

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF  
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**

**COMMISSION ON  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



**REPORT OF THE  
*ENHANCING STUDENT PERFORMANCE*  
EVALUATION TEAM**

**YingHua Language School  
Lawrenceville, New Jersey  
April 24, 2005**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools is a non-governmental, nonprofit, peer-administered organization of diverse educational institutions committed to the highest quality education for students. Its purpose is to ensure the continuous improvement of its member schools through effective leadership, self-study, peer evaluation, accreditation, exemplary programs, and supportive services. For more than 85 years, the Association has provided leadership in educational improvement for its member institutions in six states in the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, the subcontinent of Asia, and Africa.

*Enhancing Student Performance (ESP)* is a unique accreditation process for supplementary education organizations (SEO) that uses a reflective process of self examination and strategic planning as vehicles for SEO improvement and growth. The process, developed by the Commission on Secondary Schools (MSCSS), Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, provides linkages between individual learning areas, the accreditation standards applied to all supplementary education organizations, and future needs of the SEO. *ESP* engages the SEO in a comprehensive examination and evaluation of every aspect of the supplementary education organization, including the community it serves, the SEO's underlying philosophical underpinnings, each area of the curriculum offered, and a variety of resources such as finances and facilities. The seven MSCSS Standards for Accreditation of Supplementary Education Organizations demonstrate the critical role that inputs such as organizational design, planning, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student programs and services play in creating the conditions necessary to promote improved student performance and organizational growth.

The evaluation program that supplementary education organizations must undergo is a threefold process: the self-study which is conducted by the SEO staff with input from representative stakeholders of the SEO community, the visit by the Commission's evaluation team to validate the self-study, and the follow-up program carried out by the SEO in response to the findings of its own self-study as well as the recommendations of the evaluation team.

The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools' Evaluation Team is a group of professional educators appointed by MSCSS to visit a supplementary education organization using the *Enhancing Student Performance* process. The purpose of the team visit is found in four major areas. First, it is the Team's responsibility to review the SEO's adherence to the MSA accreditation standards. The Team makes a recommendation as to whether each of the accreditation standards is met. Second, the Team determines how well the SEO designs and implements curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes that stimulate student learning. An evaluation of both the content of the educational program and the actual student performance results—is an important determinant of the quality of the SEO's efforts. Third, the Team reviews the SEO's Improvement Plans to judge the validity and clarity of the plans along with the level of commitment to implementation. Finally, the Team offers an accreditation recommendation to the Commission.

The four members of the Evaluation Team to YingHua Language School used the evaluation visit to review written documents regarding the supplementary education organization, its

objectives and action plans, and their development. The Team interacted with as many of the SEO's stakeholders as possible regarding their knowledge, understanding and support for the plan and to gain greater insight to the SEO's adherence to the Middle States Standards for Accreditation. The groups interviewed included the Steering Committee, Board of Trustees, administration, teachers, students, parents, and representatives of the self-study committees for Student Programs and Services, Resources, Improvement Plans, and the Chinese Language curriculum. The Team concluded that it had a full and rich experience of the supplementary education organization leading to the following report and assessment.

This report of the findings of the Evaluation Team will be forwarded to the Commission on Secondary Schools which will make a decision on the accreditation of YingHua Language School.

Careful planning and good organization for the Evaluation Team visit made the activities of the Team both efficient and effective. In the short space of time allotted for the visit, the Team was able to gain a sense of the commitment of faculty and students to effective education and the feeling of caring and enjoyment that students, faculty, administration, and staff share.

## CONTEXT OF THE YINGHUA LANGUAGE SCHOOL

The YingHua Language School (YHLS) was founded on May 4, 2002 and is a nonpublic, non-profit, non-denominational Chinese language school. It is located in Lawrenceville, a village in Lawrence Township, Mercer County, New Jersey. The township is well-known for its diversity and natural beauty, and is committed to conservation, cultural diversity and historic preservation. YingHua is housed in the Lawrence Middle School, a facility rented from the Lawrence Township School District (LTSD).

YingHua serves students from a five-county area in the Princeton and Lawrenceville, New Jersey areas. Some parents commute as much as 40 minutes to bring their children to school. The school is completing its third year of operation. In its first year of operation, the YHLS opened with 94 students; in the next year, the school enrolled 143 students. Currently, YingHua has 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 Mandarin Chinese language instruction to children ages 5 and up.” Students are placed in classes by skill level. Skill levels are organized loosely around age equivalents, although each skill level has students representing a wide range of ages.

The mission of the YingHua Language School states that its purpose is to “inspire and facilitate Chinese language learning, promote children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social development, and empower local communities by partnering with parents and concerned citizens.” Further, the philosophy indicates that YHLS will “teach to suit a student’s abilities and guide to realize his/her potential.” Finally, the philosophy states that it believes “that learning international languages is the best way to understand members of our global community.” The basic goal of the school is to promote Chinese language learning and improve students’ linguistic and cognitive capacities. More than simply strengthening ethnic identities, the school bears a strong sense of social responsibility to cultivate future citizens of a pluralistic American society.

YingHua is open to students of any race, color, gender, national or ethnic origin. This is unusual for Chinese language schools which tend to accept only Chinese heritage learners. Acceptance of a more diverse student body is possible at YingHua because of its clear philosophy, mission and objectives and its effective two-track curriculum for Chinese as a Heritage Language (CHL) and Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) programs. Nearly all students who want to register are admitted. Currently, lower skill level classes are full, while upper level classes have some spaces open for new students. Placement decisions are made based on whether the student comes from a Mandarin-Chinese-speaking family or a non-Mandarin-Chinese-speaking family. Skill level placement decisions are also made based on knowledge gained about the child during registration and home visits.

During the past five years, the self-study notes that more immigrants have moved into the community. Major corporations such as Bristol Myers Squibb have relocated hundreds of its employees from Delaware. Among these relocated employees are immigrants from China, who have been supportive of YingHua's mission. There has been a steady increase in the number of children adopted from China, although no specific data is available in the self-study. There has also been an increase in the number of people in the community interested in learning Chinese. The local Mercer Community College has seen an increased interest in its two Chinese beginner courses.

Currently, YHLS has eleven classes, 9 of which are for CHL learners and 2 of which are for CSL students. Due to the limited pool of potential students from Chinese heritage families (although there are more and more Chinese immigrants entering the area) and the number of competing Chinese language schools, growth in the CHL programs is expected to be modest. However, the unique feature offered by YingHua is its CSL program, which is expected to grow a great deal in the coming years. Trends show that non-heritage learners at YHLS now account for 23% of the student body, up from 18% two years ago. In addition, the percentage of students that are Chinese or mixed Chinese (one parent is Chinese) is at 90%, down from 99%. The school now includes 6% Caucasian and 3% Asian Indians. No other local Chinese language school offers a two-track curriculum to address such diversity. In addition, YingHua differs from its other competitors in its dedicated focus on learning the Chinese language. Other schools tend to focus more on Chinese cultural activities such as games and activities, rather than the academic aspects that define YingHua.

YingHua has made excellent use of technology and is rightfully proud of its website. A great deal of time, energy, and creativity has been given to the development of a series of CD-ROMs for instructional use and homework. In addition, every teacher has password-protected online access to individual student records, rosters of classes, and student performance data.

YHLS's 140 students are divided almost equally between male and female students, with 108 students in the CHL program and 32 students in the CSL strand. The self-study notes a projected enrollment of 180 students next academic year and 240 students three years from now. The maximum enrollment is listed as 300 students. It is noted that the CSL group would be more diverse since it includes ethnic Chinese families that speak a Chinese "dialect" other than Mandarin at home. It also includes Chinese adoptee students whose parents are not Chinese and do not speak the language. Finally, it includes totally non-Chinese families that enroll because they see the inherent value of learning the Chinese language in today's global society. A challenge noted in the self-study and during the Evaluation Team visit is the number of families that do not speak Chinese at home, thus providing limited reinforcement of what students are learning in school.

YHLS has conducted ongoing analyses of the enrollment trends to make decisions about the class sections to offer. In addition, serious review has been done to determine whether there is enough anticipated enrollment to offer an Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese Language and Culture course in 2006-07 that would prepare these students to take the inaugural AP exam in May 2007. The self-study states that "assuming no student withdrawals, if all students in Grades 9-11 register for the AP Chinese course in 2006-07 and take the exam in May 2007, the projected

class size would be 20. If only students in Grades 10-11 do so, the projected class-size would be 11 – still a viable business decision.” Therefore, YingHua is proceeding with the assumption that such a course will be offered and will be valued. Thus, the school is expecting to decide in September 2005 how many teachers to send for the professional development events organized by the College Board in order to have them receive the official certificates in teaching an AP Chinese course.

Currently, YHLS does not have a formalized 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 the Educational Testing Service (ETS) offers Advanced Placement exams in Chinese language in Spring of 2007.

Data show that YingHua maintains a relatively low withdrawal rate. During the past year, a total of 36 students withdrew from the school for the following reasons:

- 33% temporary withdrawal ( for reasons such as scheduling conflicts, family financial situation changes, or learning developmental issues with plans to reenter in the future)
- 22% permanent withdrawal (no plans to reenter)
- 17% too demanding a high school schedule
- 11% family relocation
- 11% unknown
- 4% student lack of interest
- 0% unmet expectations

To address “controllable” withdrawals, YingHua plans to provide more new parent orientation, before and after the beginning of a new school year, and to offer school support via an active car-pooling system.

About 91% of students attend public schools during the school week. The high percentage of public school students enrolled in YingHua is believed to be primarily because public schools cannot meet their Chinese language learning needs. YingHua students are drawn from 26 towns and 19 school districts. Most of the public schools in these townships do not offer Chinese as a second language. The self-study notes that while some independent schools in the area have started offering Chinese as a second language course, the majority of the public schools will not have the resources to meet the need for Chinese language education, especially that of heritage learners.

Parents at YingHua value education and hold high expectations for the school and their children’s success. Most parents themselves have a Bachelors’ degree and 77% of fathers and 82% of mothers hold advanced degrees. They primarily work in professional fields such as technology or management. Over 90% of students come from two-parent families. YingHua’s mission and philosophy have attracted these parents, who in turn expect high quality Chinese education for their children.

To achieve its mission, philosophy and objectives, YingHua has a comprehensive communications program that includes a regular column in in-language newspapers, regular emails to parents, a website, and staff visits to students and parents at home. In addition to the governing Board of Trustees and advisory Board of Advisors, there is an active Parent Advisory

Council. The staff organizes and attends conferences and training workshops. Finally, YingHua concludes its regular school year with a publicly visible commencement exercise. Through all these channels, the school provides effective communications of its philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives.

Parents are highly involved in the efforts of the school. There are clear expectations that students complete homework during the week, generally under the supervision of parents. Parental support and participation is most visible on the last day of each term, when most of the classes need help from 4 to 6 or more parents to conduct oral exams. Parents have also organized the commencement exercise, holiday teachers' gifts, classroom assistants for younger classes, and the term-end rock-climbing parties. An active Parent Advisory Council (PAC) includes a representative from each skill level class.

An annual parent survey is conducted online in November - about two months into the new school year and provides positive affirmation of the school's ability to meet parent and student expectations. The survey questions ask about parents' and students' experience in the school as well as students' language learning motivations and environment at home. Two of the questions are:

- I am generally satisfied with the Chinese education my child has received in YingHua so far.
- My child is generally satisfied with his/her Chinese education in YingHua.

Answers	(1) Parents		(2) Students	
	2003-04 <sup>1</sup>	2004-05 <sup>2</sup>	2003-04 <sup>1</sup>	2004-05 <sup>2</sup>
1) Strongly Agree	57%	42%	26%	30%
2) Agree	40%	50%	62%	49%
3) Neutral	3%	7%	10%	16%
4) Disagree		1%	2%	5%
5) Strongly Disagree				

<sup>1</sup> Based on 117 out of 143 students (some answers represent more than one student)

<sup>2</sup> Based on 98 out of 140 students (some answers represent more than one student)

A summary of responses on the annual survey results indicate that the overwhelming majority of the parents and students (>90% for parents and about 80% of students) are satisfied with the Chinese education they are receiving at YingHua.

## **STANDARDS OF THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION**

The Steering Committee consisted of the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Principal of YingHua Language School. They supervised the many details and activities related to the school's self-study. Teachers, administrators, Trustees, members of the Board of Advisors, and parents of YingHua were assigned to appropriate subcommittees whose job it was to determine the quality of all programs, services, and resources available on behalf of the students.

There are a total of seven (7) accreditation standards that must be met in order for a supplementary education organization to become or remain an accredited member of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Secondary Schools (MSCSS). These standards serve as important indicators of quality and guidelines for organizational improvement to MSCSS's diverse supplementary education organization membership and aid in improvement planning and future development.

The following rating scale was used for the assessment of the indicators:

### **Team Assessment of the Indicators of Quality**

<b><i>1</i></b>	<b><i>Unsatisfactory</i></b>
<b><i>2</i></b>	<b><i>Needs improvement</i></b>
<b><i>3</i></b>	<b><i>Adequate compliance</i></b>
<b><i>4</i></b>	<b><i>High compliance</i></b>
<b><i>NA</i></b>	<b><i>Not applicable</i></b>

Recommendations found in this and the next section are supplied in a spirit of collegial interest, and are not meant to be construed as criticisms of individuals within YingHua. All comments are to be viewed as suggestions from "critical friends," designed to help the school in its improvement processes. As part of the maintenance process of accreditation, the school will be expected to respond to all recommendations found in this and the next section on Curriculum/Program Areas. While it is valid for a YingHua to reject a recommendation for implementation, it should be prepared to provide logical and well-reasoned arguments why the recommendation is not appropriate for the school.

The full text of each standard is provided, along with a statement as to whether the Evaluation Team believes the school meets or does not meet the standard. This information will be used by the Commission on Secondary Schools in determining the accreditation of YingHua Language School.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard on Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives

**The Standard:** *The supplementary education organization has clearly written statements of philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives that convey the general and specific purposes of its educational programs and that express expectations for quality in the delivery and results of its educational programs. Stakeholders in the outcomes of the supplementary education organization understand and accept the organization’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These documents are appropriate for the clients served and are reviewed periodically.*

**The Standard on Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives is met.**

## THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	All constituents of the supplementary education organization generally understand and accept its philosophy, mission, beliefs and/or objectives.	Staff, administrators and the students interviewed by the Evaluation Team were articulate about the purposes of the supplementary education organization.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The supplementary education organization provides opportunities for representative constituents to offer input into the SEO’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.	The evidence indicates a very strong and consistent effort to communicate with parents on these matters. Input opportunities for staff exist, but could be strengthened and formalized. There was limited evidence of student input, even from the high school-aged pupils.
1 <u>2</u> 3 4 NA	The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives and advertising and marketing of educational programs and services are consistent with ethical norms and	The Evaluation Team observed a respectful learning environment as well as ethical and accurate marketing and advertising. A policy of nondiscrimination is available on the school’s site. YingHua has an extensive communications system

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	demonstrate respect for and acceptance of persons of all races, creeds, and cultures.	through newsletter articles, the website, and emails to parents. These appear to be effective in communicating the purposes of the school to the <u>current</u> school community. However, although official policy is to reach out to all community groups, in fact, the Team observed that the primary audiences are ethnic Asians. Efforts to reach out and welcome peoples of all races and nationalities, races and cultures could be substantially strengthened and would likely contribute to the CSL enrollment.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives are free of contradiction, ambiguity, and excessive abstraction and can be discussed by SEO authorities in terms of operation, action, movement, and direction.	The foundational documents of YingHua are clear and understandable. They appear to play a key guiding role in decision-making and behaviors.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives are appropriate for the students enrolled.	The school's mission is tightly focused on the learning outcomes of students enrolled. The Evaluation Team observed, in the self-study and in interviews, a clear understanding of the importance of evaluating the appropriateness of philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives for the students that are served.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives are periodically reviewed to ensure that the statements are appropriate to the needs of the students.	The Board of Trustees most recently reviewed these foundational documents in March 2004. Because this is a new school, there has been little opportunity or need for a comprehensive review. However, the Board of Trustees and administrative conversations reflect a high concern with meeting this objective.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The supplementary education organization takes steps to ensure potential students	The evidence indicates that students are very aware of the school's purposes and that a strong orientation takes place,

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	understand and support the SEO’s philosophy, mission, beliefs and/or objectives upon enrolling new students.	beginning at enrollment. During the Evaluation Team interviews, students were quite conversant and positive about the reasons “why they were here.”
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The philosophy, mission, beliefs and/or objectives are actively implemented and serve as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision-making as well as long-range planning.	The school’s core purposes clearly direct daily operations and planning. The self-study describes 3 areas where philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives guide decision-making: in deciding upon partnerships, in curriculum development efforts, and in growth planning. The Evaluation Team observed consistency and transparency in YingHua’s application of its philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives.

**DESCRIPTION:**

During the early stages of the development of YingHua Language School, the founders devoted much time in crafting a vision, mission, and objectives. This was considered to be especially important given the number of language schools in the area that serve similar target students. Attention was given to how the school expected to “distinguish” itself in this competitive arena.

