WHY I AM HERE?

"My life formula is: I can = I want + I do. I do well because I love my job, and I want to do it better."

It’s been two years since I began to work for Riverview International Academy, which is affiliated with the Confucius classrooms of CISDSU. I have been very confident in all my work this year, because of my students as well as my team.

I have been teaching Chinese since 2009 and never changed my mind. Because of the pure love of my job, I dedicated myself to teaching Chinese—the language itself and the teaching practices of China. It could be said that my professional development has been quite smooth. After I got my bachelor’s degree, I wanted to continue in graduate studies for teaching Chinese as a second language, and I did it. I wanted to teach and practice in South Korea after getting my master’s degree, I did it. I wanted to know more about American education when I returned from South Korea, and I did it. My life formula is: I can = I want + I do. I do well because I love my job, and I want to do it better.

ARE THEY DEVILS OR ANGELS?

"I was surprised at the distance between my imagination and the situation in real life."

Before I stepped into the U.S., I’d already heard about how difficult it is to manage the classroom in a K-8 school. I prepared myself by reading many books and studying a lot of classroom management strategies. However, I was surprised at the distance between my imagination and the situation in real life. I was in an immersion classroom the first month after I came here. I was astonished to see how well-behaved the kids were, and how proactive they were when their teacher asked them to participate in an activity. I found there was nowhere to use what I had prepared for. As a rule, good days don’t last long. During the second month I began to teach independently with the guidance of a local teacher. The second month brought new challenges: three schools, four grade levels, eight classes, and finally, the challenges of classroom management. After many times thinking over what the teacher in the immersion classroom did and how she communicated, it occurred to me that: a teacher matters; I matter. Students here are usually very pure, they have a strong curiosity and they dare to express themselves. Exploration appeals to them. A typical form of teaching in China where teachers speak a lot while students listen and take notes, fails to attract the kids in the U.S. who enjoy more suspense.
Teachers matter when thinking of how to design an interesting, meaningful, intriguing way to teach. When it comes to classroom management, kids here also differ very much from Chinese kids. Chinese kids have trained from a young age a respect for teachers, which comes from a long-lasting traditional Confucian culture. As a result, it’s an unwritten practice in China that kids listen to what teacher says without any doubts. On the other hand, kids here prefer to judge whether what the teacher said makes sense, then they will choose whether or not to listen. For example, if you give command, Chinese students will follow. For U.S. kids, only when you give a command and explain why you ask them to do so then they will take it seriously. Therefore, I always try to make my class interesting and active by all kinds of activities, and communicate with my kids rather than just make a command and ask them to follow.

Once, a student asked me for help in the class, I answered: “Sorry, please wait a minute, there are already two students waiting for my help.” The student answered: “you don’t want to help me.” When class was over, I asked him, did I help you? Why I did not help you right away? What might you do if the teacher is very busy? I tried to help the student to figure out the entire situation and let him know he can make a smart choice, like referring to the book, skipping the question for now, or asking friends for help. When a student can’t find a way to solve his problem, he is stuck with his feelings. What I want to do is help him to find the good process.

There is a student in my class who works quite well but when he is confronted with some difficulties, he sometimes says, “I feel I am a loser.” I always tried to convince him of what he is like in my eyes. “You are always very participating in the class. You remember all the words I teach. You talk with me in Chinese fluently. You write the characters so neatly. You finish your homework always on time. I can’t count all the things you did great. In my eyes you are great, just be confident.”

I am deeply touched by American educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom who made great contributions to the theory of mastery learning. In his opinion, 95% of the students (5% top students and 90% medium students) can learn and master a new subject, if they are supplied with enough time and appropriate help. Usually teachers come into the classroom with a definite teaching objective, when there are some students who fail to reach the goals a teacher sets, the teacher can’t help but think “why did he/she still not get it?” Whenever this question jumps into my mind, first I will try to tell myself that every student has a different pace, so I do not need to be in a hurry. Then ask myself, did you provide him/her adequate time and appropriate
THE POWER OF TEAMWORK

"Everyone in the team could tell you that we can be the best, and we are trying our best."

All the past year, I never regret that I came here, because everyone in my team has shown me an example by their words and actions. They make me feel and know that I could not have been better in such a great team.

On September 10th, all CI teachers from Riverview performed the dance Tuberose in celebration of the Moon Festival in Balboa Park. You would never have imagined that these teachers had just arrived in the U.S. on August 23rd, and began to learn the dance to perform on August 25th. As their coach, I can tell that they must have practiced a lot by themselves, because every time we practiced together I found that they had great progress. Two weeks are even not enough for settling themselves down, but enough for the hard working teachers to perform perfectly. Everyone in the team could tell you that we can be the best, and we are trying our best.

BEYOND 8 HOURS

"I enjoy living in a different country; you can’t tell your life apart from travelling, every day everything can be different and new."

I love the eight working hours, because I am doing the job I love, and getting along with my beloved students and fantastic team. Beyond the eight hours, I spend all my vacation time traveling around. Now I have been to most of the states in the western United States, including Alaska. My biggest pleasure comes from traveling, and enjoying the real way of life here. To tell the truth, I hate traveling as a tourist, using only a couple of weeks, and taking pictures in haste. I enjoy living in a different country; you can’t tell your life apart from traveling, every day everything can be different and new. I can experience the different culture, as well as the different language and the scenery.

Time flies. One year is too short. However this year working for CI/SDSU has been enriched by the people I met, and the life I have made/ lived here.