**General Information**

Name: Liang Min

Country: China

Title of Project: Chinese New Year Celebration

Project dates: Feb.7 and Feb 10.

**Project Description:**

Western High School (my host school) is a big one with more than 3000 students. This is the first year to have a Chinese program even though they have French, Spanish, American Sign Language as electives and the World Language Department is really a big one. The first year 66 students take Chinese one and become my students, but still not many students in school are even aware of the Chinese program yet because I often overhear conversations like this going on and on when they see me or pass by my classroom: Seriously? We do have Chinese class in our school and a Chinese teacher? That is so cool...

In order to spread the impact and promote the Chinese program, I saw the Chinese New Year Celebration as a great opportunity to demonstrate the progress of my Chinese 1 students and display the Chinese culture to people who barely know anything about our culture as well. Meanwhile, the celebration could have a lasting impact and reach a large group of target people including teachers, students as well as parents. Those are just the objectives of my project as well. My project is divided into two parts: Chinese New Year Gala and Chinese New Year Food which takes place on Feb.7 and Feb 10. The Chinese New Year Gala consists of 9 performances where I include the most typical Chinese cultural elements and demonstrate students’ Chinese language skills at the same time. For the food part, I ordered authentic Chinese food in the restaurant and invite teachers and students to share the food. With posters presenting what food would be seen on the dinner table in China during this festive occasion and what symbolic meaning each food item has, the participants definitely have a clearer picture of the festival and helps to trigger their passion about Chinese culture. Word spread about my gala and people talk about it for a long time. They’ve never had this kind of performance before and the first year of this kind of show in the history of World Language Department really gives it a special touch and people are super impressed and a lot of them congratulate me on the success of the celebration.

**Results:**

I am the organizer of the celebration: I included all my students in both Chinese 1 and Chinese club. First I helped them brainstorm the performance they can contribute to the show and helped select one that best represents the Chinese culture and display their language progress. Then I made sure that they do the things that are both age-appropriate and theme-related in the rehearsal. It is a lot of work. I give my regular students one period to do the rehearsal per week for one month and a half. For the Chinese club we have to do the rehearsal after school. We have to practice the dragon dance twice a week for about 2 months after school. I applied both district grant and CLP grant, with which I order the costumes on Chinasprout(an online store) for the show and food in a Chinese restaurant to offer people a complete and authentic experience. Then I sent emails to administrators both in the district and school to come. Since the Gala takes place during school, I invite 34 teachers who have study hall during that time to bring their students to come and enjoy our show. We did the show twice on Feb.7 so that it could reach more people. A lot of teachers and students came without invitation because word spread they do not want to miss this. 720 seats in the auditorium were fully taken for both of the shows which makes the total audience 1400. Actually I didn’t expect it to be such a big audience and the administrators from the district said to me: You are fantastic. This is an amazing show. The principal told me he didn’t expect the show to be so wonderful and it is a very successful school event. Since food is not acceptable in the school auditorium, I introduce food to teachers and students in my Chinese club on Feb 10. I made cards for each food item with both English and Chinese. Those students who are too shy to be on stage help with the posters. They did a lot of research online to complete their project and it is also a great opportunity to learn. I think the whole celebration is a successful practice of project-based learning. Though the preparation of the celebration, I feel more comfortable using this teaching strategy and my students benefit from it as well. They become experts of their project: the performers in the Taiji show were so good at it that lots of teachers and students asked me whether we will have such training in the future that are intended for them. The audience were amazed by the progress of the language skills of the students in my Chinese 1 because the poems they recite are so long and they did it with great enthusiasm so that it seems they bring the whole audience to another different world. Students who are responsible for introducing the food for the Spring Festival did so much research that they may know more about that than a native Chinese. I think all these benefit my teaching and students learning. I believe there will be more students taking Chinese 1 next year. As for the community, some students invite their parents as well. Word spread, and more people will be interested in the Chinese language and culture. As for my professional development, even if it is lots of work and I experienced frustration and there were difficulties, I benefit a lot either as an organiser for the event or helper for students. I think my ability of leadership improves a lot and I fully understand one has to be proactive and it takes coordination to make such a big event work. I communicate with lots of people. Mr Black who is in charge of Drama in school helps me with the lights and audio for the show. Ms William helps me squeeze in the schedule for the use of the auditorium because it has been fully booked since the beginning of the school year. The assistant principal facilitates me in many aspects like selecting date for the show, etc. Through tons of emails and phone calls I think my ability to communicate and coordinate with people improves a lot. I am proud of what I did.

