

Hmong Students Are Discovering The Success Factor 英華 At Yinghua Academy



Yinghua Academy, the first Chinese immersion public charter school in the Midwest, was established in St. Paul in 2006 with 75 students in grades K-3. When Yinghua students scored 100% proficiency on Minnesota's standardized tests of math and reading in the spring of 2007, word of the bilingual, tuition-free school spread. Yinghua Academy recently relocated to a larger school building at 1616 Buchanan St. in Minneapolis, and currently enrolls 303 students in grades K-6. Yinghua has added the first middle school Chinese program in the Midwest, and will be a K-8 school by the 2011-12 academic year. After enrolling one Hmong student in its first year, an increasing number of Hmong families are now choosing Yinghua Academy for Chinese language, academic rigor, and a safe school community. Yinghua Academy's rapid growth is due in part



NouTing Lor, Yinghua Academy fifth grader and son of Tou Pao Lor and Mee Moua

to families' interest in Chinese language. Local Hmong families reflect this interest in their own choice of an elementary school for their children. Tou Pao Lor and Mee Moua have two sons attending Yinghua, and say they decided to enroll their children at Yinghua because of the Chinese language class that it offers to elementary students: "I believe that for my children to start learning another foreign language at a young age, it would be excellent and easy for them to learn. It would also be beneficial for them to understand other people's language and culture." My Lee and Ka Vang chose to enroll their daughter at Yinghua in second grade: "We knew it wasn't going to be easy for our daughter to switch from a non-immersion program to an immersion program because she knew no Chi-

nese. However, we realized that our child could only benefit from learning a third language, so we couldn't decline the opportunity. Since then we also enrolled our younger child in kindergarten, and both of our children are enjoying their educational experiences." The curriculum at Yinghua fosters intellectual curiosity and critical-thinking skills, and places great emphasis on both academic learning and cultural understanding. Of the comprehensive education, My Lee says "The people at Yinghua make the school a great school because of its dedicated teachers, staff, and parents. It's the small daily differences that leave a lasting impact in our children's lives from the offering of field trips to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts or programs brought in-school from the Science Museum of Minnesota, to embracing cultural diversity and learning Chinese that gives our children a world class classroom experience." Another important factor in Hmong parents' decisions to enroll their children at Yinghua is the school's welcoming and supportive community.

Yinghua stresses being a "heart-safe" place that brings together diverse learners from over fifty different zip codes to learn in a nurturing and engaging educational setting. Tou Pao Lor says of the Yinghua community "Besides the Chinese language class, I really appreciate the efforts that teachers, staff, boards, and parents had put together to make Yinghua Academy a better place and safe environment to learn. It is an excellent school. I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to place my children in this school. I can tell that my children are learning new things everyday. Although I live in St. Paul, I don't mind driving them to school and picking them up everyday." Also, as My Lee adds, "Our children are proud to eat their home packed Hmong lunches at school."



If you are interested in learning more about Yinghua Academy, the school offers several open houses, which feature sample immersion lessons during its open enrollment period from January 9th - February 11th. For more information, please visit: www.yinghuaacademy.org or contact the school at (612)788-9095 to attend an open house or arrange a site visit.