

Report of Jiangsu Educators' Group to FFI Wichita, KS

Being invited by the Friendship Force International, a group of 9 Jiangsu Educators, led by Mr. Wang Ting of Jiangsu Wixi Education Bureau visited Wichita, KS during Nov.27 to Nov.30, 2007. We have been home-hosted by the members of FF Wichita, KS and we had a great exchange there.

We arrived in Wichita at 3:20 pm on November 27 local time. Members of Friendship Force welcomed us at the airport. We were surprised to see some of them holding the large paper with three Chinese characters on it, which meant "Welcome". Learning that our appetite had been destroyed by the food on the plane, they were so considerate as to give us a reception in a Chinese restaurant, where we met most of the members of Friendship Force in Wichita and enjoyed a good meal.

On the following two days, we visited two high schools, one middle school and a state university in Wichita. We were deeply impressed by the newly-organized Chinese Language class at North High School, the second language acquisition program at East High School, and the special program for training handicapped children at Stucky Middle School. The Chinese teacher, who had lived in China for ten years, taught three sections a day, one for the students at North High School and two for students from other schools. He taught in a classroom equipped with advanced computer systems, where he could give lessons to three separate groups of students from different parts of the city. Though there were relatively fewer Chinese teachers in Wichita, students scattering over the city could attend Chinese language class with the remote education system.

Since the United States is a country of diverse immigrants, second language acquisition program is of great importance to the new comers. Non-English speaking students gained help from teachers who talked slowly and worked in a professional way so that those "foreign" students could understand their teachers and keep up with other students. According to the headmaster of East High School, the second language acquisition program at their school was so effective that many students living in other districts of the city chose to study there.

It is obvious that education programs in America differ from one school to the other. However, almost all the programs offer certain help to students with particular needs, either for advanced learning programs or for basic useful skills. The special program for training handicapped children at Stucky Middle School is of no exception. Its training program is practical and helpful enough for the disabled children to learn and live a decent life. Teachers there attempted to tell the students how to live independently by giving them appropriate exercises and requisite confidence. Some of the children suffered from serious physical disability, but none of them looked miserable or irritable. Instead, they did their exercises attentively and looked at us with calm and peaceful eyes.

One thing that is different from Chinese culture is that a day care center was set up in some American high schools so that mother students could finish their high school education without worrying about who would take care of their kids. If it is

incredible to find a pregnant high school student in China, it is also unimaginable for us to see a day care center at high school in America.

We paid our last visit to the College of Education at Wichita State University on the afternoon of November 29. Not only did we get the information of teacher training system in America, but also appreciated the magnificent architecture and modern sculptures there. We attended a teacher training class and answered questions raised by the teacher students, who showed their curiosity about Chinese culture and the income of Chinese teachers.

We really learned a lot in Wichita, not only from our visit at the schools and the university, but also from the spirit of the members of Friendship Force, most of whom were retired teachers. They made breakfast for us and drove us to each place we went. Though they were at the age of over sixties, all of them remained energetic and were willing to serve for the public good. If a nation has a considerable number of citizens endowed with intelligence, enthusiasm, and optimism, how can't it be a great country?

All of group has sweet memories of the wonderful time the FF Wichita members provided for the us in KS. The group enjoyed the program and events very much and appreciated the time and effort the FF club has contributed to make our visit to Kansas something really special.

We hope that we have extended the hand of friendship to the people of Wichita and Kansas and we hope that we will meet them again in China. The trip is over now, but the smell of Kansas food and vivid sounds of cowboy singer is still lingering in our memories.