



SUBSCRIBE NOW and get 3 months for the price of 1 **SUBSCRIBE**



search: All azcentral.com

Log in Subscribe Register e-Newspaper Help

News Sports Money Things to do Politics Opinion Watchdog Travel Food & Home Health Traffic Weather

Ahwatukee | Chandler | Gilbert | Glendale | Mesa | Peoria | Phoenix | Pinal | Queen Creek | Scottsdale | Southwest Valley | Surprise | Tempe



Community » Mesa » Article

0 Comments

Chinese language school a bridge to cultural roots

Chinese linguistic program attracts youths for 32 years



First-grade instructor Jill Yen assists Bradley (right) and Jet Lien with an exam at the Chinese Linguistic School of Phoenix at Mesa Community College on Sunday, April 28, 2013.

PHOTO BY: Angela Piazza/The Republic

JUMP TO 1 OF 12

Remaining Views

SHARE URL EMAIL

FONT: A A A

Recommend 0

Tweet 0

For Full Access: [LOG IN](#) or [Subscribe now: 3 months for the price of 1](#)

RELATED INFO

About the school

The Chinese Linguistic School of Phoenix has classes on Sunday afternoons at Mesa Community College, 1833 W. Southern Ave. in Mesa.

Fall classes: Enrollment has

By Cathryn Creno

The Republic | azcentral.com

Mon May 13, 2013 8:08 AM

Six months after Marta and Victor Waddell's first child was born, they decided she would learn Mandarin, the national language of China.

"We want her to speak Mandarin by the time she finishes high school," Marta Waddell said. "China is now the big player in the world. With any field she goes into, knowing Mandarin will be a plus."

That was seven years ago. The Tempe couple now have three

Exclusive selections for our subscribers

[Critics urge Scottsdale to rethink city's contract with PGA over TPC](#)

[Tempe gets 1st medical pot dispensary](#)

[Boivin: Griner's marketing power apparent](#)

[Vinyl records making a comeback](#)

[Gilbert transit plan is in the works](#)

Most Popular Top Videos

[Mesa police arrest man in sister's attack](#)

started for fall classes at the school, which begin Aug. 11.

Cost: \$120 plus a \$36 registration fee per student per semester. The cost is reduced to \$100 per student for families with three or more children enrolled at the same time. Textbooks may cost extra.

Where to enroll: Go to the school website

at clspheoenix.org for an enrollment form.

Additional information: Contact Principal Grace Lee at 480-620-1982 or e-mail her at chenglee2009@gmail.com.

daughters enrolled in the Chinese Linguistic School of Phoenix — Niamh, 7, Maeve, 6, and Lily, 3. "I wouldn't call them fluent, but they are learning an awful lot," Marta Waddell said.

The Tempe-based Chinese Linguistic School began 32 years ago as an informal language-tutoring program for children of parents from China.

Over the years, it has evolved into a non-profit organization that now offers formal language classes on Sunday afternoons through Mesa Community College's non-credit community-education program.

This spring, 160 preschool through 11th-graders were enrolled in classes ranging from basic Mandarin conversation to high-school-level classes in reading and writing Chinese. Students mainly come from the Southeast Valley, but over the years some families have driven to the school from as far as Yuma, Maricopa and Fountain Hills.

Two-thirds of the students are children or grandchildren of native Mandarin speakers. The rest come from English-speaking homes, like the Waddells, or families that speak Cantonese, the primary language of Hong Kong.

Gilbert mom Tammy Berg's mother was born in China. Her dream is for her children, Sophia, 8, and Zachary, 6, to learn enough of the language to communicate with their relatives in Taiwan.

"We are going to go back next year and I want them to be able to speak to their grandparents," she said.

Teachers at the school are all native speakers of Mandarin.

"Students who graduate from our program will be proficient in reading, writing, listening and speaking Chinese at the level equivalent to students who graduate from high school in Asia," said Edmond Tse, chairman of the school's board.

Interest in studying Chinese also is growing in Valley public schools. Mesa, Scottsdale, Phoenix Union and Higley are among the districts that offered Mandarin.

But few Chinese Linguistic students feel the need to take any additional classes, according to school Principal Grace Lee. Plus, the Sunday program frees them to focus on other studies during the week, she said.

Amy and Gary Gilpin of Phoenix enrolled their three children in Chinese Linguistic classes last fall after learning that they would be moving to Taiwan this summer. Gary's employer, Air Products and Chemicals, is transferring him there for a three-year stint as a controller.

"We wanted to keep it fun and low-pressure," Amy Gilpin said. But even though the Gilpins have not put heavy emphasis on doing Chinese-language homework, their kids — Megan, 8, Anna, 6, and James, 4, — know enough Mandarin to enjoy a recent house-hunting trip in Taiwan, she said.

Students who graduate from the school typically start out in preschool classes for 3- and 4-year-olds in which they learn Mandarin word

sounds, or phonetics, and basic conversation.

By age 6, the students begin learning to write Chinese characters. By graduation, students typically are able to read and recite Chinese poetry and write short essays.

On a recent Sunday, teacher Sheau-Yann Liang sat on the classroom floor surrounded by preschoolers chattering comfortably in Mandarin. They had brought in dolls and toy cars to share and students were encouraged to describe their toys as carefully as possible.