The self-study reports that one of the founders, “Principal and Trustee Bonnie Liao, sought and consulted with community leaders, school officials, parents and teachers on the viability of a new school and its potential impact on the community.” Thus, when YHLS opened in May of 2002, a formulated mission statement was available to all stakeholders. Since its founding, the mission and philosophy have changed in modest ways, but the purpose of the school has remained constant. The Board of Trustees most recently reviewed and affirmed its philosophy, mission, beliefs and objectives on March 21, 2004.

The two-track curriculum is consistent with the school mission of, as one of the Trustees said, “serving American, not just Chinese Americans. It is important for us to be competitive as a nation and we need our students to know more about the Asian nations.” The school also states that it would like to develop more Asian leadership in the community (which is one of the purposes of the new students’ Performance Index).

Many of YingHua’s communications approaches serve to deepen the understanding of the YHLS mission, beliefs, and objectives. The Evaluation Team observed a well-designed communications program that includes a regular column in in-language newspapers, frequent

emails to parents, a web site, and staff visits to students and parents at home. An active Parent Advisory Council supports these communications vehicles. Since the YingHua philosophy is focused on academic performance and the learning of the Chinese language, it is notable that the regular school year concludes with a publicly visible commencement exercise. The self-study notes that “the comprehensiveness of communications in itself reflects a belief in active family participation and ongoing outreach to students, their parents and the broader community.”

The Board, Principal and staff are extraordinarily devoted to their students and the purposes of the school. Everyone seems to understand why YingHua exists and how it is distinguished from other Chinese language schools. The Team believes, however, that the school must now begin to open its doors, literally and figuratively, to all members of the community, not just Chinese Americans, or it risks becoming more of a “private club.”

The self-study emphasizes that “the Board of Trustees is responsible for upholding the highest integrity and ethical norms in managing the school. The Board has been vigilant in avoiding even appearances of impropriety.” This is exactly what the Evaluation Team observed during its onsite visit. Attention to such “cultural issues” is most important in setting the tone and standard of behavior for the rest of the school.

#### **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- understanding the importance of identifying what makes YingHua unique and then “sticking to it” as decisions are made.
- “knowing who it is” and what it aims to accomplish. Sometimes this means having to “say no” as the school did when a small group of parents voiced a desire for more organized activities for the parents and/or better access to the school building’s other facilities. As the self-study notes, the Board seriously discussed this request and “quickly resolved not to lead such activities or seek access to the building’s other facilities for the parents’ use because the request was inconsistent with the school’s mission and objectives.”
- a strong, intelligent, visionary Principal and Board of Trustees that live out the mission of the school.
- committed and supportive parents who understand and support the school’s purpose and methods, thus helping to ensure that YingHua can be as successful as it is.
- highly motivated students who, in their own ways, support the mission of the school and demonstrate determination to master a difficult subject.
- its excellent relationship with the host school district in whose building classes are held.
- seeking accreditation, as a means to ensure that the school strives for excellence in all it does. As the self-study stated, “perhaps the clearest example of the use of these documents [philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives] in planning decisions is the application for accreditation. Knowing fully well how the process could tax the school’s resources, the Board has persisted in its accreditation effort because the school has consistently held itself to academic excellence. Accreditation would be an independent recognition of the school’s high standards.”

## **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- involve students and teachers in the ongoing review and affirmation of the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives of YingHua. While there are multiple avenues for communication, there is a need for *proactive* requests for input. The self-study stated that “an area for improvement could be made in the ongoing solicitation of input regarding the school’s philosophy, mission, beliefs and objectives. Objectives, in particular, may be more dynamic than philosophy, mission and beliefs, and should reflect new educational research, best practices, and evolving community needs.” The Evaluation Team wholeheartedly concurs with YingHua’s assessment.
- reach out to the community to seek broader involvement in the school. It is the Evaluation Team’s opinion that the YingHua mission is so compelling and engaging that many would seek to support it.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard Governance, Leadership, and Planning

**The Standard:** *The governance and administration work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the supplementary education organization through the establishment of policies and procedures and prudent oversight of the organization’s operations. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. The administration of the organization provides a productive environment of learning and work, timely and open communication, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the supplementary education organization.*

*The corporate status of the supplementary education organization is clearly defined and there are no legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility. As appropriate, the SEO is approved for its operations by the civil authorities within the jurisdiction it is located.*

*The supplementary education organization makes use of strategic, long-range, and operational planning to continuously improve its educational programs and services. Improvement plans focus on student performance and organizational growth and engender continuous improvement across all aspects of the organization.*

**The Standard on Governance, Leadership, and Planning is met.**

## THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The status of the supplementary education organization is clear. No legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility exist. Partnerships and/or any corporate linkages are expressed as enforceable agreements.	Board members provided evidence to the Evaluation Team that the school is recognized as a non-profit educational organization. In accord with IRS regulations, the school has established a Board and adopted bylaws.  Control rests with the Board of Trustees. However, the Principal is a member of the Board and there are only two additional Board members. The Evaluation Team believes that it is time to separate the

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
		Board and administration and make it clear that the Principal reports to the Board. Membership of the Board should be expanded to protect the viability of the school and ensure representation of all constituents.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The supplementary education organization and the programs it operates are approved and/or recognized for their function by the civil authority within whose jurisdiction they are located.	The YingHua Language School is organized as a not-for-profit corporation in the State of New Jersey. Its Board of Trustees bears legal responsibility for the organization. The Team received assurances that it addresses all necessary local regulations.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The governance and administration act ethically, consistently, and fairly in all dealings with parents, students, staff, and the community.	Evidence of ethical and fair operations included the obviously passionate support of the school among staff, parents and students. The Board and administration presented themselves as open and seeking for ways to improve the school.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The governance and administration work cooperatively to establish and maintain clearly formulated written policies and practices that are consistent with the SEO's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These policies and practices are reviewed regularly.	The school is a young organization and has performed acceptably on this standard to this stage. Understandably, the operation is somewhat informal. Progress in this area should be expected and reviewed in coming years.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The governance and administration maintain appropriate and constructive relations with constituencies served in the interest of serving the needs of the students.	Communications with parents and the larger Asian community are excellent and the web site is a particularly strong asset. There is a strong and admirable focus on student achievement.
	The governance and administration comply with	Emergency procedures in the school must be improved immediately. Fire drills are

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 <u>2</u> 3 4 NA	all applicable statutes and governmental regulations.	<p>inadequate and there is limited, long-range planning evidenced for other emergencies. These problems can be quickly remedied by adopting the emergency practices used by the host school where Ying Hua meets.</p> <p>The Board should immediately review insurance coverage with a broker. Compliance with the host school district’s insurance requirements addresses the liability of the host district—not the YingHua school, its Trustees, officers, staff and students. The absence of “Directors and Officers” (errors and omissions) insurance seems to be a significant concern that should be addressed immediately.</p>
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The governance and administration undertake operational, long range, and strategic planning aimed at accomplishing the SEO’s philosophy, mission, and/or objectives.	Given the short time that YHLS has existed, the evidence of planning in the governance of the organization is commendable. Continued progress in this area should include program and budget planning. The Board has not yet established any surplus or contingency funds in the budget and planning has been mostly year-to-year. Future reviews should address whether the Board has extended its scope of planning beyond one year.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The governance uses a system for evaluating its own effectiveness in performing its duties.	A chief strategy for self-evaluation has been this accreditation process. This is an excellent start, but the Board should move on to develop less formal and more frequent—at least annual—reviews of its own performance.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The governance focuses its activities on selecting, evaluating, and supporting the head of the supplementary education organization, policy development, planning, assessing the SEO’s	Progress has been made on this dimension. However, as noted elsewhere in this report, it is time for YingHua to separate administration from the policy-making role of the Board. With the Principal sitting on the Board, it is almost inevitable that, over time, the Principal will become too involved in determining

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	performance, and ensuring adequate resources to accomplish the SEO's philosophy, mission and/or objectives. Governance refrains from undermining the authority of the administration to conduct the daily operation of the SEO.	policy (as opposed to recommending policy) and the Board will become too involved in operations. The current structure may have made sense for the start-up, but now it is time to move on to a more formal and functionally-separated structure.
1 <u>2</u> 3 4 NA	The governance utilizes a clearly defined performance appraisal system for the head of the supplementary education organization. The appraisal is conducted with the knowledge and participation of the head of the supplementary education organization.	Currently, YHLS has a number of ways that the Principal is evaluated, albeit these are all informal and not fully codified. She regularly reports to the Board of Trustees on her activities and the level of communication with parents is outstanding (via emails, home visits, regular contact). However, under the current governance structure, if a formal evaluation were put into place, the Principal would effectively be voting on her own evaluation.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The head of the supplementary education organization is accountable to the governance and is responsible for creating a productive learning environment and for the day-to-day operation of the supplementary education organization.	The Team observed a smoothly operating school and the evidence indicates the Principal is doing a marvelous job of managing YingHua. However, the Team expresses concern that if a "different person" were serving as the Principal, the structures to assure accountability are not in place. As noted above, evaluation processes are informal and relatively effective for <u>this</u> Principal and at this stage in the school's development. However, there is limited evidence that accountability to the Board is systemic to the school.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The administration ensures that all SEO programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.	The management of school operations functions at a very high level and is an obvious strength of the school.

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Planning information includes historical data, baseline information, trend data, and projections. Data-driven decision-making enables the SEO to make critical judgments with confidence. The supplementary education organization maintains a disciplined knowledge of its future with projections of income, expense, enrollment, and trends in its educational and business environment.	The decisions of the organization are supported by a data base well beyond what could be expected of so young a school. It is clearly strength of the school and reflects the value placed on data by management and parents.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	A written improvement/strategic plan is developed and a major focus of improvement plans is student achievement and performance. Periodic review of improvement plans is conducted to determine the extent to which outcomes meet expectations so that corrective actions can be initiated.	Planning is informal at this stage of the school’s development, but the importance the governing body places on planning is evident. Development of a more formal, longer-term strategic plan should be considered in the near future.

**DESCRIPTION:**

The YingHua Language School is governed by a three-member Board of Trustees. One of these three trustees is also the Principal of YHLS. The Board members are capable, dedicated, and exceptionally skilled individuals from the business world, and they bring that knowledge to the operation of the YingHua Language School. The roles of the Board of Trustees are clearly spelled out in the Bylaws. It is also notable the head of the Parent Advisory Committee attends all Board meetings, although the position is not a voting role. In addition, there is a Board of Advisors that includes eight individuals with particular expertise in areas such as community relationships, nonprofit organizations, legal, child development, curriculum development, and finances.

The self-study states that “integrity is paramount in the governance of YingHua.....we are careful about compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, the institution’s reputation, the degree to which decisions create precedents, and ultimately, the impact of all that we say and do on current and future students.” The school’s statement was reinforced by all that the Evaluation Team saw, heard, and experienced.

Currently, policies are initiated and adopted by the Board with limited discussion beyond the Board. At the present time, the policies in place are sufficient to address the needs of the school. There is provision for proposals to be initiated by administration or parents and sent to the Board for discussion and there are opportunities to discuss them with administrative and parent leaders before formal adoption. However, to date, policy efforts and reviews have been irregular and have been driven by an event or an inquiry.

The self-study acknowledges that there is a need for YingHua’s “legal consultant.....to provide the Board with regular updates.....” on compliance with all relevant laws, statutes and regulations. While YHLS makes every effort to comply with appropriate statutes and regulations, this is an area for improvement.

It is notable that since YingHua’s founding, there has been no turnover among Board members. Thus, there have been few provisions made (or needed, so far) for consistent processes to identify and replace members of the Board. In addition, there has been no need for a Board orientation or Board evaluation process. The school did express the realization that, as one of the Team members stated, “the systems you put into place to start an organization are different than those that need to be in place to keep it going strong.”

The Board of Trustees is responsible for appointing the Principal with the approval of the Parent Advisory Council. Because the Board members have known one another for about 10 years, they elected one of the Board members to serve as Principal, based on shared philosophy, mutual trust, respect and understanding. This has worked well to date. However, all concerned recognize that this “easy situation” can not continue indefinitely. Steps should be taken to develop more explicit guidelines for the recruitment, appointment, and annual evaluation of the Principal.

Currently, the Board evaluates the Head’s performance based on feedback from the school’s immediate stakeholders, particularly teachers and parents, as well as evidence of student performance and academic achievement. The Principal’s reports given at the regular Board meetings also serve as input for such evaluation. As with the Board’s self-evaluation, the Principal’s evaluation can benefit from a process that is more systematic, regular and rigorous.

A key aspect of YingHua’s “informal” governance is the Parent Advisory Committee. The President of the Parent Advisory Council attends the Board’s regular meetings and participates in the discussions and development of many of plans listed below. The President of the Parent Advisory Council holds monthly meetings with PAC members and the representatives of parents from all classes to share any new information on the discussions and development of school plans.

The Principal has taken the lead in all public relations activities, and thus, reviews all public relations materials prior to dissemination. These include the school's website, as well as a regular column in Chinese language news periodicals and flyers. One of the parents serves as a very capable webmaster.

In the area of planning, YingHua indicates that it has a number of plans in place. It is notable that the current Principal works full-time for Merrill Lynch as the Vice President of Management Science in the Strategy and Finance Department. Thus, she brings considerable expertise to the planning area. To date, the Board, the administration, and the leadership of the Parent Advisory Council have carried out virtually all planning. The YingHua plans outlined in the self-study, with YingHua's recommended areas for improvement (in "quotes"), include:

- a strategic plan that addresses academic standards, financial health, staff recruitment and retention, leadership, and staff development. The current accreditation process has been a central and integral part of the school's strategic plan. "The strategic plan should be strengthened to be more comprehensive and to contain additional action plans and guideposts. It should at least touch on most, if not of all, of the other plans addressed below."
- a financial plan that focuses on the current and next school year. "Projections tied to the strategic plan should be developed."
- a technology plan that focuses primarily on the use of technology in pedagogy and secondarily, on staff development and school communications. "Efforts should continue to maximize the use of technology for pedagogy and communications. Interactive CD-ROMs, DVDs and Web technology are examples of media that could be particularly helpful in this area. These tools should be tied in to the strategic, financial, curricular review, and institutional advancement and development plans."
- a facilities plan that will increasingly focus on arrangements beyond the school's current 5-year lease--including possible permanent arrangements. "The facilities plan should be developed within the next 6 – 9 months to anticipate the end of the current lease. This should be tied to the strategic, financial, institutional advancement and development, and student enrollment plans."
- a staff development plan that consists of earmarked programs as well as pro bono service provided by members of YingHua's Board of Advisors. The plan also calls for continued expansion in terms of staff development. "The staff development plan can benefit from more attention. It should be tied more closely to the staffing plan, student enrollment, student assessment, and curricular review plans."
- a staffing plan that recently underwent modification to examine compensation for teachers. This led to a decision to offer tiers of compensation based on the length and quality of service. "With the teachers' market in YingHua's local area primarily a seller's market, the staffing plan will continue to be reviewed dynamically as market conditions and the school's needs change."
- a student enrollment plan that "is robust but could benefit from a more comprehensive discussion with all immediate stakeholders. Besides a shorter-term plan for the fall of 2005, longer-term forecasts should be developed in 6 to 9 months to support strategic and financial planning."
- a curriculum review plan that addresses ways to enhance student learning and addresses classroom curricula, programs of study, multimedia, and other age-appropriate and student-centered strategies. A current focus is the Chinese as a Second Language curriculum, because

research and practice in that field is still developing. “The curricular review plan should be formally updated and approved on at least a biannual basis. Curricular review has been and must continue to be an ongoing project.”

- an evolving institutional advancement and development plan that is closely tied to the strategic and financial plans. “Institutional advancement and development has been the object of much discussion on the Board of Trustees. As with the strategic plan, measures will be taken in the next 6 to 9 months to integrate this policy area into the strategic plan, complete with action steps and milestones.”
- a public relations plan that is in the developmental stage. “It should be tied more closely to the institutional advancement and development and student enrollment plans.”
- a student assessment plan that addresses valid and reliable methods for assessing student learning. “The student assessment plan should be reviewed on an ongoing basis and formally adopted on no less than a biannual basis.”

The self-study states that the “Principal and the administrative leadership have approved an estimated 80% of the substance of the student enrollment, student assessment, curricular review, public relations and technology plans. The Board has been more directly involved in approving the strategic, financial and institutional advancement and development plans.”

Both prior to and as a part of the accreditation process, YingHua has learned the value of data-gathering and data analysis and has put a number of impressive systems in place. The self-study’s Organizational Profile provides an impressive description of the students and communities served. The YingHua website offers extensive data points on student performance.

