

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
3624 MARKET STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104**

**REPORT ON CANDIDACY VISIT-
Special Purpose Accreditation**

SCHOOL NAME _____ YingHua Language School _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS _____ P.O. Box 3004 _____

CITY/STATE _____ Lawrenceville, NJ _____ ZIP CODE _____ 08543 _____

DATE OF VISIT _____ 5/16/2004 _____ SCHOOL PHONE _____ 609-530-0399 _____

SCHOOL FAX _____ 484-933-5253 _____ SCHOOL E-MAIL: _____ principal@yinghua.org _____

VISITOR _____ Susan K. Nicklas, Ed.D. _____ GRADES TO BE EVALUATED _____

SCHOOL HEAD _____ Bonnie Liao, Principal _____

ENROLLMENT _____ 143 _____ YEARS IN OPERATION _____ 2 years, opened May 4, 2002 _____

PLEASE DESCRIBE THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS AND STAFF .

	STUDENT POPULATION	STAFF POPULATON
Ethnicity		
Chinese	90%	100%
Mixed (1 Chinese parent)	3%	
Caucasian	3%	
Asian Indians	3%	
African American	1%	
Gender		
Male	45% (65)	20%
Female	55% (78)	80%
Home Language Environ- ment		
Heritage Learners (Mandarian)	78%	
Non-Heritage Learners	22%	

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The YingHua Language School is a nonpublic, non-profit, non-denominational Chinese language school. Serving students from a five-county area in the Princeton and Lawrenceville, New Jersey areas, the school is completing its second year of operation. In its first year of operation, the school opened with 94 students; next year, the school expects to enroll 180 students. Currently, YingHua has over 140 students and classes are offered on Sundays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. The school operates 30 weeks each year.

The school's name has the following meaning—ying means “elite” in Chinese” and hua means “talented.” YingHua states that it promotes “Chinese culture by offering top-quality educational programs and experiences. It is a community school that provides Chinese (Mandarin) language instruction to children ages 5 and up.” Students are characterized/placed in classes by skill level (A00, A01, A04, A05, A07, A08, A10, A11, C00, AND C05). Skill levels are organized loosely around age equivalents, although each skill level has students representing a wide range of ages. For example, A00 is similar to age level kindergarten, and A04 is similar to 2nd grade (although this class includes an age range of 6.6 to 13.32 years old).

Ages and percentages of students are as follows:

AGE	PERCENTAGE
4-6	23%
7-8	30%
9-10	19%
11-12	14%
13-16	14%

While YingHua believes in the use of technology, the Candidacy Application states that, “where it can, ‘high touch’—not ‘high tech’—will continue to be the prevalent mode of learning and teaching among staff, students, and parents.” A great deal of time, energy, and creative thought is being given to the development of a series of CD-ROMs for instructional use and homework.

Currently, the school does not have a relationship with area high schools such as Princeton High School or Lawrence High School. However, there are plans to be “ready” to provide support and enrichment to these schools when ETS offers Advanced Placement courses in the Chinese language in 3-4 years.

The YingHua Language School admits students of any race, color, gender, national or ethnic origin to the school. All students in kindergarten and above may apply and nearly all students who want to register are admitted (currently, lower skill level classes are full; upper level classes have some room). Placement decisions are made based on whether the student is coming from a Chinese-speaking family or a non-Chinese-speaking family. Skill level placement decisions are also made based on knowledge gained during registration process and home visits.

The school has an excellent, well-developed website (www.yinghua.org) that includes everything from Board minutes to teaching materials. Each teacher has a password and is able to access individual student records, rosters of classes, and student performance data.

SECTION 2: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Philosophy and Objectives

- **Does the school have a clearly written statement of philosophy approved by the governing body?**

Yes. Statements of philosophy mission, beliefs, and objectives were approved on September 28, 2002. The mission states that the school will:

- inspire and facilitate Chinese language learning
- promote children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social development
- empower local communities by partnering with parents and concerned citizens

Further, the philosophy states that the school will:

- teach to suit a student’s abilities
- guide to realize his/her potential

Finally, the school states that it believes “that learning international languages is the best way to understand members of our global community.”

- **Has the school analyzed its community and studied the nature of its student body to determine the type of instructional program and services it should offer?**
- **Is the school involving the community, including the governing body and the school staff, in ongoing review, development and implementation of the philosophy, goals and objectives?**

Yes. The Board of Trustees first drafted the foundational documents through an “iterative process” using email. These documents were then shared with the Board of Advisers for comment. Because these groups include community members and parents, the views of various stakeholders are represented and regularly reviewed.

