

*What is like to be a
Chinese teacher in the
US*

Why I want to do these two internships...

I am a TFL Chinese MA Candidate who was born and raised in Asia. Compared to the TESOL candidates in my department, I don't have the same degree of understanding about the educational system in the US, even though I used to work as an intern teacher in a public school in California for six months. Therefore, I volunteer in two Chinese programs in the bay area in the fall semester to familiarize myself with different contexts for teaching Chinese in the US, preparing myself for the future career.

Differences between Two Teaching Contexts:

International School of the Peninsula
(ISTP)

- 1) Chinese immersion program in an IB school
- 2) All students meet with their teachers every day
- 3) Teachers have all the access to the teaching resources they need at school/ in their classrooms
- 4) There is no regular TA in the classroom

Chinese Weekend School (Mandarin Language & Cultural Center)

- 1) Mixed class (age from 6 to 12), focusing mainly on speaking and listening skills
- 2) Teachers only meet with their Ss once a week for around two hours
- 3) Teachers don't have their own classroom
- 4) There are three to four high school TAs in each classroom

My responsibilities in the two schools

International School of the Peninsula
(ISTP)

- 1) Observe and assist in different classes (G1 to G5)
- 2) Lead learning activities
- 3) Work with individual students and small group on different subjects
- 4) Give teachers feedback on their teaching

Chinese Weekend School (Mandarin
Language & Cultural Center)

- 1) Observe the class
- 2) Design and teach different learning activities on a weekly basis
- 3) Lead review activities
- 4) Give clear instructions to class TAs so they know how to lead activities in their groups

Me in ISTP



Me in Chinese Weekend School



My reflection

Working as an intern teacher in two different teaching contexts allows me to familiarize myself with the responsibilities a Chinese teacher has and the required skill set. In the Chinese immersion program at ISTP, Chinese teachers are not only language teachers but also homeroom teachers, so they are responsible to design their curriculum according to the IB framework and teach all the subjects in Chinese. The Chinese teachers of the same grade level in this school attend meetings regularly to brainstorm meaningful inquiry-based teaching content and class activities. Therefore, all students are learning the same course content through similar activities. In this way, the Chinese teachers can monitor their students' progress and try hard to make sure that their students will reach similar level when they move to the next grade.

In Chinese weekend school, the teachers are in charge to design and deliver learning activities that help their students remember vocabulary and sentence structures, so the listening and speaking skills are the main foci. Those teachers do not need to follow an assigned framework when they create learning activities. This fact enables them to have more flexibility, but the practice and learning experience students receive in different classes can be quite different. Therefore, language content-wise, the teacher has to accommodate more individual differences. The teachers in those two teaching contexts face contrasting challenges.

However, I think both contexts are beneficial for a new teacher to develop professionally. I learned the four types of inquiry-based teaching in ISTP and the goal of inquiry-based teaching is to guide students to figure out the problems they will encounter when they work on their language learning projects and search for possible solutions by posing questions. As a teacher, I need to foster their ability to

think critically and explore possible solutions independently. In the Chinese weekend school, my job is to design and deliver learning activities that engage and interest my students, so they are going to spend more time learning and using the language both in school and at home. Though I teach the same language, the goals and purposes of my Chinese classes are very different. The number of responsibilities of the Chinese teachers in the two contexts is incompatible, but the amount of effort they put into preparing their classes comparable.

To a new teacher, working as a full-time teacher in a day school will be an ideal starting point of his or her teaching career, but even if he or she needs to start their career in local Chinese weekend school, they can still learn plenty transferrable teaching strategies in that context. Therefore, when I start job hunting in August, I will not restrict myself from only applying for the teaching positions in day schools.