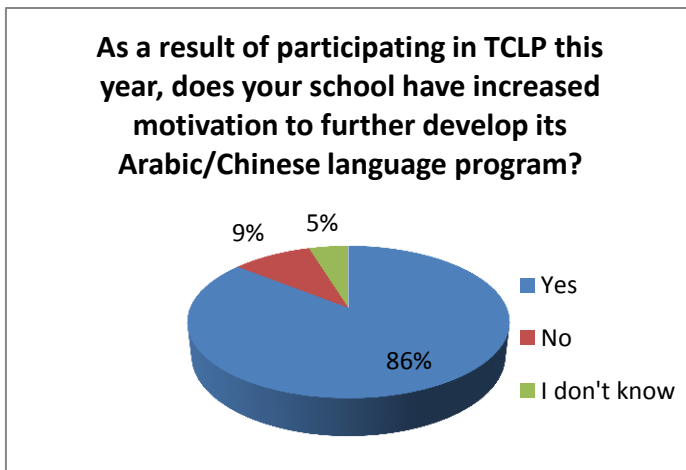


Table 2

TCLP is enabling many schools to expand their Arabic and Mandarin language programs in long-term, sustainable ways. Of the mentor teachers surveyed, a strong majority of eighty-six percent said their school has increased motivation to develop its Arabic or Mandarin language program as a result of participating in TCLP (Table 2). Many schools followed up their intentions with action; forty-seven percent of mentors—a plurality of respondents—reported that their schools plan to hire an additional Arabic or Chinese teacher (Table 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, 2014 was the first year of their Arabic/Chinese

program and a critical period in which success was far from certain. Yet, sixteen out of twenty respondents (excluding those who did not know) said that their school will continue to offer Arabic or Mandarin classes the coming school year.

Finally, in order to evaluate the sustainability of the 2014 program year, mentors were asked how many new students they anticipated enrolling in 2015 Arabic/Chinese classes as a result of the school's year with TCLP. Host schools expected to enroll on average one hundred one students in Arabic or Chinese next year thanks to TCLP. In other words, almost as many students will benefit from TCLP the year *after* the exchange as during the program year itself.

In a separate survey given in May 2015, 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 (table 3).

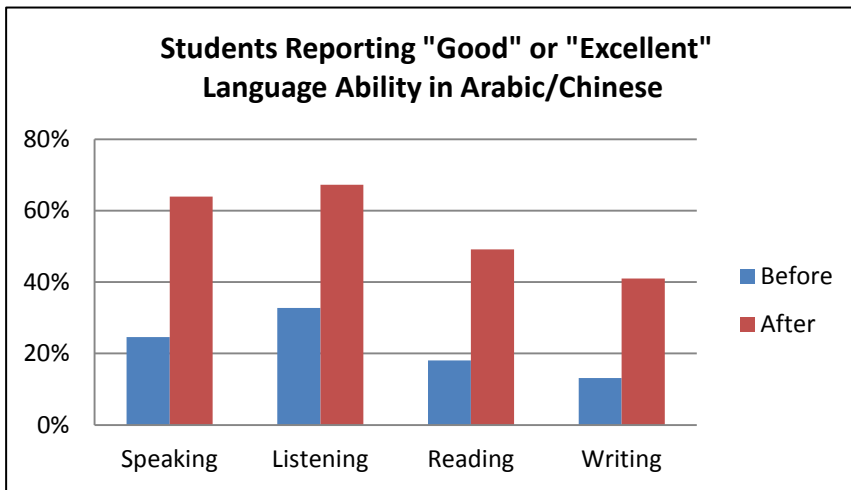


Table 3

Students also self-reported their understanding of various areas of Egyptian and Chinese culture. The survey revealed a relatively low baseline at the beginning of the year, with most first-year language students saying they knew “nothing” 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; art, literature, and music; and modern-day society (Table 4).

