SECTION ONE

NEED FOR THE PROJECT AND GOALS
Section One: Need for the Project and Goals

Over the past decade, STARTALK has provided high-quality language and culture instruction to thousands of young American students who are learning a variety of less commonly taught languages. This experience has changed the lives of many young American students and stimulated within them a long-term interest in mastering the languages and cultures of the non-English speaking world. These programs serve to increase the number of Americans who are proficient in languages that are critical to economic competitiveness and national security, while increasing cross-cultural understanding in today’s interconnected world.

STARTALK provides programs with training and resources, as well as professional guidance and support from STARTALK team leaders, who are world language experts, to develop performance- and proficiency-based curriculum using the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements, Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication, and the Reflection Tool for Learners. These tools and statements give educators the ability to unpack important documents, like The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012, and ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners. Not only does STARTALK provide educators with the skills and training necessary for any successful language education program, but the STARTALK curriculum has also been carefully articulated to ensure that students can effectively meet national, state, school district, and individual STARTALK summer program learning goals. Furthermore, STARTALK empowers learners by helping them cultivate 21st century skills (See “21st Century Skills Map”) so that they are college- and career-ready. There is no doubt that these skills are extremely important in today’s increasingly global society.

Designed curriculum are delivered and implemented in the classroom with instructional methods that adhere to STARTALK-endorsed Principles for Effective Teaching and Learning (https://startalk.umd.edu/public/principles). These principles promote meaningful language and culture instruction that is theme-based and learner-centered. Student learning outcomes are demonstrated through performance-based assessments, the self-assessment tool LinguaFolio, and language proficiency tests. Instruction that integrates language, content, and culture focuses on reaching designated language proficiency targets in the three modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. Besides these three traditional modes of communication, instruction also focuses on giving students the tools and targets to meet a high degree of Intercultural Communication Proficiency through age-appropriate activities that are culturally rich and cognitively engaging. STARTALK programs equipped with STARTALK curriculum and STARTALK-endorsed Principles for Effective Teaching and Learning have successfully helped learners smoothly develop their language proficiency. Unfortunately, the STARTALK approach to curriculum design and instruction are not yet common practice for K-12 Chinese language providers. As a result, many Chinese language programs in the country face challenges in both vertical (across levels) and horizontal (classes at the same level) articulation. The lack of articulation may potentially stem from a few key factors. Some of which include the lack of understanding of the breakdown and importance of student proficiency levels in language acquisition, differing world language learning standards, or the challenge of understanding how to implement quality language instruction and assessment. Consequently, many students find themselves inadequately prepared for college language courses.

1 Beginning from Summer 2018, Pulsar, online language portfolio, is used to collect evidence demonstrating STARTALK students’ communicative abilities in a world language. Here is the info: https://startalk.umd.edu/public/resources/pulsar
SECTION TWO

CONTEXTS FOR EACH SCHOOL AND THE CHALLENGES FACED
Section Two: Contexts for Each School and the Challenges Faced

Research has shown that learning a critical language such as Chinese takes a long time. Offering Chinese to children at young ages has many advantages, such as acquiring native-like tones and pronunciation, all while assisting in children’s cognitive development. Therefore, we have seen an increase in Chinese courses offered to students at elementary and middle school levels. In addition to the American education system, the Chinese community has a long history of offering language and culture instruction to students with Chinese heritage at the K-12 levels. These heritage school students are valuable national resources. Having articulated curriculum can help them maintain and further develop their heritage language skills successfully.

The flourishing of Chinese language programs at different education levels makes articulation extremely important because it requires unprecedented collaborative efforts. Collaboration must not only exist from level-to-level within the same school, but also be maintained for students transitioning from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to college. But, professional development is perhaps the most crucial aspect of this articulation effort. Why? Because teachers equipped with curriculum mapping knowledge are more able to adjust their curriculum and differentiate instruction to meet their students’ needs at the individual and class level. This Infrastructure-building articulation project demonstrates how the Hunter College STARTALK team has worked with the selected Chinese language providers to adopt STARTALK principles and curriculum design, along with performance-based assessments to help facilitate articulation from elementary to secondary school and into college.

The Hunter College STARTALK team worked with three partners: 1) a public high school with three levels of Chinese and an AP Chinese course in the fourth/senior year, 2) a public college preparatory STEM high school which offers one year of college-level Chinese courses for students to earn three college credits (CHIN101), and 3) a K-12 Chinese heritage school which offers weekend and after school Chinese language instruction. The primary goal of this project is to show partner school teachers how the STARTALK approach works, and how they can adopt its principles. Showing partner school teachers the STARTALK approach will smooth articulation so that their students can transition into college level Chinese courses more smoothly.

Participants were introduced the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines first and were then asked to complete a course survey. In this survey, the partner school teachers indicated the course level’s speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiency targets for each and every course they taught, then specified the different types of classroom activities they use to reach these purported proficiency targets. The project team also asked them to elaborate upon the challenges they faced in teaching Chinese at their school. High school teachers emphasized that Chinese is difficult for all students (regardless of their status as a heritage or non-heritage student) to learn because it requires more time to reach advanced proficiency than an alphabetical language such as Spanish or French.

The teachers from public high schools believed that because the Chinese courses are part of the school’s curriculum, the problem of learning difficulty can be overcome if students were able to pursue a longer sequence of developing proficiency. If we provide students with a longer and better articulated sequence, they would be more likely to possess a solid and balanced Intermediate Chinese proficiency upon graduating from high school. Upon entering college, these students would be able to continue forward in
their pursuit of establishing higher proficiency – instead of having to retake, relearn, or redo lessons or studies they’ve completed before.

Heritage school teachers who taught Chinese outside of the mainstream education system expressed more challenges in their teaching environment. In the section below, we focus on describing the numerous challenges faced by heritage schools and how this project can equip teachers to meet these challenges:

**Challenge One: Lack of Motivation**

The first challenge was students’ lack of motivation. Teachers believed that many kids in heritage schools were forced to study Chinese by their parents, and therefore, did not complete homework or review. As a result, they quickly fell behind and could not follow what was taught in class.

Teachers in grades 5 and 6 experienced a lack of participation in classroom activities. Students were not willing to speak in class due to lack of interest. When they did speak, they might say things that were not related to the instructional content. This wasted valuable instructional time – time which ought to have been used to teach content. Classroom management for grades 5 and 6 students was often a headache for teachers. Teachers mentioned that students played with their cell phones in class despite teachers issuing multiple warnings. Teachers found that this behavior seriously affected their ability to instruct students effectively.

While traditionally, heritage schools recruit students from heritage families, in the past few years, there has also been a number of students who come from non-Chinese families. To the surprise of Chinese teachers, these non-Chinese students are typically genuinely motivated in their pursuit of learning Chinese. One family not only sent their two children to Chinese school but also hired a tutor to teach them Chinese at home. The elder brother was in third grade. He won the first place in the story telling competition last year. During the semester, he also maintained good grades on every test. Teachers were nonplussed by the different performance of heritage and non-heritage students.

**Challenge Two: Insufficient Resources and Support**

The second challenge was lack of resources and support for teachers. Many heritage schools were managed by volunteers and part-time teachers with scarce resources for instruction and professional development. Compared to STARTALK teachers, heritage school teachers had limited access and thus very little knowledge of modern foreign language teaching methods and approaches. The heritage schools do not provide regular professional development opportunities either.

In terms of course materials, school administrators may change language textbooks without telling teachers. At the beginning of the academic year, teachers experienced this. They were asked to switch to a new textbook series. According to teachers, the new textbooks were linguistically more complex than the old textbooks. Since changing textbooks meant teachers had to create new supplementary materials for students, many teachers decided to use old materials because they were given no time to develop supplementary materials for the new book. Besides the problems with educational materials, the educational environment has also provided the heritage schools with another set of problems. Because Chinese heritage schools often do not have their own buildings, they have no option but to rent local school classrooms or church space. The less permanent nature and constant
shuffling of classrooms between programs made the use of technology a challenge. Because of this, the heritage school was unable to download files or play videos in class since teachers had no access to computers in the classrooms.

**Challenge Three: Wide Range of Proficiency at Secondary Level**
Teachers who taught students at the secondary level faced the challenge of having a wide range of proficiency amongst different age groups in their classes. Students from middle schools and high schools were put in one class in order to fill up the classroom seat space to 30 students. As a result, the weaker students fell even further behind because the learning materials were too difficult for them and the learning abilities of older students and younger students were different. The weak students often spaced-out or day-dreamed in class.

**Challenge Four: Requirements from School Cannot be Met Without Support**
The fourth challenge was related to the unrealistic requirements mandated by the school. The heritage school’s education followed the Chinese education tradition which emphasizes writing skills – especially compositional writing. Following this traditional ideal, students in grades 6-8 were required to write five essays per semester. Some students simply ignored this essay assignment because their writing skills were low. Students would not be able to produce five essays even if teachers provided assistance and guidelines for students. Another example of unrealistic school requirements involved the school’s policy of using Pinyin for K-3 students. In pre-K and K, the workload was very light. Students played in class most of the time. Ever since they entered first grade, students were required to learn Pinyin and Chinese characters. Thus the burden of memorization increased dramatically. Because students only meet once a week for three hours, if students did not review or study at home, they would fall behind very quickly.