## **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- making decisions by consensus at both the governing body and administrative levels. The Evaluation Team supports this decision, given the size and mission of YingHua.
- the obvious clarity of roles and responsibilities observed during the Evaluation Team visit. Everyone seems to understand the role that is played by each of the “parts” of YingHua.
- its committed, intelligent Principal, strong and dedicated staff, and thoughtful and committed Board of Trustees. The governance and leadership of the school reflects enormous achievement in a short amount of time. Only a highly-committed founding and governing group could have achieved so much in a brief period. The fact that Ying Hua is seeking accreditation at such an early age is evidence of this attitude.
- the strong evaluation and analysis of the status of its various planning efforts. The Evaluation Team found an excellent depth of understanding of what needs to be done in the planning area.
- a remarkable understanding of the important role that data plays in decision making. For a young institution, YingHua has made impressive progress in this area.
- its consistent practice of, and positive attitude toward, critical review of the organization and determination to improve.

## SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- make immediate changes in emergency procedures as outlined in the Resources section.
- expand the size of the Board of Trustees to protect the viability of the school, to ensure representation of all constituents, and to garner the expertise that is necessary to move YingHua forward to the next stage of its development. For example, YHLS has plans to engage in much more fund-raising efforts. Someone on the Board with expertise in this area could be enormously helpful.
- separate the Board functions from the administrative functions. In the experience of the Evaluation Team members, the current “commingling” of functions will likely lead to micromanagement of operations, inefficiency, or disagreements over who should perform which roles.
- develop a policy development timeline that aims to develop new policies on a proactive basis and review current policies according to a particular timeline. It is further suggested that a process for “vetting” these policies among staff, parents, and where appropriate, students, be developed.
- establish a means to regularly review appropriate regulations and statutes that apply to supplementary education organizations. The legal consultant position may be another designated role to be addressed through expansion of the Board of Trustees.
- look carefully at how to deal effectively with Board of Trustees openings, recruitment of new Board members, orientation for new Board members, and evaluation of Board performance. As a young institution, YingHua has not had to deal with these. However, as it grows and matures, these are the types of issues that must be dealt with proactively and transparently.
- likewise, consider the process it will use when the time comes to seek a new Principal for YingHua. While no one ever wants to think of a day when the current Principal no longer serves in this role, it is a key responsibility of the Board, in assuring the future of YHLS, to anticipate such changes. In addition, it is important to put a clear, consistently applied evaluation procedure in place, before the performance of the Principal becomes a concern.
- continue its new and exciting emphasis on planning activities. Such efforts will serve the school well in the future. YingHua has identified the formalization of strategic and institutional advancement and development plans as the priority. In addition, as the self-study notes, “monitoring, reviewing and updating planning efforts are sound practices, which YingHua should formally adopt in the not-too-distant future. Recognizing that these activities can only be applied to schools where planning has been made a priority, YingHua will first consider the adoption and implementation of procedures to promote systematic planning efforts.” The Evaluation Team supports this assessment.
- obtain Directors’ and Officers’ insurance.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard on Organizational Design and Staff

**The Standard:** *The structure of the supplementary education organization provides the vehicle for carrying out the established philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the educational program and support services. A clearly defined set of reporting relationships exists, and the staff is qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to allow the effective delivery of quality education to students. Staff assessment procedures are in place, are clear to all involved, and are collaborative. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities and collegial relationships among staff and administration are evident and conducive to cooperative action. An appropriate program of professional development is provided to the staff.*

**The Standard on Organizational Design and Staff is met.**

## THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	A clearly understood table of organization for the supplementary education organization exists with written job descriptions that specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.	Roles and responsibilities appear to be clearly defined. Well-developed job descriptions that describe qualifications, reporting relationships, job goal, areas of responsibility, and job duties are available for the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Instructors. The Team observed respectful relationships with all focused on their assigned duties.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Staff is qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the total educational program and the students enrolled.	The Evaluation Team observed an administrative and teaching staff that is capable and dedicated to the mission of the school. Teachers were well-prepared for their lessons and demonstrated strong command of the Chinese language. The current Principal “wears many hats,” including acting Academic Dean and acting Treasurer.

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Staff members possess the qualifications of education, preparation, experience, and commitment that contribute to effective learning. Staff members are assigned to work by reason of their training and/or expertise.	While the Team observed some unevenness in the quality of instruction and classroom management, on the whole, students are actively engaged in the learning process and teachers are appropriately assigned to classrooms based on their knowledge and expertise.
1 <u>2</u> 3 4 NA	There is a plan for professional development to ensure that knowledge and skills of staff members remain current.	YingHua offers some staff development, but a formalized plan, aimed at enhancing instructional capacity is not yet in place. Given the mission of YHLS and its emphasis on academics, the Team felt this was an important area for improvement.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Designated, qualified leadership provides coordination and direction for the instruction and services the supplementary education organization provides.	It is hard to imagine a more dedicated administrative staff than the one at YingHua. The designation of a Webmaster and a Pedagogy Consultant show the priority that the school places on instruction, assessment and communication with parents.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Leadership and staff work cooperatively to create a climate for teaching and learning that fosters the attainment of the SEO's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.	The Evaluation Team observed a strong work ethic and a cooperative atmosphere in both the classroom setting and in interviews with the various constituents. The Principal holds regular staff meetings and communicates frequently with instructors via email and phone calls.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Personnel policies and regulations for the operation of the organization are written and available to all employees.	Some personnel policies and procedures are posted on the YingHua website. In addition, staff receives hard copies of the policies and regulations. The current scope of available policies is adequate for the school, but as the school grows and matures, it is expected that more detail will need to be added to these materials.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Procedures are in place for determining adequate compensation, arriving at reasonable workloads and	The Principal researched compensation and benefits offered by similar, neighboring schools and submitted a "Compensation and Benefits Proposal for

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	acceptable working conditions, and defining just and fair treatment, professional satisfaction, and good general morale among all staff.	Administrative and Instructional Staff’ to the Board of Trustees for approval. The pay-for-performance schedule is a good way to offer incentives for years of experience and larger class sizes. The Evaluation Team heard no concerns about compensation, work load, or job satisfaction.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	A clearly defined system of appraisal of staff exists that is based on predetermined criteria. It is conducted with the knowledge of the staff member and reported in writing. Staff members have an opportunity to discuss and appeal any aspects of the appraisal.	Appraisal processes for instructors appear to be clear and appropriate. The Pedagogy Consultant and the Principal conduct regular observations and written feedback is provided. While there are informal avenues in place for evaluation of the administrators, the Evaluation Team recommends that these be formalized and written.

**DESCRIPTION:**

YingHua Language School has a staff of 15 individuals including 4 administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal, Pedagogy Consultant, and Webmaster) and 11 teachers to carry out its activities; these translate into 2.6 full-time equivalents. All staff have at least a Bachelors’ degree and nearly half have a Masters’ degree or higher. There is a nice blend of years of experience with most in the range of 2-10 years of experience. While few staff members hold U.S. certification, many have teaching experience in China and have completed teacher training programs with credits. The Evaluation Team observed individuals who were qualified to teach the Chinese language at YingHua.

The Principal takes great care to ensure that high quality staff is in place. This was acknowledged during the Team interview with parents, who stated that “Bonnie works very hard to get the best teachers for YingHua. She does a good job with this.” The self-study states that “When considering prospective teachers, YingHua seeks native Chinese speakers, who are responsible, dedicated, and kind.”

The Evaluation Team conducted an interview with the teaching staff and heard unanimously positive accolades for the school and its programs. They praised the textbooks as “very systematic” and said the “curriculum builds on an inner sense of satisfaction and achievement.” “It gives a sense of pride,” said one teacher. Teachers expressed appreciation for the “seriousness and the focus of the Principal on academics.” One teacher said that the school’s

reputation is excellent, expectations are high, and “if you can teach at YingHua, you must be really good.”

As is true of many supplementary education organizations, turnover is higher than in a traditional school. During the first year of the school (2002-03), YingHua had 7 teachers and only 2 returned to teach in 2003-04, so the turnover rate was 71%. During the 2003-04 academic year, YingHua had 10 teachers and 8 returned to teach in 2004-05, so the turnover rate was 20%. For the current 2004-05 academic year, YingHua has 11 teachers and to date, two teachers have indicated they will not be available for 2005-06.

Roles and responsibilities appear to be clearly defined in the organizational chart, job descriptions, and everyday activities. A Job Description Committee that includes teachers, administrators, and the Advisor for Academic Development drafted current descriptions. This Committee is expected to review and update descriptions annually in the spring. The Evaluation Team observed clarity of purpose, a palpable understanding of the school’s mission, and genuine respect for each others’ efforts.

- The Principal serves as the chief executive officer and is responsible for working with the Board of Trustees, the Board of Advisors, and the Parent Advisory Council. She is involved with teacher employment and supervision, communication avenues, marketing and public relations, preparation and administration of the budget, and student admissions.
- The Assistant Principal is responsible for the smooth operation of the school when it is in session. She handles the details of staff attendance, purchasing of materials, student discipline, and overall monitoring of the facility.
- The self-study notes that the Pedagogy Consultant spends more than 50% of her time observing in classrooms and provides written and oral evaluations to the teachers.
- The Webmaster helps to maintain a dynamic and professional website, including a student records management system.

Because of the importance of the other two administrative roles of Webmaster and Pedagogy Consultant, the Team felt that there was a need to develop clear job descriptions for these two positions.

The self-study notes that the CHL teachers follow the written curriculum guidelines and lesson plans. They have routinely worked with the Advisor for Academic Development and the Pedagogy Consultant to improve their teaching methods and regularly meet with parents, other teachers and administration to look for ways to improve students’ learning. Due to the lack of good CSL teaching materials, the CSL instructional staff has voluntarily developed audio materials to supplement their textbooks. They have also worked to add resources to the YingHua website for teacher, parent, and student use.

A notable part of YingHua is the website, which acts “almost like an extra staff member.” Sophisticated “inhouse” database systems, with password-protected access where needed, are located on the website and handle student attendance, student assessment records, online registration and electronic receipts, teacher records, and substitute teacher information. The school’s curriculum guidelines, learning goals, grading systems and lesson plans (for CHL classes) can all be found on the website. It also includes important marketing and public

relations information, and school donors can even make their pledges online and receive electronic receipts.

While YingHua's remuneration is competitive with other Chinese schools operating in the area, compensation for all administrative and instructional staff positions is low, in comparison to the large number of hours that are actually given. The four administrators are paid on an annual "salary/stipend," while instructors are paid on an hourly basis for the hours of teaching. However, it is quite notable that a "pay-for-performance schedule" is in place and provides incentives for years of experience, teaching larger class sizes, and contribution to the school. Annually, the Board reviews promotion requests submitted by the Principal and once approved, the assessments and promotion decisions are announced at the staff meeting and communicated to the educational community through weekly announcements as well as through the school's web site. Currently, YingHua has 1 Outstanding Teacher, 6 Senior Teachers, 1 Regular Teacher, and 3 New Teachers on the pay-for-performance schedule. No benefits are provided. In addition, staff efforts are acknowledged through two avenues:

- The Board of Trustees rewards teachers with exceptional contributions through its "Chairman's Award" based on the Principal's recommendations and presents the citations at the annual commencements.
- The Principal presents "Certificates of Appreciation" at the commencement to teachers who participate in activities above and beyond their regular teaching assignments, such as helping to develop a CD-ROM for the CSL Track students.

An "Honor Roll" for the award and certificate is also at the school's web site

Communication efforts with both parents and instructional staff are highly commendable. The Principal provides support and guidance through frequent emails and phone calls with the Board Chair. She makes weekly email announcements to teachers and parents. During the Team's interview with parents, several commented on how much this contact is valued and how it helps them to "stay abreast of what is going on in the school." The Principal holds staff meetings twice a year and this is often in conjunction with some type of training program.

A unique feature of the YingHua Language School is the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). PAC assists with commencement activities and oral language assessments at the end of the school year. It also organizes rock-climbing events three times a year. These events are aimed at increasing social opportunities for students and parents to interact as well as a way to increase self-esteem of students and motivate them to overcome difficulties. The self-study notes that PAC members' "frequent presence at community activities serves to enhance YingHua's relationship with the communities around it."

The Evaluation Team felt that appraisal processes for instructors appear to be clear and appropriate. The Pedagogy Consultant observes every teacher at least once during the school year and uses an appraisal form that examines three areas: curriculum guide and objectives, classroom management, and inclusiveness (i.e. ensuring attention to every student's performance). Written feedback is provided. The Principal also conducts regular observations.

While there are informal avenues in place for evaluation of the administrators, the Evaluation Team recommends that these be formalized and written. The self-study description and

evaluation reports that “The Board of Trustees appraises the performance of the Principal at Board meetings in fall and spring after listening to the Principal’s report. The Principal holds lunch meetings with the Assistant Principal about once a month to go over her projects and to provide suggestions for improvement. The Principal also gives feedback mostly through email to the Webmaster on a project-by-project basis. The Principal talks to the Pedagogy Consultant about twice a week to go over her area of responsibilities and to provide suggestions for improvement. The school’s current appraisal practice is adequate because the Principal maintains a strong personal connection with the administrative staff.”

Staff development is an area where the Evaluation Team sees room for improvement. While there have been a variety of options offered, there does not appear to be an overall plan aimed at consistently enhancing the quality and capacity of administrator and teacher performance, over time. During classroom observations, it appeared that some teachers could profit from training in classroom management techniques and how to differentiate instruction for a diverse group of students. YingHua has made efforts in the area of staff development through DVD recordings of observed lectures and hosting teachers and administrative staff from four other New Jersey Chinese schools that came for classroom observation and experience sharing. There is often a teaching training of some kind in conjunction with the twice yearly staff meetings. YingHua has also established a long-term working relationship with Chinese schools in Illinois, Tennessee, California, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, North Carolina, and New York. The focus of most training to date has, perhaps appropriately so, been in the areas of Chinese language instruction. There are, however, broader educational topics such as classroom management, differentiated instruction, and assessment techniques that would be beneficial to all staff.

YingHua’s reputation as a quality Chinese school has begun to spread. The Principal has been invited to three other Chinese language schools to give seminars on education and parenting and has been invited to give presentations, as well as a workshop, at the annual conference of Chinese Language Teachers Association of Greater New York. She has also given two presentations at the biannual conference of CSAUS (Chinese School Association in the United States) and published articles in its quarterly newsletter.

### **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- the remarkable dedication of the entire YingHua staff. The Team observed genuine respect, caring for the well-being of the students, and commitment to YingHua’s mission. It is clear that everyone puts in far, far more hours than they are paid for, to ensure that the school runs well and is the premier Chinese language school in the area.
- the care that the Principal takes to employ individuals that not only “know the Chinese language,” but are dedicated to the transmission of the language and the Chinese culture.
- its dedication to effective curriculum and instruction, as observed through the services of a Pedagogy Consultant and an Advisor on Academic Development. Both of these individuals provide much “value added” to the instructional program of YingHua

- the effective and efficient website, which handles so many of the school’s simple administrative tasks and is an enormous time-saver for the administration and the teaching staff. The Webmaster is to be commended for the significant contribution she has made to the efficiency of YHLS.
- excellent communication efforts of the Principal with both parents and staff.
- the “pay-for-performance schedule” that offers incentives for teachers to stay at YingHua, take on larger class sizes, and work their way up the scale.

