



## Community-Based Program

### Background Information

**Institution:** CATA Tibetan School

**Program address:** 120 Cherry St. SE, Vienna, VA 22180

**Telephone:** (703) 851-7804

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**Web address:** [www.dctibetan.com](http://www.dctibetan.com)

#### Contact person:

**Name:** Tenzing Barshee

**Title:** Coordinator

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**Levels:** PreK-8

**Languages/dialects taught:** Tibetan

### Program Description

**Purposes and goals of the program:** The goal is to teach and preserve the Tibetan language and culture in a Tibetan-American context.

**Type of program:** Sunday school

**Program origin:** It was founded in 1996 through parent donations.

### Parents

**Parents' expectations for the program:** For their children to learn how to read and write in Tibetan and establish a relationship with its culture and religion.

### Staff

**Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program:** To teach the language with an aim toward inspiring pride in the children for their language and heritage.

## **Students**

**Students:** Students range in age from 4 years to 16 years old.

- First-generation immigrants: 30%
- Second-generation immigrants: 60%

**Countries of origin:** Tibet and India

**Total student enrollment:** 37

**How the program identifies heritage speakers:** First-or second-generation immigrants who have had exposure to the language and culture at home.

**How the program determines the language background and language proficiency of students:** Oral proficiency interviews performed by instructors

## **Instructors**

**Number of instructors in the program:** 4 language instructors, 2 culture and dance instructors

**Languages in which instructors are proficient:** Fluent in English, proficient in Tibetan

**Credentials:** All instructors are parents who volunteer, most of whom work at the radio station Voice of America.

## **Instruction**

**Total contact hours per week:** 3 hours per week

**Times per week:** 1 time per week

**Student grouping:** By language proficiency and age

**Hours devoted to language teaching:** 80-85% of the time

**Hours devoted to culture teaching:** 15-20% of the time

## **Language skills**

**Heritage language skills:** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing

**Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program:** Fluency

## **Culture**

**Aspects of culture taught:** History, festivals, customs, traditions/beliefs, religion, folktales, arts and crafts, dances, songs, rhymes, social and cultural norms, cultural appropriateness, literature, and sewing for custom dress

**Kind of student identity program fosters:** A Tibetan-American who is comfortable with and knowledgeable about their heritage language and culture

## **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:** Teachers use instructional strategies that are appropriate for instruction in the United States.

## **Materials**

**Textbooks:** Teachers make their own textbooks, as well as using textbooks from Tibet and India.

**Other materials used for instruction:** Videos, songs, and audios

## **Assessment**

**Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:** Weekly quizzes, chapter tests, teacher observations, students' self assessments

## **Articulation**

**Connections with other institutions:** Universities in Tibet

**Credit or recognition students receive:** High school foreign language credit

**How the program develops home/school connections or promotes parent involvement:** A PTA organization coordinates home-school connections and participates during various lessons. We have very close relations with the teachers and parents.

**Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program:** Students have the opportunity to speak Tibetan on a daily basis in their homes. Students also speak Tibetan with their friends at various Tibetan functions throughout North America.

## **What the program has in place**

**Financial support the program receives:** Parents

**Solicitation of funding:** The CATA Tibetan Sunday School PTA officers

**Assistance or funding the program would like to receive:** We would like to receive financial collaboration in addition to assistance in acquiring a permanent venue for our classes. We have had to move the school venue four or five times since its inception. We would also like to receive accreditation from the Fairfax County school board.

**Continuing heritage language development:** Some students who have graduated high school still continue to use the Tibetan school, and are becoming more and more comfortable with the language. We have noticed that after attending our school, many students remain involved in the local Tibetan community.

**Program research or evaluation:** Instructors have noticed that the students in the Tibetan program also perform very well academically in their regular schools.

## **Special challenges**

**Challenges the program has experienced:** Funding is a big problem. Finding a permanent venue is also quite a challenge, as well as the retention of students once they have reached high school.

## **Additional Information**

**Information for parents:** We are planning to start a Tibetan newsletter. We will start with a one-page newsletter in English with various short articles and then move on to a combination of English and Tibetan. We have a professional broadcaster from Radio Free Asia who will train the students to write the articles, and eventually everything will be done by the students.