**Challenge Five: The Mismatch of Parental Expectations and Teachers’ Teaching Goals**
The main concern of this challenge is the contradiction between teachers’ teaching goals and parents’ expectations. Parents wanted their children to learn Chinese but children were not interested in learning the language. On the other hand, some parents sent their children to Chinese school not because they really wanted them to study Chinese, but because they regarded the Chinese school as a sort of day care for their kids. Other parents, however, had high (or unrealistic) standards. These parents were extremely upset if their children did not earn first place and even questioned the fairness of the contest or test and would appeal to check scores. A teacher reported one such case where a parent requested that her child be selected as an honor student and later protested when it was not the case. Upon finding out that her child was not selected due to the fact that her child had missed five classes, the parent said it was her own fault and not the child’s fault and therefore her child still ought to receive the honor.

Other cases of institutional/familial mismatch manifested in a set of complaints made to the lead teacher. Two parents actually filed complaints within the same semester for the exact opposite reasons. One parent said that the teacher did not give enough homework and that the instructional materials were too easy for her child. This parent wanted her child to learn Chinese and bring it to a high level so that her child could later do business in China. On the other hand, in the same class, another parent said that her child only needed to speak and understand simple Chinese and Chinese culture. She complained that the teacher gave too much homework and that the homework load
caused her child to lose interest in going to Chinese school. She said there was too much pressure for her child to complete her homework at home and blamed the teacher for being too demanding. She even threatened to file a complaint to the Department of Education. These two incidents precisely capture how different learning expectations vary from parent to parent. Such differing expectations caused much frustration amongst the teaching staff.

Teaching Observations at the Heritage School
In order to better understand how to best help heritage teachers face these various challenges, the project team conducted a site visit. Four Hunter teachers observed classes at each level for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 and wrote observation reports.

As evidenced in the classroom observation reports, the project team realized that the students’ lack of motivation may not entirely be the fault of students (as teachers believed), but rather a result of a more fundamental issue: inadequate pedagogy. In the observation reports, the class activities included rote memorization or activities which did not involve meaningful communication. Some examples of less meaningful communication included: reciting a lesson from memory or copying down paragraphs of characters that teachers wrote on the blackboard. Teaching and learning focused more on finishing the textbook content, rather than meeting the set proficiency goals. Because the class was teacher-centered, instruction was irrelevant to students’ needs or interests, leading to students sitting through hours of classes until their parents finally gave in and said they did not have to go to Chinese school any more.

Given the dearth of discussions about articulation and lack of coordination which could align curricula between levels, teachers on the receiving end often found that their students had deficiencies in certain areas. Teachers were told to teach new materials and were discouraged from devoting time for review. These suggestions or ignoring review and pushing relentlessly through lesson plans caused the aggravation of articulation issues. Without articulated instruction, students not only showed minimal or no improvement, but also sometimes ended up losing interest entirely in Chinese language study. Our conclusion was that the aforementioned challenges made by teachers listed above were, to a large extent, due to the lack of common and shared learning goals for all stakeholders. These stakeholders included school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. To address this, the project provided partner school teachers with professional development activities.

During the process, partner school teachers first reviewed their current curriculum. After review, they received training which elucidated and helped them understand STARTALK-endorsed principles, proficiency goals, assessments, and curriculum mapping in order to find gaps in curriculum, both in horizontal and vertical articulation, within their schools. These professional development activities enabled partner school teachers to continue the pursuit of refining their curriculum and instructional practices even after the project was over. Partner school teachers also learned how to use assessment results to inform their pedagogical design and the effectiveness of their articulation. Most importantly, the articulated curriculum will not only ensure a better learning experience, but it will also help transition students from pre-college to college-level language classes more seamlessly. Students will be motivated to sustain their learning trajectories and continue their development of usable and applicable high language proficiency in their future careers.
CURRICULUM MAPPING AND PROFICIENCY TARGETS FOR ARTICULATION
Section Three: Curriculum Mapping and Proficiency Targets for Articulation

The purpose of curriculum mapping is to identify gaps with proficiency targets and to explore strategies for revising the curriculum by adding assessments and learning experiences to meet proficiency targets. Curriculum mapping produces a roadmap for language- and culture-progression pathways to guide students from Novice, to Intermediate, to Advanced in each and every communication mode – Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational; along with students’ Intercultural Communication. Cultural mapping shows how learners’ competence in two major areas can grow: 1) their competence in investigating cultural perspectives and 2) their use of the target language when interacting with native speakers in a culturally appropriate manner. The most important type of competence gained and made visible through Cultural Mapping is instilling students with the virtues of tolerance and respect for cultural differences. The roadmap will also cultivate learners’ 21st century skills in information, finance, and entrepreneur literacy; cross-cultural understanding, communications, critical thinking skills, leadership skills; and the ability to collaborate with others. These skills bring to life the World Readiness Standards and the 5C’s (Communications, Culture, Connections, Communities, and Comparison).

Mapping helps teachers find out whether students have integrated language, culture, and content learning along with uncovering whether or not students have developed proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Knowing where gaps and weaknesses are helps teachers develop solutions to fill gaps and implement a revised curriculum. As Dr. Deborah Robinson points out, there are several advantages to conducting curriculum mapping: “It can help teachers to organize curriculum by standards, themes, topics, culture, vocabulary, structures, and assessments over the course of the academic year to meet proficiency targets, AP, and unique school foci (e.g., STEM, arts).”

In order to map out how what we teach aligns with proficiency targets, we followed the three major stages in backward design:

Stage 1: Desired results: what will learners be able to do with what they know by the end of the program?
Stage 2: Evidence: how will learners demonstrate what they can do with what they know by the end of the program?
Stage 3: Instruction: what lesson Can-Do Statements and resources will guide learning plans?

The Process of Building an Articulation Framework

In today’s global economy and society, the ability to speak more than one language is critical. It is always exciting to hear about the establishment of a new language program, especially in less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese, Arabic, Korean, and so forth. Often times, the entire program rests on the shoulders of one sole teacher who is responsible for teaching, curriculum design, and assessments – among other school responsibilities. As the program grows, new teachers will be hired, multiple classes and levels will be offered, and more students will be recruited. Without a comprehensive plan for

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2 Dr. Robinson’s workshop on September 1, 2018 at Hunter College.

3 Understanding by Design, 2000, Wiggins and McTighe
horizontal and vertical articulation, the program may not maintain adequate rigor across classes or scale up in expectations from one level to the next.

For this project, the team adopted the STARTALK curriculum design procedure derived from backward-design principles. These procedures were introduced to our project partner school teachers – where a Hunter College project team member served as a curriculum mapping coach to assist teachers in conducting curriculum mapping. We found that having a coach work with teachers was crucial because teachers’ background knowledge varied in terms of understanding proficiency levels, constructing thematic units, and national standards. It will no doubt take a while to absorb the new concepts; however, they proved useful and were well-received by partner school teachers.

Setting Reasonable and Yearly Proficiency Targets for the Chinese Language

One area that the partner school teachers needed help in was language proficiency training. Understanding the significance of the different language proficiency standards and comprehending the various means of setting proficiency goals was necessary for these teachers because they needed to be able to set reasonable and yearly progressive proficiency targets for learners of Chinese. The training included two steps. The first step was helping partner school teachers grasp the major characteristics of learners’ language performance by unpacking proficiency performance ranges. The second step involved the teams’ pointing out what teachers ought to take into consideration when dealing with the characteristics of Chinese language learning for English speakers. Besides this, the team also encouraged partner school teachers to consider how these proficiency ranges must exist in time – not in an abstract context where a semester or year never ends. Accordingly, these ranges must take into consideration the amount of time required for students to achieve the teacher-set proficiency level.

Unpacking Proficiency Performance Ranges

For teachers encountering proficiency guidelines for the first time, it is very likely that they will find the information to be abstract and difficult to decipher. During the project, we invited Dr. Robinson to conduct a workshop for partner school teachers on curriculum mapping. She addressed this issue by describing performance and proficiency within the context of six features: text type, contexts and topics, functions, variety/range/extensiveness, level of detail, and timeframes. We advised partner school teachers that proficiency is a sort of continuum – from Novice to Intermediate to Advanced. The embodiment of proficiency’s continuum-like nature is shown in how at the Novice-High level, students will exhibit a lot of Intermediate level performance, but will be unable to sustain it. Below is a chart that shows some features and the kind of proficiency or performance characteristics that learners will exhibit:

Unpacking Proposed Learning Outcomes Based on Performance Ranges

- **Text Type** (e.g., words, phrases, formulaic expressions, sentences, series of sentences, connected sentences, paragraphs)
- **Contexts, Tasks, and Topics** (e.g., oneself, immediate environment, general interest, world)
- **Functions** (e.g., ask and answer formulaic questions; give simple advice; start maintain, and end a brief conversation; create with language; give short narrations and descriptions; make inferences)

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4 This is adopted from Dr. Robinson’s workshop content conducted at Hunter College on September 1, 2018.
Notes: Each performance range is defined by a set of features explaining what the language learner is able to do, in what contexts and content areas, as well as how much and what kind of language the learner is able to produce or understand. The ranges take into consideration that the learning environment is controlled and articulated, allowing learners to demonstrate greater control of certain features of a level when these have been practiced in familiar contexts.

- Variety/Range/Extensiveness (e.g., very familiar, familiar, variety of/range of... wide variety/range of...)
- Level of Detail (main ideas, a few details, some details, many details, most details)
- Timeframes (e.g., periphrastic future vs. future tense – I’m going to study / I will study; chunks of language vs. complete paradigms – I came, I saw, I conquered vs. I came, you came, he/she/it came...)

