

YingHua Language School Community-Based Program

Background Information

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Type of institution: Community-Based Program

Languages/dialects taught: Mandarin Chinese

Courses: Pre-K to grade 12 and adults

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: To teach Mandarin Chinese to students from all cultural backgrounds; inspire and facilitate Chinese language learning; promote children's linguistic, cognitive, and social development; and empower local communities by partnering with parents and concerned citizens

Type of program:

- Saturday academy (for heritage and non-heritage learners)
- Immersion
- Heritage language program
- Foreign language program

Program origin: The program was founded on May 4, 2002, by Bonnie Liao, with Bob Eng and Ken Chiang.

Parents' expectations for the program: For Chinese-speaking families, the expectation is for students to learn to read. For non-Chinese-speaking families, the expectation is for students to learn to speak and listen.

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: Same as the parents' expectations

Students

Students:

- First-generation immigrants: 70%
- Second-generation immigrants: 5%
- Third-generation immigrants: 3%
- Children of interethnic marriages: 5%
- Children of interethnic adoption: 12%
- Others: 5% Indian or Caucasian

Countries of origin: China, India, U.S.

Total student enrollment: 180

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Based on whether or not the students speak Mandarin Chinese at home (based on parents' input on a home language survey) and an oral interview

Percentage of students who complete the program: 85%

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Lack of motivation, family relocation, or schedule conflicts

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 15

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Mandarin Chinese (native proficiency)

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 2 hours per week

Times per week: once

Student grouping:

- Home language background, Mandarin speaking or not
- Level of proficiency

- Age

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: The focus of YingHua Language School is on the teaching of Mandarin. While culture is a part of what is learned when students study the language, there is no direct teaching of culture. All contact time with students is devoted to language development.

Heritage language skills: The program teaches the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The curriculum is also organized around the “5 C’s” as identified by ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages): communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities.

For home-background speakers of Mandarin, reading and writing skills are a primary focus of instruction.

For students who do not speak Mandarin at home, speaking and listening skills are the focus.

Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program: Home-background speakers learn approximately 1,500 characters by the end of the program. Non-home-background students learn to communicate orally in Mandarin. They also learn some reading and writing skills.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: Texts used in the program address history, social and cultural norms, folktales, traditions, and literature, but culture is not taught separately.

Kind of student identity fostered by program: YingHua Language School fosters a strong sense of the importance of bilingualism. Students take pride in their language development, and they learn about the value of maintaining and advancing their ability to use Mandarin in concert with academic achievement in English in their mainstream schools.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: The program is based on the teaching methods and materials developed by Ma Liping, founder of the Stanford Chinese School. Information about the Stanford Chinese School and Ma Liping’s teaching methods and philosophy can be found at:

<http://www.mychineseschool.com/>

YingHua uses materials developed for the Stanford Chinese School by Ma Liping. The materials are designed for heritage language learners of Chinese and focus on literacy development.

An example text from Ma Liping's materials is a condensed version of the *XiYou Ji* (Journey to the West), one of China's most famous traditional novels. The text is used at the fifth grade level and is an example of how Chinese culture and history are taught through language development.

For heritage learners, students learn to recognize Chinese characters directly without going through the phase of learning *pinyin* (the official Romanization system used in the P.R.C. and in most Chinese classes in the U.S.). They learn to recognize about 1,300+ characters during the first four years (Grade 1-4) but are only required to write 500 of them. Teachers are provided with a basic teaching guide. Classroom activities are centered on character recognition (e.g., flashcards, etc.) and comprehension.

Materials

Technology used for instruction: About half of the teachers use some form of multi-media for instruction: PowerPoint, DVD, VCR, Internet, etc.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:

- At the end of each term (10 weeks), there is one review day and one exam day. The written exam is about an hour including dictation, reading, and comprehension. The oral exam is usually conducted with parents' involvement and includes reading aloud from the textbook and flashcard recognition.
- Chapter tests
- Final exams

Articulation: YingHua Language School is accredited by the Commission on Secondary Schools, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools: www.css-msa.org.

Connections: The program resides on the campus of Rider University in Princeton, NJ.

The school is connected with Beijing Yanjing Professional Culture School for its summer and honors programs in Beijing.

Credits: If students need credits to meet their regular schools' requirements, the school can issue transcripts as YingHua Language School is an accredited institution.

How the program promotes parent involvement: Parents of heritage learners know that speaking Mandarin at home is part of the curriculum. The school has a Parent

Advisory Council with one representative from each class. Parents of heritage learners help out at exam time.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Heritage learners can practice the language at home by talking to their parents and watching Chinese TV.

What the program has in place

Types of financial support the program receives:

- Foundation grant of about \$300 per year from a cultural organization/foundation
- Tuition
- Parent contributions

Types of support the program receives from these or other entities: Funding and training support for our teacher development programs.

Solicitation of funding: This is done by the program director and the Board of Directors.

Research on heritage language issues: Xiang Zhang, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Alabama, visited and studied YingHua's program in March 2005, and is incorporating findings into her Ph.D. dissertation.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Funding and quality teachers. Teachers are mostly full-time employees elsewhere, which makes it difficult for them to devote time to training and development.

Additional support desired: Funding from foundations to allow a dedicated part-time employee to run the school.

Insights:

- 1) Set up the school as nonprofit organization, rather than with a membership-based structure and governing body, to minimize the potential for conflict.
- 2) Establish two different programs: one for heritage learners and one for second or foreign language learners;
- 3) Establish more supporting programs (both financially and academically) – summer programs, etc.