### **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- develop job descriptions for the Webmaster and the Pedagogy Consultant, the other two administrative positions. In addition, the roles of the Treasurer and the Academic Dean should be clarified in the event that a separate individual is employed to serve in these positions.
- give consideration to the addition of a dedicated treasurer to supervise the school’s finances. The expected future emphasis on fund-raising should be considered when thinking about the appropriate individual to fill this role, since YingHua may want someone with fund-raising and development experience.
- look at ways to involve others in the leadership of the school as “insurance” for the long-term future of the school. Currently, the Principal assumes so many roles and YingHua is very dependent on her incredible skills and capacity for work.
- develop clear guidelines for the instructional staff on expectations for teaching and responding to students in Chinese. The Evaluation Team observed inconsistent use of bilingual teaching methods in a number of classes.
- provide greater teacher training opportunities in the areas of classroom management, differentiated instructional techniques, student assessment, and working with diverse student populations. The Team believes that it would be beneficial to establish a formal staff development plan that looks long-range at the skills administrators and teachers need.
- develop a more formalized, written appraisal process for all administrators, including the Principal, the Assistant Principal, Webmaster, and Pedagogy Consultant.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard on Educational Programs and Materials

**The Standard:** *The educational programs consist of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs that include appropriate standards, solid instructional pedagogy, and appropriate assessment based on research and best practices. The educational programs are sufficiently financed, periodically reviewed, and mission-appropriate. They are developed to meet and address the needs of students and are designed to produce appropriate levels of student learning. Effective policies and practices regarding the educational programs are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Instructional materials and technology function as important tools to enhance instruction, as appropriate.*

**The Standard on Educational Programs and Materials is met.**

## THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The educational program (including curriculum, instruction, and assessment) is clearly defined, approved by the SEO's governance, and is consistent with the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the SEO.	YingHua has two sets of well defined curricula (CHL & CSL) with clear goals that are consistent with their educational philosophy. It also provides specific teaching strategies, concrete instructional guides and sound assessment methods that facilitate reaching the curriculum goals.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The educational program defines desired student outcomes as expressed in terms of student understanding, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits.	YingHua has a clearly articulated mission and specific educational goals based on students' needs. It has also created an Academic Index system and a Performance Index system to help to define and measure student outcomes.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as	YingHua has two sets of written curriculum guides (CHL & CSL) that are compatible with students' backgrounds and needs. They are both based on sound, current theories and best practices, and

<b>Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator</b>	<b>MSCSS Indicator of Quality</b>	<b>Team Comments and Evidence Provided</b>
	well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.	they both contain appropriately targeted learning objectives.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Resources required to implement the educational program are available and utilized.	YingHua has made an effort to find the textbooks that are most suitable for its two programs (CHL & CSL), though it still has difficulties finalizing the materials for the CSL program due to lack of general availability of materials at this level in this field. The school also maintains a moving library and an online library. In terms of human resources, YingHua has committed instructional staff and highly-qualified administrators. However, finding qualified CSL instructors remains a challenge.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Instructional materials are up-to-date, sufficient, and appropriately supported through adequate funds provided in an annual budget.	YingHua has chosen an up-to-date textbook series with facilitating materials such as homework assignments, CD-ROM, audio CD, and flashcards for the CHL program. For the CSL program, however, YHLS has met some challenges finding appropriate instructional materials. Currently, the school is facilitating the publication of a full set of teaching materials. According to the self study, each teacher also has \$100 per year for purchasing miscellaneous materials.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Consideration is given to the students' ages and their varying ability levels. The instructional program is designed to meet students' needs consistent with the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.	YingHua takes students' ages and their varying ability levels into consideration when it chooses learning materials and assigns classes. It has also set up two separate programs (CHL & CSL) based on the different needs of the target students. The two-tier structure of the CSL program is consistent with the concept of Multiple Entry Points. However, the Team did observe students with large age gaps taking lessons in the same CSL class.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Curriculum and instruction policies and procedures provide direction to the staff	The curricula that come with the textbooks articulate clear directions of the CHL and CSL programs in terms of their

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	and administration in the development, implementation, and improvement of the educational program.	development, implementation, and improvement. Based on different students' needs, the CHL program emphasizes improving students' literacy, while the CSL program adopts a communicative approach to help students develop all four language skills.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The educational program, policies and procedures, and other pertinent information relating to the student are available in printed form to students and parents.	All pertinent educational information is available online at the school website. The website is a major strength of the school. It contributes greatly to the overall program, communication processes, and services.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Educational programs are aligned with state and local requirements as necessary and are supported by adequate record-keeping and good communication.	YingHua is fully aware of and complies with the state and local requirements. Sufficient record-keeping and good communication using technology are strengths of the school.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The scope, quantity, and quality of information resources and technology are adequate to support the total educational program and encourage students and staff to broaden and extend their learning.	YingHua maintains a sophisticated website with more than adequate information for the students, parents, teaching staff and administrators. It also operates an online library to facilitate students' learning. For some classes, finishing CD-ROM homework is part of the requirement.

**DESCRIPTION:**

In the self study, YingHua Language School clearly articulates its mission as: 1, to inspire and facilitate Chinese language learning; 2, to promote children's linguistic, cognitive, and social development; 3, to empower local communities by partnering with parents and concerned citizens. The school strives to accomplish its mission by providing learning opportunities to students with both Chinese-speaking and non-Chinese-speaking backgrounds. As the YingHua self-study states, "To the best of our knowledge, YingHua provides the most coherent and comprehensive educational programs of its kind." The Evaluation Team concurs and notes that such an effort makes YHLS unique among language schools and is highly commendable.

The school offers two separate programs, namely the CHL program (Chinese as a Heritage Language) and CSL program (Chinese as A Second Language) with two different curricula and two sets of learning materials. CHL is for those who have been exposed to spoken Chinese and who may have had limited reading and writing experience. CSL is for students with no prior exposure to Chinese. YingHua recognizes that learners' needs vary depending upon the type and length of their prior experience with the target language. For example, CSL students need explicit grammatical instruction, while CHL students may only require reminders in this area. The two major components in the curricula cater to these different student needs, through the application of different teaching methodologies and specialized textbooks.

The self-study states that the YingHua "curriculum is informed by and sensitive to the National Standards for Foreign Language Education (1999 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages (1996; Revised 2004 New Jersey Department of Education), to ensure that all necessary skills are addressed in both study tracks." The self-study also gives specific examples of how this is done in areas such as:

- the creation of the two-track system is consistent with the emphasis on **Meeting the Needs of All Students** in the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages.
- the two-tier structure of the CSL track is consistent with the concept of **Multiple Entry Points** in the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages. "Multiple entry points accommodate students who develop interests in specific languages during their middle or high school years because of career choices or personal motivation. Learner choice becomes an increasingly important factor as students mature and their eventual competency is linked with interests and motivation. Students who choose to start a new language in the high school will reach levels of competency commensurate with the sequence available; and their previous experience with language study in general often contributes to more rapid acquisition of a second language."

The self-study notes that "the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) indicates that the main purpose of foreign language learning in the United States is to educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad." YingHua strives to meet this objective by integrating (1) the traditional model of community-based Chinese heritage language schools (where the emphasis is on Chinese cultural reproduction through literacy, literature, history, geography, and some art forms) and (2) elements from the public school system (where Chinese is being taught as a foreign language, as part of a liberal arts education, in an increasingly greater number of schools). Compared with point (1), where few explicit standards exist, and point (2), where standards for Chinese AP are still being developed, YingHua states that its "educational standards are unquestionably high." The Evaluation Team concurs.

Students receive 100 minutes of instruction per week during the Sunday afternoon classes. This weekend instruction is expected to be supported during the week through completion of homework and parent support. Students are placed in one of eleven skill levels, nine for CHL and two for CSL programs.

To ensure consistency and articulation between levels, instructors meet twice a year to share their teaching experiences. The Pedagogy Consultant observes every teacher at least once a year. The Pedagogy Consultant and the Principal regularly discuss matters related to continuity and congruency between the two major curriculum areas and program levels. The Principal also consults with the Board of Advisors and the Board of Trustees.

YingHua has developed a comprehensive Academic Index system to measure students' academic performance represented by exams, homework, and quizzes. The self-study reported that "for students to be promoted from one level of learning to the next, they need to attend a minimum of 54 out of 60 hours of instruction; complete at least 60% of the class assignments and homework; attain an average quiz grade of 60%; and achieve a final grade of 60% or above."

A key aspect of YingHua's success is related to the completion of homework. Homework is required for all registered students and they are expected to work on assignments five nights per week (Monday through Friday). The school supplies the exercise books (or sheets) and the CD-ROMs or audio CDs for the homework. Most of the students are required to turn in recorded readings that they prepare at home. CSL students are encouraged to listen to audiotapes on a daily basis to help them develop a firm grasp of Chinese tones and rhythms. All CSL students also have an audio CD to accompany their textbooks. Higher-level CHL students are assigned homework projects that require the use of Internet.

A major new addition to YingHua's educational offerings is its summer enrichment program known as YingHua in Beijing. In this program, students travel to Beijing during the month of July. The 4 to 5 week Summer Program focuses on Chinese language learning and cultural adaptation in China. The curriculum includes four-hour Chinese classes every day and Chinese cultural tours two days a week. Tour sites include the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, and various museums. During interviews with the Evaluation Team, students that had participated in this program spoke very highly of it and those that had not yet gone to Beijing were eager to participate.

YingHua is rightfully proud of its Online Library which contains over 600 short stories and three children's novels, for a total of over 300,000 characters of material. The school also maintains a library that holds over 150 volumes of books, audiocassettes, and video/DVD materials. These libraries serve as a resource center for the YingHua staff, parents, and students. There is a library reservation system in place and all materials are catalogued and inventoried online. In addition, staff is encouraged to explore online teaching resources, including web-based learning and testing. YingHua regularly videotapes its instructors for the purposes of teacher training and teacher evaluation.

The YingHua website is an exceptional addition to the school program and is a model of how a website might be designed. Most of the information is in English, with Chinese language references throughout.

- The Home Page expresses what YHLS values by featuring the mission and highlighting examination results. It also invites parents to give input by taking a simple, easy-to-use survey.

- A link to a section on Accreditation is a particularly nice communications feature since it is directly linked to the Middle States website. Also provided is a timeline of accreditation events, a listing of all committee members, and an identification of parents as “proofreaders.”
- The History section provides all Board agenda and minutes of all meetings.
- The Policies section features policies on admissions, non-discrimination, parent rules, student conduct, and assessment practices/grading systems.
- A section on Most Frequently Asked Questions is divided according to Common Questions, Questions from Chinese Speaking Students and Questions from Non-Chinese Speaking Students; a nice feature is that it shows when each of these questions is updated.
- The Organization section shows background information and photos for the Trustees, Advisors, and Teachers at the school. The Parent Advisory Council is listed with hyperlinks to each member’s email address.
- The Curriculum section provides an outline and description of textbooks for both the CHL and CSL tracks. A comprehensive summary of the YingHua in Beijing program is included as well.
- The Registration section provides all registration forms, a registration guide, and options to conduct registration online. A description of financial aid through a grant from the New Jersey Chinese Cultural Studies Foundation is also provided.
- The Library section features an online library catalog with a reservation system. Library rules are listed and links are provided to Internet resources.
- The Donation section offers a process for making donations online. An Honor Roll of donors includes parents, Board members, and local businesses. The website notes that “Since the official kick-off meeting on April 13, YingHua families have made 55 generous new pledges totaling \$3,405. We have also received the contribution from our first corporate sponsor, Schoor DePalma Engineers and Consultants and matching gifts from Citigroup and Bristol-Myers Squibb. This brings the total pledges and contributions since the founding of YingHua to \$6,870.”
- The Job section provides a way for teachers to apply online for a possible position at the school.
- The Teachers’ Circle section describes the Teachers’ Honor Roll which lists teachers who have received awards or certificates. This is also the “portal” through which teachers enter grades, attendance, retrieve roster, and update student records.
- The Parents’ Circle includes surveys, event registration, and carpool network information. A particularly nice feature in this section is password protected access to individual student records for each family
- There is also a Testimonials page and links to three other Chinese language schools. .

## **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- its separate curricula and instructional materials for CHL and CSL programs that are based on different students’ needs.
- its age-appropriate language learning materials with clear objectives that are suitable for K-12 students. In both interviews and the review of student performance data, the Team found

that students, parents, and faculty have responded well to the major curriculum areas. Students' academic achievements (test grades, class performance) at all levels, and in both categories, also attest to the success of the YingHua curricula.

- the clarity of learning objectives and the goal-oriented approach of the program. The Evaluation Team found that students, parents, and teachers appear to know from the first day of class what they are expected to accomplish.
- its sufficient supplementary learning materials that help students to develop language skills outside of the classroom.
- the efforts made to search for the most appropriate materials which can effectively help students to develop their language skills. The efforts that YingHua has made to develop a suitable set of CSL materials is wonderful, both for the YHLS students and the field of education.
- the YingHua's well developed website including a variety of information ranging from online registration to a password-protected student record system.
- the online library and the "onsite" library that are provided for staff, students, and parents.
- the "YingHua in Beijing" summer program which is both popular and effective. This well-structured summer program is dedicated to the improvement of Chinese language fluency and to the promotion of Chinese cultural understanding.

#### **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- continue to search for and develop learning materials that facilitate CSL students learning the target language.
- continue to help and provide training so that instructors understand the different student needs, instructional materials, program goals, and teaching strategies between CHL and CSL programs. In order to reach such a goal, different academic advisors may be needed for each program given the fundamental differences between them.
- re-evaluate the curriculum and learning materials for the CHL students taking various family language environments into consideration. The Evaluation Team observed that although Chinese was used as the primary instructional language in CHL classroom, the students were not necessary held accountable for speaking Chinese in class. The current CHL curriculum assumes that students speak Chinese at home and therefore, puts its primary emphasis on developing literacy. However, some parents who were interviewed admitted that they did not speak Chinese at home. Therefore, training for oral communicative skills might be important for the CHL program as well.
- pursue ways to establish a connection between the participants in the two curriculum tracks, so that students from different backgrounds can benefit intellectually and socially from each other. The idea described in the self-study of a "pen-pal or shared-reading programs for students in the different tracks" sounds fun and interesting. Other ideas such as CSL students visiting CHL classrooms to have the experience of language immersion or CHL students visiting CSL classes to share their language and cultural skills also show promise.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard on Assessment of Student Learning and Organizational Performance

**The Standard:** *The assessment of student learning outcomes enables students to monitor their own learning progress and allows teachers to adapt their instruction to the specific learning needs of students. The performance of the supplementary education organization is assessed by examining areas such as student learning and performance, program evaluation, graduate success, and client satisfaction. Results of student learning and organizational performance are used to develop strategies for improving service and program quality. Assessment results are communicated appropriately to students and staff.*

**The Standard on Assessment of Student Learning and Organizational Performance is met.**

## THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The supplementary education organization identifies specific criteria for assessing student learning and organizational performance.	As the self study mentions, YingHua uses weekly homework, weekly quizzes and end-of-term examinations to evaluate the progress of the students' language skills. Students need to "attend a minimum of 54 out of 60 hours of instruction; successfully complete at least 60% of the class and homework assignments; achieve an average quiz grade of 60%; and attain a final grade of 60% or above in order to go into the next level."
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The supplementary education organization utilizes appropriate and varied methods to assess student learning and organizational performance.	For the CHL program, assessment methods include a written exam, text reading, dictation, and character recognition. Since the primary goal is to promote literacy, it is not clear if oral communicative skills are part of the assessment. According to the self-study report, both written and oral exams are given at C01-04, but only a written exam is given to C05 and above. Again, whether oral communicative skills are

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
		assessed at higher-level CSL classes is not clear.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Student progress is regularly evaluated and accurately interpreted and reported in an understandable manner.	Weekly quizzes and end-of-term exams are given to evaluate students' progress. Successful completion of weekly homework assignments also generates a code that is used to check the homework completion ratio. Numerical grades are given for the quizzes and tests.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned into a coherent system consistent with the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.	YingHua's curriculum, instruction and assessment which are based on the target students' needs are clear and sequential, and consistent with the school's well-articulated mission and goals. Developing strong oral communicative skills, though articulated in the CSL curriculum, is not the focus for CHL and higher-level CSL classes in terms of instruction and assessment.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Assessment results are used regularly in evaluating the effectiveness of the supplementary education organization's curriculum and instructional practices in order to develop strategies for improving student learning.	Based on the self-study report, class instruction may be adjusted to focus according to the test results. In cases where the majority of students underperform, the Principal, the Pedagogy Consultant and the instructor work together to investigate the causes. Assessment results are also one variable in evaluating instruction and staff development needs.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	All teachers and other appropriate SEO personnel commit to, participate in, and share in the accountability for student learning and organizational performance.	As a weekend school, YingHua relies heavily on the communication among the teachers, the Advisors, the Principal, and the parents. During interviews with the teachers and parents, many comments were made on the committed instructional staff and administrators. Stakeholders are routinely involved in the discussions related to the students' achievement and organizational performance.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Communication regarding students' progress and needs is regular, productive, and meaningful.	Individual student performance is posted on the school website to which stakeholders have password-protected access. According to the self-study report,

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
		when a student under-performs, the instructor contacts the student in question to determine the reasons and to make plans to improve. Instructors, the Principal, and parents regularly communicate through e-mail and phone. The Principal also makes a home visit if it is necessary.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	A monitoring system is in place to provide current and longitudinal data on student learning and organizational performance.	YingHua's web-based information system contains students' past exam results, which provides teachers and parents with records of student learning and data to understand and address student performance over time. The website also contains testing data indicating class and school performance.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Assessment of student learning is the primary indicator for documenting the effectiveness of the supplementary education organization's program.	YingHua has a comprehensive Academic Index (AI) system, which is used to measure students' performance. Along with the information gathered regularly from the parents, the AI is the primary indicator for documenting the effectiveness of the programs.

**DESCRIPTION:**

The YingHua Language School has clearly defined and measurable learning objectives. Ongoing student assessments are tied to those objectives. Examinations are conducted every ten weeks and aggregated exam results are regularly updated on the YingHua website. Homework assignments have self-assessments to help students and parents monitor learning. YHLS conducts weekly quizzes and term-end exams to measure individual student's learning progress. The chart below was provided in the self-study and shows assessments, areas assessed, and frequency of administration.

Names of Assessment/Test Administered	Skill Levels	Areas Assessed	Frequency and Semester of Administration
Final Exams	CHL-- A01 and above	Written exam, text reading, and character recognition	Three times a year for the fall, winter, and spring terms

Final Exams	CSL-- C01 – C04	Written and oral exams	Three times a year for the fall, winter, and spring terms
Final Exams	CSL— C05 and above	Written exam	Three times a year for the fall, winter, and spring terms
Quizzes	CHL-- A01 and above	Character dictation	24 times a year
Quizzes	CSL-- C01 – C04	Oral test	3-5 times a year
Quizzes	CSL-- C05 and above	Written exam	3-5 times a year

YingHua places great focus on student achievement data. This emphasis is reflected in the prominent display of students' general exam results on the school's website home page. These results have provided further evidence that the school's commitment to quality and high standards have yielded positive results. An example of just one week's quiz performance is shown below as an example and demonstrates the universally strong achievement of the students.

