



## **Heritage Voices: Program**

### **Rockville Cantonese School**

#### **About the Principal**



Ms. Mandy Wong, the principal of Rockville Cantonese School, received her degree in education in Hong Kong and came to the United States for a second degree in accounting. She has been an accountant for years.

When her son went to Rockville Cantonese School, she started to volunteer in the school and became the director in 1989. She took the position of school principal in 2003. Ms. Wong values heritage language education tremendously and is committed to running the school well.

#### **About the Program**

Rockville Cantonese School (RCS), a non-profit organization, was established in 1984 by several teachers and parents, who wanted to provide Chinese culture and education to students in the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area. Enrollments increased from approximately 30 students in 1984 to 220 students at the beginning of the 2002 fall semester. In 2004, RCS reached a record high enrollment of 235 students and became the largest Cantonese school in the Washington Metropolitan Area.

Classes from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade are offered from 2:00 to 4:00 pm on Sundays. Cantonese listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are emphasized. RCS also strengthens students' knowledge of Chinese cultures, manners, customs, arts, and history, and encourages students to learn Chinese dance, calligraphy, Kung Fu, and sports. To provide students with first-hand experiences with Chinese culture, RCS celebrates various holidays and Chinese festivals, such as Mid-Autumn Festival, New Years Eve, and Chinese Spring Festival. *To view photos of the Mid-Autumn Festival, see the Photo Gallery at the end of this profile.*

RCS strives to inspire and maintain students' interest in learning Cantonese. Starting in 2007, the school has held annual speech and word recognition competitions, and the students who win first place receive monetary awards. To encourage students to further their studies in Cantonese, RCS also established scholarship programs. With the continuous efforts of Ms. Wong, the principal of RCS, students are able to receive one high school credit for each one-year class they take in RCS. The articulation between RCS and the public school system allows students' efforts and accomplishments in RCS to be recognized by the formal education system.



Students who won first place in the word recognition competition



Students who won first place in the speech competition

In recognition of RCS's accomplishments, Mr. Shing Wah Wong, Secretary of Education, Hong Kong Department of Education, and Mr. Alan Cheung, former Member of the Board of Education, Montgomery County, Maryland, sent congratulatory greetings. In May 2009, RCS celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Teacher Appreciation Party and fifth graduation ceremony at New Fortune Restaurant in Maryland. The Teacher Appreciation Party is held every year to give students an opportunity to express gratitude to their teachers for their teaching and dedication.



The fifth cohort of graduates from RCS



The fifth cohort of graduates and the teachers



According to Ms. Wong, one of the biggest challenges that the RCS faces is a lack of funding, especially in view of increasing costs of classroom rent each year. RCS's primary source of support is from tuition. When the school received a last-minute notice of rent increase in the summer, 2010, they had finished collecting tuition from parents, and Ms. Wong was struggling to find ways to make up the deficit. Another challenge is lack of instructional materials. Since RCS is a Cantonese school, teachers cannot use Mandarin textbooks published by mainland China and Taiwan. They cannot even use Cantonese books published by Taiwan, because some vocabulary in the two Cantonese varieties used in Taiwan and Hong Kong is different. Teachers in RCS have to spend a considerable amount of time compiling their own instructional materials. Ms. Wong hopes to find appropriate textbooks to relieve this burden.

Ms. Wong emphasizes that the strength of RCS is its people (administrators, staff, and parents), and RCS looks forward to having even greater participation to enable the school to grow and excel.

To learn more, [read the program profile](#) or visit the [Rockville Cantonese School website](#).

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### About the Author



Na Liu received her PhD in language education and language policy from Arizona State University in May 2010. Her research interests include Chinese heritage language education, minority education, education in English as a Second language, and language policy. Na was once a language teacher in Chinese heritage language schools, and she currently works at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

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The Heritage Voices Program Profile on the Rockville Cantonese School was prepared by Na Liu for the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages, Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), Washington DC.

*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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## Photo Gallery

### 慶祝中秋節 Mid-Autumn Festival



學生扮演嫦娥，吳剛，和小白兔  
Moon Lady, Ng Gong, and Rabbit



吃月餅，拿著燈籠游行真開心  
"My lantern is better than yours"



鄺綺華，曹麗芳唱"月光光"  
Eva and Caryn sang the moon song



學生有獎遊戲的獎品  
Student won prize during "Q&A"



趙汝光和杜家楠的精彩表演  
Brian & Ka-Nam as Tree Cutter & Rabbit



拿著燈籠排隊去游行  
"We are ready for the parade"



五班同學開開心心過中秋  
The happy 5<sup>th</sup> grade students



"看看我美麗的燈籠"  
"Look at my beautiful lantern"



珈汶，家豪，婉棋表演 嫦娥奔月  
Kaman, Benson, & Nicole Performed