

# ARKANSAS

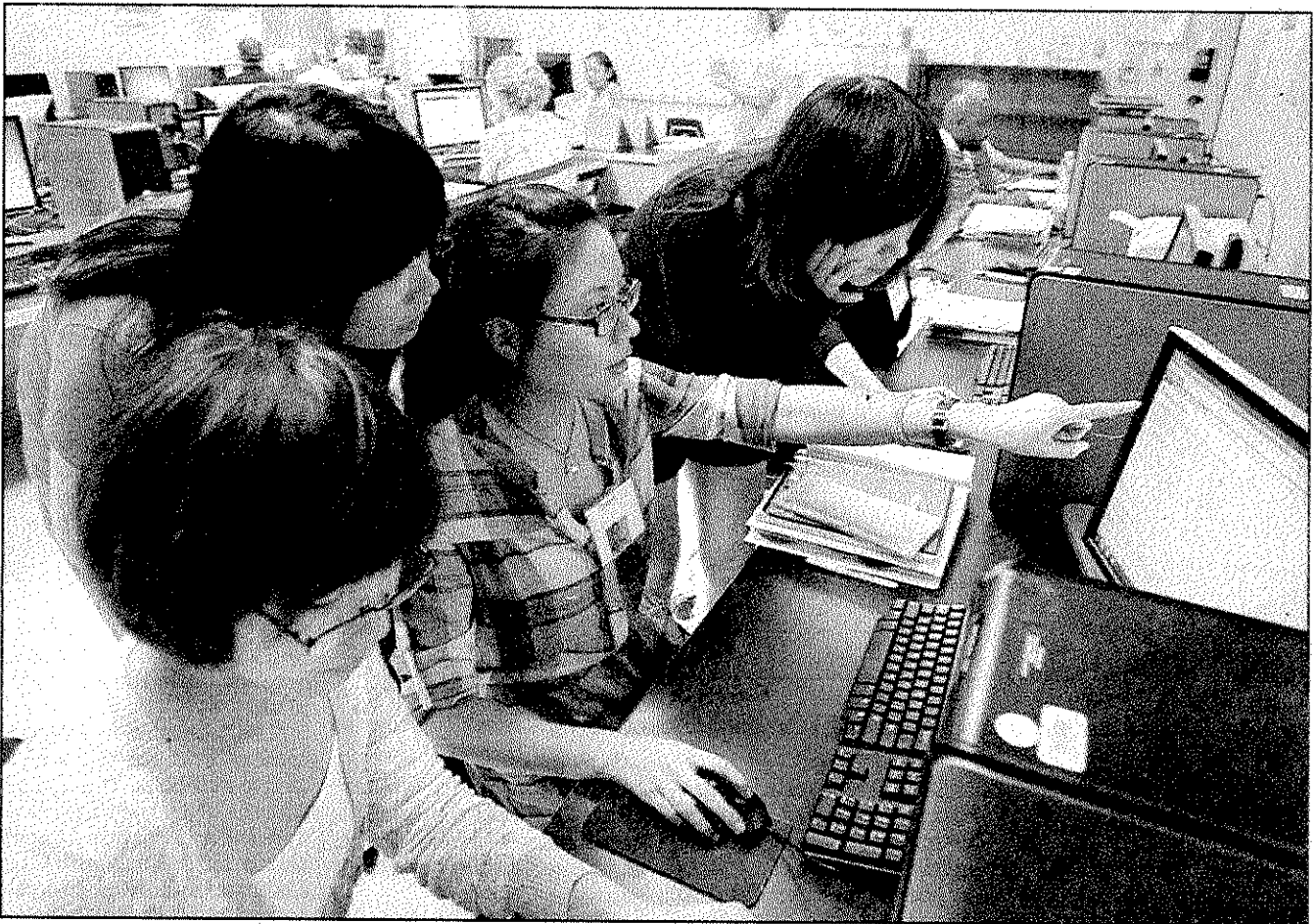
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**Le Chang** (from left), Jing Hu, Danyu Liao and Lida Jiang check out an Internet site Thursday at Carl Stewart Middle School in Conway. The four will teach Mandarin Chinese at Arkansas high schools.

# 11 to serve up lessons from China

## Educators from afar get in-state training as school year nears

ALISSA SKELTON  
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

As a young girl, Paige Morphew felt like a Chinese princess when her cousin dressed her in a traditional red Chinese dress and arranged her hair Beijing-opera style.

Not knowing the Chinese language, Morphew was fascinated with her Chinese cousin's culture and tried to connect with her by playing dress up.

