

Community-Based Program Chinese Language School of the Chinese Cultural Center

Background Information

Institution: Chinese Language School of the Chinese Cultural Center

Program address: 300 Summit Street, Hartford, CT 06106

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Languages/dialects taught: Mandarin Chinese

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: Provide heritage students, adopted children from China and others interested in learning Chinese, with an environment to learn the language and culture.

Type of program: Saturday academy (for heritage and non-heritage learners)

Program origin: The program was founded in the 1980s by a coalition of groups.

Parents' expectations for the program: Parents want their children to learn the heritage language and they expect to socialize with other parents who have similar backgrounds.

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: Help the school run the program, organize activities, and be a bridge between parents and the school.

Students

Students:

- First-generation immigrants 3%
- Second-generation immigrants 85%
- Third-generation immigrants 3%

- Children of interethnic marriages 5%
- Children of interethnic adoption 3%
- Others: 1%

Countries of origin: U.S., China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Asian countries

Total student enrollment: 230

Age of students: Pre-K to grade 12 and adults

How the program identifies heritage speakers:

- At least one parent speaks Chinese at home, and the family reports using Chinese more than 50% of the time
- Placement test

Percentage of students who complete the program: 60%

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Some students find that homework and academic activities from their regular school are an overload.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: about 35

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese (Southern Min), and other Chinese dialects. The teachers are native speakers.

Credentials:

- 10% of teaching staff hold a teacher's certificate or license
- Teacher certification in World Languages, MA and CT
- BA
- MA—one teacher has an MA in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language
- Doctorate—Medical School

Professional development opportunities for instructors: Attend conferences and training workshops.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: two hours; one hour for language and one hour for extra-curricular programs

Times per week: once a week

Student grouping:

- Age and level
- Separate adult conversation class

Language skills

Heritage language skills:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program: Low Advanced proficiency. Our goal is that every student will be able to take the Chinese AP and SAT II exams.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught:

- History
- Festivals
- Customs
- Traditions/beliefs
- Folktales
- Arts and crafts
- Dances
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature
- Dragon Boat Festival with other organizations

Materials

Textbooks:

- K and first grades—we are developing our own textbooks.
- Second to ninth grades—*Far East Chinese for Youth*, Volumes 1, 2, and 3
- Tenth grade—*Integrated Chinese*

Other materials used for instruction: Teachers provide their own resources.

Technology used for instruction: We teach students how to type in Chinese.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Mid-term tests
- Final exams
- Teachers' observations
- Performance-based tasks or assessments
- SAT II

Connections:

- Local schools
- Trinity College provides facilities to our program, but we would love to affiliate with other primary and high schools, too.

Credits: We do not have a credit system, but we are working on it.

Credit recognition: We would like students to receive school credit after finishing our school.

How the program develops home school connections: We invite parents to help in different activities and to join our education committee.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Annual recitation contest for three different groups, K to second grade, third to fifth grade, and sixth to ninth grade. Some contests are held by the Association of Chinese Schools.

What the program has in place

Types of financial support the program receives:

- Ethnic/cultural organizations
- Tuition
- Parents

Solicitation of funding: Funds are solicited by the Chinese Cultural Center and the United Way.

Plans for the future: We are developing our own kindergarten and first grade textbooks. At the end of 2006, the chief editor of these two textbooks will present a paper at the World Chinese Teachers Association in Taiwan.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Some political issues

Additional support desired: We would like to work with the state education department and help them get certified for primary and high schools.

Insights: We open our school not only to heritage language students but also to anybody interested in learning the Chinese language and culture. We are working on our pre-K to grade 10 pipeline curriculum, and we will be finished soon.