It is important to note that each performance range is defined by a set of features explaining what the language learner is able to do, in what contexts and content areas, as well as how much and what kind of language the learner is able to produce or understand. The ranges take into consideration that the learning environment is controlled and articulated, allowing learners to demonstrate greater control of certain features of a level when these have been practiced in familiar contexts.

In the project, we worked with teachers to unpack proficiency/performance levels based on text type, topics/contexts, levels of details, etc. We also discussed variation of targets by modes because Chinese is not an alphabet-based language, and thus, takes a longer time at the beginning and intermediate level for students to develop reading skills.

Considerations for Setting Proficiency Targets for Chinese
Because the process of moving from Novice to Intermediate, and from Intermediate to Advanced is a continuum, students must engage in tasks at the next higher level so that they can perform them independently after sufficient practice. The project team advised teachers on two points regarding proficiency – specifically when learning Chinese: 1) it takes a longer time to develop literacy in Chinese, and 2) teachers should teach to the target level rather than to students’ current level.

Chinese uses a character-based writing system and thus requires more time to achieve literacy. Given the linguistic characteristics of the Chinese language, it is extremely crucial for teachers to take into consideration how students develop oral skills and literacy skills at different paces and should design curriculum accordingly. Therefore, the proficiency targets should specify the progression of all four modalities: speaking, listening, reading, and writing – rather than just using one proficiency target for all skills.

Another linguistic feature concerning literacy skills is the Chinese language’s written style, otherwise known as ‘shumianyu’ (book-face-language). ‘Shumianyu’ has a set of vocabulary and sentence structures, most of which are derived from Classical Chinese. Chinese writing is composed of written style Chinese, which is very different from vernacular Chinese or spoken and conversational Chinese. In a sense, written style Chinese is the formal style Chinese. Thus, it is used not only in composition but also used in formal speaking situations. For example, audio authentic materials such as TV commercials or public announcements that might be considered for novice level tasks would be difficult for Chinese language learners because the language usage in these materials is formal.
When learning to write Chinese characters, learners use a different cognitive process from learning to speak words. Learners cannot assume that knowing how to speak will eventually increase their reading skills. Learning to read character-based texts and write characters requires explicit instruction, as well as frequent review or memorization of characters. To acquire literacy, students first need to know the structure of the characters, the strokes, stroke order, and the radicals (meaning the components of the characters). Then, students need to be able to recognize the 2,000 to 3,000 most frequently used characters and the compound words formed by these characters. Furthermore, students need to learn written Chinese vocabulary and sentence structures.

The second point teachers ought to keep in mind is that it takes a shorter amount of time to go from Novice level to Intermediate than from Intermediate level to Advanced level. An analysis of time required for moving from the Novice level to the Intermediate level and from the Intermediate level to the Advanced level for college students with no background indicates that this is indeed the case. The time required to move from Intermediate to Advanced level is double the time (or even more) that is required for moving from the Novice level to the Intermediate level. Therefore, when creating proficiency targets, teachers should give students more time to develop from Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-Mid while encouraging students at Novice level to achieve an Intermediate level as soon as possible. This could be done by introducing instructional tasks or activities that focus on the targeted proficiency performance and require students’ output to meet the target proficiency level.

### A. Proficiency Targets for High School Students

Given the linguistic characteristics, the Chinese language requires more time to reach Advanced proficiency than an alphabetical language such as Spanish or French. Therefore, the proficiency targets should be specified for each modality, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is also critical for students to pursue a longer sequence to develop proficiency. The goal is to have high school graduates achieve the Intermediate level in both oral and literacy proficiency. They can continue to build Advanced proficiency in college.

When working with the high school teachers, the project team consulted several proficiency progression charts developed by language professionals in the field, including the Ohio Department of Education’s “Proficiency and Research-based Proficiency Targets (Level 4 Difficulty), the Virginia Department of Education’s “Implementing the Foreign Language Standards of Learning in Virginia Classrooms”, CELIN’s “Mapping Chinese Language Learning Outcomes in Grades K-12,” and Dr. Richard Chi’s proficiency for Chinese as a second language learner. The proficiency targets that the project team came up with is below:

#### Recommended 9-12 Non-heritage Proficiency Progression Chart (for L2 Learners):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>ICC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>Novice/Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Proficiency Targets for K-12 Heritage Schools

The project team did not find any resources on proficiency target for heritage schools. The original curriculum provided by the heritage school set the following proficiency targets, which are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency Target</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>AH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that neither of these proficiency charts assign proficiency targets for each modality. Also, the progress going from IL to IM to IH and then graduate from Chinese school at AH is unrealistic since it did not take into consideration students’ need for more time to develop proficiency after intermediate level. In order to find out what, in Chinese heritage school, would be a reasonable exit proficiency, we gave students a STAMP test. The STAMP tests are computer-based standardized tests for speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students can take the tests in traditional and simplified characters.

After an information session provided to students about the test, 42 secondary students and 21 elementary school students signed up to take the tests. The test tool we used was STAMP for secondary students and STAMP 4Se for elementary students. Students did not have any practice before they took the tests. It was also every student’s first time taking a STAMP test.

One issue was that some students did not know how to type, therefore, when they took the writing test, they had to write characters stroke by stroke using a computer mouse. Some younger students were not used to speaking into the microphone when taking the speaking tests so they spoke too softly. Overall, after the test, students were happy about their accomplishment and the project team prepared snacks for them since it took about an hour or longer for the elementary students to complete and about two hours for secondary students to complete.

**STAMP Assessment Results for Secondary School Students**

A total of 42 middle and high students completed the STAMP assessments. Thirty-six students completed the traditional version and six completed the simplified version.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advance-High</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2/42 (5%)</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance-Mid</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
<td>3/42 (7%)</td>
<td>4/42 (10%)</td>
<td>0/42 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance-Low</td>
<td>4/42 (10%)</td>
<td>9/42 (21%)</td>
<td>3/42 (7%)</td>
<td>2/42 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-High</td>
<td>10/42 (24%)</td>
<td>8/42 (19%)</td>
<td>6/42 (14%)</td>
<td>9/42 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-Mid</td>
<td>9/42 (21%)</td>
<td>9/42 (21%)</td>
<td>10/42 (24%)</td>
<td>11/42 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-Low</td>
<td>11/42 (26%)</td>
<td>8/42 (19%)</td>
<td>5/42 (12%)</td>
<td>16/42 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice-High</td>
<td>2/42 (5%)</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
<td>2/42 (5%)</td>
<td>2/42 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice-Mid</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
<td>2/42 (5%)</td>
<td>10/42 (24%)</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice-Low</td>
<td>0/42 (0%)</td>
<td>0/42 (0%)</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
<td>1/42 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this proficiency assessment was to grasp an overall understanding of the proficiency range for secondary school aged heritage students in speaking, listening, reading and writing. This information will help the project team evaluate whether the proficiency targets set for heritage school grades 7-12 students were reasonable or not.

The language background of the secondary school students is either Mandarin Chinese or speakers of Chinese dialects. They attend American public or private schools so they are proficient in both English and at least a Chinese dialect, which may or may not include Mandarin. If we take a look at the bar graph, it is evident that the proficiency of secondary students falls within the range of Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-High for all four skills. The majority of students are at Intermediate-Mid in all four skills. Among the four skills, heritage speakers apparently have stronger listening skills. The largest group of students have reached Advanced-Low level in listening whereas the other three skills are lower.

In conclusion, listening is the students’ strongest modality, and reading is students’ weakest modality.

**STAMP Assessment Results and Analysis of Elementary School Students**

A total of 21 elementary students at grades 3 to 6 completed the STAMP 4Se tests. Below is the score distributions in chart and in bar graph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-High+</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>2/21 (10%)</td>
<td>0/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-High</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>7/21 (33%)</td>
<td>7/21 (33%)</td>
<td>0/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-Mid</td>
<td>1/21 (5%)</td>
<td>11/21 (52%)</td>
<td>1/21 (5%)</td>
<td>2/21 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The test results showed that the proficiency of elementary students falls within the range of Novice-Mid to Intermediate-Low for all four skills. The majority of students are at Intermediate-Low in speaking and writing skills. Among the four skills, heritage speakers at elementary level also showed stronger listening skills.

In conclusion, similar to the secondary school group, listening also appears to be the strongest modality for this group. To improve students’ output performance (writing and speaking), instructors need to provide more opportunities for students to speak and write during class time. In addition, while it is important for students to be able to hand-write characters, being able to type out characters is equally important, and perhaps can be added to the curriculum. The project team and the teachers came up with the following chart after discussing the materials and the proficiency scores. Below is the K-12 proficiency progression chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Level</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>NM</th>
<th>NH</th>
<th>IL</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IH</th>
<th>IH+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novice-Low</strong></td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novice-Mid</strong></td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>0/21</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Novice-High</strong></td>
<td>7/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate-Low</strong></td>
<td>11/21 (52%)</td>
<td>1/21 (5%)</td>
<td>3/21 (14%)</td>
<td>11/21 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grades 3 - 6 Combined Proficiency Results**

The test results showed that the proficiency of elementary students falls within the range of Novice-Mid to Intermediate-Low for all four skills. The majority of students are at Intermediate-Low in speaking and writing skills. Among the four skills, heritage speakers at elementary level also showed stronger listening skills.