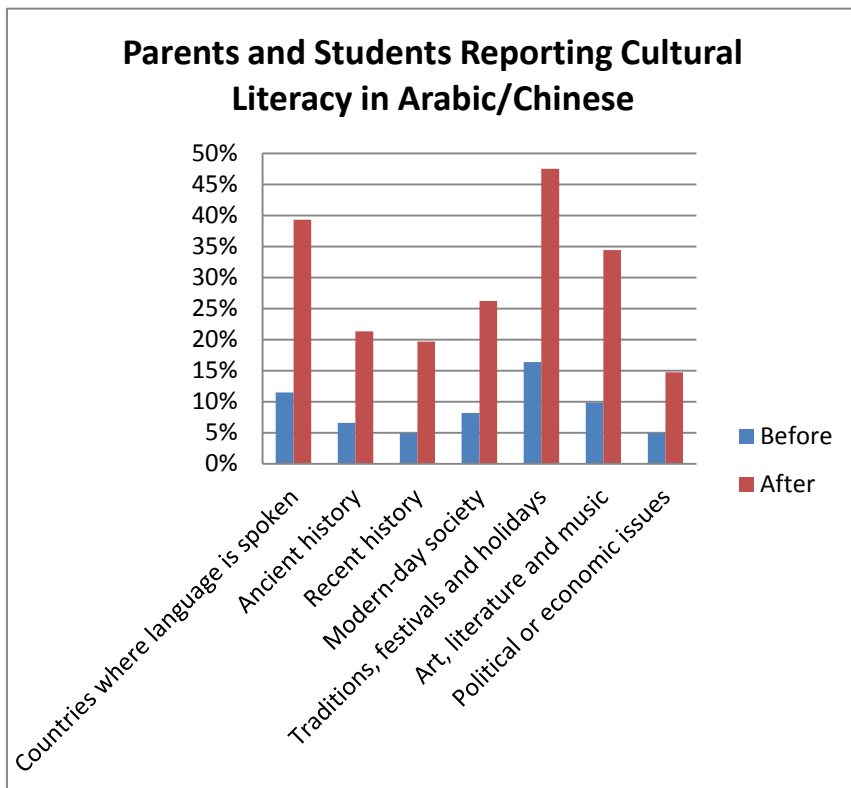


Table 4

What Students Are Saying

“It has greatly increased my over-all interest in Arabic. I took this class simply because I am very interested in languages, and thought this would be something neat to add to my list. I did not expect to learn as much as I did and to be this successful. It has impacted me positively.”

– Student, age 15, Wisconsin

“I have nothing to say except thank you for the amazing opportunity to learn a language and for going out of your way to teach us about Chinese. I really look forward to learning about Chinese in the future.”

– Student, age 13, New York

“I found having a teacher from China was enormously helpful not just in learning more about the Mandarin language, but also when learning about the Chinese culture. Some of the most invigorating conversations we had in class were when the teacher asked us questions about our culture.”

–Student, age 15, Georgia

“I think this is a great program, especially in a small town in Wisconsin where kids don't have a lot of access to multiple cultures. Great exposure to a new culture!”

–Parent of 14-year-old, Wisconsin

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 Chinese teacher’s class overall this year?” seventy-one percent of students answered that they were “very satisfied” (forty-three percent) or “satisfied” (twenty-eight percent). Solid majorities of students also reported that their teacher treated all students fairly, respected student viewpoints, cared about student progress, and exhibited both passion and preparation for language teaching (Table 5).