- **Does the philosophy of the school address identified needs while expressing respect and consideration for individual worth and dignity for all races, creeds, and cultures?**

Yes. Clearly, the school sees the teaching of Chinese language and culture as a key means to help individuals thrive in a global society. The Candidacy Visitor observed a warm, respectful, welcoming, and purposeful environment at the school.

Educational Program

- **Is the educational program well defined and are the instructional materials up-to-date?**

YingHua's educational program is based on the curriculum and pedagogy developed and successfully practiced by Dr. Liping Ma, founder of the Stanford Chinese School. Dr. Ma is the author of numerous textbooks on teaching immigrant Chinese children, particularly focusing on literacy teaching of the 1300+ characters in the first four years. This will enable students to read more than 90% of characters in a Chinese newspaper.

For the Chinese as a Second Language track, there is a widely used curriculum for non-native Chinese speakers.

- **Is consideration given to the various levels of ability within the school and is the instructional program geared to the needs of all students?**

Yes. The YingHua Language School offers two learning tracks. The first is called "Chinese as a Heritage Language" or CHL and is for Chinese (Mandarin)-speaking students. The second track is called "Chinese as a Second Language" or CSL and is for non-Chinese (Mandarin)-speaking students", but who wish to learn the Chinese language. The second track currently accounts for 20% of the student body and this percentage is expected to grow as more and more families become interested in learning the Chinese language and culture.

- **Are current and useful curriculum guides available and do they reflect modern approaches to teaching and learning?**

Yes. The CHL Track includes one textbook for kindergarten and 36 textbooks for Grades 1-12 (3 books per academic year, one per 10 weeks). Textbooks come with supporting materials such as a teaching guide, flashcards, homework books, CD-ROM disks, etc). The emphasis is on reading literacy.

The CSL curriculum is divided into two levels by age. CSL1 is for ages 5 to 9 and CSL 2 is for ages 10 and up. The CSL 1 curriculum includes 12 textbooks (3 books per academic year or 1 per 10 weeks) and comes with a great deal of supporting materials. The emphasis is on pronunciation, basic daily vocabulary, and grammar. These materials were developed in 1995 by Ms. Sunny Zeng of the China Institute and have been widely used with younger students.

The CSL2 curriculum includes 3 textbooks with workbooks and CDs. The emphasis is on communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These materials were developed in 2001 by Yamin Ma and Zinying Li in Hong Kong.

The Candidacy Visitor inquired about the potential for teaching adults. The Principal noted that some thought has been given to this, but adults learn differently, so the school is not yet ready to move strongly in that direction. YingHua did accept one adult into the program who is working with a group of older students, using the same program they are using.

- **How well does the educational program address the school’s philosophy, goals, and objectives?**

Very well. The materials developed by Dr. Ma are clear, sequential, and well-used by the school. They clearly meet the objectives of the school.

- **Does ongoing evaluation of student progress and the educational program occur, providing the basis for continuing curricular growth, improving the quality of instruction, and assessing the achievement of learning outcomes?**

The Principal, the Adviser for Curriculum and Instructional Pedagogy, and the Adviser for Academic Development jointly evaluate and review curricula and their development.

The Candidacy Application states that “student assessment is a central part of the curricula. Across tracks and grades, students are expected to demonstrate the ability to recognize Chinese characters, read texts out loud, and write characters based on dictation.”

The school has very clearly defined measurable learning objectives and ongoing student assessment are tied to them. Examinations are conducted every ten weeks and exam results are regularly updated on the YingHua website. These exams assess students’ ability to:

1. read aloud selected or all text content from the textbook
2. recognize all characters learned from the textbook (using flashcards, students are expected to recognize each card within 3 seconds)
3. write 30-60 characters or phrases during dictation.

Homework assignments have self-assessments to help students and parents monitor learning. Parents are considered to be key partners in assessing student learning.

The Candidacy Visitor observed an impressive student record keeping system with multiple assessments listed for students. There is obvious care taken to assess student learning and to use the results as a means to guide instruction. Student evaluation standards are very clear and include a performance index (class participation, cooperation, speaking Chinese in school, and respect for others), an academic index (exams, homework, etc.), and attendance requirements. Awards are given for achievement, citizenship, most improved, perfect attendance, and best effort. The Candidacy Visitor reviewed the program for last year’s “graduation ceremonies.”

Student report cards are provided to all students and follow the student evaluation standards listed above.

- **Is adequate provision made for horizontal and vertical articulation?**

Yes. The program used is sequential and well-designed to promote successful movement from one skill level to the next.