Skill Level	#	Last Exam Date	Written	Text Reading	Character Recognition
			(Median/Max)	(Median/Max)	(Median/Max)
A01	24	11/21/2004	108/110	100/100	104/105
A04	15	11/21/2004	110/110	80/80	117/118
A07	18	11/21/2004	101/108	80/80	125/132
A09	11	11/21/2004	91.5/100	75/100	148/158
A10	9	11/21/2004	94/100	100/100	152.5/154
A11	10	11/21/2004	90/96	120/120	162.5/170
A13	6	11/21/2004	97/99	93.5/97	96/99
A15	7	11/21/2004	99/100	160/160	180/180
C02	22	11/21/2004	100/100	100/100	100/100
C06	9	11/21/2004	96/98	/	/

Two unique assessment strategies used by YingHua include the use of parents for oral examination and the role of the culminating commencement ceremony in assessment efforts.

- CHL-Track parents are routinely involved in the oral exam portion of each term's final exams. Each parent will test 2 to 3 students on reading from their textbooks and character recognition. All scores are reported on preprinted sheets and collected by the teachers.
- All students perform at their skill level to a sizeable audience in the school's commencement ceremony. YingHua believes that "because effective language learning is meaningful, enjoyable, and interactive, assessment of this skill should reflect a similar focus." The students' performances focus on authentic performance tasks, such as singing Chinese songs and acting out stories in the textbooks.

YingHua sets clear assessment expectations and has established levels of student performance. For each course, there is a standard exit examination. The standards and expectations are made available to students before they enroll in a particular course (e.g., YingHua specifies the minimum number of Chinese characters to be learned in each course). In addition, the school encourages its CHL students to take the HSK (*hanyu shuiping kaoshi*, the Chinese equivalent of the TOEFL exam) and its CSL students to take the SAT II Chinese. The self-study noted that “in October 2004, six students from the A15 class took the HSK. Three received certifications at the Intermediate level and three at the Elementary level. This result is considered quite remarkable for a school with such a short history.” In the future, it is expected that students will also be encouraged to take the Advanced Placement Chinese exam, when it becomes available.

In the assessment process, all the concerned parties (classroom teachers, principal, parents and students) are highly involved. Assessment results are available through password-protected web reports. They are also archived to provide instructors, parents and administrators with rich data to understand and address individual student academic performance over time and program performance as a whole.

YingHua has a comprehensive Academic Index system that is used to measure students’ academic performance represented by exams, homework, and quizzes. For students to be promoted from one level of learning to the next, they need to attend a minimum of 54 out of 60 hours of instruction; successfully complete at least 60% of the class and homework assignments; achieve an average quiz grade of 60%; and attain a final grade of 60% or above.

YingHua also has a Performance Index system that is used to measure students’ classroom participation, cooperation, and other “softer” skills. The Performance Index factors in class participation, cooperation and team spirit, display of respect to others, use of spoken Chinese in school, and attendance. A student’s AI and PI scores are used in the year-end, honor student selection and recognition process.

To date, there has been limited communication with the students’ home schools regarding student progress in the YingHua program. The self-study states that so far, “transcripts have only been called for in two situations: 1) when a public high school student could not meet the school’s World Language requirement, due to a course schedule conflict; and 2) when a public high school student wanted to skip the course level she was slated to enter and jump to the next level.” The Evaluation Team believes that these two examples suggest other possible opportunities for marketing the YingHua program to a broader group of students. If World Language requirements could be “universally” met through classes at YingHua, this could provide an incentive to future enrollees.

## **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- the use of regular homework, quizzes and exams that help to assess student’s ongoing learning progress.

- the comprehensive and well-designed Academic Index and Performance Index systems. YingHua has wisely acknowledged that it is the interplay of both academic progress and skills such as class participation, attendance, and use of that language that will facilitate results.
- its comprehensive web-based academic reporting system which has proven to be both efficient and effective. It allows parents to be well-informed and encourages teachers to utilize assessment results in their instructional decision-making.
- the regular communication among instructional staff, principal, program advisors and parents regarding student performance and assessment.
- encouraging parent participation in the assessment process, thus helping parents to further understand the academic standards and principles of the school. Parental involvement also increases the amount of material upon which a student can be tested, which in itself gives the student an opportunity for reinforcement of the material. In addition, it gives participating parents an opportunity to see how much other students in their child's class have learned, hence encouraging parents to help their own children improve their performance.
- the key role that commencement ceremonies play in the assessment process.

#### **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- further help its teachers to effectively use the technology-based report system. The self-study report recognizes that not all teachers regularly enter the required information into the web-base assessment system. If the report system is the primary source for the parents to get information about the students' progress and for the evaluation and development of the educational program, basic information entry is necessary.
- further develop the assessment for the CSL program. According to the self-study report, CSL teachers design their own exam questions for assessments. Therefore, the effectiveness of the assessments largely depends on individual teachers' understanding of the program and its goals. More standard exams may help to assess students' learning and evaluate teachers' instruction more effectively.
- consider including the assessment of oral communicative skills as part of the evaluation process for the CHL program and higher CSL classes.
- explore the possibility of closer communications with the students' home schools and possibly, the New Jersey Department of Education for the purpose of YingHua receiving recognition as an option to fulfill the NJ World Language requirement.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard on Student Programs and Services

**The Standard:** *The supplementary education organization provides services to students that optimize their success in learning. Among the services provided are ethical admissions and placement practices, guidance and counseling, appropriate assistance for success in learning, and accurate student records.*

**The Standard on Student Programs and Services is met.**

### THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Relationships between staff and students demonstrate respect, fairness, and understanding.	The Team observed positive relationships between staff members and students. There is a genuine feeling on the part of staff that they are doing “important work” and their sense of commitment is quite observable and commendable.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Student records are current, comprehensive, and well-maintained. Standards for transcript control and use are known and observed.	YingHua maintains all student records electronically and makes them available to students and teachers on the impressive YingHua website. This information is password protected. The Team does have some suggestions for additional information that the school should gather in the health areas (see the Resources section of this report).
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The supplementary education organization accounts for the presence of its students and meets all local regulations for maintaining their health and safety. Procedures for the termination of any student for cause are known and consistently applied.	YingHua teachers keep up-to-date student attendance records on the website records system. In order to ensure the health and safety of its students, however, the Team believes there is a need for regular emergency drills so that staff and students know what to do in such situations. Records on student withdrawals are well-documented.

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 4 <u>NA</u>	Follow-up studies for graduates and other former students are carried out, and the resultant data are used to determine the effectiveness of supplementary education organization programs.	Due to the nature of the YingHua program, students do not “graduate” from the program (in the traditional sense) nor use their Chinese language learnings in other educational settings. It may be necessary to do follow-up studies if and when YingHua instruction is used for the purposes of taking the Advanced Placement Chinese exam.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Productive relationships exist with students, parents, and where appropriate, the comprehensive educational institution, that the student regularly attends.	The Team found very satisfied parents and equally happy students. All individuals interviewed expressed their pleasure with the structure and format of the YingHua curriculum and the quality of the program. It is notable that many of those interviewed had transferred from other competing language schools and thus, had a point of comparison. At the present time, YingHua does not have formalized relationships with the comprehensive educational institutions that each student regularly attends.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Career awareness and counseling, information on financial aid, and guidance for parents are provided, as appropriate.	While YingHua rated this indicator as “Not Applicable,” the Team believes that it is pertinent to the school. Due to the nature of the YingHua program, career awareness and counseling and information is not provided. However, information is given on financial aid provided by a local charity organization which now enables three needy students to attend YingHua. Guidance offered to parents is a key strength of the school. The Principal makes regular “home visits” and phone calls to parents and students to assure their success in the school.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Effective procedures for identifying and addressing the special needs of students are in place.	Due to the nature of YingHua, the school does not have a formalized special needs program in place. The Team felt that the school does a good job in identifying student needs, but suggests that more can be done to individualize instruction. Some attention is given to individualizing

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
		the program to each student through placement in appropriate levels and frequent assessments. The Team suggests, however, that teachers need to receive staff development on ways to provide more effective differentiated instruction in the classroom.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The supplementary education organization has a well-defined and documented admissions process with a clear exposition of admissions criteria. Admission and placement procedures are well-administered, unbiased and equitable.	Currently, nearly all students that apply are admitted into YingHua. The admissions criteria and process are written and available on the YingHua website.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Those wishing to enroll in the supplementary education organization are clearly informed of the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the SEO, the nature and extent of educational programs and services available, tuition and fees, and expectations for satisfactory performance.	The Team found clear procedures for ensuring that parents, and to some degree, students, are fully informed on what YingHua aims to accomplish. Tuition and fees are well-documented and the Student Code of Conduct lays out the expectations for behavior and performance.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The supplementary education organization accepts students who can reasonably be expected to succeed in its programs.	The Team observed serious attention to this indicator. During interviews, YingHua indicated that the school had seldom accepted students that were “questionable” in their ability or commitment to profit from the program. The school notes, however, that if a student was not thriving in the program, s/he was supported in a variety of ways or asked to leave.

## DESCRIPTION:

YingHua prides itself on its “open door” policy and the quality of the relationships among all those associated with the school. A notable aspect is the availability of staff, outside of school hours, via email. During the Evaluation Team visit, respectful and cooperative relationships were clearly observed. Everyone seems to be committed to ensuring a top quality Chinese language experience, yet, roles and responsibilities are respected and honored.

A very important aspect of the school is the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Each class has a representative on PAC and PAC is involved in a variety of supportive activities such as commencement activities. PAC is also a part of the school’s expressed Complaints process. Some complaints are given directly to the administration, while others may go anonymously through the PAC representatives. Parents and teachers may report complaints or grievances to PAC and the PAC representative will then bring these to the attention of the school for resolution. In addition, the Evaluation Team heard about the PAC’s efforts to organize regular rock-climbing parties, which are much-loved by the students.

*Guidance and Counseling:* YingHua’s philosophy states that it is committed to “teaching to suit a student’s ability” and “guiding to realize his/her potential.” The self-study notes that guidance and counseling services, while limited, are clearly focused on helping students to see the value and benefits of Chinese language learning. Support is given in a number of ways such as:

- providing parents and students with access to the Principal and staff outside of school hours. The Principal regularly meets with parents during school hours as well as making house calls and onsite home visits.
- conducting regular parent surveys to assess parent opinions on a wide range of topics, including the desire for guidance and counseling services. (It is notable that 98 of 140 parents welcomed such services. Of these, 69 parents preferred the Principal to talk to students at school, 19 parents preferred the Principal to make house calls, and 6 parents wanted a home visit. The remainder wanted all forms of guidance services to be made available to them.)
- offering a highly-developed website that is “chock full” of pertinent information and support for parents and students. The website includes the YingHua Forum that provides advice on study skills, social skills, and self-improvement skills. The Teaching Guide Page and Student Motivation Page provide guidance-related material online for teachers, students, and parents.
- administering and interpreting aptitude tests for parents and students.
- having a Parents and Children Education Club.
- providing occasional conferences on Chinese-American parenting practices
- making available the services of a member of the Board of Advisors who is an expert on child development and parenting support.
- supporting teachers’ efforts in the classroom to develop strategies to enhance student learning and to encourage students to make the best use of their capabilities. This support is provided by the Principal and the Pedagogy Consultant.

The self-study notes that the Principal “has been systematically targeting the students who appear to be struggling academically.”

*Admissions and Placement:* YingHua’s admissions processes indicate that children ages 5 and up may apply and nearly all students who want to register are admitted. New transfer students are assessed in terms of their Chinese language level, which might include a test. In some cases, the test consists of the end of school year examination for the level immediately lower than the requested entry level.

Currently, lower skill level classes are full, while upper level classes have some room. When there is a limitation in class vacancy, a child's name may have to be put on a waiting list. Any vacancy that becomes available is to be released to waiting list applicants on a first-come-first-served basis. It is notable that YingHua “lives” its commitment to admit “any race, gender, religion, nationality, or ethnic origin” by offering a two-tiered approach to Chinese language instruction with its Chinese Heritage Learning and Chinese as a Second Language programs. Evaluation Team members interviewed parents and students in both programs and were told of their pleasure with YingHua’s approach to admission of all types of students.

The school posts all admissions information online, including registration criteria, registration forms, and online registration procedures. Once again, the YingHua website plays a key role in allowing technology to be used effectively for admissions activities. Registration receipts are printed online after payments are received. Parents interviewed by the Team were very satisfied with this fast and easy process.

Regarding placement, students are initially placed depending on whether the student is coming from a Chinese-speaking family or a non-Chinese speaking family. Skill level placement decisions are made based on knowledge gained through the registration process and home visits. Skill levels are organized loosely around age equivalents. Students from non-Chinese-speaking families may apply for transfer to the CHL Track, if they appear willing to take on more rigorous work. Currently, two students from non-Chinese-speaking families are studying in the CHL Track.

The Evaluation Team was pleased to learn that YingHua will be adding a “31<sup>st</sup>” class session in the 2005-2006 academic year to enable the addition of a more sophisticated orientation program for parents and students (as well as an emergency drill process). As a part of that session, students will review their summer homework with teachers and new students and their parents will be introduced to classmates, the school facilities, and the YingHua policies and expectations. A fire drill will also be conducted.

Most YingHua recruitment is accomplished through word-of-mouth, newsletters, and newspaper ads in Chinese language newspapers. Flyers are sent to local comprehensive schools during the registration period. Some non-Chinese-language families are given information through Families with Children from China newsletters. Prospective parents are invited to visit the school during the last three weeks of the school year.

*Record-Keeping:* During the Team evaluation, it was determined that maintenance and security of student records is a key strength of the school. A well-developed database that contains contact information, admissions, academic, attendance, and other student information is in place and is well-used by staff and parents.

An efficient and effective Webmaster has worked under the leadership of the Principal to save all information and records online. These records are stored on a password-protected server. Each teacher has a password and is able to access individual student records, rosters of classes, and student performance data. It is notable that at the teacher luncheon and interview session with the Team, when the Webmaster's efforts were recognized, the whole group cheered!

*Meeting Student Learning Needs:* In cases where students either under-perform or over-perform, the Principal, the Pedagogy Consultant, and the classroom teacher investigate the causes. A program is being piloted (currently with four students) to match younger students with senior students who can help with tutoring. So far, this has been popular with both age levels of students.

## **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- having this section of the self-study chaired by the President of the Parent Advisory Council who is also a parent. This shows YingHua's clear commitment to promoting an effective parent-school partnership.
- the purposeful and dedicated staff who work hard to ensure that good relationships exist among administration and teaching staff, administration and parents, and teaching staff and students. The staff is praised for its willingness to be available to students, outside of school hours, via email. This helps to ensure that YingHua is seen as a "school" and not just a "two-hour session on Sunday afternoons."
- its efforts to consider the "whole child." While the school is unique in its educational focus on the reading, writing, speaking, and understanding of the Chinese language, the Team observed great attention to students' social and personal development as well.
- the effective and regular parent survey processes.
- the quality of its student record-keeping system. The school makes very effective and efficient use of technology and offers easy access to appropriate stakeholders. The Webmaster is to be praised for her diligent work in this area.
- the personalized attention to each and every student that is provided by the teaching staff and especially, the Principal of the school.
- the effective and efficient use of the YingHua website for dissemination of information about admissions and registration process as well as for the online registration and payment confirmation processes.
- the efforts of the Parent Advisory Council to organize events such as rock-climbing parties. PAC is a valuable asset through its support in organizing commencement activities and oral assessments in the classroom.

## **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- follow through on its planned Orientation Program to be held for the first time during the first of the 31 sessions in the 2005-2006 academic year. The Team believes this session will be quite strategic, committing the parents and students to be well-prepared for the expectations of the school as well as providing school staff with important information on the needs and talents of the parents and students enrolled.
- consider more effective ways to recruit students for the Chinese as a Second Language program. The Team felt it was important to recruit for the CSL program in non-Chinese language newsletters/papers, for example.
- gather more health related data on students, especially at the time of admission. (See Resources section for more detail.)
- give consideration to more formalized relationships with the comprehensive institutions that students are attending. Doing this may be an effective marketing tool for other potential CHL and CSL students and might also be important once the Advanced Placement Chinese Exam becomes available.
- provide staff development for all teachers in the area of differentiated instruction methods. This will enable teachers to address differing learning styles and skills of the students.
- begin efforts to formalize a selective admissions policies and procedures. Once the school meets its maximum capacity, it will need a way to assess which students should be admitted because they will profit most from YingHua's academic focus.