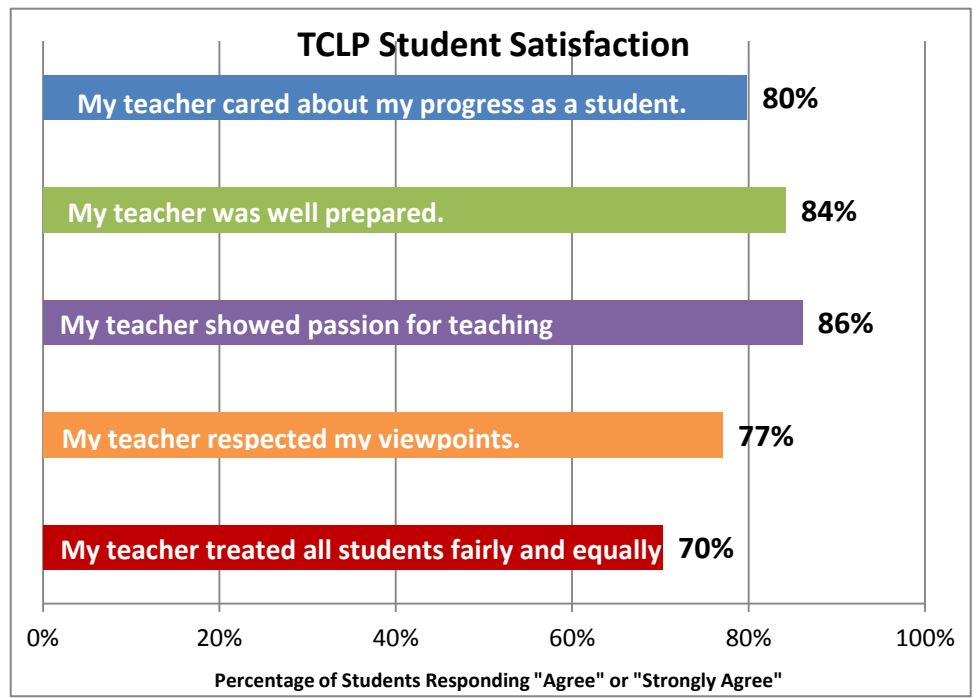


Table 5

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. Among exchange teacher survey respondents, fifty-nine percent said that their host schools were planning to hire a full-time Arabic or Chinese language teacher for the next school year (excluding three teachers who did not know). Additionally, seventy-seven percent of exchange teachers had worked on developing a curriculum that their host school will be able to use in future years.