In conclusion, similar to the secondary school group, listening also appears to be the strongest modality for this group. To improve students’ output performance (writing and speaking), instructors need to provide more opportunities for students to speak and write during class time. In addition, while it is important for students to be able to hand-write characters, being able to type out characters is equally important, and perhaps can be added to the curriculum. The project team and the teachers came up with the following chart after discussing the materials and the proficiency scores. Below is the K-12 proficiency progression chart:
## Recommended K-12 Proficiency Progression Chart for Heritage School Students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>ICC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>NL/NM</td>
<td>NL/NM</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NL/NM</td>
<td>NL/NM</td>
<td>Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>NM/NH</td>
<td>NM/NH</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NM/NH</td>
<td>NM/NH</td>
<td>Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>NH/IL</td>
<td>NH/IL</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>NH</td>
<td>Novice/Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>NH/IL</td>
<td>NH/IL</td>
<td>Novice/Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>IL/IM</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>IM/IH</td>
<td>IM/IH</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>IM/IH</td>
<td>IM/IH</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>IH</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION FOUR

INTRODUCING THE STARTALK CURRICULUM TEMPLATE TO TEACHERS
Section Four: Introducing the Startalk Curriculum Template to Teachers

The project team introduced the STARTALK curriculum template to partner school teachers and used the template stages to lead them step-by-step in grasping the concept of curriculum mapping.

STARTALK Curriculum Design Stages
According to the STARTALK Curriculum Guide, the STARTALK curriculum design is divided into three stages. Stage 1 asks program personnel to identify desired results and to identify the program Can-Do Statements which essentially guide the program. Stage 2 asks program personnel to identify formative performance tasks which allow learners to provide evidence that they have met each program Can-Do Statement. Stage 3 asks program personnel to unpack each program Can-Do Statement into smaller lesson Can-Do Statements that will guide the major learning experiences in the program.

Stage 1: What Will Learners Be Able To Do With What They Know by the End of the Program?
After the program’s yearly language proficiency goals had been identified, the project team and teachers consulted the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements to help write down their own Can-Do statements for each mode (interpretative, interpersonal, and presentational) based on the proficiency target in the chart. These Can-Do Benchmark Statements bridge performance and proficiency from Novice to Advanced levels, indicating what students can do at each level. The team brainstormed with teachers to come up with three themes for their yearly curriculum.

How to Write Program Can-Do Statements
One observation from teachers was that each of the Can-Do Statements begins with “I can” and they wondered why it was not ‘Students can’ as wording more similar to this is required by the school lesson plan, which states: ‘students will be able to...’ in the posited learning outcomes. This led to a discussion on the purpose of Can-Do’s being written from a learner’s point of view and not the teacher’s point of view. One teacher suggested that if that were the case, then it would be critical that students be introduced to Can-Do Statements so that they also could understand the learning goals that they should be able to achieve by the end of the lesson/unit. The group agreed. A comment was that younger learners in particular need to be guided through examples. If a course description is provided, teachers should write down the proficiency targets for students and parents for each course. Students also should understand the language learning goals at each stage in relation to proficiency. If students comprehend what the characteristics of the language output should look like, they can monitor their own language performance and be conscious of their language performance.

The project team worked with teachers to show them the 2017 NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements and explained what each proficiency means by cross-referencing the Can-Do statements (in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills) to the unpacking methods introduced at the curriculum mapping workshop. The teachers now know that proficiency levels correspond to the text types, details of information, and tasks. They are also aware of the resources provided on the ACTFL website for more direct access to Can-Do charts (blue, green, and orange) where they can learn how to review the text type, details, and functions.
The team explained to teachers the importance of theme-based instruction, as a tool which would enable students to engage in real life situations with meaningful activities. Besides this, theme-based instructions also allow students to recycle language usage and thoroughly memorize new vocabulary and grammatical/sentence structures. We wrote down the topics of each lesson in a textbook to be used throughout one year and came up with four unit themes. This helped teachers to see how we unite the language (vocabulary, grammar, sentence patterns) into a meaningful and connected theme. They agreed that having a theme made teaching and learning more meaningful and easy to do since students could recycle similar words for a period of time without jumping from one topic to the next that were completely unrelated. Several themes that teachers came up with were: ‘Let me introduce myself’ (this theme could be used for students at all grade levels) and ‘Let’s plan a trip’ (for high school students). After teachers filled the Can-Do’s, the team worked with teachers to modify the Can-Do statements (which are very general) to suit their level’s needs based on the chosen theme and the modes of communication.

**Stage 2: How Will Learners Demonstrate What They Can Do With What They Know?**

The purpose of Stage 2 is to understand how well learners demonstrate what they can do with what they know. The task is to develop performance assessments which allow learners to provide evidence that they have met each level’s Can-Do statement.

In order to design performance assessments that show evidence of students meeting their assigned targets, the teachers must know students’ current language level(s) and the target proficiency. Again, the project team advised partner school teachers to use backward design methods to develop good performance assessments to better show evidence of meeting targets. In this project, we worked with teachers to better understand what proficiency goals students should achieve by the time they complete the level in each modality. After setting this goal, teachers would then use the backward design process to determine the learning pathway from level one up. All teachers must participate in this discussion so that teachers at every level know what the goals are.

One important task in revising curriculum is the revision of language tasks for the current curriculum. Often times, the revision needed is a sort of augmentation of the current tasks which makes them more challenging and meaningful. This requires teachers to have a clear understanding of not only language proficiency, but also the corresponding language tasks and text types of language output that learners should be able to produce. In order to revise the curriculum so that language tasks match the targeted proficiency outcomes, teachers need more training in the areas of language proficiency and performance, as well as increased understanding of the relationship between Can-Do Statements and the language tasks leading to proficiency.

**How to Design Performance-Based Assessment Tasks**

A common issue of teaching is that teachers tend to use the same types of prompts and probes from beginning level to advanced level courses, often focused on discrete WH-questions. Students’ language output in terms of text type, level of detail, and functions elicited are good indicators of what level of language tasks teachers are using. The article “How to Use Can-Do Statements” ([https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements](https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements)), states, “Can-Do Statements describe what learners can independently do at each sublevel and help pave the way to higher levels. Higher level skills and functions (e.g., using timeframes, understanding complex texts) need to be
introduced at lower sublevels and built upon in order to have independent control of those skills and functions at higher sublevels.”

**Write a Scenario Related to Theme and Real Life for Students Age**
This is an important concept for language teachers to remember when delivering learning plans. If a teacher solicits word-level language output in an advanced-level language course, students will not be able to develop Advanced level proficiency. Often times, word-level language output is found in beginning level and advanced level courses because teachers may not be familiar with language proficiency or the distinction between the characteristics of proficiency levels. Teachers need to know that in order to push students to higher proficiency levels, instruction should contain language tasks that are beyond students’ current proficiency levels. The text type of students’ language output serves as an important indicator to determine whether instruction is effective or not. Failure to practice tasks in the target language at the targeted proficiency level is the fundamental reason why students cannot advance in their language proficiency from year-to-year.

The difference between how thematic units versus individual lessons impact learning effectiveness and student motivation is huge. For theme-based instruction, students are working on real-life tasks (e.g., introduce my school to my Chinese friend). These themes bring topics to learners’ day-to-day life, making them meaningful to talk about and practice. Provided, with practical themes like this, teachers can invite students to express what they are interested in doing. Giving students some flexibility when developing or working on their interests is crucial when attempting to motivate them in continuing their study of the target language. If students attend classes based on the themes that they are interested in, they will be more engaged in participating in all sorts of activities concerning different types of communication modes in class and, thus, achieve better learning outcomes (See Appendix A for task examples in Curriculum Framework).

**Stage 3: What Lesson Can-Do Statements and Resources Will Guide Learning Plans?**
In Stage 3, teachers need to identify smaller indicators of how learners can incrementally move toward meeting each level’s Can-Do Statement. The project team showed partner school teachers how they can follow the instruction of the curriculum template in creating learning plans and designing activities. An important piece of information for teachers to consider is “what language students need to know to do the target tasks?”

In order to determine what students need to know in order to do the tasks, teachers need to provide the appropriate and corresponding vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns required to accomplish the assigned tasks. Teachers can introduce some new vocabulary and new sentence patterns to scaffold their students so that they can perform the tasks independently after the unit is taught.

We have mentioned that schools use different learning materials. Teachers should go beyond the textbook by thinking about real life situations, and asking, “what language (vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns) would be required to complete each task?” The textbook language may not be relevant to students’ personal situations, and in this case, we suggested that teachers should include what students want to express in real life.
However, asking teachers to do this may be a daunting task. In our observation of teachers, regardless of level, one phenomenon that caught our attention was the teachers’ focus on teaching vocabulary but not teaching sentence patterns. A favorite question of teachers is, ‘Do you like X?’ This question was asked at the Novice level, the Intermediate level, and even at the Advanced level when these Chinese students are supposed to practice describing different types of foods, activities, hobbies with a variety of words. As a result, students can only provide word-level answers and students are consequently not pushed beyond the elementary word-level. The obligation to push students beyond this elementary stagnation falls on teachers who must require students to use increasingly complex sentence and grammar structures at Intermediate and Advanced levels.

Below is an example from Dr. Robinson’s workshop of a backward designed unit on families focused on identifying results and determining evidence.

