Catalina Foothills School District – Orange Grove Middle School
Overview: Mandarin Chinese Program

The Mandarin Chinese program at Orange Grove Middle School (OGMS) serves Catalina Foothills School District (CFSD) students in grades 6-8 who have prior Mandarin Chinese immersion experience or heritage learner background. This middle school program is designed to support students' continued progress toward proficiency in Mandarin Chinese (simplified) while simultaneously building learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). ICC is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other language and culture backgrounds. The goals of ICC are: "to expand one's own worldview; to develop an insider's perspective toward the target culture's beliefs, traditions and ways of behaving; to develop a sensitivity toward alternative perspectives and cultural differences and mediate those divides through language; and finally, to expand one's own identity as a global citizen" (VanHouten and Shelton, 2018). ICC is an essential skill set for establishing effective, positive relationships in local, regional, national, and international contexts and will prepare our students for success in college and career pathways.

There are three courses in the Mandarin Chinese program: Exploring Culture (Grade 6); Investigating Culture (Grade 7); and Bridging Cultures (Grade 8). Students in the program develop literacy skills in the target language and deepen their understanding of their culture and the target culture through a thematic approach. Additionally, students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades plan and implement activities for specific festivals each year. The activities associated with these cultural celebrations give students the opportunity to engage in authentic interactions with the purpose of demonstrating their growing ICC. Within each unit of instruction, students also learn about historical eras of China through focused investigations of specific dynasties and governing structures. Topics include the following:

◆ **Exploring Culture (Grade 6)**
  o Introduction to China, Families & Communities, Modern Life, Social Interactions
  o Understanding Ancient China – Qing Dynasty
  o Mid-Autumn Festival

◆ **Investigating Culture (Grade 7)**
  o Historical Eras & Events in China, Hospitality, Festivals, The Art & Evolution of Calligraphy
  o Understanding Ancient China – Qin Dynasty
  o Duanwu (Dragon Boat) Festival

◆ **Bridging Cultures (Grade 8)**
  o Diversity in China, Inventions, Arts & Leisure, Family Names
  o Understanding Ancient China – Tang Dynasty
  o Qixi Festival (Double Seventh Festival) & Chongyang Festival (Double Ninth Festival)

Each thematic unit is linked to language outcomes and cultural understandings. For example, in a unit about family students may ask the question: *How do cultural beliefs about family influence how and where people live in my own culture and in China?* As they research this question, students may study the *sì hé yuàn* (traditional Chinese courtyard house) and modern housing options in China and then compare those to housing in the U.S. They may also investigate the relatively recent U.S. housing trends toward multigenerational housing and compare the reasons for that trend with Chinese perspectives on family and housing. At the same time, students might be focused on improving their proficiency in Chinese by learning new ways to describe places (referring to size, shape, number of occupants, location, etc.). Teachers consider individual and group needs as they select differentiated language goals that support learning about cultural similarities and differences in each thematic unit.

The assessment framework for each course is grounded in CFSD's Deep Learning Proficiencies, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines, and the National Council of State Supervisors for Foreign Languages (NCSSFL)-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication.

CFSD's *Deep Learning Proficiencies* (DLPs) highlight the cross-disciplinary skills/proficiencies that students must develop as they prepare for success in a world that is increasingly complex. Students in the middle school Mandarin Chinese program build knowledge and skills in the DLP focus areas of Citizenship, Communication, and Critical Thinking.

The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* are descriptions of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of proficiency: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished. The major levels of Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The levels of the *ACTFL Guidelines* describe the continuum of proficiency from that of the highly articulate, well-educated language user to a level or little or no functional ability. Teachers and students in the middle school Mandarin Chinese program use CFSD's K-12 World Languages rubrics (which align to the *ACTFL Guidelines*) to assess learners' current levels of proficiency in each skill area in order to set goals for future growth.

The *NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication* describe a continuum of intercultural understanding across five major proficiency levels (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished). The *Can-Do Statements* consist of two Global Proficiency Benchmarks: **Investigation** of products and practices to understand perspectives; and **Interaction** with others in and from another culture. The Intercultural Can-Do Statements guide learners as they analyze and interpret cultural products, practices, and perspectives in order to build the competencies required for successful intercultural communication. Teachers and students use the *Can-Do Statements* to set learning goals and monitor progress toward achieving them. Where applicable, these are referenced in the standards in each of the performance areas. Examples of Novice through Distinguished Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication in a unit about school life are listed below:

	NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED	SUPERIOR	DISTINGUISHED
INVESTIGATE	o In my own and other cultures, I can *identify* some elements of a classroom, a school schedule, or levels of schooling and how they reflect the culture.	o In my own and other cultures, I can *compare* school/learning environments and curricula to determine what is valued.	o In my own and other cultures, I can *explain* how beliefs and values are reflected in educational testing, ceremonies, and certificates.	o In my own and other cultures, I can *analyze* the role family plays in schooling.	o In my own and other cultures, I can objectively *evaluate* the role of education in the quality of life.
INTERACT*	o I can answer simple questions about my school day.	o I can use a course guide to select courses that match my preferences and academic goals.	o I can explain school-related requirements for my peers in the target culture.	o I can interview a peer in the target culture about their parents' role in their education and analyze their responses.	o I can collaborate on an educational research project with peers from other cultures, mediating objections during the process.

* When face-to-face or digital interactions with members of the target culture are impossible, CFSD teachers may create authentic contextualized scenarios for student role plays.

ICC develops as the result of a process of intentional goal-setting and self-reflection around language and culture and involves attitudinal changes toward one's own and other cultures *(NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements, 2017).* For this reason, assessment in the Mandarin Chinese program is differentiated based on individual performance levels and each student's unique needs. Through reflection and with teacher guidance, learners identify what it takes to advance their intercultural communication (IC). IC represents the intersection of language proficiency and cultural competence, which may not always align. For example, if a student's language proficiency is limited but he has an extensive understanding of the target culture, he may demonstrate Novice level IC. Similarly, if an individual's language proficiency is high but his understanding of culture is low, the extent to which he can communicate effectively in the target language will also be at the Novice level (see *Glossary*, Intercultural Communication, Figures 1-2).

The standards for the three-year middle school Mandarin Chinese program are built around a set of overarching ICC **knowledge** and **skills** (i.e., knowledge of self, general knowledge about culture, knowledge of own and other cultures, knowledge of others, relationship building skills, critical thinking skills, and self-reflection). These ICC components are woven into the content of the program and form its foundation. At each grade level, students also work to identify and develop selected ICC **attitudes** that support their continued growth over time as illustrated in the table below:

ICC ATTITUDES* – FOCUS AREAS BY GRADE LEVEL		
Exploring Culture (Grade 6)	**Investigating Culture (Grade 7)**	**Bridging Cultures (Grade 8)**
▪ **Respect**: respect for others ▪ **Openness**: readiness to withhold judgment, open to being proven wrong ▪ **Curiosity**: interest in collecting and examining evidence of cultural differences and similarities	▪ **Respect**: respect for differences ▪ **Openness**: belief that difference provides an opportunity to learn; awareness of limitations of own understanding; flexibility and adaptability regarding new ideas, different settings, and different ways of thinking ▪ **Curiosity**: interest in seeking out cultural clues in order to interpret meaning	▪ **Respect**: values different ways of thinking and acting ▪ **Openness**: accepting of difference, demonstrates empathy and an ethnorelative worldview ▪ **Risk-Taking**: motivation to communicate in unfamiliar contexts, willingness to make mistakes and learn from them

* See: *Key Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills* below for a complete list of the key components of ICC.

The Mandarin Chinese program at OGMS supports learners' progress toward proficiency in the areas of language and intercultural understanding in order to prepare them to transfer their learning to challenges both inside and outside of the classroom walls. Over the course of the three-year middle school program, learners focus on building key knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will serve them well as they move on to advanced high school courses. The specific skill sets that students begin to develop in the middle school Mandarin Chinese program will ultimately help them to interact appropriately and effectively with people from other language and cultural backgrounds which will lead them to success in their daily life as members of a global community.

Intercultural Communicative Competence: Key Components and Outcomes

Interculturally competent individuals demonstrate specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enhance their ability to interact effectively with others who may or may not be members of the same cultural group(s). Researchers have noted the critical importance of ICC attitudes, knowledge, and skills as they consider the need for workers who can interact successfully with others at the local, national, and global levels.

> *More than ever, we need to communicate with each other, seek to understand each other, and develop an unprecedented level of competence in recognizing how culture affects everything we think and do...That goes not only for business, but for day-to-day contacts in our lives. To connect successfully, we need knowledge, understanding, and skills. (Tula, 2017)*

> *There are no easy solutions to the difficult challenges of intercultural communication...The relationship [between culture and communication] is, and probably always will be, complex and dynamic. We live in a rapidly changing world where intercultural contact will continue to increase, creating an increased potential for both conflict and cooperation. (Martin & Nakayama, 2010)*

> *The goal for intercultural communication is not just better communication; rather successful interaction with those who are different comes through better understanding of self in relation to others. This is because conflict and misunderstanding will always be a part of the human condition and, while we can never eliminate misunderstandings because of cultural differences, misperception is less likely if we are aware of the tacit subtleties that create the potential for conflict. (Tula, 2017)*

Perhaps the most important outcome related to ICC is that it supports students in building self-awareness and collaborative relationships with others (i.e., with people from different peer groups, generations, cultural groups). The interpersonal connections that students forge with current and future peers, co-workers, and employers will help them to work toward and reach shared goals.

