



## Heritage Voices: Programs



**Alamo Chinese Language School 圣安东尼奥中文学校**

**Alamo Chinese Language School  
San Antonio, TX 78240**

### About the Author



Dr. Chang Pu is an Assistant Professor of Teacher Education (ESOL) at Berry College, GA. Her research interests include language minority education (heritage language education, ESL, and bilingual education), second language teaching and learning, classroom-based research in language and literacy development, and language teacher preparation. She has published on language minority education, language planning, and discourse analysis. She conducted a series of research projects with her colleagues on Chinese American students' heritage language learning, language use, and identity construction in Chinese heritage language classrooms.

Dr. Pu is supporting the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages by developing profiles of community-based Chinese heritage language programs. In addition, she plans to work to establish coalitions and collaboration between the Alliance and Chinese heritage language schools, share information and resources from the Alliance with heritage language practitioners, support heritage language teachers' professional development, conduct research on heritage language issues, and make conference presentations on her research.

## About the Program



The Alamo Chinese Language School is a community-based Chinese language school “dedicated to the teaching and promotion of Chinese language and culture in the greater San Antonio community.” The school was founded in 1999 by Chinese immigrant parents and became the Alamo Chinese Language School in 2006. A strong team of parents and staff members ensure an excellent program.

That is, student’s parents compose a strong administrative volunteer team and teachers motivated with effective teaching approaches, provide enriching academic activities for students, and actively play a role in leadership language education in the community.

The school serves PreK-adults, has approximately sixty students, eleven Chinese classes (nine levels), one dance class, and one art class. Students are assigned to class based on age and Chinese proficiency levels as determined by parents’ opinions and teachers’ observations at the school. Students are either born in China or raised in the U.S. or are American-born. In 2007, the school gained a larger enrollment of native English speakers, including children and adults.



Grades are given

The simplified Chinese writing system and the Pinyin phonetic system are used in teaching. The school has adopted the textbook series, “Zhōng Wén” (中文), published in mainland China and designed for Chinese children living abroad. The textbooks integrate facets of Chinese history and culture with a wide coverage of topics in science, history, culture, children literature, and folktales that contain Chinese cultural and moral values. Since the school supports teacher training, in May 2008, it co-sponsored San Antonio’s First Chinese Language Teachers Conference with the Department of Bi-cultural and Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). Teachers of the school are members of the Chinese Language Teachers Association-Texas and are taking advantage of these professional development opportunities. These experiences have motivated teachers at Alamo to offer more classes, such as Chinese Advance Placement and calligraphy classes.

According to Dr. Li Jia, Director of Curriculum and Instruction at the school, several features distinguish the program. "Our most important goal is to have an environment that provides teachers with professional experiences by participating in conferences, workshops, and other professional development activities. For example, we held a conference January 10, 2009." "Having meetings with the instructors is necessary for exchanging ideas and information on language teaching. I circulate textbooks and fliers that I bring back from conferences among the teachers so that they can learn from other schools."



Alamo Asian Festival

"Organizing activities and participating in community services such as Asian festivals and the Chinese New Year Gala helps too," explains Dr. Li Jia. "Students are encouraged to play active roles so that they internalize our cultural concepts and values. Communication between instructors and parents is also important; for example, we inform parents about the assignments for each week so that they can oversee the progress of their children."

Conferences with parents also contribute to the success of the program. Conferences can be very informal (whenever there is a need), and they can be formal such as end-of-semester conferences after parents have received the school report.

Students want to come to Alamo, because the program is enjoyable for them. For example, Lily, a third grade Chinese American child, is very excited about attending the school on Sundays. In the school for three years, Lily is never absent from her Chinese classes. Lily comments, "I like my Chinese school. My Chinese teacher, Ms. Zhang, is very nice. She helps me read. I like my Chinese dancing class too."

In summary, Alamo Chinese Language School is important to the Chinese Community because it plays a crucial role in community activities and often participates in performances at the Chinese New Year Celebration and other events such as Asian Festival. In May 2008, the school, along with several other Chinese organizations, raised \$14,000 for the earthquake-stricken Chinese civilians at home. The school represents local Chinese communities in the Southwest of the United States. Its accomplishments were covered by the *San Antonio Express-News* and the *World Journal*, a Chinese newspaper widely distributed in North America.

To learn more about the San Antonio Alamo Chinese Language Program, [read the program profile](#) or visit their Web site at [www.alamochinese.org](http://www.alamochinese.org).



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