

A Successful Model of Transforming Traditional Overseas Heritage Weekend Chinese Schools through Collaborations between the Local Public Schools System and the Startalk Chinese Summer Program

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Abstract

One of many challenges traditional overseas heritage weekend Chinese schools (TOHWCS) face is low student enrollment. The two attributing factors: decreasing number of Taiwanese immigrants and Taiwan students studying in US and minimal efforts in recruiting non-heritage students. The fact of decreased students enrollment has forced many Chinese schools to close or to merge. There are discussions on how to keep these TOHWCS open. Yet, the lack of follow-up leaves many educators wonder the future of their affiliated school. In this paper, readers will learn a model that the administrator adopted to keep a traditional heritage weekend Chinese school open and its long standing in Howard County, Maryland for 42 years.

In order to keep TOHWCS open, an immediate action that most school boards took after its enrollment dropped below a critical point is to raise tuition, fees. This plan A is a short term goal. In contrast, the administrator of this TOHWCS adopted plan B- to attract more students including non-heritage speakers. The administrator who has been an active advocate for the world language program in the local public schools system, set up a few goals for both the heritage school and the public schools system. The first goal is to pilot the FLEX program in selected elementary and middle schools using the STEM model. The second goal is to set up grade-level curriculum for bilingual classes in TOHWCS. Lastly, to secure funding for teacher training, student Chinese summer camps, and culture exchange through federal grants such as the Startalk program. This paper would focus on the third goal of the plan B- to secure the Startalk grant to achieve a win-win situation for both public schools system and TOHWCS.