## THE STANDARD

### The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools Accreditation Standard on Resources

**The Standard:** *The supplementary education organization’s facilities consisting of the site, building(s), and equipment, provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment that supports optimal student achievement and a productive work environment for the staff, and that are appropriate to implement the stated philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the supplementary education organization.*

*Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the supplementary education organization’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. The business practices of the supplementary education organization promote confidence in the organization’s ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and to follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of funds are dedicated to the SEO’s operations.*

**The Standard on Resources is met.**

## THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	All grounds, buildings, furnishings, and equipment are sufficiently maintained to meet the supplementary education organization’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives, including achievement of desired student learning outcomes.	The Team observed well-maintained classrooms with appropriate spaces for student learning. Classroom sizes are large and well-lit. Desks and small group areas are available for all students. During the hours of the YingHua classes, qualified custodial staff, hired and insured by Lawrence Township School District, is on duty.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The premises are maintained in a safe and healthy condition and meet local, state and national fire safety standards, including fire extinguishers, a satisfactory fire alarm system, and other safety devices.	Because the Lawrence Township School District is an MSA-accredited school district, the meeting of the Facilities and Health and Safety standards has already been verified and is well-documented. The district adheres to all local, state, and national fire safety standards, and employs all appropriate safety devices. These practices directly benefit YingHua.

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The governance and the administration exercise prudent control over all financial operations, following accepted accounting principles and annual independent audit practices.	<p>The YHLS administration and Board of Trustees appear to work well together, with support from the Advisor for Finance and Accounting. All involved with the financial system are well-qualified for their duties. The Board of Trustees reviews and approves each year's operating budget and authorizes major expenditures and contracts.</p> <p>At the present time, no annual audit is conducted, but there is sufficient review in place, although the Team does recommend that an audit be instituted. Fiscal operations need to be reviewed regularly. Cash management practices are somewhat loose and informal. While the Board has not felt the size of the school's budget warrants an audit, an auditor could teach the school a great deal about managing the fiscal operations of a non-profit organization.</p>
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Periodic audits are conducted by a qualified external agency.	While an annual independent <u>audit</u> is not conducted (due to the small size of the budget), checks and balances are sufficient at the present time and budget processes are transparent. The self-study notes plans to have financials reviewed by an independent CPA, every other year, starting next year.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The instructional program and supporting services are developed in accordance with suitable short-term and long-range financial plans.	The self-study states that "each year, the budget is prepared and reviewed based on need." The fiscal year begins on July 1, just as the school is accepting new admissions for the coming year.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Financial resources to attain the organization's philosophy, mission, and/or objectives are available and utilized appropriately.	YingHua is debt free, with a positive cash flow.

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Levels of income and expenditure are in appropriate balance. Finances are currently stable, and projections indicate continuing stability.	All evidence, including past and current budgets show that expenses and income are in appropriate balance. Finances are currently stable and are expected to remain so for the foreseeable future.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Students enrolling in the supplementary education organization are informed in advance of the financial obligations for attendance.	All admissions materials explain financial obligations and parents are informed at the time of registration or when they make an inquiry. In addition, the YingHua website includes key financial information. Finally, the Principal provides a “personal touch” through phone calls and at-home visits.
1 <u>2</u> 3 4 NA	ADDED INDICATOR BY YINGHUA: Fund raising activities to supplement tuition income.	YHLS added this indicator and noted that fund-raising is important to the school, but is an area that needs development. The Team concurs and believes that such efforts will allow YingHua to keep tuition low, while continuing its programmatic and technology developments.

**DESCRIPTION:**

*Facilities:* YingHua Language School currently has a lease agreement with the Lawrence Township School District (LTSD). This agreement is renewable annually and is for partial use of the Lawrence Middle School (LMS) facilities. The district has provided a designated contact with LMS to stay abreast of any problems or potential problems that may arise throughout the school year. In appreciation for this arrangement, YingHua has given student-drawn “Thank You” boards to the school district and the LMS staff.

After student registration is concluded in August, YHLS determines the number of classrooms needed and lets LTSD know of its needs. The self-study states that “this leasing arrangement allows YingHua the fullest flexibility in space planning” and notes that the district’s “support and cooperation have simplified facility planning.” The arrangement allows YingHua to “maintain financial flexibility by providing a scalable facility tailored to the exact needs of the organization.”

*Health and Safety:* YingHua has general, written medical emergency and emergency evaluation procedures. These procedures are specific to medical, fire, weather, and civil disturbances. However, the Evaluation Team expressed serious concerns about the lack of systematic fire

drill/emergency drills. This is considered essential for both students and teachers to be prepared for eventualities associated with an emergency. The Principal and Assistant Principal have received CPR training, the Assistant Principal has the Red Cross certificate for First Aid Basics, and both administrators are on duty during school hours to handle emergencies. In addition, YHLS has an Advisor for Children's Health on its Board of Advisors and a professional pediatrician is on call during school hours, although the school has never had to use this system.

For the most part, the Team members observed well-behaved, orderly students during the team visit. The Team did observe, however, a number of students running in the halls during the recess and noted that the quality of classroom management varies widely from teacher to teacher. Parents are required to sign a form, annually, that states students will uphold the code of conduct and the first class session of each school year includes an explanation of conduct, performance, and classroom behavior. The code of conduct is also posted on the YingHua website. Disciplinary actions are identified, up to and including expulsion, for inappropriate behavior. It is notable that the code of conduct was developed by examining what local public schools expect as well as attending to values important to the heritage of the Chinese culture.

YingHua has clear pick-up and drop-off policies in place. The school is wise to have students picked up at the door of each classroom at the end of the class session.

*Finances:* The YingHua annual budget is just under \$90,000, with 75% coming from tuition, 13% coming from fees, and 11% from fund-raising and special activities. Regular tuition for the 2004-2005 school year was \$360 with a special early-bird rate of \$300. These tuition rates make the school quite affordable for nearly all students. It is notable that YingHua charges about \$50 more annually than other local Chinese schools in the area. Tuition rates are published on the YingHua website.

The Principal oversees financial management functions, with assistance from the Assistant Principal, under the guidance and supervision of the Board of Trustees. The budget planning and approval process is outlined in YingHua's Financial Regulation document, which is available on the website. It is also notable that the President of the Parent Advisory Council attends the regular Board meetings and participates in discussion during the Board's budget approval process.

Regular financial reports are provided to the Board members and parents via the website. The Advisor for Finance and Accounting (who is not a member of the Board of Trustees) reviews the financial records annually. All are well-qualified for these roles with the Principal holding a Masters in Business Administration in Finance and Computer and the Advisor holding a PhD in Economics and experience as a Treasurer in another nonprofit association.

The self-study states that the "Board of Trustees are bonded by law." Appropriate insurance coverages are in place to meet the expectation of the hosting school district, either through YingHua or the Lawrence Township School District. However, the Evaluation Team expressed concern about the lack of Directors' and Officers' (Errors and Omissions) insurance (see the Standard on Governance, Leadership, and Planning).

## **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- the excellent relationship it fosters with the Lawrence Township School District. Both organizations benefit from the positive services and flexibility offered by the district to YingHua and by the quality programs provided by YingHua to the larger educational community.
- the existence of a well-articulated student code of conduct that is reflective of commonly held local norms as well as those important to the Chinese culture. Expectations are clearly communicated to staff, students, and parents.
- its concern and vigilance for the safe pickup of its students. The practice of having parents pick up their children at the doorway of each classroom is a wise one.
- the transparency and appropriate checks and balances in its financial systems. All pertinent documents are available on the YingHua website, for all to review.
- its recognition of the important role that fund-raising can play in programmatic and technology improvements to the school. The school has successfully used fund-raising in the past and plans to continue its efforts in this area.
- the YingHua in Beijing Summer Program, which provides both financial support and programmatic emphasis. Many parents and students commented on this excellent program.

## **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- continue to pursue the possibility of a longer-term leasing arrangement, possibly with the Lawrence Township School District. Such an arrangement would allow YingHua to concentrate more fully on programmatic changes it wishes to make, rather than annual lease negotiations, and to assure parents that YHLS plans to stay in a known location.
- gather some health-related information on annual admissions materials. At a minimum, it seems important for YHLS staff to be aware of any student health issues, food/bee-sting/drug allergies, and so on. It might also be prudent to seek legal advice regarding the need for written permission from parents to seek medical assistance in case of major medical emergencies and when a parent/guardian can not be immediately reached.
- follow through on its plans to conduct an emergency drill on orientation day, beginning in Fall 2005, and add at least one additional emergency drill later in the year. A single drill is considered to be insufficient to ensure that all involved know what to do. While one hopes that such precautions will never be needed, it is important that students are prepared for such emergencies and that teachers can account for the presence of all students in such emergency situations.
- pursue, with vigor, the exciting new ventures identified in its self-study (especially on pages 10-17 and 10-18). Ideas such as seeking grants from the government, state, and other financial sources by partnering with the Lawrence Township School District and offering the AP Exam in Chinese Language and Culture in May 2007 could be a “win-win” for both organizations. With Rider University so close by, the opportunities to work with a local university are also abundant.

## **CURRICULUM/PROGRAM AREAS**

As an educational institution, a supplementary education organization needs to give considerable attention to the quality and comprehensiveness of its curriculum as well as the effectiveness of instructional pedagogy and assessment techniques used to ensure student success. YingHua Language School examined the Chinese Language learning area through an in-depth examination of the curriculum content, instructional methodology, and assessment practices within individual curriculum areas. The Chinese Language Program was evaluated to ensure that the existing educational program is consistent with and supportive of YingHua’s statement of philosophy, mission, beliefs and objectives.

The Evaluation Team has responded to the Chinese Language program area with a description of what was observed while onsite and through document review, followed by commendations and recommendations. As with suggestions for the areas noted previously in the accreditation standards, these comments are made in the spirit of validating the findings of the YingHua’s self study with the added benefit of an external perspective.

As with recommendations found in the section on standards, the comments included here are not meant to be construed as criticisms of individuals within YingHua. All recommendations are to be viewed as suggestions from “critical friends,” designed to help YingHua in its improvement processes.

## **THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY FOR CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT**

*For each indicator below, the evaluation team used the following assessment scale:*

### *Team Assessment of the Indicators of Quality*

<i>1</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Needs improvement</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Adequate compliance</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>High compliance</i>
<i>NA</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>

## Chinese Language Program

### CURRICULUM INDICATORS OF QUALITY

<b>Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator</b>	<b>MSCSS Indicator of Quality</b>	<b>Team Comments and Evidence Provided</b>
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The development of the <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum is based on a thorough assessment of the basic concepts, skills, and knowledge required of all students to fulfill the stated goals of the program.	YingHua Language School has developed two separate programs with different curricula and educational objectives based on the needs of students with various linguistic backgrounds. The school has worked hard to determine which skills both CHL and CSL students need and to identify appropriate materials to support those objectives. This has been especially challenging in the CSL area.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum has established priorities, objectives, and goals for all courses and units within the program that are based on clearly defined expectations for all students. The curriculum is designed to ensure the alignment of teaching strategies, learning activities, instructional support, instructional resources, and assessment.	Based on the understanding of the student needs, YingHua has adopted two different curricula for its CHL program and CSL programs. For CHL, the primary goal is to acquire literacy. For CSL, the primary goal is to achieve oral proficiency. The separate curricula with clearly defined teaching goals ensure the consistency of teaching strategies, learning activities, instructional support, instructional resources, and assessment.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The learning expectations of the <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum address the diverse learning needs of the students without compromising the essential knowledge and skills students are expected to learn.	As the self-study report points out, the two separate programs and the two-tier structure for the CSL track are the result of an in-depth understanding of the needs of the students and the expectations of the educational community. Each program has its own focus and priority. Because the CHL students are expected to speak Chinese and improve their oral communicative skills at home, it is not the focus of the class. However, it is not clear that oral proficiency is acquired in the DHL program, and the Evaluation Team suggests that attention to oral proficiency in the CHL classes be examined. In

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
		<p>addition, the Evaluation Team encourages a more “differentiated” approach to the CSL program in terms of teaching pedagogy, types of teachers hired, and overall supervision of the program.</p>
<p>1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA</p>	<p>The skills and knowledge of the <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum are well-articulated and coordinated between all teachers at each grade level/curriculum area and by teachers across grade levels/curriculum areas.</p>	<p>A well-defined curriculum for each program, course contents, and assessment results are available online to all the classroom instructors. Teachers have full access to a sophisticated web-based student information system.</p> <p>The school notes that it relies upon the textbooks used to promote continuity and coherency. By choosing a single set of textbooks, gaps, omissions, and unnecessary repetitions have been minimized. The textbooks contain reviews of previously learned materials.</p>
<p>1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA</p>	<p>All staff members work cooperatively to provide a meaningful, and logical progression of learning activities in the <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum.</p>	<p>According to the self-study report, YingHua relies on continuity and coherency in the textbooks and the communication among the staff members. Staff members work cooperatively through discussions, e-mails, web postings, phone calls and meetings to ensure a meaningful and logical progression of learning.</p>
<p>1 2 3 4 <u>NA</u></p>	<p>Students demonstrate an understanding of problem solving and decision making skills in the <u>Chinese Language</u> program.</p>	<p>The Evaluation Team has insufficient information to make an accurate assessment in this area.</p>
<p>1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA</p>	<p>The <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum is designed to foster active involvement of students in the learning process.</p>	<p>The current curricula allocates 30% of class time to the teacher-directed instruction, 10% to cooperative learning and group activities, and 50% to guided practice in which students are actively involved. Students are also expected to finish at least 30 minutes of homework daily, including CD-ROM-based work and audio CD listening and recording exercises.</p>

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	The <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum, objectives, and expectations for learning are understood and supported by the educational community stakeholders.	The curricula and objectives are clearly defined and posted on the school website. According to the self-study report, the school judges curriculum success on “feedback from the staff, students, and parents.” Responses from them have been “overwhelmingly positive.” In interviews, the Evaluation Team found parents and students to have a good understanding of the YingHua program and expectations.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Written course guides are utilized as the basis for all instructional activities in the <u>Chinese Language</u> program.	Specific, down-to-the-minute instructional guides are available for teachers in both programs.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	<u>Chinese Language</u> learning materials are current and are selected to fulfill the goals and objectives of the program.	YingHua has chosen a set of textbooks accompanied by homework assignments, CD-ROM, audio CD, and flashcards that are consistent with the program goals and objectives of helping CHL students to develop literacy. However, finding proper learning materials for the CSL program has proven to be challenging due to lack of material for this level in the field. Currently, the school has chosen and developed some materials for the CSL Tier 2 class and they are still developing materials for the CSL Tier 1 class.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Current best practices in <u>Chinese Language</u> , including the utilization of technology and other media, are considered in the selection of educational materials.	YingHua has chosen and developed materials supplemented by CD-ROM and audio CD. Some classes also assign homework that requires students to use a word processor and the Internet. However, due to the limitation of the resources, the instructors primarily rely on “low-tech, visual aids” such as flashcards and charts. Also, due to lack of materials, they have encountered some difficulties in establishing an ongoing CSL program, supported by consistent materials.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Decisions made in the <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum are based on data	YingHua judges curriculum success on “feedback from the staff, students, and parents.” The school has made an effort

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	about student performance, knowledge about organizational development, and research about best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.	to locate instructional materials that are based on the best understanding and practice in the field. The school makes very effective use of student performance data and it is significant that when the YingHua website is opened, student performance data is the first thing that the viewer sees.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Curriculum programs and instructional activities in <u>Chinese Language</u> are consistent with the supplementary education organization's philosophy/mission/beliefs/objectives.	YingHua's decision to have two separate programs for CHL and CSL students using different curricula, learning materials, and instructional strategies is consistent with its educational philosophy and educational objectives.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Administrative leadership and support is provided in the coordination and articulation of the <u>Chinese Language</u> program.	According to the self-study report, the Principal and the Pedagogy Consultant play a predominant role in all matters related to educational matters and materials. The Principal regularly talks to teachers and students, and visits students' homes to ensure sufficient communication among stakeholders. The administrators are fully involved in coordination and articulation of the educational program. The Evaluation Team observed strong efforts in this area.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	There is an ongoing process in place to evaluate the <u>Chinese Language</u> curriculum. The curriculum review process includes safeguards to ensure that the written curriculum is actually taught. The review process focuses on what is to be deleted from the curriculum as well as what is to be added.	According to the self-study report, YingHua's CSL Tier 1 curriculum is reviewed annually and was last reviewed in Summer 2004. The CHL and CSL Tier 2 curricula are reviewed once every three years. Due to the short history of the school, there has not yet been a formal review of these curricula. The school has an Academic Advisor and a Pedagogy Consultant who visit classes and sometimes videotape them for discussion and evaluation purposes.

## INSTRUCTION INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	A variety of teaching strategies and techniques is utilized to meet the needs of individual students in <u>Chinese Language</u> .	According to the self-study report and activities observed during the short duration of the Evaluation Team visit, various in-class activities are designed to meet the needs of individual students, such as group and pair work, short games, retelling stories, and teacher-guided practice.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The scope and pacing of lessons in <u>Chinese Language</u> are appropriate to the students.	Based on the Team’s observation, CHL classes generally have appropriate learning pace and learning materials. However, it is not clear from the observation if the learning pace and materials are appropriate for the two CSL classes.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Provision is made for appropriate amounts of learning time for all aspects of the <u>Chinese Language</u> program.	For the CHL program, the primary focus in class is to develop literacy. Therefore, most class activities observed were literacy-based activities. For both CSL classes, character recognition and question/answer activities were observed. The primary instructional language is English in the CSL classes. According to the self-study report, 30% class time is devoted to teacher-directed instruction (lecture), 10% to cooperative learning, 10% to independent reading and study, and 50% to guided practice. This is generally what the Team observed.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Students are provided with additional assistance to address specific learning challenges in the <u>Chinese Language</u> program when needed.	The school provides additional assistance as is appropriate for this type of “weekend school.” If needed, private tutoring is available.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Students and teachers demonstrate mutual respect toward each other in <u>Chinese Language</u> classes.	Based on the Team’s observation, students and teachers demonstrate sufficient respect toward each other in the classes.

