

Chinese Program/Flushing High School K-12 Program

Background Information

Institution: Chinese Program/Flushing High School

Program address: 35-04 Union Street, Flushing, NY 11354

Contact Person: Jenny Chen, Teacher

Email: nyjennychen@hotmail.com

Telephone: 718-888-7500 ext. 247

Type of institution: K-12 Program

Grades taught: 9-12

Languages/dialects taught: Mandarin Chinese

Courses: Introductory Chinese to AP level classes are offered.

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: To teach Mandarin Chinese to speakers of Mandarin Chinese as a first language and to heritage language students.

Type of program:

- Partial immersion
- First language and literacy development
- Heritage language development

Program origin: The program was founded in 1980.

Students

Students:

- First-generation immigrants 95%
- Second-generation immigrants 5%

Countries of origin: China (80%), Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia

Total student enrollment: 200

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Surveys and tests

- Background questionnaire
- Placement test
- Oral interview

Percentage of students who complete the program: 98%

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: 97%

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 3

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Chinese, French, and English advanced level of proficiency

Credentials:

- Teacher certification: Chinese, French, ESL/New York State
- BA: French, English, Chinese
- MA: French, Linguistics

Comments: The primary instructor teaches up to five classes. There are two other instructors who can take over additional classes if enrollments are high. The three teachers are all speakers of Chinese as a first language and are certified in ESL.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: five

Student grouping: Based on the placement test

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: Chinese is the first language of many of the students in the program, and they began developing literacy skills in China. These students enter the program at a high level and focus on literature. For heritage language students—those who speak Chinese at home but cannot read and write very well—the program focuses on literacy development and continued development of spoken ability.

English skills:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Heritage language skills:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program: They are able to analyze literary works.

Comments: Students must pass the NY State Regents' Exam. At the advanced levels, reading and analysis skills are taught that can be applied to English language literacy. English grammar is also taught. The first-language Chinese speakers in the program have a stronger command of grammatical concepts in their first language. The teacher builds on this understanding to increase the students' understanding of English grammar as a supplement to their ESL or English program classes.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught:

- History
- Festivals
- Customs
- Traditions/beliefs
- Folktales
- Arts and crafts
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature

Comments: Culture is taught through the reading and discussion of literary works and also through discussion of students' life experiences.

Materials

Textbooks: The main textbook is a 12-level Chinese literature series published in Hong Kong. However, only a small portion of class materials are drawn from the text.

Other materials used for instruction: The majority of the materials are selected by the teacher. At the higher levels, materials include works of classical Chinese literature of a type often used in college classes in China.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Mid-term tests
- Final exams
- Student self-assessment instrument
- Teacher's observations
- Performance-based tasks or assessment
- Portfolios

Comments: Assessment practices are at the discretion of the teacher. An AP course is being offered, so students at this level will also take the AP test.

Connections:

- Colleges
- Universities

Financial Support

Types of financial support the program receives:

- US government
- Local/state government

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: The varied background of the students is a major challenge. As heritage learners progress to higher levels, they move into classes with many native-speaking students. Developing literacy skills in Chinese takes a long time, and the heritage learners are behind the recent immigrant students in terms of their reading and writing abilities.

Many of the students in the Chinese classes are also enrolled in ESL classes, as they are recent immigrants from China. They are under a lot of pressure to pass the state

Regents' exam (a high school exit exam). The Chinese classes are designed to help the students with academic skills that they can transfer to their other classes, including English. A practical approach is necessary to both help the students continue to develop their Chinese language skills and learn English so they can access materials in all of their other class and successfully pass the exit exam.

The school does not have a Chinese speaking guidance counselor, so the students receive general academic counseling from their Chinese teacher. In addition, the teacher helps students handle other practical problems related to both school and family.

The success of the program, in particular the range of support the students receive from their Chinese class, is facilitated by a supportive school administration. Allowing the teacher to work with the students on a range of academic skills, using methodologies of her choosing, is a benefit to the students.

A major reason for the success of the program is that the principal values language education and supported the introduction of an AP-level Chinese class in the 2006-2007 academic year. Two classes of AP Chinese are offered.