- **Does the school provide for ongoing professional growth along with a well-planned and systematic means of program and staff evaluation?**

Teachers are regularly evaluated via the Teacher Professional Development Process. This process was introduced to teachers on the Annual Teacher's Training Day (August 16, 2003) and continues to be implemented. Each teacher will have a lesson videotaped at least once every two years. All new teachers are videotaped during their first year. These videotapes are evaluating using a standard format using Dr. Ma's curriculum and pedagogy as criteria. (The Candidacy Visitor observed the videotaping of a teacher's lesson during her visit.) In addition, classroom management, the learning atmosphere, and the motivation and stimulation provided to students are evaluated. Each teacher receives his/her evaluation along with a 2-CD set with his/her lesson videos for future reference.

Special fund-raising has allowed for some professional development of staff. It is expected that current and future budgets will retain this activity. This includes two annual events:

1. Annual Teacher's Training Day—Each August/September, experts conduct a one-day, 7-hour training program for teachers. The morning session covers theoretical aspects of teaching Chinese to both heritage learners and as a second language. The afternoon is a workshop where the trainer critiques actual video clips from teachers' lessons and leads them in roleplaying various classroom scenarios
2. Winter Idea Exchange Luncheon—Each January/February, teachers have a New Year luncheon and us the opportunity to share successes and failures with each other.

Recently, seven teachers went to a Rutgers University conference on the teaching of Chinese.

Learning Media Services

- **Are learning media resources (books, periodicals, information technology, audio-visual equipment and materials) sufficient to support the total instructional program and meet the needs of the school? Are they appropriately catalogued and housed?**
- **Are the learning media resources (budget, staff, space) sufficient to meet the needs of students and staff?**

The Candidacy Application states that YingHua provides "curricular offerings that leverage technology. Homework and enrichment materials for students are based mostly on CD-ROMs, while web and email technology facilitate communication among members of the YingHua community." An extensive and growing array of CD-ROMs is

available for instruction and homework; the school is looking for outside funding for the development of more CD-ROMs. During the visit, the Candidacy Visitor also observed effective use of a variety of “low-tech” instructional materials such as pocket charts, flashcards, and individual student Chinese-character cards.

Currently, YingHua lists 300 books in its library collection, 1 magazine subscription, 150 multi-media titles, and 20 CD-ROMs. Many of these materials have been donated. The YingHua Chinese Education Online Library has a collection of over 200,000 character enrichment materials. The Candidacy Application also states that there are two high school students who volunteer who to manage the library collection. Each Sunday, they bring the library collection into the Parents’ Waiting Room and make materials available to parents for checkout. This wonderful service to parents was observed as a part of the Candidacy Visit and the two high school students were an excellent help to the school.

The school is currently piloting a web-based homework center for the CSL2 students.

Student Services

As an institution seeking Special Purpose Accreditation as a supplementary education school, most of the following questions typically addressed in a candidacy report are not applicable to YingHua Language School.

However, it is notable that the Principal and Assistant Principal state that they do spend “significant amounts of time reaching out to parents to counsel them and their children on study, review, and reinforcement outside of contact hours.” Home visits and house calls by the Principal are encouraged, especially for new students, to ensure that they understand what YingHua stands for. These are usually scheduled on Wednesday evenings and are designed for the Principal to speak one-on-one with the student.

Also, the school makes a positive contribution by conducting workshops for parents to “discuss their changing roles in a dynamic and evolving (sometimes confusing) Chinese-American context.”

- **Are guidance services available and adequate to meet the school’s philosophy and objectives and to meet the needs of all students?**
- **Are health services available and adequate to meet basic health needs and to handle medical emergencies?**
- **Does the current instructional program provide opportunities for students to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary to meet the present health needs of youth and society?**
- **Are services to students under the leadership of qualified personnel?**

The following questions are applicable to the YingHua Language School.

- **Are there established policies and procedures for handling emergencies, accidents, and illnesses as well as routine student/staff/parent requests?**

The Candidacy Visitor learned that the school would like to do more with this area and she agrees that this is important and necessary. Currently, students who need care would be taken to the local emergency room. The school is looking to establish a relationship with an “emergency medical advisor” who would be on call, for an emergency phone consultation, when students are in the school.

- **Is student data current, comprehensive and readily available?**

Absolutely! The school’s website includes extensive student record information, in password-protected locations. The development of these materials is extensive and quite commendable.

Student Activities

As an institution seeking Special Purpose Accreditation as a supplementary education school, the following question that is typically addressed in a candidacy report is not applicable to YingHua Language School.