**Example for Novice Learners**

**Topic:** Families  
**Theme:** Comparing families in the U.S. and the Chinese-speaking world.

- **Overarching understandings**
  - Family structures vary.
  - Grandparents (and others) often care for children.
  - Roles within families vary both in the U.S. and in the Chinese-speaking world.

- **Essential questions**
  - What are families across the Chinese-speaking world like?
  - How are families similar and different in the U.S. and in the Chinese-speaking world?

**Comparing My Family and Yours**

**Need to Know**

- **Family terms:** father, aunt, grandma  
- **Expressions:** How many people are in your/his/her family? There are ___ people. Who are they?  
- **Numbers:** 1-10  
- **Comparative terms:** more, fewer

**Need to Do**

- Interpret information from a story about a family  
- Ask and answer questions about families  
- Describe one’s own family as well as others’ families  
- Construct a graph  
- Present information about families here and in the Chinese-speaking world

**Determine Acceptable Evidence**

- What evidence will show that students can compare families in the Chinese-speaking world and in the U.S.?
  - Performance Tasks and Projects:  
    - Purpose: From Can-Do’s and Theme  
    - Context: When, why, with whom students communicate  
    - Expectations: How well?
Determine Acceptable Evidence: Performance Assessment

Students will create:
   a. a poster (elementary school)
   b. a multimedia presentation (middle school)
   c. a Webpage or blog (high school) that compares their families with families in the Chinese-speaking world.

Teachers can use RAPPs to differentiate performance assessments:\n
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R = Role</th>
<th>WHO are you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = Audience</td>
<td>To WHOM are you communicating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P = Products</td>
<td>What FORM will your communication take?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P = Performances</td>
<td>HOW will you demonstrate proficiency?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is an example of RAPP poster:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Guests attending open house at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Product | Posters with photos and labels of family members
          | Graphs |
| Performance | Share comparisons between families at home and in
              | the Chinese-speaking world with open-house guests in
              | Chinese. |

Teachers should keep in mind that we all want respectful tasks. What are respectful tasks? Here are some key words to consider:
- Engaging, stimulating, varied; build curiosity; allow everyone to participate and contribute.
- Challenging, hard fun, rigorous; based on where students begin.
- Authentic, relevant, meaningful; connected to real world, outside people, other learning, and subject areas.

In short, it is important for teachers to keep in mind that the themes and language tasks in the learning plans should be age appropriate and match learners’ cognitive abilities. In addition, teachers should purposefully and systematically incorporate authentic materials into their teaching.

**Design Performance Tasks Across the Modes**

In order to enable students to develop proficiency skills in a balanced fashion, teachers should use a variety of learning activities along the way to ensure that students can perform tasks across the modes. In

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5 Understanding by Design, 2000, Wiggins and McTighe
other words, one activity in interpretive listening can be expanded to include a task in interpersonal followed by presentational speaking.

Below is a list of activities students can participate in when teachers plan learning experiences and instruction that adds more of a variety of authentic tasks for students. These activities take into consideration students’ lives, and thus are based around events that they are likely to encounter in daily life situations. Besides this, the activities also encourage the development of critical thinking and analytical skills in the target language.

Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction
- Identify family members through manipulatives, visuals, and games.
- Understand illustrated stories about various families in the Chinese-speaking world.
- Answer yes/no, choice, and short response questions about the stories.
- In pairs, ask and answer questions about their own families.
- Report back about their classmate’s family.
- Practice writing about their own and others’ families.
- Create a family tree.
- E-mail or videoconference with peers to ask questions about their families.
- Create simple graphs with class data and compare information about U.S. and Chinese-speaking families.
- List similarities and differences between families using a Venn diagram.
- Present comparison results to visitors during open house.

Proficiency Assessment Tool and When to Assess
Requiring students to take a proficiency assessment is beneficial to students’ learning because it demonstrates an objective assessment of students’ learning outcomes. The assessment results (proficiency scores) can be used to check if the proficiency targets have or have not been reached. High school partners do not adopt any proficiency assessment. The Chinese heritage school asked students to take the TOCFL (Test of Chinese as a foreign language). This test was developed by the TOCFL in Taiwan. During the project year, the Chinese school did not give students the tests because of a scheduling conflict. Thus, the project team recommended that their students take the STAMP tests. In addition to STAMP tests, there are several other proficiency tests listed in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tools</th>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Children Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTFL</td>
<td>Proficiency (telephonic, paper)</td>
<td>OPI</td>
<td>ACTFL</td>
<td>ACTFL</td>
<td>WPT</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer-based</td>
<td>OPlc</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAPPL</td>
<td>Performance (only on computer)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Presentational writing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proficiency tests can be conducted at key junctures, such as the end of an academic year or the end of a semester, or after an intensive summer study. It is our goal to take students from where they are to where they need to be by using differentiation of instruction and personalizing learning plans. Teachers need to design different learning plans for them so that no matter where they are, they can continue to improve. For example, if students’ speaking scores are higher than their reading skills, the allocation of learning time and major learning focus should be reading. If students’ reading skill is much higher than their speaking skills, then the focus of learning for these students in the next semester would be to improve their target language speaking abilities.
SECTION FIVE

ADDITIONAL COACHING FOR TEACHERS IN HERITAGE SCHOOL
Section Five: Additional Coaching for Teachers in Heritage School

Heritage school is a community-based entity that provides heritage speakers with language and culture instruction. Students only meet once a week on weekends for three hours. Comparatively speaking, students in Chinese heritage school receive rich culture activities but the quality of language instruction has been an issue. Heritage school classes are taught by teachers who are not trained to teach languages. These schools rely on the support of the motherland in providing language materials along with sporadic teacher training activities. The salary of heritage school teachers is low. Teachers have to work many hours in order to make a minimal living. The low salary cannot attract professional foreign language teachers. As a result, the majority of teachers in Chinese schools are native speakers of Chinese or those who had some teaching experience in their native country. Many of the heritage school teachers are not proficient in English making it difficult for them to secure opportunities to become full-time teaching professionals in the American education system.

The teaching methods demonstrated in heritage school classes are thus very different from what STARTALK promotes. Two issues stood out from the classes that the project team observed: 1) classes were teacher-centered; 2) there was no real-life communicative interactions in class. The most common activities that took place in these classes included asking students to read the text out loud; copying text in characters; memorizing text; and the teacher asking content-based questions to check for reading comprehension. For younger students, the teacher might play some games or let students watch a video in class, but students rarely engage in meaningful communicative language tasks. As a result, many students could not survive this rote memorization teaching style and quit. The attrition rate reaches its peak when students transition from elementary school to middle school. Another sharp drop in enrollment occurs when students transition from middle school to high school. This heritage school goes from having hundreds of students at K or grade 1, to only having ten or fewer students left at the high school level. To save money, heritage schools would put middle school and high school students together in one class. At the same time, heritage school teachers are bound by school requirements. For example, they must teach the content of the language textbook provided by the school and ask students to complete school-assigned homework.

Owing to this complicated situation of heritage teachers, the project team decided to adopt a different approach to work with heritage school teachers since the project team realized that any drastic change in curriculum or teaching methods would hit a wall and run into strong resistance. Therefore, rather than asking them to do a holistic curriculum mapping, the goal was to obtain the buy-in of teachers by making small, incremental changes. The goal for this project was to add one presentational and one interpersonal speaking activity in their teaching so that students could have some chance to be engaged in communication in class. The project team provided coaching to the teachers and worked alongside them throughout the process, which is described below.

Making Small Changes: Adding Presentational and Interpersonal Speaking Activities

The team worked with three lead teachers (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and engaged them in individual coaching. During the first meeting in person, the team reviewed the STARTALK principles, proficiency levels, and three modes of communication using an outline written in Chinese. During the guided discussion, the
team provided them with examples of interpersonal and presentational tasks and asked them to create a few examples on their own.

Because heritage teachers shared with the project team that student motivation has been a serious issue, the team pointed out to the teachers that in order to motivate students, teachers should not teach Chinese as a Chinese language art, in other words Chinese as a subject matter in a Chinese school in China, but rather, they should teach Chinese as a language of students’ heritage in the U.S. where the Chinese heritage language (Mandarin or a Chinese dialect) is not a dominant language. The team made sure to advocate to teachers an emphasis that language is a tool for communication—not some abstract or futile part of their culture. If we wish to motivate students who come from a Chinese heritage background but live in an environment where Chinese is not the dominant language, students must first be guided to see the potential and need of using Chinese in their lives. For example, some very practical uses of Chinese we shared with partner teachers included providing students with language skills to use when paying a visit to China, communicating with grandparents and relatives; and communicating with the Chinese local communities. Furthermore, students should be reminded that if they reach a high level in Chinese, the language skills will bring them numerous and varied opportunities in their future careers. Teachers, by endeavoring to connect with their students’ life purposes of learning Chinese (however remote they might be), ought to work to illuminate the practical uses of Chinese in their own lives. This sort of personal and practical guidance is essential in motivating students to learn Chinese.

The team pointed out to teachers that the activities they currently use in their classrooms only partially fulfilled the purposes of the course (that is, the instruction has an emphasis on literacy rather than balanced conversation and literacy instruction). During the discussion, the team realized that the teachers’ understanding of the word “communication” is fundamentally different from the project team’s understanding. Teachers thought that students reading the text aloud was a form of “presentational speaking” and the teacher asking students questions were forms of “interpersonal speaking.” This indicates to the team that in order to enlist any type of instructional changes at the heritage school, the fundamental concept of what communication really means must first be established and be reviewed over and over again.