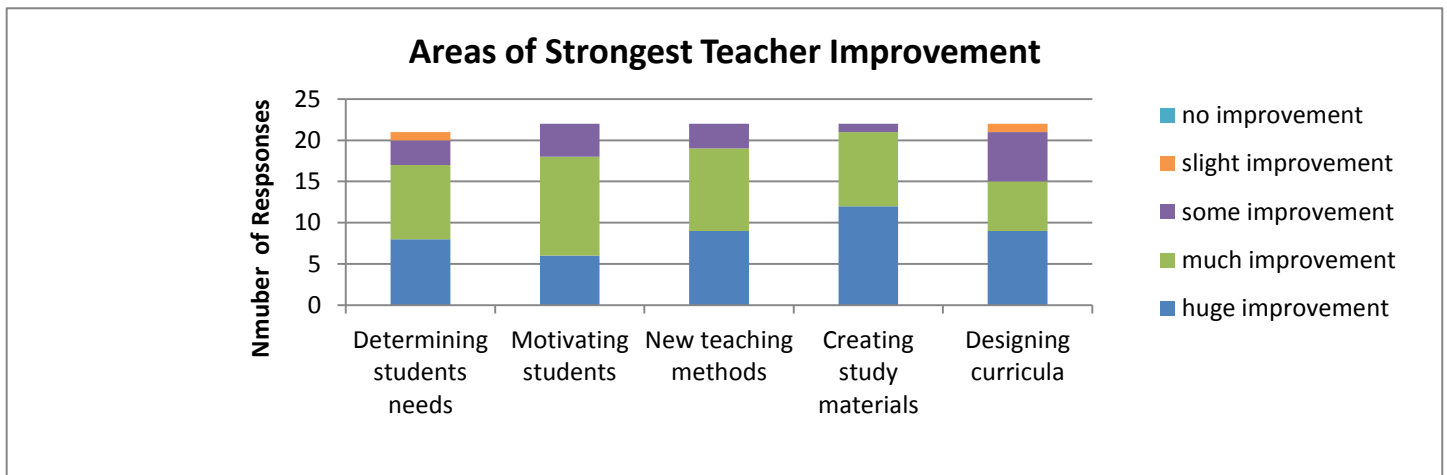


Table 6

In developing or expanding language programs at their host schools, exchange teachers simultaneously experienced significant gains in their language teaching abilities. Of the twenty-two exchange teachers, all reported at least some improvement in the following areas: Determining language learning needs of students, Motivating students to learn, Learning new teaching methods, Creating study materials, and Designing curricula. Most notably, ninety-five percent of TCLP teachers noted much or huge improvement in their abilities to create instructional materials and eighty-six percent of teachers reported much or huge improvement in new teaching methods (Table 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 total twenty-two participants, twenty agreed that their participation in TCLP resulted in higher degrees of self-confidence. Twenty-one teachers also maintained that they are more self-reliant and internationally minded as a result of the program (Table 7).

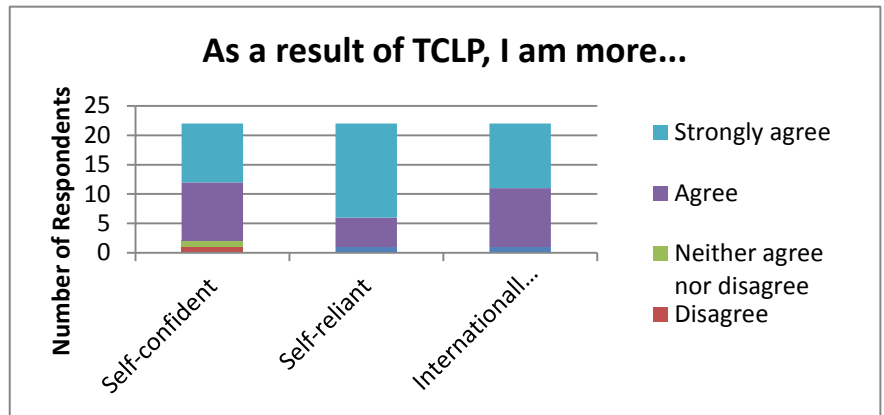


Table 7

International participants additionally reported that their understanding of American culture improved as a result of living and working in the U.S. (Table 8). Three teachers qualified themselves as very knowledgeable about American people and their daily lives at the beginning of the program. By the end of TCLP, twenty-one 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 schools and communities. Fifteen

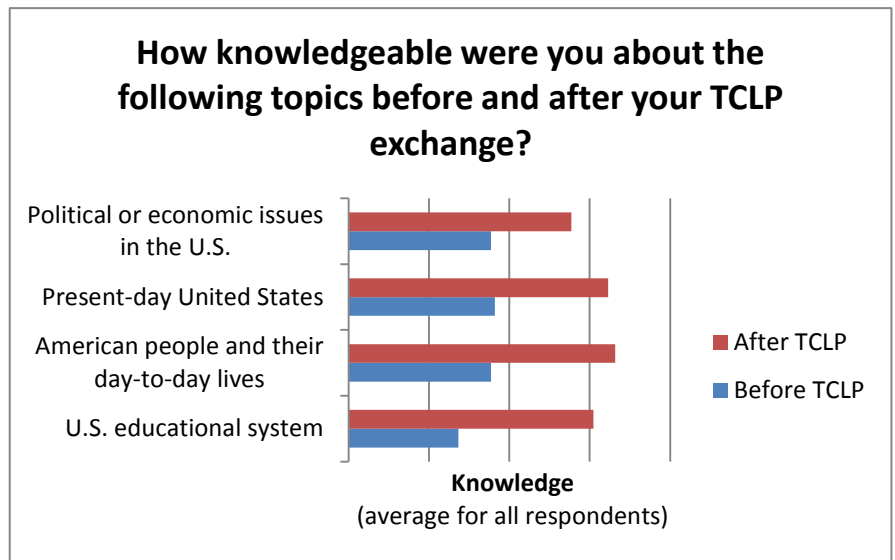


Table 8

teachers expressed an interest in developing a sister-school relationship with an American school following the return to their home countries. 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

Exchange Teachers Share Their Future Plans

"After I go back to China, I will be more confident in introducing American social life and culture to my students and apply the new globally focused classroom activities to... my classroom teaching."

