



## **Heritage Voices: Program**

### **Chinese School of Delaware**

Hockessin, DE 19707

[www.chineseschoolde.org](http://www.chineseschoolde.org)

## **About Key Program Leaders**

### ***Current Director, Dr. Tommy Lu***



Dr. Tommy Lu is a Chinese immigrant from Taiwan who came to the United States in December 1983 to pursue a master's degree in Computer Science. In addition to serving as principal of the Chinese School of Delaware, he is an instructional coordinator at Delaware Technical and Community College, teaching computer courses. Tommy became involved in Chinese language education in 1993, when his daughters enrolled as students in the school, and he is an advocate for Chinese community schools. He has served in different positions in the Chinese education community, including vice principal, culture/language teacher, curriculum director, regional president of Chinese schools for the Association of Chinese Schools, and president of the National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools. His doctoral dissertation is about building a Chinese heritage community school curriculum using a community-of-practice approach.

### ***Former Teacher, Dean, and Principal, Dr. Shuhan Wang***



Dr. Shuhan C. Wang, now Deputy Director at the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland, was first involved in the Chinese School of Delaware in the mid-1980's, when her children went to the school on weekends. She started as a Chinese instructor and then became the dean and principal of the school. During her tenure as principal, she professionalized and institutionalized the school's language and culture curricula. She succeeded in conveying the message to the teachers that heritage language teaching in the U.S. context is different from mother-tongue teaching in the home country. In addition, she developed many professional development opportunities for the teachers.

Shuhan is active in the field of foreign and heritage language education and serves on various national committees, including the Board of Directors for the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the Editorial Board of *Foreign Language Annals* of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Her research interests include heritage and foreign language education, curriculum design, material development, teacher education and professional development, and language planning and policy. She is leading an international team to develop *Flying with Chinese*, a series of textbooks for K-6 learners of Chinese.

### **Founder, Dr. K. F. Lin**

Dr. K. F. Lin, one of the 25 founders of the Chinese School of Delaware, helped establish the school in the summer of 1971. In his own family, Dr. Lin maintains his language and culture:

*"My sons were required to speak Chinese at home. They were, at least orally, bilingual in English and Chinese, but most of the kids from other Chinese families at that time were not. My motivation to get involved in the school was to help those kids learn their ancestral heritage."*

The initial enrollment in the school was about 20 to 25 students, divided into 4 or 5 classes by age. There were 2 one-hour classes, 1 for language and the other for culture and Chinese history. The teachers were all parents. Dr. Lin was one of them. For the language class, the textbooks used were donated by the Embassy of the Republic of China. For the culture class, the teachers wrote their own teaching notes on wax stencils, and the principal/vice-principal made copies for the classes.

As a founder of the school, Dr. Lin accomplished the following:

- Started to use books published by various organizations, to find materials that students would be able to identify with and be more interested in.
- Registered with the IRS as an educational not-for-profit organization to enable the school to accept tax-deductible donations.
- Registered with and was certified by the Delaware State Department of Education for students to earn credits at their high schools.
- Added a judo class, taught by Mr. Richard Hugh, black belt, as an elective before the regular classes, and an art class, taught by a well-known artist in Chinese painting, Mrs. Tzu-Wen Kwok, once a month in place of the culture class, for enriching the curriculum and making it more interesting to the students.
- Student enrollment increased gradually to about 55 students.

## About the Program

The Chinese School of Delaware was established in 1971 by a group of educators and parents to serve the Chinese student population in the area. As Dr. K. F. Lin (one of 25 founders) explains, all founders were first-generation Chinese, mostly from Taiwan, and created the school in order to have a place for Chinese children to learn the rich heritage culture of their ancestors. The founders decided to offer a two-track system that would serve both heritage and non-heritage (or adopted children) students. The school is one of two Chinese community schools in Delaware, and most Chinese families in Delaware send their children to one or the other.



Students at the Chinese School of Delaware

The school's mission is to provide an exceptional educational experience with learning Chinese language and culture for all children aged 4 (Pre-K) to 16 (10th grade). Many of the older students find it a challenge to attend the weekend school, but they understand the importance of it, and some come back to the school for advanced Chinese classes after they have graduated from high school.

Some graduates of the school return to serve as non-paid teaching assistants. This involvement indicates that there is a generation of students who are interested in Chinese language and culture and may pass it on to their children.

Since the early years, parents have played a crucial role in the school as teachers, who taught at the school because their children were in the program. Currently, a growing number of teachers have no children studying in the school, although parents continue to hold key positions, including recruiting teachers. Parents and teachers share the goals and mission of the founders and would like to pass the culture and heritage to the next generation, as they are passionate about teaching and language maintenance. Dedicated staff have included Dr. Cheng Ming-Fou of the University of Delaware Physics Department, who served in the school for 10 consecutive years through the mid 1980's. Dr. C. S. Liu was the principal and vice principal of the school for several years, and Dr. S. B. Woo was a principal of the school who provided important leadership and valuable support.