It is notable, however, that YingHua does have a clear and comprehensive student code of conduct. This code includes the right to put students on warning and/or to expel them. Parents and students must sign a consent agreement that indicates that they understand and will honor the student rules.

- **Does the school provide a non-discriminatory program of student activities consistent with the school’s mission and all applicable laws and regulations? Do student activities supplement regular classroom instruction and contribute to the academic, physical, and social development of students?**

Resources (Staff, Facilities, Finance)

- **How effectively does the school utilize its financial, physical, personnel, and time resources? Are resources adequate, stable, and appropriately allocated?**
- **Are the governing body and administration exercising appropriate control over all financial operations of the school in accordance with policies that reflect sound business practices?**

YingHua operates on a very lean budget and all monies are dedicated to the educational program. Annual revenue is \$48,000 with \$42,000 coming from tuition and registration fees and \$6000 coming from book fees. The Candidacy Application states that 85% of

the operating budget comes from tuition, with the remaining 15% from fund-raising. In order to keep tuition low, there are plans under way to develop “multiple levels of fund-raising, including United Way, corporate contributions, as well as ‘Friends of YingHua’ individual donations.” It is expected that additional fundraising will support both the operating expense needs of the school as well as curriculum development and staff training.

Annual expenditures are \$48,000. Rent is \$15,000 a year, staff salaries account for \$24,000 annually, and the remainder of expenditures is for books, supplies, and administrative costs (bank charges, postage, etc). The Application states that “teaching staff is paid competitively, but modestly.” The Principal and Assistant Principal are paid nominally when all other expenses are met. There is a large volunteer group that supports the efforts of the school.

Per pupil expenditure is listed at \$470 per student. Annual tuition is \$300 if paid before July 15 and \$330 if paid after July 15. (The tuition will go up next year to \$360, but continuing students will be allowed to remain registered at the current rates.) Registration fee is \$10 and book fees range between \$30 and \$50 depending upon the program. The Principal explained to the Candidacy Visitor that there are a number of Chinese Language Schools in the area and it is a competitive arena; therefore, she is concerned about raising the tuitions too much.

Due to the size of the school and its budget, an annual audit has not been conducted. However, the Candidacy Visitor was provided with a Profit and Loss statement, a balance sheet and a cash flow statement.

- **Does the school devote all, or substantially all, of its gross income to the pursuit of its educational purposes and programs?**

Yes.

- **Are the school facilities adequate in all instructional and services areas and sufficiently well maintained so that the school environment supports student learning?**

Currently, the school is in rented space in the Lawrence Middle School. YingHua is looked to establish a formalized relationship with the Lawrence School District to ensure that future usage of the facilities would be guaranteed. Lawrence Township School District apparently has a provision that indicates outside groups may not rent facilities for more than 5 years. Because YingHua is an educational organization, the Principal is hopeful that a different and longer-term relationship can be established with the district. The Candidacy Visitor agrees that this is essential for future planning for the school.

- **Is appropriate and adequate provision made for the safety of all students and staff in all areas of the school facilities?**

Because the Lawrence Middle School must comply with all building, construction, health, and other codes, YingHua also meets this standard. It is notable that the

Lawrence Middle School was recently (in Fall 2003) reaccredited by the Middle States Association. At that time, all Standards for Accreditation were met.

- **Are school and class enrollments in harmony with available facilities?**

Yes. The average class size is 14 students, but the classes range from 7-8 students to 22-24 students. Since the classes are held in a middle school setting, classrooms are spacious and appropriate.

- **Is the number of staff members adequate for the educational program, the enrollment, and the special needs of students?**

Yes. The school employs twelve academic staff and 1 academic support staff to provide instruction to the students. It is notable that the school has a cadre of substitute teachers as well, should a regular teacher be unable to be present.

- **Do staff members possess the qualifications of preparation, experience, and philosophy that contribute to effective learning?**

Yes. The staff is accountable to the Principal and the Assistant Principal.

Teachers are recruited through advertisements in the local Chinese newspapers and through word-of-mouth with parents. A number of parents serve as instructors at the school. Most teachers are not certified by the state, partly because this is a “weekend school” and partly because the certification of Chinese language instruction is not common. YingHua looks for the following characteristics in its prospective teachers: native Chinese speakers and individuals who are responsible, dedicated, and kind.