In order to find out how teachers can integrate presentational speaking and interpersonal speaking activities into the existing lesson plan, the team invited teachers to describe their teaching routines for two weeks’ of lessons. The team then asked the teachers to suggest where they thought it would be possible to add one presentational and one interpersonal communication activity. Once that was determined, the team asked teachers to submit their activity designs in writing for an experiment which would be held the following week. The activity design was commented on by the project coaches before implementation. The team met again to discuss with the teachers about the first experiment and asked if they had encountered any issues or not. Communications between the heritage school teachers and the project team were often carried out through emails and WeChat messaging. One coach asked her teacher to videotape the activities and use the video for comments. After receiving the coaches’ comments on their first implementation, teachers were provided with several ideas on how they could improve these presentational and interpersonal activities. Teachers then went home to design a second set of activities. This time, the team asked teachers to distribute a survey to be filled out by students after the activities. The survey contained questions relating to students’ experiences and feedback. The team also asked teachers to provide their written feedback to the team.
The team found out that there were many advantages to this “small-change” approach when working with heritage teachers because 1) during the process of design, teachers were able to discuss their ideas and work together closely with coaches for comments and suggestions; 2) teachers were able to practice in a sequence of two weeks to reinforce the skills in conducting the activities; 3) the cycle of design, that is experiment, critique, and reflection, provided teachers with a comprehensive coaching and learning experience. Given the comprehensive nature of this approach, teachers not only gained a real sense of achievement, but were also positively encouraged to implement further and more beneficial small changes in the future. After the experiment, the team believed that teachers had a better idea about what presentational speaking and interpersonal speaking activities actually mean. In order to ensure a long-term impact on transforming the teaching style to more learner-centered communications, the project team asked teachers to design weekly presentational speaking and interpersonal speaking activities for the upcoming spring semester. These activities were also reviewed by coaches to ensure that they were ready for implementation. Below are the activities, student and teacher surveys, along with feedback from students and teachers:

Summary of the Activities and Survey Results for Students and Teachers

Interpersonal Speaking Activity for Grade 3-5
Teacher gives instruction in Chinese, students work in pairs with interview sheets on which there are questions concerning specific family members. The other student will answer in Chinese. While the questions are asked, students must check the correct answer on the interview sheet or write down if they have one or two or more siblings. Before the whole class worked on this activity in pairs, the teacher gave a demo on how the interview should be conducted and reminded students to speak in Chinese.

Note: All the questionnaires for teachers were in Chinese. The answers were translated from Chinese to English. Students at grades 2-3 did not do a survey but the teacher sent us video clips of student performance during the activities.

Zheng Laoshi (Teacher Zheng)
1) Please describe your experience regarding the process of planning and implementing these presentational and interpersonal activities. Please elaborate upon any challenges you may have faced throughout this process.

In general, during the design process of the activity, I did not run into any formidable challenges, but during the implementation stage there were some difficulties. However, the activity as a whole really didn’t have any problems and the students were quite happy to participate.

Presentational Activity for Grades 2-3
For example, some students, when they got in front of the class to speak, they were able to speak but were too shy and their voices were too quiet. For others, the problem was their precision in their Chinese speaking abilities. Consequently, they stammered in broken Chinese or used some English words throughout.

Interpersonal Activities for Grades 2-3
The students have different levels of Chinese proficiency, some students could fill up six pages when filling out their questionnaire, some could only finish one page and still needed help. During the interactive
paired interview activity, there were problems with some students when it came to their listening ability, or they were unable to understand their partner’s language and occasionally would use English to help make themselves clear. Other students could listen and understand well enough but couldn’t speak and would use English instead to reply. These above mentioned issues are the sorts of problems we ran into during the activity. But upon the activity’s completion, students wanted to keep going! Everyone wanted some more time to work! There are 18 students in class, and in total did the interpersonal pair activity twice, giving us a total of 108 examination papers. We did the presentational activity once and every student got up and had a chance to speak.

2) Would you agree with the statement that presentational activities are beneficial to increasing students’ speaking abilities? Why?

Presentational activities are definitely beneficial to students’ speaking abilities. For one, standing at the front of the class and introducing your family can only happen after students go through the lesson, study it and truly digest it. Besides this, it is spoken on the basis of one’s own real family situation and requires organization in their language skills if they hope to effectively introduce their family. This not only gives students an opportunity to practically apply their language skills and create a Chinese atmosphere, but also deepens how students understand and can use the lesson – all while improving their spoken confidence and command of the Chinese language.

3) Would you agree with the statement that interpersonal activities are beneficial to increasing students speaking abilities? Why?

Interpersonal activities are beneficial in improving students’ spoken Chinese ability. Because of the interpersonal question and answer activity process, there was an improvement in student-to-student communication, and some students for a moment thought, “Hey! I can actually use Chinese to interact with other students!” From this instant a realization emerged which gave rise to growth in interest and a sort of confidence in their Chinese language. The students were competing and striving to finish before one another and come up with other questions to write down in regards to their familial investigations, thereby advancing their oral proficiency in a social context.

4) In future teaching activities, would you still be willing to try this activity? Why?

I would be willing to continue trying these sorts of activities, because through these activities, I was actually able to see an increase in students’ interest in Chinese. Besides this, their Chinese language ability also improved. As a teacher this was really quite gratifying and I felt some sort of accomplishment. In fact, this grade has carried out a number of other activities as well. For example, we have held daily character recognition card activities. Even though we only have class once a week, teachers and parents keep in touch every day. We ask each student to participate in this card character recognition activity and parents report the progress of their child’s in the character recognition process. The parents and students are extremely cooperative with this endeavor and by the end of the semester most of the students could recognize every single card. The grades are then broken up into groups for competition and the winning parties are awarded prizes and certificates. Everyone is pretty enthusiastic about this.
Student Survey Results for Presentational speaking for Grades 6-8
Students were asked to tell a story based on a picture. It’s a story about a student in middle school. In total, eight students completed the survey. Seven students (87.5%) indicated that they understood the instructions given by the teacher and one student (12.5%) indicated he understood “some” of the instructions. Five students (62.5%) indicated that they were able to describe the picture in 4-6 sentences, two students (25%) indicated 6 or more sentences, and one student (12.5%) indicated 1-3 sentences. All eight students indicated that they had the opportunity to share their description with at least one other classmate. Six students indicated that they liked the paired sharing activity, but two students indicated that they did not enjoy the sharing activity. All eight students agreed that the activity allowed them to create their own story and that they had the opportunity to share their story with the whole class. All eight students indicated that overall they liked the story.

Student Survey Results for Presentational Speaking Activity: My Favorite Book
Eight students completed the survey. Five students (62.5%) indicated that they understood the instructions given by the teacher, three students (37.5%) indicated they understood “some” of the instructions. Three students (37.5%) indicated that they were able to introduce their favorite story in 4-6 sentences and five students (62.5%) indicated that they were able to introduce in six or more sentences. Six students (75%) indicated that they had the opportunity to share their favorite book with one other classmate, and two students (25%) indicated they didn’t have the opportunity to do so. Among those six students who had the opportunity to share with one other classmate, four students indicated that they enjoyed doing so, two indicated “I didn’t” even though they checked off “yes” previously.

The two students who previously indicated that they didn’t have the opportunity to share then indicated that they liked the activity, so all eight students indicated that they had the chance to share their favorite book with the whole class. When asked whether or not they liked to share their story with the whole class, six students indicated “yes,” two students indicated “I didn’t”. All eight students indicated that they asked questions when their classmates introduced their favorite book to the class, and all eight students indicated that overall they liked the activity.

Wang Laoshi (Teacher Wang)
1) Please describe your experience regarding the process of planning and implementing these presentational and interpersonal activities. Please elaborate upon any challenges you may have faced throughout this process.

When I was designing this activity, I was already beginning to predict many things that could go wrong. But upon actually implementing these ideas, some things ended up really exceeding my expectations. First, I thought students wouldn’t be able to fulfill the expectations of this sort of educational program, since after all they’ve already been studying at the heritage school for five years and the school has always implemented traditional Chinese educational methods. However, something that I did not expect, was that they were not only extremely willing but also really enjoyed this sort of American teaching style (after all they were born and raised here in America). But the thing which really blew me away was this interpersonal communication activity; it really made them want to participate – eagerly, even! Sometimes students would ask quite a few weird questions, like why do the lessons’ characters always have the same names, and aren’t these names really outdated and overused? This made me think, “Perhaps before teaching class I, myself, as a teacher, ought to perform some societal investigations, so that the lessons are...
more pertinent to the *real* Chinese society existing here and now – not the made up, outdated one of a more rigid lesson plan.”

2) **Would you agree with the statement that presentational activities are beneficial to increasing students’ speaking abilities? Why?**

I would agree that presentational activities are beneficial to increasing students’ speaking abilities because quite simply, if students are studying language, the most important part of this study would be for them to be able to gain the skills which allow them to use the language in their everyday lives (I am referring specifically to listening and speaking). If one is not frequently using this language, there is simply no way to get it embedded deeply into your brain, and consequently after a while it will be very easily forgotten.

