



RUIHONG GE

Chinese Immersion teacher

Washington, DC

Ms. Ge reluctantly returned to China in summer of 2011. She had stayed in the US teaching in J-1 exchange visa teacher status for three years. The Cordell Hull Foundation was not able to obtain an extension for her to continue her work. She had already been approved by Hanban to continue for a fourth year and waited in China all summer hoping to get the State Department's approval for an extension. Though the possibility had been extended for public school foreign-language teachers in January of 2011, there was a change in personnel during the summer. Despite Ms. Ge's extraordinary track record in winning awards for her students, CHF could not convince the new team that Ms. Ge was not taking a job away from an American teacher, and sufficiently show the enormous positive impact that Ms. Ge contributed to public school students in the nation's capital city.



Beloved by her students and co-workers, Ms. Ge I taught in a Middle School and High School in Washington, D.C.

In the second year, she was assigned to a high school due to the absence of the previous Chinese teacher. After she left, for almost one year, they couldn't find a Chinese teacher who could stay at the job for a long time. They hired 4 teachers in half of the school year and none of them stayed.

Continuing in her words ... "The students' learning process was thus broken from time to time. When my old students graduated from the middle school and went to the high school the second year, all of them complained to me that the Chinese class was in chaos and they didn't learn



anything after I left because of the discontinuity of the teaching. Their parents said the same thing. On the other hand, while I was teaching in the high school, I built up a continued positive learning environment, continued rapport with students and their parents, and students' learning was progressing in a continuous way.

Some students told me, "Ms. Ge, we will stay in your class for four years. Don't get tired of us." I would tell

them, "How could I get tired of you---my lovely American students?"

"Staying in the Chinese class and leaning my language and culture is my honor. I would love to see all of you stay for four years."

As the end of the previous semester was approaching, very often my students asked me whether I would stay for another year or not, and every time I would tell them, "how could I leave my loveliest and dearest students behind? Of course I will stay----for you!"



In my heart, I knew that I was not certain about the possibility of the extension of the J-1 visa, but I didn't want to disappoint my students.

In 2010, I took my students to participate in the Chinese Bridge Competition---a Chinese language proficiency competition held at University of Maryland. We did an excellent performance and thus won a three-week free trip to China in October, 2010. Because of this, my principal also won a two-week free trip to visit China. After the three students came back, they brought up a heated wave among the students to visit China. A considerable number of students applied to a variety of programs which could give them an opportunity to study Chinese during the summer vacation.

Now, in summer of 2011, four of my students are in China studying Chinese language and culture-----three are in Beijing and one is in Zhengzhou. I am so proud of them and I hope to bring more students in the future to China.



In 2011, we took part in the Chinese Bridge competition again, and one of my students again won a three-week free trip to China because of his excellent performance. Seeing the progress of the Chinese language program, the principal also expressed his wish to me: the school wanted me to stay, and they already made the budget for me for the 2011-2012 school year.

They knew that it might be easy to find a Chinese teacher, but it is not very easy to find a qualified and devoted native Chinese teacher who loves teaching the language and who loves the learner of the language. Many of my students' parents also expressed the same wish to me. Very often, parents and I discussed the possibility of opening up more Chinese courses such as AP Chinese and Chinese Literature in the near future. Some even told me that they could write to the principal if I need them to do so. Seeing the enthusiasm from the students, the school and the parents, how could I not want to stay and carry on the Chinese program to a deeper and wider level?



The second reason I wanted to stay is that I really, really enjoy teaching in Washington. The administrative team and my department team are friendly, efficient and helpful, other colleagues are nice, and the students and parents are eager and cooperative, all of which made the teaching incredibly enjoyable and pleasant. I love the communication with the community, especially the communication with the students. Students and I talked about almost everything. We discussed which one is better----the Tiger Mom or the Western Mom,



the Chinese education methods or the American ones. We discussed whether China is currently more Communist or more capitalist and which political system is better. We compared the long history of China and a comparatively shorter one of America and we debated whether we need to look back to history or not. We discussed which is more scientific ----the traditional

Chinese medicine or the modern western one, and we argued which is more preferable--- censorship or not... Communication with students was always pleasant and beneficial. Looking at things from students' perspectives also helped broaden my mind.



Working with my American students and helping them learn my native language and culture gave me a tremendous feeling of fulfillment. Seeing them grow everyday both intellectually and psychologically provided me with enormous satisfaction. That's also why I want to extend my teaching for a longer period of time----extend the fulfillment and pleasure from teaching Chinese

to American students.

In a word, my students needed me and I needed my students. I was very sad to leave them behind."