Years later, Morphew was

one of the few Hot Springs students selected to take Mandarin Chinese classes from a teacher who had come from China in an initiative between the Arkansas Department of Education Chinese Teacher Program and the University of Central Arkansas/Hanban Confucius Institute.

Morphew, a junior at Hot Springs High School, took three years of Mandarin Chinese and grew close to her teacher, Jie Min of Beijing,

who Morphew says was like an older sister to her.

Min helped Morphew train for the Chinese Bridge Language Competition in which Morphew took first place in Arkansas and second place in the national competition held in Houston.

"I really looked up to my teacher, and she pushed me really hard to study," Morphew said.

Min returned to Beijing in June after her teaching stint

in Arkansas was over.

Now, a new group of Chinese teachers is in Arkansas ready to inspire students to learn a foreign language that the government and international businesses, including Wal-Mart, prize in their employees.

The 11 teachers, all women, were interviewed in China in December by some Arkansas educational leaders for the opportunity to teach in

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## China

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America. This opportunity will give the women a leg up in the Chinese job market, which favors men, said Barbara Culpepper, who runs the Arkansas Department of Education Chinese Teacher Program and interviewed the teachers.

"If we are going to keep our students competitive on a national and international level, we have to offer them the tools to do so," Culpepper said.

The 11 will teach Mandarin Chinese and its culture to students at high schools in North Little Rock, Maumelle, Cabot, Hot Springs, Beebe, Conway, Bentonville, and at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts in Hot Springs, and at multiple schools in the Batesville, Cross County and Harrisburg school districts.

There are also three additional teachers — one in Wynne and two teaching distance-learning courses at the Northwest Arkansas Educational Cooperative. They are entering their second year of teaching Mandarin Chinese through the program.

The first batch of Chinese teachers arrived in Arkansas in 2008 under a contract between the state Education Department and the Hanban, which is the Office of Chinese Language Council International.

Most of the new teachers — who all hold master's degrees in teaching Chinese as a second language — had never been to America before this month.

Culpepper said the teachers

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are paid \$1,000 per month by the Hanban. The state Education Department pays the rest of the teachers' salaries equal to any Arkansas teacher holding a master's degree — at least \$33,620 each.

Jing Hu of Tongling, who will teach at North Little Rock High School, said she is excited to try out the American way of teaching.

A training program this month gave the women a taste of teaching in an Arkansas classroom. School resumes in mid-August. The training is part of a two-year nontraditional licensure program that certifies Chinese teachers to teach in Arkansas.

The teachers have figured out quickly that teaching American students for the next two years will be much different from what they're used to.

"American students don't care about how much the teacher knows, they just care about how much the teacher cares about students," said Guimin Qu of Shanghai, who will teach in Cabot. "In China, we think teachers must be knowledgeable and have wisdom."

During the training program, they learned about different types of learning, teaching and note-taking.

They received lessons about the visual learner, the auditory learner and the kinesthetic learner. Then the training program instructor rattled off various methods to approaching in-class activities — the jigsaw and partner techniques, for instance.

The Chinese teachers scratched down notes from PowerPoint. In China, classes are conducted only one way — a teacher lectures and students take notes without asking questions.

"Our students in China are very quiet. They obey the rules, listen to the teacher, take notes and study hard for exams," said Yanxin Liu of Taiyuan, who will teach in Hot Springs. "But here, the students and the teachers are maybe more interactive, and the teachers will provide more activities and projects for students to do."

Morphew said her former teacher, Min, taught one of the best interactive classes she has taken during her education. Min had many games and fun learning methods, Morphew said.

Her favorite activity was when Min taught students how to play chess. The students labeled chess pieces in Chinese and then learned how each chess piece received its name. Then they played the game while asking one another questions in Chinese.

The Chinese Bridge Language Competition had fun ways to learn about the Chinese language and culture, too, Morphew said.

For the talent portion of the

competition, Morphew performed a puppet show in Chinese starring a Chinese dragon and herself arguing over who was more Chinese.

"I want there to be more appreciation in both worlds of the Chinese and American cultures," Morphew said. "We are so different. But how can we help each other and work toward a better goal?"

The new teachers will report to their respective school districts this week.

"A school district that offers Chinese is forward-thinking," Culpepper said. "This will give our students an edge."



Xian Lu (from left) and Haixia Wang visit with fellow teachers Andrea Hathoote and Nathan Holloway during a break Thursday at Carl Stewart Middle School in Conway.

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