## Challenges

The Chinese School of Delaware is facing several challenges. The immigrant population in Delaware from Taiwan is shrinking, and there are fewer students from that background. At the same time, there are more foster children from China, as well as children from the United States without Chinese background, who attend to learn Chinese. How to address the diverse needs of these students poses a challenge. In addition, the school relies on parents as teachers. In the past, there were a lot of stay-at-home mothers who served as teachers. Recently, with more and more families having both parents in the workplace, teacher recruiting is a challenge. Recruitment of principals and staff of the school has historically been a challenge, and the need for staff at one time threatened the life of the school.

Other challenges that the school faces include the following:

- limited hours per week for the program; Classes are held for 2 to 3 hours, 1 day per week
- limited learning opportunities for the students between classes
- limited facilities to hold classes
- lack of instructional standards and assessments
- lack of career advancement opportunities for teachers and administrators
- high turnover rate among teachers and administrators
- unstable funding
- lack of recognition by the school district and state
- shrinking enrollment of traditional students (heritage students)
- increasing enrollment of non-heritage students
- limited language proficiency and cultural knowledge of non-heritage students

## Resources

The school has a lot of teaching resources and supplemental materials for the teachers to use. A "tool box" that contains useful and presentable materials, including a lion head for the Chinese New Year, is available for teachers, other staff, and parents when they go to their children's schools to present Chinese New Year or other events.

The major source of funding for the school is tuition that parents pay for their children to attend. In addition, several parents and organizations donate money through United Way. The program receives free textbooks from the government of Taiwan. There is a parent co-op program, in which parents pay a deposit of \$30 per family per year when they register their children, and each family helps at the school twice a year making copies, delivering materials, serving as judges, setting up facilities, carrying out fund raising activities, and keeping children safe during recess. If parents fulfill this work, the deposit is returned. The primary goal is to get parents involved in school operations and let them know how the school functions. The secondary goal is to give parents a chance to discuss issues and concerns with, or offer suggestions to, school administrators.

The Delaware Chinese American Community Center has supported the school in many ways, including providing free space. The Center does not charge rent and provides an office to store teaching materials. The school has budgeted money to allow teachers to participate in professional development, including through activities with the Chinese School Association. The Association, spearheaded by Dr. Peter Chow, is now called "The East Coast Chinese School Association."

The school previously had an agreement with two local school districts so that students in the school would get language credit from those districts, and program staff are working to restore this arrangement. The school is working with a local private high school, Pencader Charter High School, and students attending the Chinese School of Delaware may earn foreign language credits from that school. Pencader offers the largest Chinese language program in Delaware, with over 100 students studying Chinese every day. The Chinese School of Delaware offers teacher and cultural materials to Pencader, and Pencader students are invited to attend cultural events at the Chinese School of Delaware.

### **Impact on the Chinese Community**

Students in the Chinese School of Delaware are involved in activities of the Chinese community, including those of the clubs of the Chinese American Community Center, including the Folk Dance Troupe, Children's Dance Club, Origami Club, Tang Soo Do Club, and Chinese Yo-Yo Club. The school also works with the Center to host an annual Chinese New Year celebration and provides manpower and materials at the annual Chinese Festival in June. In 2008, the school was identified as one of the few Chinese community schools that has tried a two-track approach (serving both heritage and non-heritage students) and achieved positive results. The success of the program helps the school to be sustainable, generate outreach opportunities, and bring awareness of the program to the local community. It also provides an opportunity for teachers to prepare for teaching in a regular school, offers a place for adopted families to bring their children, and serves second- and third-generation Chinese immigrants, so that they can learn their Chinese language, culture, and heritage.

### **Curriculum for Heritage Chinese Learners**

Curriculum development is a long process, especially for heritage schools. The school started to develop curricula in the 1990s, when Dr. Shuhan Wang was the principal. Curriculum development, and purchase of associated materials, proceeded slowly. Recently, the school has started another round of curriculum development and revision. Because there are more certified teachers, school administrators have a better understanding of the importance of curriculum, and there is increased enrollment of non-heritage students. Every year school staff evaluate what has been accomplished and gather feedback to guide improvements the following year.

There is more to do to build the school in ways that the teachers, administrators, and parents would like, but the school has made a lot of progress in its first nearly 40 years of existence.



2010 Speech Contest

To learn more about the Chinese School of Delaware, read the [program profile](#). Visit the Chinese School of Delaware [website](#) for more information and to view photos.

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The Heritage Voices Program Profile on the Chinese School of Delaware was prepared by Dr. Tommy Lu, with contributions from Dr. K. F. Lin, Dr. Shuhan Wang, Jacqueline López, and Dr. Na Liu.

*The Heritage Voices Collection is designed to spotlight individual heritage language speakers and programs. The information presented does not necessarily represent the views of the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages or the Center for Applied Linguistics.*



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