– Chinese Exchange Teacher

"I've significantly improved as a teacher, and I plan to apply this new knowledge in the short term by starting a professional collaborative workshop to help transfer some of this knowledge to my colleagues in Egypt."

– Arabic Exchange Teacher

"The two schools [home school and U.S. host school] will become sister schools and teachers and students will communicate through email or Skype and send videos of classes to each other and invite principals, teachers and students to visit the other school."

– Chinese Exchange Teacher

U.S. to their teaching at home to educate students and colleagues about the United States.

American Councils staff also used participant feedback surveys to determine whether TCLP is accomplishing its greater mission. All respondents 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. Nearly all teachers said that their participation in the program made dramatic or significant contributions toward these program goals (Table 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: "We exchanged a lot of ideas; though her "mentor," I viewed this role as that of a fellow teacher with an equal amount to learn from her."

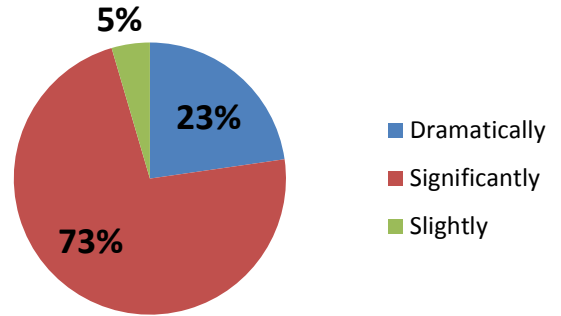
Some U.S. teachers who served as mentors in the program also noticed positive impacts in areas beyond those traditionally associated with international exchange, including curricula design and setting performance targets (Table 10).

"It has made me a better instructional coach because it has given me more opportunities to aid in the development of plans and best practices" said one respondent of her experience.

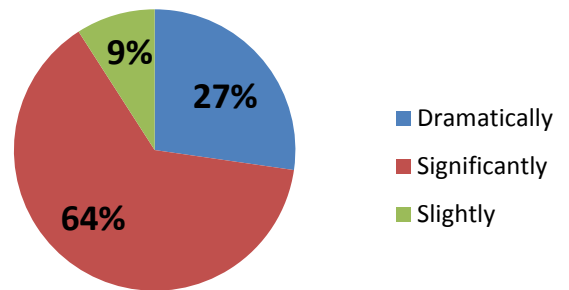
Additional remarks about TCLP from exchange teachers and mentor teachers are included on the following page.

Question: To what extent do you think your experience helped you to...?

Assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the U.S. and your home country?



Promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement?



Strengthen ties which unite people of the United States with people of other countries?

