



Heritage Voices: Program

Bilingual Buds



Bilingual Buds - New Jersey

St. John's Lutheran Church
587 Springfield Avenue
Summit, New Jersey 07901

[Visit the website.](#)

Bilingual Buds - New York

175 Riverside Boulevard
at West 68th Street
New York, New York 10069

[Visit the website.](#)

About the Program Director



Sharon Huang is the founder and director of Bilingual Buds. She was motivated to start this bilingual school so that her sons would maintain their Chinese heritage language and culture.

Before founding the school, Ms. Huang majored in chemical engineering at the University of California Berkeley, earned an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Schools, and has worked for more than 15 years for a Fortune 500 company. At the same time, she is a devoted mother, which motivated her to establish the school.

About the Program



Bilingual Buds was founded in 2005, and its mission is to prepare students to be global citizens who are intellectually curious, culturally aware, and linguistically capable.

The school has four programs: a daily program, after-school program, Mommy and Me program, and summer camp.

- **The daily program** (the schedule varies according to different age groups) is for 2- to 9-year-old students (preschool to Grade 3), who are immersed in Mandarin while receiving a rich early childhood program where they develop cognitive, fine and gross motor, social-emotional, and linguistic skills.
- **The after-school program** (which meets from 3:45 to 5:15 PM 2 or 4 afternoons per week) is for 5- to 12-year-old students, who are immersed in an active, collaborative language arts curriculum.
- **Mommy and Me** (which meets on Saturdays from 9:30 to 10:15 AM or from 10:30 to 11:15 AM) is for parents and their 1- to 4-year-old children, who learn Mandarin while sharing time together.
- **Summer camp** (which meets from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM or 1:00 to 3:00 PM each day for 2 weeks in the summer) is for students to learn Mandarin language skills and culture through immersion-based activities including singing, stories, arts and crafts, and other summer activities.

The common feature of these programs is that all activities and interactions are carried out in Chinese with no use of English.

These programs provide a stimulating environment for young children to learn the Mandarin Chinese language and culture in a fun and natural way that facilitates their social and emotional development by helping them interact with and learn from one another.



The teachers help the students build personal qualities of self-confidence, empathy, and enjoyment of exploration and learning in the immersion setting. The teachers in the Bilingual Buds program are all native Mandarin speakers.

A Success Story from Bilingual Buds

An interesting feature of Bilingual Buds is that one-third of the students are adopted from China by non-Chinese-speaking parents, who want them to keep and develop their heritage language and culture.

For example, Emily (a pseudonym) was adopted from China by Caucasian parents, who are committed to supporting Emily in keeping ties with her heritage language and culture. During her three years in the program, Emily's Chinese proficiency has grown, and she is now near fluency -- Advanced-Low level as measured by the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA), an oral language assessment developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics. She is now helping her parents, monolingual English speakers, to interact with her newly adopted sister from Taiwan, who only speaks Mandarin.



Tigers celebrating the new year



Students practicing Chinese calligraphy

After the success of its Mandarin programs, Bilingual Buds started a Spanish immersion program in January 2010 at Summit, New Jersey. In May 2010, it opened another location in the upper west side of New York City for Mandarin immersion. The Spanish immersion program and the program's New York location are growing because of the success of the Mandarin program in New Jersey. In addition, Bilingual Buds has many cultural events such as Dragon Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Chinese New Year performances. The connection with Chinese heritage schools in New Jersey allows the schools to learn from each other and creates a strong community for Chinese learning and culture.

In the future, Bilingual Buds plans to continue to improve the quality of its programs and to pilot a summer camp program in Beijing so that it can create more opportunities for students to communicate with the Chinese people and experience life in China.

About the Author



Luyun (Lucy) Zhang obtained her Bachelor's degree from Shanghai International Studies University and her Master's degree from George Mason University, where she concentrated on curriculum development and language instruction and received the Chinese language teacher certification.

At Bilingual Buds, she teaches preschool Chinese in the morning and serves as a coordinator of the afternoon program.

Before she joined Bilingual Buds, Lucy was a research assistant at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, where she worked with the [Student Oral Proficiency Assessment \(SOPA\) for Chinese project](#), the [Chinese curriculum development](#) project, and the [Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages](#).

To learn more about Bilingual Buds, [read the program profile](#).

The Heritage Voices Program Profile on Bilingual Buds was prepared by Luyun Zhang 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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