The resource on the next page *(Intercultural Communicative Competence: Key Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills)* is an adaptation of the work of experts in the field including Milton J. Bennett, Michael Byram, Darla K. Deardorff, Alvino Fantini, Judith Martin, and Thomas Nakayama. Interestingly, the competencies highlighted on the following page are also embedded into CFSD's deep learning proficiencies (for citizenship, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration, and systems thinking). These understandings and skills will help students to be successful in their interactions with others now and in the future.

ATTITUDES	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS
Words and actions provide evidence of: **RESPECT** ✓ Respect for others ✓ Respect for differences ✓ Values different ways of thinking and acting **OPENNESS** ✓ Accepting of differences; interest in maintaining relationships with people who are different than oneself ✓ The belief that difference is a learning opportunity (i.e., when you interact with others who are different than you, you can learn things about them and about yourself) ✓ Readiness to withhold judgment (i.e., positive presupposition, the belief that cultures aren't "good" or "bad," awareness of limitations of own understanding, open to being proven wrong) ✓ Empathy (i.e., holds an ethnorelative—vs. ethnocentric—worldview; can imagine being in another's shoes; as a language learner, is patient due to awareness of and sensitivity to the challenges others may face as they learn a second or third language and/or interact in different cultural contexts) ✓ Flexibility & adaptability regarding new ideas, different settings, and different ways of thinking and acting ✓ Sense of humor **CURIOSITY** ✓ Interest in collecting and examining evidence of cultural differences and similarities ✓ Interest in seeking out cultural clues in order to interpret meaning ✓ Interest in asking questions to uncover perspectives **APPROPRIATE RISK-TAKING** ✓ Motivation to communicate in unfamiliar contexts (i.e., willingness to move beyond one's comfort zone; willingness to make mistakes and learn from them) ✓ High level of comfort in the face of ambiguity (i.e., views embracing ambiguity as a key component of learning; perseveres in situations that require negotiation of meaning and interpretation of contexts) ✓ Emotional resilience	**KNOWLEDGE OF SELF (Self-Awareness)** ✓ Cognizant of own cultural context and how he/she may be perceived by others *(Who am I? What do I believe and how do I act in different situations? Why do I think and act that way? What are my strengths and weaknesses?)* **GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CULTURE** ✓ Familiar with patterns and components of culture; understands that diversity exists within and between cultures *(What is culture? How are people influenced by culture? How do cultural products and practices reflect cultural perspectives?)* **KNOWLEDGE OF OWN & OTHER CULTURES** ✓ Culture-specific knowledge about norms, values, and history *(What is accepted & familiar in my own and other cultures?)* · History · Geography, regions, climate · Family & communities · Customs & traditions · Rules, regulations, social norms · Food, clothing, housing · Communication styles · Transportation, tools, technology · Arts & Leisure · Architecture (public and private spaces) · Education · Politics · Religion · Values and Beliefs · National memory · Government & economics · And…? **KNOWLEDGE OF OTHERS** ✓ Cognizant of others' cultural context and endeavors to understand them through <u>their</u> unique cultural lens *(What do others believe and how do they act in different situations? Why do they think and act that way?)* **KNOWLEDGE OF GLOBAL ISSUES & TRENDS** ✓ Informed about the global perspective *(What's going on in the world? How are events and people interconnected? What's happening locally that's connected to a global force?)*	**SELF-REFLECTION SKILLS** **The ability to:** ✓ Identify and analyze strengths and challenges related to key ICC dispositions, knowledge, and skills ✓ Set specific goals for improvement **LANGUAGE SKILLS** **The ability to:** ✓ Communicate in own and other language(s) ○ Verbal communication ○ Non-verbal communication ✓ Adjust one's speech and behaviors to accommodate others **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING SKILLS** **The ability to:** ✓ Interact in ways that are accepted and familiar in own and other cultures ✓ Listen and observe with patience and perseverance for intended meaning ✓ Understand the world from others' perspectives ✓ Understand various factors that may influence behavior and affect interactions ✓ Move beyond one's own comfort zone in order to deepen and broaden understanding of others ✓ Help others to understand his/her own perspectives **CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS** **The ability to:** ✓ Ask questions, gather information, and interpret meaning (i.e., consider factors that may influence behavior and affect intercultural interactions) ✓ Analyze and interpret interactions, events, documents, etc. from another culture in order to explain and relate them to own culture (i.e., identify links, causality, and relationships) **PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS** **The ability to:** ✓ Recognize and respond to stereotypes and ethnocentric attitudes that may interfere with intercultural communication ✓ Take action (before, during, and after interacting with others) to ensure successful interactions ✓ Address communication breakdowns effectively

Sources: Bennett (2004), Byram (2006), Deardorff (2011), Fantini (2009), Martin & Nakayama (2009)

Glossary

Attitude – A belief, feeling, behavior, or way of thinking about something or someone.