School Leadership and Governance

- **Does the school have designated and qualified leaders to direct and coordinate instructional activities and support services?**

There is a Board of Trustees, Principal, and Assistant Principal that provide leadership to the school. The three-person Board of Trustees, which includes the Principal, is responsible for the school’s strategic direction and financial health. The other two members have strong business and community service backgrounds and one holds a doctorate from Harvard University in education. The Board meets twice a year in September and March. Minutes of these meetings are made available to the YingHua community via the website. At these meetings, the Principal submits the Principal’s Report to the Board for approval; this includes the school’s performance and its budget. The Board of Advisers and Parent Advisory Council members are invited to attend the March meeting of the Board of Trustees.

There is also a six-member Board of Advisers that provides expertise in the Chinese language pedagogy, cross cultural communications, and non-profit management. The Application states that the vast majority of these individuals “hold terminal degrees in their field of expertise.”

In addition, there is a ten-person Parent Advisory Council that also plays a supportive role. This group includes representation from all of the skill levels provided in the school. Members of the PAC have regularly scheduled times when they work in the classrooms as volunteers.

The credentials and backgrounds of staff, Board of Trustees, and Board of Advisers are quite impressive. All have advanced degrees and many hold top-level business and educational job roles in the community.

It is also notable that the school conducts a survey with parents in November regarding the school's performance. These results are reported at the March Board of Trustees meeting.

- **Are there adequate and appropriate written policies and procedures for the operation of the school? Are the respective roles and responsibilities of the governing body and administration clearly delineated?**

The Candidacy Application states that the Board “operates on the basis of integrity, consensus and transparency. In the truest sense, members of the Board of Trustees and Board of Advisers are advocates, ambassadors, and advisers to the school. As a group, they volunteer hundreds of hours of service to YingHua each year.”

A set of Bylaws has been developed and they outline how the Board of Trustees shall operate, how they are elected (a self-perpetuating structure), and how long they may serve. The Board of Trustees replaces or renews members of the Board of Advisers. The Principal replaces or renews members of the Parent Advisory Council.

- **Is the school engaged in appropriate short and long-range planning activities?**

The Candidacy Application states that the school has a number of plans “in development.” The Principal, Assistant Principal, Board of Trustees, and Board of Advisers all play a role in ongoing planning for the future of the school.

- **Are the relationships among staff, administration, the governing body, and school community members appropriate and effective?**

The Candidacy Visitor observed excellent relationships among staff, with students and with parents.

SECTION 3: OBSERVATIONS BY THE CANDIDACY VISITOR

The Candidacy Visitor observed classes, at all levels, where students were engaged in instruction and where they understood and responded to the structure provided by their teachers.

The Candidacy Visitor asked the Principal why the school was seeking accreditation. The following reasons were given:

- Accreditation will set a standard and a high bar. Ying Hua is a “real” school, not a social club or some other type of organization.
- The Principal first learned of accreditation when her children were in day care. She learned firsthand of the difference between the quality of institutions that are accredited versus those that are not.
- As a resident of Lawrence Township, the Principal learned of the value of the accreditation process when the township schools went through the accreditation process.
- The school wants to focus 100% of its effort placed on academic performance.
- Accreditation will ensure that the school is ready to offer services when the Advanced Placement Chinese courses are implemented in the public schools.
- Finally, through the accreditation process, the school will be held accountable for student performance and progress.

The school has made extraordinary strides in its short time in operation. There are, however, a few areas of needed development. These include:

- The school needs to have clear emergency procedures in place and teachers need to be trained in such procedures. Such requirements as parental release forms (stating what will be done in case of emergency, whom to call) need to be put in place.
- The school should pursue the idea of multi-year lease possibilities. The Visitor sees this as an important “guarantee” of the school’s future.
- Continued focus on CD ROM development and obtaining outside funding for this initiative. One of the most exciting distinguishing features of YingHua is the exciting website and the use of technology to support instruction and homework.

SECTION 4: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE CANDIDACY VISITOR

YingHua Language School is clearly ready to begin an accreditation process. The school has agreed to work with Middle States on the development of appropriate procedures, standards and self-study materials; much of this work will take place over the coming summer months.

Suggested Evaluation Schedule

SELF-STUDY/PLANNING YEAR:	2004-2005 School Year
TEAM VISIT:	Late Spring 2005/Fall 2005

Because team visit procedures are yet to be developed for supplementary education centers, it is uncertain how large a team or the type of team visit that will be required. It will be important to have native Chinese language speakers as members of the evaluation team. It is likely that a 2-3 person team will be needed and that the team will need to

meet with the Principal, the Board of Trustees, and others outside of the Sunday instructional times. As a part of the evaluation, the evaluation team may want to use the videotapes that all teachers produce as a part of the evaluation process.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan K. Nicklas". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature of Candidacy Visitor