3) **Would you agree with the statement that interpersonal activities are beneficial to increasing students’ speaking abilities? Why?**

I would agree that interpersonal activities are beneficial to increasing students speaking abilities because interpersonal speaking activities allow for each and every student to really involve themselves and participate in growing their own oral proficiency. Sometimes teachers will have taught something over and over yet students still will not remember. This is because in that case the responsibility of proficiency-raising is left entirely to the teacher. Yet in this new interpersonal activity, when students engage in small group discussions, they take responsibility for their own proficiency-raising, and consequently the impression that students left upon one another were deep. Whether it was a careless question or a short phrase as an answer, you could tell they were remembering better already. Besides this, dialogue between similarly aged peers as opposed to learning with teachers are very different, also encouraging this sort of dialogue was more simple and convenient than traditional Chinese education methods.

4) **In future teaching activities, would you still be willing to try this activity? Why?**

I will continue trying out and working with these sorts of teaching methods because it makes the students who are studying Chinese grow more interested in the learning process than they were before. At the same time, students are also more enthusiastic about expressing their own questions and ideas, instead of mindlessly, stubbornly answering the teacher’s questions.

**Student Survey Results for Presentational Speaking Activities for Grade 9-12**

Students worked in groups of four to present their stories. Then one student representing each group told the story to the whole class.

Seventeen students completed the survey above. Thirteen students (76%) indicated that they were able to understand the instructions given by the teacher about the activity and four students (24%) answered they understood “some” instructions. Eight students (47%) indicated that when they narrated their story, their story was about 5-8 sentences long, seven students (41%) indicated that their response was between 3-5 sentences long, and the remaining two students (12%) indicated that their response was one or more paragraphs long. Twelve (71%) students indicated that they had the opportunity to discuss their story with one of their classmates and five students (29%) indicated that they didn’t have the opportunity to discuss their story with their classmates. Four students (24%) indicated that they had the opportunity to share their story with the class and thirteen students (76%) indicated that they didn’t have the
opportunity to share their story with the class. Although only four students had a chance to share their story with the class, six students (35%) indicated that they didn’t want to share their story with the class, four students (24%) indicated that they liked to share, another seven students (41%) indicated “not applicable” because they probably didn’t get an opportunity to share with the whole class. Fifteen students (88%) expressed that the activity helped them to remember the story better and two students indicated the activity didn’t help them to remember the story better. Twelve students (71%) concluded that overall they liked the activity, while five students (29%) indicated that they didn’t like the activity. 100% of students indicated that they hope to improve their speaking skill. When students were asked to check all that apply below, here’s the final results:

- I want to be able to tell a story. (11 checks)
- I want to be able to describe (10 checks)
- I want to be able to talk about current events or news (13 checks)
- I want to be able to debate in Chinese (10 checks)

Students suggested the following activities that they think would be helpful to improve their speaking skill:

- Talk to classmates about things that happened to them
- More opportunity to speak in class
- Talk about more news in class
- Watch more Chinese TV

The same teacher conducted the presentational speaking activity with another class for grades 9-12, which is described below:

**Student Survey Results for Presentational Speaking Activities for Grades 9-12**

Twenty students completed the survey above. Seventeen students (85%) indicated that they understood the instructions given by the teacher about the activity, and three students (15%) indicated they understood “some” of the instructions. Nine students (45%) indicated that their story was 5-8 sentences long, seven students (35%) indicated that their story was 3-5 sentences long, and four students (20%) indicated that their story was one or more paragraphs long. Fifteen students (75%) indicated that they had the opportunity to share their story with at least one classmate, while five students (25%) indicated that they didn’t have the opportunity to share with their classmates. Twelve students (60%) indicated that they liked to share their story with a classmate and eight students (40%) indicated that they did not like to share their story with a classmate. Seven students (35%) indicated that they shared their story with the whole class and thirteen students (65%) didn’t have the opportunity to share their story with the whole class. Among those seven students who shared their story with the whole class, four students indicated they liked to share, two students indicated they did not like to share, and one student indicated “not applicable.” In conclusion, eighteen students (90%) indicated they liked the activity overall, and two students (10%) responded that they did not like the activity.
Zou Laoshi (Teacher Zou)

1) Please describe your experience regarding the process of planning and implementing these presentational and interpersonal activities. Please elaborate upon any challenges you may have faced throughout this process.

During the process of design and implementation of presentational and interpersonal activities I ran into the following problems:

- Some students aren’t in the habit of being willing to speak Chinese aloud in class, and upon engaging in this activity we had to be patient in our leading/guiding tactics, but at the same time, time is limited which led to some conflicts in implementation.
- Because students have varying proficiency levels, some students had a hard time participating in the presentational/interpersonal activities.
- Many factors impact student performance. For example, whether the content is new or too advanced and whether or not students had prepared at home, such factors have direct effects on the level of participation in this activity. Therefore, requiring students to prepare their lessons in Chinese before class would help us make better use of class time.
- Increasing student interest in participating in educational activity arrangements requires a targeted approach. If we hope to better target increasing student interest in participation, teachers will need to put in more work and effort when designing these educational programs and activities.

2) Would you agree with the statement that presentational activities are beneficial to increasing students’ speaking abilities? Why?

I agree that presentational communication activities are beneficial in increasing students’ oral proficiency and ability. The development of presentational communication activities shortens the amount of time students passively listen to teachers while increasing the amount of time along with opportunities students have to actively practice their speaking skills, thus students’ oral proficiency will definitely increase.

3) Would you agree with the statement that interpersonal activities are beneficial to increasing students’ speaking abilities? Why?

I agree with the statement that interpersonal communication activities are beneficial in increasing students’ oral proficiency. During interpersonal activities there is exchange and communication amongst students. During these activities, students are actually opening their mouths to speak Chinese and at the same time this allows for them to use their own familiar and comfortable ways of speaking. This makes communication easier for them to understand and accept. The fruit and result of this sort of study has proven to truly exceed our expectations.

4) In future teaching activities, would you still be willing to try this activity? Why?

After today, I will utilize presentational and interpersonal activities throughout my teaching methods. The goal is to increase the actual effectiveness of teaching Chinese and allow my students to, within a limited amount of time, not only learn better, but also perhaps learn a bit more.
Further Thoughts from Heritage School Teachers

From working with Chinese heritage school teachers, the team learned that the Chinese heritage school neither had graduation benchmarks nor did they have any plans to help their graduates in regards to articulation leading into college. The teachers agreed that if there were set proficiency benchmarks, it would help students to articulate with colleges or earn college credits. The teachers also agreed that focusing on helping students take Chinese AP tests would help motivate students continue to learn Chinese at the high school level.

When the team asked teachers what activities were beneficial to students’ learning, teachers mentioned that students liked to watch TV dramas with their parents. The teachers believed that watching TV dramas with their families was a main way by which students were able to learn how to understand Mandarin Chinese. Another benefit of watching TV is that students also get to read characters by reading subtitles. These enhanced students’ reading and character recognition abilities, along with overall fluency because they had to read fast. In teachers’ views, watching TV dramas in Mandarin Chinese was useful because the story was interesting and engaging. If a continuous plot were to go on for 30 episodes, the word-repetition rate would obviously grow quite high. Thus the team agreed and felt that watching TV dramas could become a kind of authentic language immersion with rich language input. This realization led to teachers encouraging students to share the stories they have been watching in class with other students. Another thing we ought not to forget, which we have already mentioned above, is that language learning is a long process. So, the team also suggested that another way teachers could keep students motivated would be by assigning long-term group projects. Long-term group projects would allow students to work with friends on a topic in the target language. These group projects would be a good method for teachers hoping to engage with teenagers.

Then the team asked teachers if they had ever made use of the local language environment, such as Chinatown. Teachers replied that field trips were not part of the curriculum so they were unable to implement such use of the local language environment. However, every school has different policies. At another school, teachers were able to take students to a nearby McDonalds at the end of the semester. The team did not ask why he chose this American fast food restaurant instead of local Chinese restaurants, but perhaps it was simply because McDonalds is cheap. On the way to McDonalds, the teacher would point at the store signs with characters out to students and ask them what these signs meant. Students would then order a meal at McDonalds. Students would each pay $1 and the rest would be paid for by the teacher. (The team suspected that it was paid for out of his pocket, and not paid for by school.) According to the teacher, these sorts of extra-curricular activities really motivate students to learn and they really enjoyed them.

During the discussion the team suggested that teachers could divide students into groups so that every student could get a chance to speak. However, teachers said there were always students who did not want to speak up. This may be the reason why teachers tend to pamper the good, performing, and outspoken students and were thus prone to giving all the opportunities to them. When the teacher asked students to do group work, it was always the strong students who would be asked by the group to present or report. We made a suggestion that the student who did the presentation this week should not be presenting the second week, thus ensuring that every student would eventually have a chance to present. The teachers took our suggestion and said that they would ask a student to call on another student to present the next week.
Even though it may take a long time before any concrete results would begin to show, the team believed that the coaching activity was successful. Regardless, this project helped them make the first step toward a more communicative classroom. The team was moved by the passion of promoting Chinese language and culture to heritage students in the U.S. Their effort should be better recognized with appreciation by the field.
ARTICULATION BETWEEN
HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

SECTION SIX
Section Six: Articulation Between High School and College

In order to help students enter the target course during college, teachers in high school programs or Chinese Heritage weekend schools should have a good understanding of college course requirements. A course syllabus contains key information about the course including the course’s title, instructor’s name, office hours, contact information, information about required learning materials (textbooks), supplementary materials, a course description, grading system, instructional content to be taught, and assignments due each week. A syllabus may also contain information regarding the mid-term, final exam, and/or any projects that students need to complete for the course. Click here for a sample college language course syllabus.