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Class sizes in <u>Chinese Language</u> promote and allow for varied instructional strategies to be utilized.	The cap of class size for all classes is 30. During the visit, no class reached the cap. However, it is not clear if classes for younger students (e.g. 5 years old) and CSL students would have enough opportunities to adopt varied instructional strategies to promote learning if the class size reached 30.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Meaningful and frequent communications with parents/guardians/adult students are utilized to promote student learning in <u>Chinese Language</u> .	YingHua uses e-mail system, informal conversation, home visits and parent survey to communicate quite effectively with parents and guardians.
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	The faculty is qualified, competent, and dedicated to the objectives of the <u>Chinese Language</u> program.	All instructors must have minimally a Bachelor's degree at YingHua. YingHua provides training opportunities for its instructors. The quality of teaching has been much improved. According to the interviews with parents, students and the administrators, YingHua has dedicated faculty who care about teaching and learning. The Evaluation Team suggests, however, that potential CSL teachers might need to have a different skill set than those that are teaching CHL classes (such as skills that the public schools look for in an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	<u>Chinese Language</u> teachers maintain safe, positive, and supportive classroom environments.	Based on Team observation and interviews with students and parents, teachers at YingHua maintain safe, positive and supportive classroom environments.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Teaching staff is provided with continuing professional growth activities that support the effective fulfillment of <u>Chinese Language</u> program objectives. Support for	YingHua has an Academic Advisor who videotapes the classes and help teachers to analyze their teaching. It also has a Pedagogy Consultant who observes every teacher's class at least once during a school year for discussion and evaluation

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
	effective use of research-based instructional practices is provided to teachers.	purpose. Occasional workshops are provided for teachers. As noted elsewhere, teachers could profit from staff development opportunities in more general educational areas.

### ASSESSMENT INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Team Assessment of Compliance with the Indicator	MSCSS Indicator of Quality	Team Comments and Evidence Provided
1 2 <u>3</u> 4 NA	Timely and useful evaluative information and feedback using a variety of methods for assessing learning is provided to students by <u>Chinese Language</u> teachers.	All classes at YingHua have regular homework and in-class quizzes. The once-a-term exam normally consists of textbook reading, character recognition, and a written part of the exam. Audiotapes are used for evaluating oral proficiency. All the assessment results are posted on the web and students have password-protected access. It is not clear if oral communicative skills are part of the assessment for the CHL classes. For the CSL classes, exams are not standard and largely rely on individual teachers' understanding of the program.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Assessment data on student learning is used to determine the need to intervene on behalf of student learning as well as to measure the presence or absence of achievement in the <u>Chinese Language</u> program.	Assessment data on individual students and on each class as a whole is available on the YingHua website for the instructors and administrators. Data is used to determine the need to intervene and to measure the educational results.
1 2 3 <u>4</u> NA	Student placement in the <u>Chinese Language</u> program is based on a thorough analysis of student abilities and interest as well as staff expectations.	Students are placed in different programs and classes according to their background and ability. Transfer students often need to take a placement test to determine which level is the most appropriate.

## DESCRIPTION:

Based on the students' needs and the community expectation, YingHua has developed two separate programs to accommodate students from various linguistic backgrounds. Each of these two tracks progresses from elementary to advanced levels. The current structure provides "multiple entry points" for students. Both programs have clearly articulated learning objectives and strong administrative and academic leadership to support the coordination and articulation of the programs. The school is supported by knowledgeable advisors to guide the development of the programs and dedicated teachers to help the students.

The self-study provided the following chart to show the levels and materials used in the Chinese Language Program, along with number of minutes per week and number of weeks of instruction.

Skill Level (s)	Course Title <sup>1</sup>	Minutes per Week	Number of Weeks	Basic Instructional Materials
A00	CHL	100	30	Kindergarten <sup>2</sup>
A01	CHL	100	30	Books 1-3 <sup>2</sup>
A04	CHL	100	30	Books 4-6 <sup>2</sup>
A07	CHL	100	30	Books 7-9 <sup>2</sup>
A09	CHL	100	30	Books 9-11 <sup>2</sup>
A10	CHL	100	30	Books 10-12 <sup>2</sup>
A11	CHL	100	30	Books 11-14 <sup>2</sup>
A13	CHL	100	30	Books 13-16 <sup>2</sup>
A15	CHL	100	30	Books 15-16 <sup>2</sup> , Ancient Philosophers <sup>3</sup>
C02	CSL	100	30	"Chinese Made Fun" Book 1
C06	CSL	100	30	"Chinese Made Easy" Book 2

<sup>1</sup> CHL – Chinese as a Heritage Language

CSL – Chinese as a Second Language

<sup>2</sup> "Chinese for Overseas Chinese Children" series by Dr. Liping Ma (California)

<sup>3</sup> "Chinese Ancient Philosophers" by Ms. Shuangshuang Wang (California)

As a young school, YingHua has made serious and continuous efforts to improve its programs and to strive for better classroom practice based on sound theories. It has provided teachers with academic support and development opportunities. It has developed a comprehensive Academic Index system to assess the students' learning results and a Performance Index system to evaluate behavior-based performance.

*Chinese as a Heritage Language Program:* The textbook series used in YingHua's CHL track was written by Dr. Liping Ma, the Principal of the Stanford Chinese Language School and Senior Scientist at the Carnegie Foundation. Dr. Ma also serves on the Board of Advisors of YHLS. The self-study notes that "this series has received very positive reviews and has proven to be very effective for CHL students in the Stanford Chinese Language School and an increasingly greater number of similar schools on the east coast."

Expected learning outcomes for each course at each skill level are well-defined. For example, the objectives for A15 (the final year of Chinese as a Heritage Language) are: to be able to discuss topics of general interest, as well as of selected focus, to demonstrate a command of about 1500 Chinese characters, to be able to respond appropriately to different styles and registers, to be able to comprehend everyday written passages for the educated public, and to be able to compose short to medium length essays.

The self-study notes that “CHL-track students or ‘heritage learners’ vary from newly-arrived immigrants to the United States; first-generation students, whose home language is not English, but who have been schooled primarily in the United States; or second- or third- generation students, who have learned some aspects of the heritage language at home. These students come to YingHua with varying abilities and proficiencies in their heritage language. They often can carry on fluent and idiomatic conversations (interpersonal and interpretive modes in spoken communication, i.e., orality), but need to strengthen their ability to read and write Chinese (interpretive and interpretive modes in written communication, i.e., literacy) and to speak and write the language in a formal manner (presentational mode).” Therefore, YingHua makes speaking Chinese at home part of the curriculum requirement and emphasizes literacy instruction in its CHL classes.”

*Chinese as a Second Language Program:* The CSL Track of YHLS has two tiers for non-Chinese speaking students: Tier 1 includes ages 5-9 and Tier 2 is for ages 10 and up. Expected learning outcomes for each skill level are well-defined. For example, the objectives for C01 (first year Chinese as a Second Language) are: to get used to rhythms in Chinese, to be able to identify 20 Chinese characters, to be familiar with 5 Chinese sentence patterns, and to be able to aurally comprehend and orally produce 50 short expressions in Chinese.

Although the CHL materials are proven to be up-to-date and effective, the school has found finding appropriate CSL materials challenging. Teaching Mandarin Chinese to young students from non-Chinese-speaking families, in a weekend school setting, is a ground breaking field. After changing curriculum and textbooks a number of times within the past three years, in a search to find materials that meet the YHLS objectives and match its teaching philosophy, the school is facilitating publication of a full set of materials which hopefully will be sufficient and appropriate for the target students. The problem of good materials has been especially acute for the younger CSL students. As of the time of the Team visit, both the Principal and the Pedagogy Consultant were working with an author and another colleague from a different Chinese school, to facilitate the publication of a full set of teaching materials inclusive of CD-ROM-based homework, flashcards, homework books, teacher's guide, teacher's flashcards, teacher's classroom audio CD, and charts.

The school’s objectives for the CSL Track Tier 1 include focusing on oral presentation (listening and speaking), exposing students to reading and writing, and maintaining a learning process that is as engaging as possible. Despite the challenges the school has faced in terms of instructional materials, these objectives appear to be well-addressed and the school has “made a positive difference.”

The self-study explains that “students who come to YingHua with exceptional needs are advised to take advantage of available private tutorials which take place after regular school hours..... Those with unusual talents are challenged to work on additional/different learning materials and encouraged to take on extra responsibilities, such as mentoring other students.” In addition, YingHua has successfully promoted students with unusual talents to the next level, or transferred students from the CSL Track to the appropriate CHL level. Conversely, the school has made recommendations for struggling CHL students to be placed in the CSL track.

### **MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH:**

The YingHua Language School is commended for:

- its two separate programs with different curricula, learning objectives and teaching strategies, which provide students of diverse backgrounds, both heritage Chinese and non-heritage Chinese, the opportunity to learn Chinese language.
- its clearly articulated objectives in both programs, that provide a clear direction and a strong sense of purpose and accomplishment.
- a full set of respected textbooks and supporting learning materials for the CHL program that help to establish coherency and consistency of the program.
- its highly devoted administrators and teachers who provide sound oversight to the program and facilitate excellent communication among stakeholders.
- the effective use of Advisors, including the author of the CHL series, to provide guidance on the Chinese language curriculum.

### **SUGGESTED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

The Evaluation Team recommends that YingHua:

- continue its development efforts of the CSL program. In the self-study report, YingHua recognizes that the CSL program deserves more funding and human resources in order to fully develop the program. Due to the fundamental differences between CHL and CSL programs, the CSL program might need not only different materials and teaching strategies, but also teachers with different training backgrounds than teachers of CHL program.
- pursue its desire to set up a formal curriculum committee to deal with curriculum-related matters. In the self-study report, YingHua recognizes that the current system relies too heavily on the Principal and the Pedagogy Consultant to make all the curriculum-related decisions. A formal curriculum committee which involves both teachers and parents might be more inclusive.
- further develop its teacher training and evaluation processes to differentiate the needs of the CHL and CSL programs. While the existing teacher training and evaluation program meets some general teacher needs, YingHua needs to a more comprehensive process to provide teachers with training opportunities not only in the Chinese language area, but also in the general educational areas such as classroom management, differentiated instructional techniques, teaching Chinese as a Second Language techniques and so on.

## IMPROVEMENT PLANS

As part of the *Enhancing Student Performance (ESP)* protocol, YingHua Language School is required every five years to develop one to three measurable objectives, at least one of which must be in a student performance area. A limited number of objectives is suggested so that YHLS can focus on its highest priorities without diverting its resources and energies in too many directions. These objectives should have school-wide impact.

Supplementary education organizations may develop objectives that are tied to improved student performance in a particular subject area such as mathematics or reading, or a personal growth area such as student engagement in the learning process. Specifying clear and measurable objectives identifies the SEO's commitment to achieve specific end results and thus, is tied directly to accountability. The objectives represent the major focus for improvement in the SEO. They should be consistent with the mission/philosophy statement and should extend and define the *aim* portion of the mission/philosophy in more specific detail. Objectives explicate in measurable terms the key end results that the SEO seeks to realize from its mission/philosophy.

In addition, the SEO is asked to develop comprehensive action plans that clearly chart the path to success for those objectives. While the Commission on Secondary Schools expects that the YingHua will show continuous progress in its achievement of these objectives, and therefore, expects that they will remain constant over the course of the next five years, the nature of planning and growth not only permits, but demands that review and update of action plans happens periodically. For that reason, the objectives are included in this report for future reference, while the action plans are available as part of YingHua's self-study and will undoubtedly be revised occasionally during the course of the next five years.

### Objectives

YingHua chose two objectives to guide future improvement efforts. The Improvement Plans Subcommittee reviewed the self-study findings and the criteria for improvement objectives and selected objectives based on the criterion that requires at least one of the objectives to be related to improving student performance. In addition, the self-study noted that "this criterion resonates well with YingHua's core value emphasis on quality education and student achievement."

It is notable that the Improvement Plans Subcommittee included representation from the Board of Trustees, the administration, and the Board of Advisors. YingHua also wisely included the Advisor for Academic Development in this effort.

The full-text, with assessments and baseline information, are provided in the Appendix of this report. A summary of the two objectives selected is below.

## **Objective #1:**

*Beginning in the fall of 2005, YingHua students demonstrate Chinese language and culture proficiency as measured by The Exam Preparatory program and The Cultural Immersion Programs.*

## **Objective #2:**

*Beginning in the fall of 2005, YingHua's improvement also includes Teacher training programs, Teaching Material Publication Programs and Recognition Funding Programs.*

The Evaluation Team commends YingHua on the selection of its two objectives that focus on student performance and staff development. Not only do these objectives fulfill the requirements of the *Enhancing Student Performance* protocol, but they are consistent with YingHua's mission to focus attention on academic development of its students. The Team believes that parents and students would expect the objectives to have been developed in these areas, given what they value and desire from the school.

The Team believes that these two areas are most appropriate priorities for the school. A wide range of assessment measures have been identified and will enable the school to assess progress over the coming years.

The major suggestion that the Evaluation Team makes is to establish the baseline data for each of the assessment measures listed. While the Team is aware that most of the baseline data is currently available, it is found in a variety of places. It would serve the school well to list the baseline data and date collected with each of the objectives.

## **Action Plans**

Action plans describe the methods that YingHua will use to accomplish the mission/philosophy and objectives. They provide detailed descriptions of the specific actions required to achieve desired results outlined in the student performance and organizational improvement objectives. This is the "doing" part of the plan. Action plans can and should include a multitude of activities that will engage the YingHua Language School in improvement activities for the next five years. Action plans should be specific and tell in detail how YingHua will accomplish the objectives. Action plans should relate directly to the objectives, but they also should be related to the mission/philosophy.

The following elements must be included in each action plan:

- A description of the activity.
- The name/title/role of the person(s) or group(s) that will be responsible for this activity.
- The timeline during which the activity will be accomplished. The timeline for implementing the activities of the action plan should be very well defined for the first two years of the plan.

Less specificity is expected for years three through five, as it is anticipated that activities and timelines might be changed during the annual review process.

- The resources needed to accomplish the activity in terms of time, materials, funding, etc.
- The indicators that YIngHua will use to determine whether the activity has been successfully accomplished.
- Space to record the date on which the activity was completed.

The Evaluation Team conducted an indepth analysis of YingHua’s action plan and concluded that a good start has been made. All components listed above are included in the action plan.

The major categories of activities identified in the action plan include:

- The HSK exam (reviewing its standards, ensuring students take the test, conducting review sessions)
- The Advanced Placement exam (identifying AP teachers, obtaining training for those teachers, reviewing the AP exam and alignment with the CHL curriculum, conducting AP preparation classes)
- Setting up a YingHua in Beijing Spring Program
- Establishing a report for “Chinese Outside of YingHua”
- Establishing processes for CSL and CHL students to work together

The Team does, however, have a number of key suggestions that should be addressed by YHLS.

- 1.) Develop a separate action plan for each of the objectives, one for student performance improvement and one for staff development. Because the strategies required for these two areas are distinctly different, it is important to separate them to ensure that each objective receives appropriate attention.
- 2.) Expand the student performance action steps to include additional plans that are not related to the actual assessment performance, but will have an impact on assessment performance. Currently, the action plan is focused primarily, at least in the initial phases, on increasing the number of students taking certain exams or identifying ways to ensure that students perform better on specific examinations such as review sessions. The action plans should also indicate, however, what will be done in areas such as curriculum development that will ultimately result in improved student performance.

One way to think about the development of the two action plans is to look at the seven Standards for Accreditation. A comprehensive action plan for improving student performance or teacher training will likely include efforts in each of the seven standards areas. So, a good place to start, is to look at the Standards for Accreditation and ask, “What will we do in each of the seven areas to ensure that student performance improves or teacher training/staff development is provided and is effective?” Some schools actually subdivide their action plans into the seven Standards areas.

The *Enhancing Student Performance* self-study has been set up so that the final set of questions in each Standards section is the same, asking the school to identify “areas for improvement” and “2-4 next steps or strategic priorities” related to this Standard. Therefore, another good approach to expanding the YingHua action plans would be to examine the

responses given in the self-study to those two questions and ensure that the action plans address those areas.

Said a different way....YingHua is looking for *improved student performance*, not just *improved test performance*.