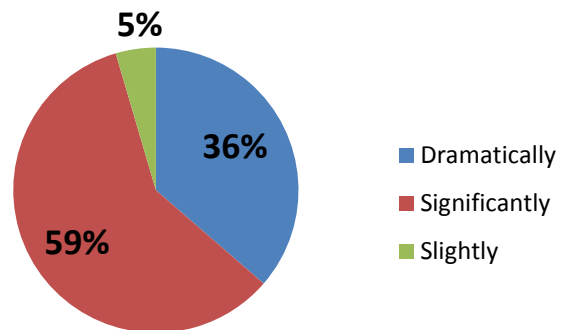


Table 9

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

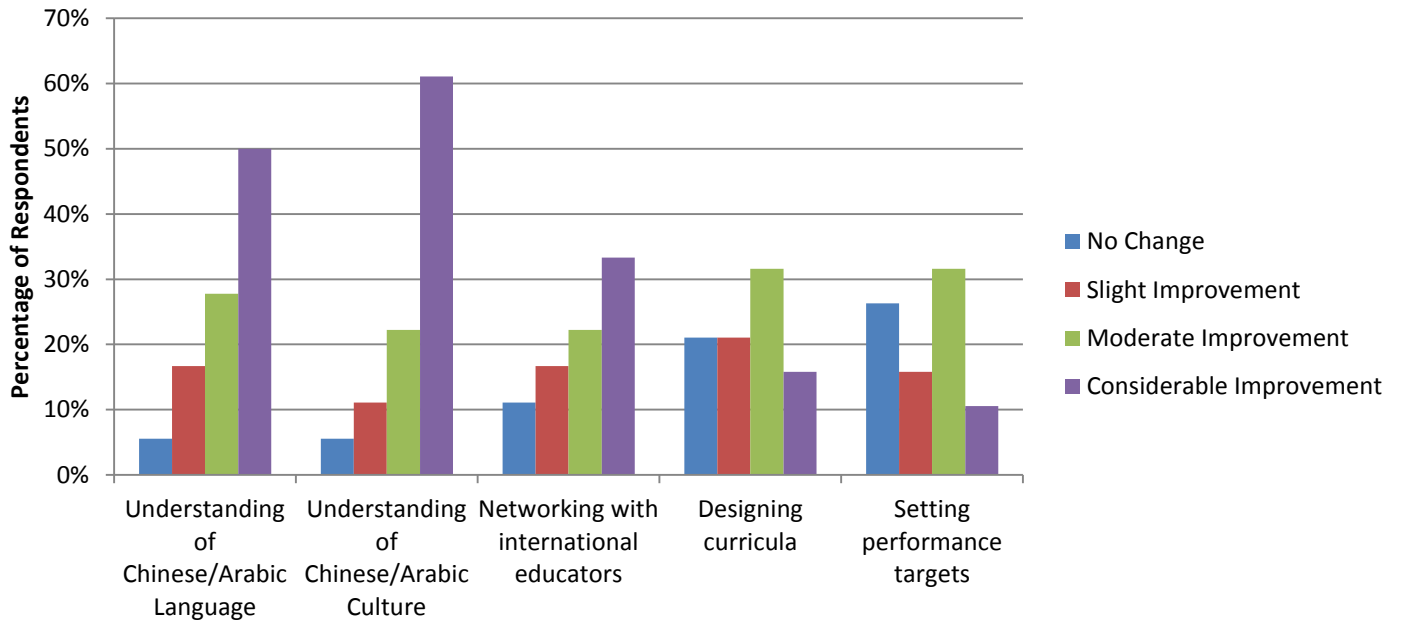


Table 10

Feedback from TCLP Exchange Teachers and Mentor Teachers

“I’m so lucky to be a TCLP participant. During this year, I’ve learned a lot both in education theory and professional skills. I will share what I have learned in the US with my colleagues and students.”

– **TCLP Exchange Teacher**

“Professionally, I feel that I have benefited from my participation in TCLP this year as I have a better overall understanding of the diversity of celebrations, festivals, language, and roles of Chinese culture.”

– **TCLP Mentor Teacher**

“It is an excellent program and it has fruitful outcomes especially in mutual understanding between people of different cultures.”

– **TCLP Exchange Teacher**

“The entire opportunity was certainly a learning experience where not only the exchange teacher grew, but I grew as a teacher/mentor and our school staff grew as a community.”

– **TCLP Mentor Teacher**

“TCLP is well organized, giving exchange teachers many opportunities to learn, to experience different lives and to improve ourselves.”

– **TCLP Exchange Teacher**

“Having to be a mentor teacher and a role model has made me a more creative, resourceful and passionate teacher. Mentoring by example is the most effective way to help exchange teachers to become successful teachers as we also become better professionals along the way.”

– **TCLP Mentor Teacher**

“The best exchange program I have ever known. TCLP cares about exchange teachers safety, health as well as professional development.”

– **TCLP Exchange Teacher**

“This is a great program that does a great job for children’s exposure to critical languages.”

– **TCLP Mentor Teacher**