In order to identify what language textbooks were used at the college level, the project team conducted a language textbook survey at 12 institutions, 3 private institutions, 3 liberal arts institutions, and 3 public institutions. The results show that 70% of institutions, regardless of the type of institution, use *Integrated Chinese* for beginning and intermediate Chinese. The rest of the institutions use other language textbooks. This result corresponds to a national language textbook survey conducted by the Chinese Language Teachers Association in 2012, which stated that *Integrated Chinese* was the most adopted Chinese language textbook in college (Li, Wen, Xie 2014).

Compare Expectations of High School and College Courses

The project team organized the instructional content of Integrated Chinese for the first four courses CHIN101, CHIN102, CHIN201, and CHIN202 on a spreadsheet. Please click the link here to access the file. Please note that the file has multiple tabs, each indicates a specific level.

For heritage school teachers, the project team learned that they used the *Go Chinese* series, published by the Taiwan Ministry of Education. Therefore, the project team created another spreadsheet for the instructional content for *Go Chinese* for levels 200 – 600. The project team did not have access to level 100 and 700 – 800.

Go Chinese 200
Go Chinese 300
Go Chinese 400
Go Chinese 500
Go Chinese 600

High School-College Articulation Suggestions from College Teachers

The project team asked advice from college teachers who teach at public institutions, liberal arts colleges, and private institutions on how to pass placement tests successfully. The project team asked them to identify some reasons why students with prior learning experience were not able to pass the placement exams to enroll in an advanced class and instead had to repeat from beginning Chinese. Most of the students failed their placement exam because they did not know how to write characters or did not know

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the vocabulary or sentence structures of the course they wanted to be placed out of. Not knowing how to write characters from memory would make an advanced speaker of Chinese end up taking a CHIN 101 course. It is not only a waste of time and money, but it also leads to students who are clearly qualified in some modalities to feel frustration and resentment for being placed into lower classes, just because of their weaknesses in other modalities. The college teachers also advised that Chinese high school teachers should know the requirements for the acquisition of characters, whether they are teaching traditional or simplified characters. In addition, students wanting to be placed out of beginning Chinese courses must master Hanyu pinyin, the most standard Romanization system along with its four tones.

**College-Credit Awarding Guidance**

As mentioned earlier, our partner school teachers did not know how to help their students successfully achieve placement into the next higher-level Chinese course upon graduating from high school and entering into college. In fact, every year, many college freshmen with prior language background enter college and want to continue taking language courses. Unfortunately, many of them do not know the college curriculum or course credit equivalency requirements. Therefore, many students have to repeat beginning Chinese. Even though they know how to speak Chinese, they do not have sufficient literacy skills to be placed into higher-level courses.

Most colleges require students with prior learning experiences to take college placement exams. Placement exams usually consist of a written and an oral part. Placement exams are not proficiency exams. The test questions may very likely be directly related to the learning materials offered in that particular institution which the student is hoping to be placed out of. Therefore, it is important to know what learning materials are used and know how to handwrite Chinese characters in order to pass these written placement tests. For the oral tests, it often starts with a self-introduction and a few impromptu questions and answers. This is also the method by which college teachers check a student’s pronunciation. Therefore, it is a good idea to practice for these potential test areas before going to see the teacher for the placement.

Information concerning the college-credit award system would also be useful to partner school students who hope to prepare and test out of lower language level classes. Such information will better prepare them for college Chinese language course placement exams, show valid proof of their language proficiency through such means as proficiency assessment scores, transcripts of relevant courses, proof of the New York State Seal of Biliteracy, or qualified AP scores.

In addition, the project introduced the concept of college-credit award systems to partner school teachers and students. The college-credit award systems introduced included college-course placement exams, AP Chinese tests, transfer of college credits earned in high school, and equivalency between high school and college language courses. The project also introduced the New York Seal of Biliteracy to Chinese heritage school teachers and students. The project team worked to help them understand this new initiative, and thus increased the possibility that their secondary students will persist not only in language study, but also in obtaining certifiable support of their proven proficiency. This particular initiative of the New York Seal of Biliteracy would help students earn a seal on their high school diploma which acknowledges their language proficiency in English and Chinese. This seal could be used as certifiable proof of a student’s language abilities upon entering college. This section will discuss the major types of language proficiency proofs that are likely to be accepted by university and college language programs, introduced below:
High School or College Language Course Transcript
If a student took language courses or college-level language courses while in high school, he or she should get a copy of the transcript that indicates the language courses taken and the grades received for these courses. Some colleges have a policy which recognize one year of high school instruction as equivalent to one semester of college instruction. If a college has one-year of language requirements, then students should have two years of that language in high school to show on their transcript for proof. However, a college teacher may not accept a language course taken many years ago because it could suggest that the student may have subsequently forgotten the materials. Therefore, it is a good idea to redeem language credits as soon as students enter college.

Chinese SAT or Chinese AP Scores
Many high school language programs offer AP Chinese and ask students to take AP exams. In other words, the AP Chinese course usually is the highest level Chinese course offered at the high school level. Collegiate policies of granting college credits based on AP scores vary from school to school. Many would not grant college credits but instead allow students to use a certain AP score to fulfill certain foreign language requirements. For example, if a university requires students to take two semesters of foreign language as a graduation requirement, showing an AP score of 3 or above may be sufficient in exempting students from taking college foreign language courses. If a university requires four semesters of foreign language, then students are likely to need a score 4 or even 5. Please note that sometimes a university may not give students with an AP score free college credits, but instead, allow students to skip beginning level or intermediate level courses so that they can immediately begin advanced level courses upon entering college. Because the Chinese AP exam does not require students to write characters, college teachers may want students to take a written test anyway to make sure that the student knows how to write an essay in characters on site.

Language Proficiency Test Scores
Even though it is still not common for high school students to take language proficiency tests, if a student has taken it and has a copy of the score, the student should by all means provide college language instructors with any obtained certification of proficiency, along with some information about the proficiency tests and how long ago it was taken. However, because language proficiency tests are often computer-based and do not require hand writing characters, it would still be a good idea to ask students to be prepared to write an essay in Chinese characters on site and also ask students to read Hanyu pinyin Romanization and know the correct tone marks. For heritage speakers, the concept of differentiating tones has been a problem because the tonal pitch articulation and pronunciation was acquired naturally. Therefore, K-12 teachers may want to conduct a workshop to help students to overcome these problems.

Seal of Biliteracy
The seal of biliteracy is a new initiative originated in California to acknowledge high school students’ language background. Because it is a new program, it requires special attention for college teachers as well as high school teachers. There are different requirements and standards in each state, so K-12 programs should check with the State Department of Education website to learn if there is a seal of biliteracy program and if there is one, what mandated requirements are. Here is a link to states that have a seal of biliteracy program. The project conducted a workshop on the seal of biliteracy led by Dr. Ron
New York is one of 26 states that issues the Seal of Biliteracy to students, but none of our partner school teachers had ever heard about it, let alone helped students in their pursuit of taking advantage of obtaining the advantageous NYSSB. The workshop informed teachers about this opportunity to articulate with college. Teachers learned at the workshop that the seal means that students, regardless of language learning experience, who can demonstrate language proficiency in two languages (English and another language) at Intermediate-High or above, can be awarded the seal on their high school diploma. This information must be delivered to schools, parents, and communities so that heritage speakers will value their language skills more and so that non-heritage students can be better recognized for their language learning efforts and achievements. The project team showed teachers in heritage schools and public schools how to obtain the Seal of Biliteracy.

Finally, because each Chinese language program at an American universities or colleges has its own policy in terms of placement exams and credit award system, the best way is to find out from a particular institution about their language credit policy is to do some personal research or simply inquire with the school’s language department. Here is a link to the list of American colleges’ Chinese language placement guidelines for reader’s reference.
Conclusion

The one-year project has tried to provide concrete guidelines in the following areas:

- How we built capacity with students, teachers, and other stakeholders
- How to identify gaps in the teaching and learning process
- Elucidate the various means by which teachers can help students show evidence of prior learning (e.g., proficiency assessments, AP) and be properly placed in college
- Show how educators can close gaps in their own curriculum and ensure that students can hand-write characters, acquire tones, and understand the Hanyu pinyin Romanization system.
- Show how students can track their own progress and ensure that they meet and exceed expectations which will help close gaps in articulation and place themselves into the next-higher level and prevent academic repeats.

The project team is grateful for the support from STARTALK and national experts, including our consultant Greta Lundgaard, workshop leaders Dr. Deborah Robinson and Dr. Ron Woo, and especially all the teachers from our partner schools. This project allowed us to foster a partnership among public high schools, K-12 heritage schools, and colleges. This partnership will undoubtedly help in our efforts to build a more articulated curriculum for students and teachers in which all stakeholders will benefit. It is our hope that from the findings of this project, teachers have a better understanding of how to build and maintain an articulated curriculum so that more students will achieve advanced-level or higher language proficiency. It is also our hope that the use of proficiency assessments and proficiency-based language instruction will be implemented at all levels. In realizing the above mentioned implementation, students will be provided with more clear expectations of their language learning pathways and value the language skills accumulated in a learning environment where meaningful communication is the process and goal of better language instruction.