

北威中文學校

每週通訊：二零零八年四月二十六日 Newsletter: April 26, 2008

家長聯絡網 Parent Network!!!

Many parents find it a challenge to keep up with learning Chinese, myself included, and I speak and write Chinese. So I can understand whole heartedly, what a challenge it is for families that do not speak Chinese at home.



Ann Daw accompanies her daughter, Emma, each week and participates in the 1B class. During the March 29th's Teacher Parent Conference, I noticed that she was in the meeting but there was no sight of Emma. Of course being the nosy person that I am, I asked "Where is Emma?" She told me that Emma is home sick. So I asked "Then what are you doing here?" She said "I didn't want her to fall behind, so I came in to take notes for her." And this is how I found my next victim to be interviewed for the school newsletter.

How long has Emma attended the NWCS?

This is Emma's third year at NWCS.

Do you speak Chinese at home?

We try to practice the lessons during each day of the week. I will ask Emma questions and she will answer in Chinese. It's really quite fun.

I understand you work full time, how do you find time to help her with her homework? What happens when you are away on business?

I am President of the NASFT (National Association for the Specialty Food Trade). We have 2900 members who are small, entrepreneurial food and beverage companies and we produce 3 Fancy Food Shows a year. Our offices are on Wall Street so I have an hour and a half commute (minimum) each way to work.

I try very hard to plan the weekend and week for Emma's Chinese lessons, because it is very important to me that she maintains the culture from which she came. As well, I have a very deep appreciation and respect for the Chinese culture, and was very fortunate to have lived in Hong Kong for 3 years (of course the language there is Cantonese). Most of the time we get the recording and written homework for the following week done either the Sunday after class or bite off small pieces each day. Then we practice every day to be sure Emma is ready for the test. I do some visual card cues and have her write things down. Repetition helps a lot.

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I do travel from time to time and Lao Shi Chao is very helpful if I need a couple of weeks of homework ahead of time so I know what it is she is studying. Then my husband Tom helps with getting Emma prepared, and Adrena (our 12 year old) pitches in as she has some rudimentary understanding of Chinese.



Ann's daughters Adrena, Emma and husband Tom.

I personally have no patience sitting amongst a group of 7, 8, or 9 years old, how do you do it week after week?

There is a wonderful group of children in the class and they all get along very well. Lao Shi Chao is fabulous with them. As well, I am learning with them and get a great deal out of the lessons. I feel like I am making progress.

Do you think that the teacher gives too much home work? (Oh, please say yes, ☺)
I wish I could say yes, and I remember that initially it was very difficult for Emma to do the recordings. But with practice, and having a regular schedule of when we do the homework, it seems to be going more quickly. Sometimes I wish we could spend a bit more time on certain concepts and phrases so that Emma (and me!) can have them fully committed to memory before moving on. The test each week also makes sure that there's a discipline to the study, and there is such a sense of accomplishment when Emma gets back her papers.

What would you recommend for parents, teachers and the NWCS to do more, less, or differently to keep up with the school work?

It isn't easy not being fluent in a language on the home front. I grew up with Armenian parents and learned the language because it was spoken at home. I also went to Armenian school for 10 years. So I think Emma and I have to work a little harder, but the important thing is to practice, practice, practice.

The willingness of the school and the teachers to allow me to quietly sit in the back of the class has really helped me keep Emma up to speed (and has helped me learn the language).

It would be ideal to have parent/child classes where we practiced saying phrases to one another, because I am not always sure I am pronouncing things properly.

Overall, how has your overall experience been with NWCS?

I think the school and the teachers sincerely care about the children and parents, and have done a beautiful job of fostering the language and culture. I not only feel very blessed to have Emma in our lives but appreciate how giving and supportive the NWCS is.