Arkansas Educators Travel to China

UCA’s Confucius Institute, along with East China Normal University, sponsored eight Arkansas educators for a trip to China for a week in June to provide exchanges with educators in Shanghai and Hangzhou. The Confucius Institute’s Chinese Bridge for Arkansas Schools program aims to start and strengthen Chinese language programs and partnerships in the state. The focus of the trip was to collect knowledge about China’s culture, society and educational system.

The Arkansas delegation spent a day at the Confucius Institute at East China Normal University in Shanghai where the visitors were provided Chinese language lessons and cultural experiences to broaden their understanding of Chinese culture. In addition, the delegation visited Changzheng High School, Gongchenqiao Primary School, and Wenlan Middle School in Hangzhou, and Ganquan Foreign Languages Middle School in Shanghai. Each of these schools provided insights for Arkansas educators into the educational system in China. Despite language and cultural differences, the educational systems are very similar. Both countries emphasize content subjects – mathematics, science, language, history while also providing students experiences with technology, art, music, sports, etc. One of the major differences for teachers is that in the United States, K-12 teachers teach six to seven class periods a day. In China, teachers may teach two to three class periods but they are also expected to research and write in their field of study. The Chinese educators reported that they did not have discipline problems in the schools because parents and students value education as a means to a better life.

Arkansas educators making the trip included: Daniel Daniels, assistant principal, and Brent Bogy, principal, representing Batesville Junior High School; Memorie Freyaldenhoven, sixth grade mathematics teacher, and Jamie Bird, Spanish teacher, representing Conway Public Schools; Tom Arnhart, Spanish teacher, and Bill Rowan, band director, representing Rogers Public Schools; Kim Rowan, Spanish teacher, representing Bentonville Public Schools; Debbie Barnes, Assistant Dean in the College of Education, and Guo-ou Zhuang, Director of the Confucius Institute, representing UCA.

HIGHLIGHTS
APRIL - JUNE 2012

UCA Confucius Institute held the 2012 Arkansas “Chinese Bridge”--Chinese Proficiency Competition

Arkansas’s 2nd “Chinese Bridge”—Chinese Proficiency Competition for secondary school students preliminary contest took place in Conway on April 7, 2012. Seven contestants participated in the competition and the winner was Chauni Kira Lourblanc from Hot Springs High School. She represented the Confucius Institute for Arkansas at the Southern Regional Competition in Houston, Texas on April 22. The 7 contestants were from Cabot, Hot Springs, Conway, Farmington and Gravette schools and they have been learning Chinese anywhere from eight months to a year and a half, in classrooms or via Distance Learning. This competition was an opportunity for the students to demonstrate their knowledge to their parents, friends and teachers. It was emceed by Jiachi Liu, one of the Chinese teachers working for the Confucius Institute. The Director of the Confucius Institute, Dr. Guo-ou Zhuang started the event with opening remarks. The contest was judged by Dr. Zhuang, Jingjing Li, the Deputy Director for the Confucius Institute, and two UCA faculty members, Dr. Phillip Bailey, a French language professor and Dr. Jia Zhu, a professor of Chinese. The contest was broken into three segments, a speech made in Chinese, a quiz of Chinese culture and a talent portion, showcasing a Chinese talent.

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Chinese Calligraphy Class in Faulkner County

UCA CI held a one-month calligraphy class for the community at Faulkner County library. The class was held from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm, every Monday during the month of April, allowing the community the opportunity to learn and practice a unique art form. The goal of this class was to introduce traditional Chinese calligraphy to the community and help them understand Chinese culture through calligraphy.

32 community members signed up for the class. One of the students, Kevin Mequet said, I have wanted to learn Chinese calligraphy for a long time, thanks for this great experience, I enjoyed every minute of it.

By the end of the one-month class, the Faulkner County Library wrote a letter of appreciation to the instructor, Dr. Guo-ou Zhuang, director of UCA Confucius Institute, in which they express gratitude to the Confucius Institute for offering the April series of Chinese Calligraphy classes to the patrons and the general public. The library received only praise from the participants, who have expressed pleasure, a sense of inspiration and joy, and a deep interest in the art of Chinese Calligraphy.

Confucius Institute for Arkansas Holds “Doing Business with China,” a Business Culture Seminar

The Confucius Institute for Arkansas held a seminar on May 21 and 22, for Dassault Falcon Jet entitled “Doing Business with China” as part of the Confucius Institute’s ongoing mission to educate students and businesses on cultural understanding.

The seminar covered a series of topics that will benefit Dassault Falcon in their future business dealings with China. It began with a brief discussion of the elements of Chinese culture that can be involved during business dealings and how these elements are changing as the younger generation gains prominence in the business world. One of the main components of the seminar was a discussion of etiquette during business meals and banquets.

Lunch was served after this discussion, allowing participants to practice what they learned. The afternoon was spent discussing negotiation strategies that can be used in business meetings, what gifts are appropriate, what colors or numbers used on their products would increase sale, and ways to adapt to the negotiation strategies used by their Chinese counterparts.

Those in attendance appreciated the real world skills taught by the Confucius Institute that they were able to take back to their company, as well as the stories from history when cultural misunderstandings halted the business process. They also benefited from the exposure to Chinese history and culture, which was the first experience for many who attended the seminar.

Chinese Bridge” (Continued)

Even though some of the contestants have been learning the language for only eight months, they are now fluent. This demonstrates not only their knowledge of the language but also their passion for learning. Preston Wade Reed from Farmington High School demonstrated his skill with the Chinese martial arts weapon, the nunchaku and Erica Nicole Peppers from Hot Springs High School dressed up like a Chinese teacher and gave a lesson that she devised herself for those in the audience. The winner, Chauni Kira Lourblanc, performed a classic Chinese dance named “Beauty Song.”

During the awards ceremony, the judges handed out certificates and prizes to the contestants and Dr. Zhuang encouraged all of the contestants to keep learning so they could have more opportunities for global experiences in the future.

12th World Short Stories Conference Held in Little Rock, AR

The 12th World Short Stories Conference was held in Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas from June 26 to 30, 2012, with the chairman of the conference being Dr. Maurice Lee, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at UCA. Over 150 writers and scholars from 26 different countries attended the meeting. Fang Fang, Zhao Mei, Ren Fukang and other writers from China were invited to attend by the Confucius Institute. This is the first time Chinese mainland writers participated in this conference. Former President Bill Clinton sent a video message to deliver a welcome to all in attendance.

The theme of this conference was the Short Story Tradition: Access to and Beyond the Modern Bridge. Writers from many countries have discussed the historical development and current status of short stories in different countries and cultural traditions. In the section of Chinese short stories, the Chinese writer Fang Fang, Zhao Mei, Ren Fukang, professor Zhu Shoutong from the University of Macau, professor Ling Jian-e from Hunan University of Science and Technology and the Director of the Confucius Institute at University of Central Arkansas Dr. Zhuang Guo-ou described the status of Chinese contemporary short stories. Fang Fang presented her own writing experiences as well as different styles of contemporary novels and fictions of China. Zhao Mei focused on the impact of foreign literature on Chinese writers, Ren Fukang, judge of Mao Dun Literature Award judge and the editor of Literature Gazette talked about the Chinese Literature Prize and the difficulties selling short stories in the market economy. Professor Zhuang commented on the impact of American short stories in China and professor Zhu Shoutong spoke about Contemporary Chinese Short Story Analysis.

Analysis.