- 3.) Revise the action steps where the “Timeline” is listed as “Ongoing,” since this suggests that the school will never know when it has accomplished that action step. MSA has found that when a school states the timeline as “ongoing,” that usually means that the action step is not specific enough to be useful. For example, the action step on “setting up a teacher training program” should be much more specific and should identify what programs on what topics will be provided to which teachers on what date.

### **System for Monitoring Achievement of Objectives and Accomplishment of Action Plans**

The final component of the improvement plan is the accountability system for monitoring accomplishment of the action plans. Inherent in the requirement to identify improvement objectives and action plans to achieve them is a system whereby YingHua monitors the implementation of the action plans and the progress being made toward achieving the objectives.

Improvement plans were developed by the Improvement Plans Subcommittee and approved by the Board of Trustees, who will also be responsible for monitoring progress. YingHua has been maintaining an area on its website to tell about accreditation activities and plans are in place to continue to use that site for communication on progress with the improvement plans. The self-study states that the monitoring of the achievement of objectives and accomplishment of the action plans will be ongoing.

YingHua has demonstrated its ability to remain vigilant and flexible in its evaluation processes. However, the Evaluation Team also suggests that YingHua schedule a formal annual review, probably after the final day of school, to conduct a thorough review of the progress on the improvement plans and to establish priorities for the coming year. In addition, this would provide an opportunity for informing the school community of overall progress, inviting their input into future priorities, and coming together to celebrate successes.

## ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

As an Evaluation Team, we are asked to make an accreditation recommendation to the Commission on Secondary Schools at the conclusion of our visit. Our four-person team has unanimously concluded that

- 1.) YingHua Language School has conducted a comprehensive review of the Standards for Accreditation of Supplementary Education Organizations. YingHua has *described* the current status of the organization, *reflected* on and *evaluated* what the SEO does well and where it can improve, and *prioritized* these findings for future planning efforts.
- 2.) YingHua Language School has demonstrated coherence between the organization's operational practices and the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives of the institution.
- 3.) YingHua Language School currently meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation of Supplementary Education Organizations.
- 4.) YingHua Language School has identified appropriate objectives for improvement, established methods to measure progress on those objectives over the next five years, and has developed thoughtful action plans designed to move the institution forward toward success in those objectives.

The Evaluation Team is, however, sufficiently concerned about the absence of fire drills and consistent, well-understood emergency procedures, to recommend the following two stipulations to that effect.

- **STIPULATION:** By October 1, 2005, YingHua should demonstrate that it has followed through on its plans to conduct an emergency drill on orientation day of the 2005-2006 school year and show plans to add at least one additional emergency drill later in the year. In addition, a process whereby teachers can account for the presence of all students in such emergency situations should be in place.
- **STIPULATION:** By October 1, 2005, additional medical information on each student needs to be gathered and shared with teachers. Medical release forms to provide permission for emergency medical assistance should be obtained prior to the opening of school.

If evidence can be provided that these stipulations have been addressed prior to the actual Commission accreditation action in October 2--5, it may be possible to remove the stipulation.

Therefore, the Evaluation Team will be pleased to recommend Accreditation with Stipulations for YingHua Language School.

## NEXT STEPS

As YingHua Language School proceeds with the implementation of its plan, there are a number of “next steps” it will be expected to take in order to maintain accredited status. These include the following:

- Conduct Annual Reviews

While Middle States does not “collect” evidence of the SEO’s annual review, YingHua Language School is expected to review progress on its objectives and success of its action plans each year. The purpose of the annual update is to revise the plans as needed and to ensure that it is making appropriate progress towards its objectives. YingHua Language School should keep a record of what transpired during each annual review. The meeting agenda, minutes, documented changes to the plans, and summaries of progress made over the past year are examples of evidence to collect. The 5-year Reviewer and the next Evaluation Team will want to see these examples of growth.

- Prepare a 5-year Report

The *Enhancing Student Performance* protocol is designed to be a ten-year process where accreditation must be renewed after the first 5-year cycle of improvement planning. At the conclusion of the first 5-year cycle, however, the Commission on Secondary Schools requires the YingHua to develop a comprehensive 5-year Report detailing progress made on recommendations and improvement plans which is to be submitted to the MSA Office.

- Prepare for a 5-year Visit

To follow-up on the 5-year report, MSA will appoint a review team of 1-2 persons at the midpoint of the ten-year cycle to make an onsite visit to YingHua Language School. Where possible, the Reviewer(s) will be someone from the original Evaluation Team since this/these individual(s) should require less explanation of what YingHua is aiming to do in its planning activities. S/he should be able to readily see the progress that YingHua Language School has been made.

Typically, the visit will last one day; YingHua will be responsible for travel expenses. The visit will not be scheduled until the 5-year report has been submitted to the MSA Office and is available for submission to the Reviewer(s).

- Prepare for Reaccreditation

Prior to the conclusion of the 10<sup>th</sup> year of accreditation, YingHua Language School will be asked to consider an appropriate accreditation protocol and enter a comprehensive self study process anew.

## CONCLUSION

These are truly exciting and productive times at YingHua Language School. Despite, or maybe because of its short time of existence, the school is “sticking its head above the crowd” to distinguish itself from the other Chinese language schools in the highly competitive Princeton/Lawrenceville/Bucks County area. As its mission proudly boasts, the purpose of the YingHua Language School is to “inspire and facilitate Chinese language learning, promote children’s linguistic, cognitive, and social development, and empower local communities by partnering with parents and concerned citizens.” Its philosophy states that it believes “that learning international languages is the best way to understand members of our global community.” These are lofty and admirable dreams that YingHua understands also bring responsibilities.

It is notable that rapid and seemingly unpredictable change is the keynote of the global community so eloquently referred to in the YingHua mission. And change is the hallmark of the YingHua Language School. And like today’s society, where the changes will likely take generations to be fully realized, YHLS will need time to institutionalize its systems. As YHLS continues in its period of growth, the school is looking to put long-lasting, consistent systems in place to effectively manage future change.

As the Evaluation Team said in the exit interview, there is a positive foundation on which YingHua can build. These admirable features include:

- an exceptionally high quality self-study that demonstrates the seriousness of purpose of the Board, administration and teaching staff. The Evaluation Team was impressed that YHLS began making improvements as soon as the need was identified in the course of self-study, and YingHua acknowledges that it is already a better institution from having been involved in the accreditation process.
- a remarkable, unified, and ambitious vision for the school. YingHua is a resourceful organization and one that looks for opportunities to serve its students and the educational community.
- YingHua’s dedication to students and their learning. The school’s focus on improved student performance in the Chinese language is what makes YingHua unique and distinguishes itself from the crowd.
- one of the most sophisticated websites seen by the Evaluation Team, even among full-time comprehensive schools! The website is effective, promotes efficiency, and is well-used to promote communication about the school’s various constituents.
- the quality of student assessment. Students are regularly assessed and instructional adjustments made. Especially notable is the effort to assess oral language proficiency.
- the overall quality of YingHua’s curriculum. The CHL—Chinese as a Heritage Language—is well-done. The ambitious and critical efforts to design and develop a quality CSL—Chinese as a Second Language curriculum are especially notable and needed. While work remains to be done on the CSL curriculum, these pioneering activities should be encouraged.

- the tremendous support from parents and students for the program. The Evaluation Team members were told in interviews that people feel they are getting good value for their money and their time.
- the superior management team of the administration and the Board of Trustees. It was clear to the Evaluation Team that a cooperative and positive ethic exists within the governance and leadership. The organization of the school has changed to meet the growing operational needs. All benefit from this.
- the existence of a tight-knit community dedicated to preserving the Chinese culture, but with an openness to anyone that shares the school's mission. This is an especially important feature of the school since it has led to the development of the dual track curriculum for heritage and non-heritage learners of Chinese.
- an effective and useful advisory board structure. For a supplementary education organization, this is an especially useful concept and has allowed YingHua to receive strong guidance on issues as varied as curriculum, child development, and finances. In particular, the Evaluation Team was impressed with the quality and passion of curriculum support provided.

There are, however, a number of areas that the Evaluation Team considers to be critical to a strong future for YingHua. In summary, the Evaluation Team recommends the following areas for immediate and long-term attention:

- attention to a variety of child safety concerns. The Evaluation Team considers this to be the most pressing issue. There is a need to increase the number of fire/emergency drills to ensure that students and teachers know what to do and where to go. Additional medical information needs to be gathered and shared with teachers and medical release forms to provide permission for emergency medical assistance should be obtained.
- keep on looking for a more permanent "home." The Team feels that in order to solidify the school's "client base," it must stop living "from year to year" in term of where it will be located.
- continued attention to the CSL curriculum. The curriculum and accompanying materials need to be formalized.
- pursue with vigor the plans for the Advanced Placement—Chinese language testing. This initiative is yet another way to distinguish YingHua's program. The school should be able to form closer relationships with school districts via its AP offerings and might even be able to become a testing site.
- obtain D & O insurance (also known as Errors and Omissions insurance), as soon as possible, to protect the members of the Board.
- begin to redefine the governance for YingHua. YHLS wisely utilized a small number of people to "get the school off the ground." However, it is the Team's opinion that the time has come to expand the number and representation on the Board of Trustees. At the current time, the Principal serves on the Board and the Team also believes that it would be wise to separate policy and administration functions. To assure that YHLS does not become overly dependent on one or two people, systems need to be instituted to put enduring systems in place that can be carried out by multiple persons.
- the need for differing responses to the implementation of the CSL and CHL curricula. For example, the Evaluation Team suggests that these two curricular options may require different admissions criteria and entrance testing, different student assessment

approaches, different criteria for the type of teacher to be hired for the program, different instructional materials, and even what type of person should oversee the CSL and CHL programs.

- increase efforts to implement greater amounts of spoken language in both curricula. While the Team observed a considerable amount of receptive (reading and listening comprehension) language instruction and some productive language (writing and speaking) activities, especially in the writing areas, more needs to be done with the spoken language aspects. In particular, the Team felt that teachers and students should be “required” to use just Chinese in the classroom setting and that more needs to be done via parenting workshops to help parents understand how essential it is Chinese be spoken in the home.
- provide greater teacher training opportunities in the areas of classroom management, differentiated instructional techniques, student assessment, and working with diverse student populations.

Finally, it is not “happenstance” that YingHua is the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools very first supplementary education organization to receive an Evaluation Team and seek accreditation. As one of the Board of Trustees said when asked why YingHua wanted to be accredited, “seeking accreditation is just part and parcel of our focus on education.....it gave us the opportunity to formalize our processes.” The Team believes that YingHua has been and will continue to be a trailblazer and a pioneer now and in the future because of its incredible leadership, the strong sense of mission, and its dedication to a better world where all can live in harmony. YHLS acted, in good faith, with Middle States to be the first.....and we sincerely thank you for the trust you placed in our organization to support your efforts as the “first.”

The school is taking great care to build an infrastructure of clear and coherent management practices and sound curriculum and instructional systems to provide a firm foundation for future growth. This work has required both vision and patience and the Evaluation Team is honored to have been a small part of the effort.

As one of the parents interviewed stated, “This school is beyond my expectations in so many areas. If any school deserves accreditation, this one does.” The Evaluation Team wholeheartedly concurs.

# **PHILOSOPHY, MISSION, BELIEFS, AND OBJECTIVES STATEMENTS**

## **Mission**

Inspire and facilitate Chinese language learning; promote children's linguistic, cognitive, and social development; and empower local communities by partnering with parents and concerned citizens.

## **Philosophy**

- 1) teaching to suit a student's abilities;
- 2) guiding to realize his/her potential.

## **Belief**

Learning international languages is the best way to understand members of our global community.

## **Objective**

To become a leading Chinese language school in the nation by offering top-quality educational programs and experiences.

**September 28, 2002**

# IMPROVEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

## Objective #1:

Beginning in the fall of 2005, YingHua students demonstrate Chinese language and culture proficiency as measured by The Exam Preparatory program and The Cultural Immersion Programs.

A) The Exam Preparatory Programs: The programs include preparation for the SAT II and Advanced Placement (AP) exams and the *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK) (China's national standardized exam for non-native speakers).

- CHL students:

1. Each year beginning in the fall of 2005, 100% of CHL students who have completed Book 12 in YingHua's curriculum take the HSK exam.
  - a. 90% of those who take the exam score Level 3 or higher
2. 75% of those eligible (generally 11<sup>th</sup> graders) CHL students take the Chinese AP exam in the spring of 2007, when the exam will be offered for the first time.
  - a. 50% of those who take the exam score "4" or better.
  - b. 10% of those who take the exam score "5" or better.
  - c. An increasing proportion of eligible YingHua CHL students take the exam and an increasing proportion score at least "4" and "5" every year thereafter.

- CSL students:

3. Beginning in the fall of 2008, 50% of CSL students who have completed at least 4 years of study at YingHua CSL Tier 2 take the HSK exam.
  - a. 50% of those who take the exam score at Level 2 or better
4. Beginning in the fall of 2009, 75% of eligible CSL students (generally 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders) who have completed at least 5 years of study at YingHua CSL Tier 2 take the Chinese SAT II exam.
  - a. 100% of those who take the exam score 500 or better.
  - b. 25% of those who take the exam score 600 or better.
  - c. An increasing proportion of eligible CSL students take the exam and an increasing proportion score at least 500 and 600 every year thereafter.

B) Cultural Immersion Programs: The programs aim to promote cultural understanding and appreciating within the school context, the programs including "YingHua in Beijing", Chinese-at-home Report System and The CHL-CSL Immersion Program.

#### i. The “YingHua in Beijing” Programs

The programs intend to provide some long-term study Chinese abroad opportunities to CHL and CSL learners. A Spring Program is added to the "YingHua in Beijing" program in addition to the current Summer Program.

1. All students in Grades 4 –8 are encouraged to participate the Spring Program, which will start in Spring 2006. All students will attend a boarding school in Beijing.
  - a. 10% of the eligible students participate per year.
  - b. 30% of the eligible students participate at least once before entering Grade 9.
2. CHL students who have finished Book 12 are encouraged to go through the Extensive Reading training of the summer programs.
  - a. 30% of the eligible students participate per year.
  - b. 70% of the eligible students participate at least once before entering Grade 11.

#### ii. The “Chinese-outside-Yinghua” Report System.

Students' increased enthusiasm towards Chinese language/culture learning is measured 1) by the estimated amount/percentage of time speaking Chinese at home (for CHL students); 2) by the frequency with which students participate in Chinese related activities (e.g., going to a concert featuring Chinese music or a museum showing Chinese art, carrying out a school project that focuses on or is related to China/Chinese, or simply visiting with people from Chinese backgrounds, or planning a career with China/Chinese being an integral component, etc.) Students and parents are given report cards, having a 0-100 scale for the parents to do a self-reporting and rate their own children performance via an online system three times a year (at the term-end).

3. Each year beginning in the fall of 2005, CHL students will be asked to sign up for “Chinese-outside-YingHua” program.
  - a. 75% of the CHL students participate.
  - b. 50% of the participants will score 80 and above.
  - c. 90% of the participants will score 50 and above.

#### iii. The CHL-CSL Immersion Program

The program is to enhance interaction between CHL and CSL students and create a collaborative and mutually beneficial learning environment for both groups.

4. A new schedule. There will be used starting fall 2005. School will open from 1:30 to 5:30 so students who are eager to observe the other track or, for that matter, any other classes may be scheduled to do so. They can pay a 50% rate on the second class. For example, a C07 student can also pay 50% on tuition to attend A04 - just to listen.

- a. 10% of the students will participate.
5. A new mentoring system. The new schedule is going to provide more opportunities. It will allow CHL students to tutor CSL students during their "off" periods in the parents' room. Some CSL students with high language proficiency are also assigned to tutor CHL students with low motivation.
- a. 10% of the students will participate.

**Objective #2:**

Beginning in the fall of 2005, YingHua's improvement also includes Teacher training programs, Teaching Material Publication Programs and Recognition Funding Programs.

A. Teacher training programs

The current training is provided twice a year (summer and winter). We encourage (not require) teachers to participate other professional conferences. If teachers miss out on the summer or winter trainings and do not go to any of the recommended professional conferences, they may use a professional conference to make it up for the two.

- 1. 100% teachers attend at least two professional training per year.

B. Teaching Material Publication Programs

YingHua's personnel will work with the author Sunny Zeng and other local colleagues to develop and publish the much needed learning/teaching materials for CSL Tier 1. The targeting publication date, for "Chinese Made Fun." Set 1 of 4, is August 2005. Then Set 2 and 3 next year and Set 4 the year after.

- 2. Publish "Chinese Made Fun" Set 1 by August 2005.

C. Recognition Funding Programs

YingHua aims to apply to private or public funding such as The Goldman Sachs Foundation Prizes for Excellence in International Education, which will award five \$25,000 prizes to schools, higher education institutions, states, and media/technology organizations that are working to "put the world into world-class education."

- 3. Initiate contact with Rider University to establish CSL Tier 3 and to seek Higher Education Title VI grant for International Education Programs.
- 4. Submit application for The Goldman Sachs Foundation Prizes for Excellence in International Education by May 2008.

# EVALUATION TEAM ROSTER

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**DATE OF VISIT:** **Sunday, April 24, 2005**

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