The project was an overall success. First of all, the show is completely culture and language-related with diverse elements. We have 9 performances: dragon dance (people here are crazy and curious about dragons), Poem Qinyuanchuanxue (I had hosts introduce the author chairman Mao and what the poem is about), Dancing Damengxiangjia (It is a pop song in China which enjoys great popularity among teenagers and it is about dreams of young people and how they achieve goals. I think it is quite inspiring and age appropriate), Flute show Molihua (The host introduced the name of the music and why the flower Molihua is held in esteem in Chinese culture), Martial arts show (China is well known for Martial Arts and some Chinese celebrities made their name here in the US as Martial Arts masters like Jackie Chen and Bruce Lee), Poem Mulan (Many kids are familiar with the story of Mulan because it has been adapted for Disney movies and many admire her for her bravery as a female character, Singing and Dancing Mingyuejishiyou(It is originally a poem in Song Dynasty and then is adapted for a song. The girl sings the Chinese song so beautifully and the dancers were so good that many of the audience told me they were quite impressed and liked the performance so much.), Taiji show (People here are so fascinated about Taiji that they asked me whether I can teach them how to do Taiji and one day they want to do Taiji on the beach in groups.), Qipao show (The traditional Chinese costume is not only beautiful but also represents the oriental element that many people are curious about.)

Secondly, the project served its purpose to spread the impact and helps to promote the program. A large audience aside, I received lots of compliments and positive feedback through email, verbal one, text messages. Some parents asked me to take photos with their kids to capture the moment. To quote some teachers’ email: That performance today was truly entertaining and it was a beautiful display of Chinese culture./Thank you for an awesome celebration. You must be exhausted. I know the countless amount of time and energy you spent on putting the show together. Please let me know if you ever need anything./ I work as a classroom assistant in the ESE PASS program. Thank you for putting together the multicultural event, it was wonderful...This is what the principal put on twitter: What an amazing event today celebrating Chinese language and culture. So proud of our students and our incredible teacher Ms Liang.

The whole celebration is a success and the same goes for the planning. As for lessons learnt from implementing this project would be it should have been planned a little bit earlier because some details are still not satisfactory like not all students are of the same level in terms of the performance and some of the acts in Martial Arts still look unprofessional. Meanwhile, it could be better if we could do one show after school when we can include more people in the community but we were quite concerned some people couldn’t make it to our show after school, but it is worth a try.

The idea of introducing food is great because food has always been a big draw and people are really interested about Chinese food but there is conflict between the budget and the number of potential target audience. This time I just invite some teachers and students in the Chinese club given the limited amount of budget for food. The aspects above could have been done better even though I’ve tried my best.

I think the whole celebration could be replicated next year and it could be made better with some improvement, like we could keep the dragon dance while introduce the drum live and lion dance as well. Most of the performances could stay next year.

**Project impact:**

About 1400 people directly benefited from this program. The performers that are about 80 students benefited most from this program. They either self taught or trained for many skills they need to go on stage. They overcome the stage fright to be on stage and they perform fantastically. To quote one colleague who used to have one of my student in her class: Is that Grant? I couldn’t believe my eyes. He used to be so shy and lazy and he is doing a long Chinese poem on stage? I believe this opportunity just helped push the kid to step out of his comfort zone and improve his self confidence.

My project helps to improve students’ language skills, culture awareness, coordinating skills, self-learning abilities. It also triggers people either on campus or out of school interest and passion for Chinese language and culture. Some students told me they are going to continue their efforts in Chinese learning even if they are unable to take Chinese 2 next year. It helps to promote the program and spread the impact. People talk and word spread. With such a successful event, I firmly believe that I can get more support and include more people in my activities. I think the school will this to be an annual event and many students on campus will be looking forward to this occasion.

**Attachment:**

Activity agendas:

Chinese New Year Gala Feb.7

1 Dragon dance

2 Poem Qinyuanchunxue

3 Dancing Damengxiangjia

4 Flute Show

5 Martial Arts Show

6 Poem Mulan

7 Singing and Dancing Mingyuejishiyou

8 Taiji Show

9 Qipao Show

Chinese New Year Food Feb 10

B lunch for teachers 12:30-1:00 pm

Students in the Chinese club 2:40-3:30