



MID-YEAR CONFERENCE FOR CHINESE TEACHERS

January 15-18, 2010

New York City

The Chinese teachers traveled to New York City over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend for the mid-year conference. The teachers had last seen each other six months ago at the July pre-departure orientation in Shanghai; they were thrilled to meet again and share and learn from each other's experiences teaching in schools across the United States.



Dr. Wu Wei-ling and the teachers discuss ideas on how to get students and colleagues excited for the Chinese New Year.

The mid-year conference kicked off with a session led by Dr. Wu Wei-ling, a Chinese teacher at West Windsor-Plainsboro High School, New Jersey, who had worked with the teachers at the pre-departure orientation in Shanghai. Before the conference, each teacher submitted a description of a challenge they had faced while teaching in American schools. During Dr. Wu's session they discussed solutions to each of the challenges, sharing ideas about motivating students, classroom management, and dealing with sensitive topics. The teachers also reflected on how teaching

in the United States is different from teaching in China.

Reinforcing the idea that there are many different ways to be a good teacher, the afternoon featured demonstration classes highlighting two very different teaching styles. TEP alumna Maura Gouck (a former high school English teacher who is now a master teacher in the Department of Teaching and Learning, NYU Steinhardt School of Culture; Beijing, 1998-99) led the first afternoon session. Using a variety of techniques, Maura taught the teachers about "enabling constraints," collaborative work and differentiation. In addition to learning new teaching strategies, the teachers also left the session with beautiful poems they wrote both individually and in groups as part of an exercise on "enabling constraints." One teacher's individual poem reads,

I am a reader of readers
I wonder why it is so magical to hold a book
I hear the writers read their stories to me
I see the scenes jump out and display in front of me
I want all children to enjoy books and love reading

I am a reader of readers

I pretend I am characters in different stories
I feel their joy and sorrow, laughter and tears
I touch the covers as if they were manna from heaven
I worry so many wonderful books can't be shared with more people
I am a reader of readers

I understand only wisdom and true feelings turn prints
I say everyone has to write his own life story into his own book
I try to take time and pleasure reading with my family and my students
I hope books will accompany us as our best friends
I am a reader of readers

Returned American teacher Richard Sanford (retired, Grover Cleveland High School, New York; Dalian, 1997-98) taught the second demonstration class. He asked everyone to write about an unexpected experience they had had in the United States. Judging from the amount of laughter in the room as the teachers read their essays aloud, the teachers really enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences with one another. Richard explained how they could use a similar exercise in their own classrooms, describing how it could be adapted to fit different students' needs and language abilities.



Richard Sanford shares an unexpected experience he had as an exchange teacher in China.



Chen Qing (Tulsa, OK), Zhang Chunyan (Milwaukee, WI), and Wang Fangqiong (Whitman, MA) discuss their experiences teaching in the United States with Beverly Parsons.

As in previous conferences, the group spent Sunday outside the conference room, visiting Ellis Island, Times Square, and attending the Broadway production of "West Side Story." On Monday the conference concluded with an evaluation session led by Dr. Beverly Parsons and Dr. Patricia Jessup from InSites. The teachers divided into small groups to discuss living and teaching in the United States, the purposes of the program, the connections the teachers have made with past American and Chinese program participants, technology use, and the impact of TEP in the teachers' schools in China.

Armed with new ideas and motivated by their colleagues' experiences, everyone returned to their American schools and host families recharged for the second half of the school year.