

California-Shanghai Principal Exchange Program  
2009 Evaluation

A total of eight superintendents, assistant superintendents and principals responded to a survey following completion of the 2009 exchange program. The results are summarized below. The numbers in parenthesis reflect the number of respondents.

1. What are some of the benefits you and your schools gained from this program?
  - Students and teachers learned from the Chinese visitors' presentations; they identified and bonded with them and even learned some Mandarin (4).
  - We shared curriculum, modeled teaching and were forced to better articulate why we do things as we do; a new set of eyes who were open and honest (2).
  - They connected us to other countries and sister schools (2).
  - They helped me evaluate our Chinese program (1).
  - We face the same challenges. The interaction brings out the best in all of us makes me thankful (1).
  - Helped me understand how they do professional development (1).
  
2. What were some of the difficulties?
  - Finding host families for home stays (2).
  - Not knowing expectations. Planning appropriate activities and events (3).
  - Poor mastery of English (1).
  - They had very good English (1).
  
3. What would you do differently next time?
  - Give them more time to rest and relax. Make each home stay about 3 weeks (2).
  - Mainly focus on school sites with longer full-day visits. Involve them in more evening events (3).
  - Get more students to attend the principals' presentations (1).
  
4. What insights did you gain into the similarities and differences between our educational systems?
  - Our students have much in common such as the expectations of parents. The focus on learning is a common thread (5).
  - Chinese students choose to participate; they are motivated and display diligence, perseverance and discipline. American students lack (2).
  - Chinese students are more passive learners with fewer opportunities for independent thinking (1).
  - Both systems struggle with policies. Shanghai schools are more tracked, with different management structures, teacher evaluation and approaches to curriculum. Their top-down system gives consistency of curriculum and instruction; our site-based approach gives staff support but takes more time and resources. China makes education a true priority. It was eye opening; it completely changed my knowledge and perception of China and its educational system (6).
  - It showed the importance Shanghai places on high school career technical education; their support is phenomenal (1).
  - This benefited both our cultures and makes me realize what our schools can gain from this relationship (2).

5. What might help guest principals overcome language barriers?
  - There were few, if any, language barriers (2).
  - Better screening. More conversation practice with native speakers. Training in American educational jargon (5).
  - They were willing to take risks-I applaud their efforts (1).
  
6. What changes would you like to see in your school/district as a result of this program?
  - Expand our Mandarin program, particularly to lower grades (3).
  - Give our students more exposure to outside cultures (2).
  - More exchanges involving students, teachers, music groups, project-based programs, etc. (4).
  - Invest more in career and technical education in high school (1).
  - Incorporate the idea of continuously asking questions-why do we do what we do? I now do this in my daily routines. Leaders need time away from their schools and need to challenge practices (1).
  
7. What would you like to do in the future to benefit from this program?
  - Expand to other schools in our district (3).
  - Bring students to visit and make “sister school” connections (2).
  - Have Shanghai educators teach Mandarin, math, etc. and help us find teaching materials with traditional characters (2).
  - Expand Chinese teaching to other grade levels (1).
  
8. Other comments?
  - The visit made a major impact on our children (1).
  - This was a very valuable experience-I continue to draw on conversations with our visitors concerning curriculum development, teaching strategies, standardized tests, data, student life, etc. (1).
  - We have no resources in California to fund visits like this (1).