

Personal Goals

By Hou-Dan Chin

I. Career Goal

The Chinese have an old saying that “It is easy to be a teacher of knowledge, but it is very difficult to be a teacher of life.” My career goal is to be “a teacher of life,” who not only knows the Chinese language, but also is a role model based on my characters.

II. The Approach

I plan to inspire students by focusing on *how* to learn instead of knowledge. In today’s world, it is impossible for teachers to know every challenge students will confront in their lives. If students know *how* to solve problems and use effective methods to pursue knowledge, they will be able to confront whatever challenges they may have in their lives.

It is important to motivate students to want to confront the challenge, approach problems with right attitude, pursue knowledge with effective methods, and apply it to solve problems. It is a process of finding the truth, not simply imparting knowledge. Once students know *how* to do these, they can be a life-long thinker and will strive to reach their maximum potential.

III. Personal Qualities and Development

I always welcome challenges because I believe they can lead to greater achievements. I have been interested in teaching since I was ten. I was an active contributor of my fourth-grade speech class. Later I was chosen by the school to give a speech every week in front of my schoolmates. Since then, I have not been afraid of speaking in front of an audience. As a teenager, I was a summer camp teacher when I was a member of a social club. As a college student, I tutored three children for years. After college, I worked in the marketing field and taught English to adult students at a community school.

Coming to America to study Communications was a turning point in my life. It helped me explore my potential to a greater extent. During my first semester I volunteered as a telephone surveyor at the Communication Research Center in my Department, which was a way for me to improve my English since it is not my native language.

Comparing with my educational experiences in my homeland, I was amazed by the incredible differences of education philosophy between America and China. In China, there is a strong emphasis on memorization, while in America teachers encourage independent thinking.

With my professors’ help and my hard work I was able to build up my self-confidence and develop my ability to think independently. Therefore, I believe that through teachers’ help and effective learning tools, any learners can develop their potential.

My interest in teaching was reinforced after I gave birth to my child. I am curious not only about how children grow physically, but also how they learn and interact with people. From these experiences, I have also learned that teaching requires a lot of love, patience, and preparation.

IV. Professional Work Experiences

Working as a Special Education teacher provides me valuable experiences. First, it gives me a chance to work with students with special needs. I naturally want to learn more about these students and find ways to help them. It also helps to bridge my experience with my interest in teaching Chinese among whom some have special needs. I enjoy developing interesting curriculum and designing fun activities to help those students.

Some of my Chinese students who have special needs have had a combination of disabilities such as learning or emotional disabilities other than their language needs. What I learned from these students is that no matter what challenges lie ahead of them, as long as they have positive self-concept and know how to self-advocate for themselves, with the help of teacher and effective teaching methods, these students can be productive citizens and reach their maximum potential. Teachers' roles are to help them to set realistic goals, use effective methods to teach them, and keep encouraging them while they try to reach their goals.

V. Recent Enrichment

Since I pursue my endorsement in teaching Chinese, I have taken graduate courses and attended workshops and seminars. These courses have broaden my understanding in teaching methodology, strengthening my knowledge in instructional strategies, and cultivating my ability in conducting research.

The classmates in the Startalk program, the faculties, the professional acquaintances in the County, even parents of the students I worked with have not only contributed to the enrichment of my learning experience, but have also become my good friends. I expect all these experiences will help me to apply the knowledge I learned, provide me opportunity to take the responsibility as a teacher, a language teacher, and further equip me to become a competent teacher in serving students with language needs as well as special needs. Eventually I can reach my goal as “a teacher of life” who makes a difference in students' lives.