Belief – A proposition or premise that a person or group holds to be true. Beliefs may be religious, cultural, or moral. Beliefs are significant because they reflect who we are and how we live our lives.

Cultural Perspectives – The philosophical perspectives, meaning, mindsets, values, beliefs, and ideas that underlie the cultural practices and products of a society. Together, cultural products, practices, and perspectives represent a culture's view of the world.

Cultural Practices – Patterns of behavior or social interactions that are accepted by a society. Cultural practices represent the knowledge of "what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and how to interact within a particular culture. Practices involve the use of cultural products and are related to the underlying perspectives that represent the culture's worldview.

Cultural Products – The creations of a particular culture. They can be tangible (i.e., paintings, buildings, eating utensils, literature, advertisements) or intangible (i.e., oral folktales, music, dance, language, system of education). Cultural products reflect the underlying perspectives that represent a culture's worldview.

Culture – The philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products—both tangible and intangible—of a society. The products and practices are derived from the perspectives that form the worldview of a cultural group.

Ethnocentric – Refers to the mindset of individuals who evaluate other peoples and cultures according to the standards of their own culture and point of view; the belief that "the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality" (Bennett, 1993).

Ethnorelative – The viewpoint that "cultures can only be understood relative to one another, and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context" (Bennett, 1993); refers to the mindset of individuals who are comfortable with many standards and customs and who can adapt their behavior and judgments to many interpersonal settings and cultural contexts

Intercultural Communication – The intersection of an individual's language proficiency and cultural competence, which do not always align. One individual may possess strong cultural competence yet demonstrate a low level of language proficiency (figure 1). Another individual may display high language proficiency but minimal cultural competence (figure 2, from *NCSSCL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements*, 2017).
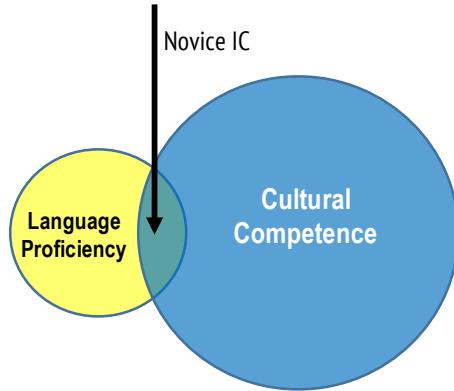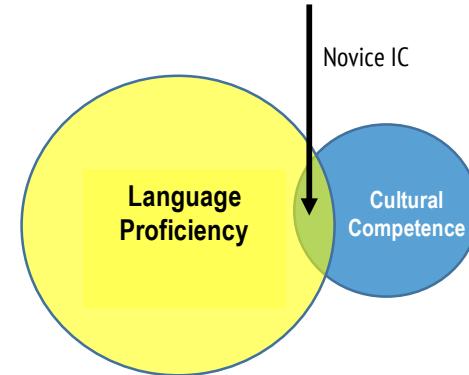
Figure 1

Figure 2

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) – The ability to use the target language and understanding of culture interact *effectively* and *appropriately* with people from other language and cultural backgrounds. ICC develops as the result of a process of intentional goal-setting and self-reflection around language and culture and involves attitudinal changes toward one's own and other cultures. ICC is essential for establishing effective, positive relationships across cultural boundaries, required in a global society. ICC is related to interculturality (the ability to: 1) find connections between one's own culture and other cultures; 2) identify and use a variety of strategies to interact with people from other cultures; 3) serve as an intermediary between one's own and other cultures; 4) deal effectively with cultural misunderstanding and conflict; and 5) overcome thinking that is influenced by stereotypes).

Mindset – The collection of beliefs and thoughts that are made visible through a person's attitudes, inclinations, habits, or dispositions; a person's mindset predetermines their interpretations and responses to events, circumstances, and situations.

Values – Principles, standards, or qualities that an individual or group of people hold in high regard. Values are commonly formed by a particular belief that is related to the worth of an idea or type of behavior.

Worldview– Cognitive and affective lens through which people interpret their experiences and make sense of the world around them.

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