"He is very good as far as speaking and listening," Tempe engineer Don Briner said about his son, Dylan, 4, who is in the preschool class.

Briner's wife, Ahua, is a native Mandarin speaker and the couple also have two daughters, Joanne 11, and Billie, 9, enrolled at the school. Briner said his children speak Mandarin nearly as well as they speak English.

"If I make a mistake when I read a Chinese storybook to Dylan he corrects me now," he said.

A few doors away, members of the Chinese Linguistic 2013 graduating class were practicing speeches and poetry to recite at a May 5 ceremony with their teacher, Chen-Ling Lu.

Cody Chang, 15, and a student at Desert Vista High School in Ahwatukee Foothills, spoke so fluently it sounded like he didn't even need to be at the school.

The aspiring computer engineer has lived part of his life in Hong Kong and attends the classes so he won't forget how to read and write Chinese. "Plus, it's fun," he said.

Jodi Arias murder case: Timeline of events
4 wounded in gunfight involving 75 people
Mesa police help plan bone-marrow drive
Jodi Arias murder trial: Best trial moments
Jodi Arias trial: Friend of Alexander's criticized his treatment of Arias
Arias trial: Sex, violence, intrigue were recipe for national interest
Mesa GM site reborn as a housing development
If Jodi Arias is given the death penalty, she will join an infamous lineup where only 3 are women
Former DC-9 presidential aircraft housed in Mesa to hit auction block

Phoenix's Revolutionary Residential Solar Power Program

SOLAR PHOENIX 2

GO SOLAR TODAY ▶

Earn *your* master's in nursing online.

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Start today.

Start Your Future Here ▶

GET AZCENTRAL ANYWHERE

azcentral.com
mobile editions

Get azcentral.com on your phones and tablets for the latest news, sports, video, photos and much more from [azcentral](http://azcentral.com), The Arizona Republic and 12 News.

» [Get azcentral.com mobile!](http://azcentral.com/mobile/)
» [Android](#) | [iPad](#) | [iPhone](#)
» [iPhone Sports](#) | [AZ](#)

From our sponsor

Banner Children's Total Kid for iPad



Download your free copy of Total Kid, an interactive digital parenting magazine filled with trending health topics, videos, tips and activities. Sponsored by Banner Health.

Angela Fu, 16, and a junior at Corona del Sol High School in Tempe, has never lived in China but her parents are native speakers of Mandarin.

"At first, I thought it was a little boring coming here every Sunday," said Fu, who has been studying Mandarin since age 3. "But as I grew up, I realized how important it is to be here. We're becoming more economically connected with China all the time."

Both Fu and Chang said they have become close friends with the seven other members of the 2013 class.

"It is so easy to connect with everyone here," Fu said.



▶ JOIN THE DISCUSSION

azcentral.com has switched to the Facebook comment system on its blogs. Existing blog comments will display, but new comments will only be accepted via the Facebook comment system. To begin commenting, you must be logged into an active personal account on Facebook. Once you're logged in, you will be able to comment. While we welcome you to join conversations, readers are responsible for their comments and abuse of this privilege will not be tolerated. We reserve the right, without warning or notification, to remove comments and block users judged to violate our [Terms of Service](#) and [Rules of Engagement](#). [Facebook comments FAQ](#)

Comments posted via facebook: 0



Add a comment...

Post to Facebook

Posting as Sally McCann Mesarosh ([Change](#))

Facebook social plugin

hatching deals daily Up to 90% off local dining, shopping, and more  Sign up now at DealChicken.com

POPULAR TOPICS

- [Investigations](#)
- [AZ Fact Check](#)
- [Arizona's American Indians](#)
- [Economic Snapshot](#)
- [City Comparison Guide](#)
- [Air We Breathe](#)
- [Republic 100](#)
- [AZ Storytellers](#)
- [Sheriff Joe Arpaio](#)
- [Valley Home Values](#)
- [Saving Arizona's Children](#)
- [Immigration](#)
- [Boomer101](#)
- [Western Jobs](#)
- [My Town](#)
- [Fiesta Bowl Investigation](#)
- [Ask & Answered](#)
- [My Neighborhood](#)
- [Who's Who In Business](#)

SITMAP

- [Homepage](#)
- [Healthy Living](#)
- [Business & Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Food & Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Things To Do](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Getaway Tips](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Weather](#)

More of azcentral.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- [Advertise with Republic Media](#)
- [Careers at The Republic](#)
- [FCC Online Public Inspection](#)
- [File](#)
- [EEO Public File Report](#)
- [Careers at 12 News](#)
- [Contact The Republic](#)
- [Media In Education](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Manage My Account](#)
- [Subscribe to The Republic](#)
- [Terms of Service](#)

PARTNERS

- [USA Today](#)
- [Gannett Co. Inc.](#)
- [Apartments: apartments.com](#)
- [Cars: cars.com](#)
- [Dating: eHarmony.com](#)
- [Homes: Homefinder.com](#)
- [HomeGain](#)
- [Jobs: CareerBuilder.com](#)
- [Local Businesses](#)
- [Shopping: findsave.azcentral.com](#)

© 2013 azcentral.com. All rights reserved. | Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights](#) and [Ad Choices](#)

GANNETT