

Registration Now Open for Fall 2026 American Chinese School's Washington D.C. Weekend Chinese Program



Editor's Note: Since its launch in Fall 2025, the Washington D.C. Weekend Chinese Program at American Chinese School has remained committed to providing children from Chinese American and multicultural families in the greater Washington, D.C. area with a structured and professional Chinese learning experience over weekends. The program not only helps students develop Chinese language skills, but also guides them toward a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, strengthening both cultural identity and cultural pride. Since its establishment, the program has received enthusiastic support and highly positive feedback from parents and the community.

The registration for the Fall 2026 semester is now officially open. In the upcoming academic year, the school will offer four classes ranging from Preschool through Grade 3, all using the Yang Yang Chinese curriculum. Designed specifically for overseas K-12 learners, Yang Yang Chinese starts from the beginner level and follows the educational philosophy of "listening and speaking first, with reading and writing gradually integrated." The curriculum focuses on real-life communication and emphasizes comprehension and expression in authentic contexts, helping children build the confidence to speak Chinese naturally while steadily developing literacy, reading, and writing skills. With its well-structured and progressive system, along with online courses and rich supplemental learning resources, the curriculum effectively supports classroom instruction while also making it easier for students to review and continue learning at home. It is especially well suited for overseas families with limited Chinese-language environments or busy parents who may have limited time for at-home tutoring. The school's mission has always gone beyond simply having children "study Chinese." More importantly, it hopes students will feel confident speaking the language, communicating effectively, and using Chinese meaningfully in their daily lives.

Over the past year, teachers Ms. Wenjing Zhao and Ms. Ping Ji have remained on the front lines of instruction, accompanying students on their Chinese-learning journey with their dedication, passion, and care. Every lesson, every activity, and every word of encouragement reflect their deep commitment to Chinese language education. Let us take a closer look at these two teachers, hear their perspectives on overseas Chinese education, learn about the dedication and persistence behind their teaching, and discover what they most hope to share with students and parents.

Young Chinese- Developing Speaking Skills, Level K

This is a starter Chinese language course, which is suitable for 5-7 year-old Non-Chinese

backgrounds students. You will learn 85 characters/words and 30 disyllables, read 12 Chinese nursery rhymes.

Young Chinese- Developing Speaking Skills, Level 1

This is a beginner Chinese language course, which is suitable for 6-8 year-old Non-Chinese backgrounds students, who has learned the Vol. Starter. You will learn 100 characters/words and 58 disyllables/polysyllabic words, read 12 Chinese nursery rhymes.

Ms. Jane Zhao (K-1)

Ms. Wenjing Zhao is currently a substitute teacher in Arlington Public Schools and is pursuing her studies at the University of Maryland College of Education, majoring in Curriculum and Instruction (teacher certification track). She is continuously strengthening her professional expertise in education.

Ms. Zhao has many years of teaching experience in kindergarten, Pre-K, elementary education, and the Montessori system. She has served as a lead kindergarten teacher and a lead Pre-K teacher, and has also operated her own family daycare. These roles have given her a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of child development, curriculum design, and classroom management.

In her teaching, Ms. Zhao excels at using games, music, picture books, art activities, and inquiry-based learning to support students' development in language, math, science, and social-emotional skills. She places strong emphasis on effective communication and collaboration with parents to support children's growth. Ms. Zhao is fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English, and her strong cross-cultural communication skills enable her to build warm and trusting relationships with children from diverse backgrounds.

Ms. Zhao enjoys learning, talking, and playing with children in class. She wishes to create a warm and fun environment where students can gradually enjoy Chinese and feel confident speaking it. She believes language learning is not about being perfect — it's about being brave enough to speak and express yourself. Seeing students become more confident is the most rewarding part of teaching for her.

When she teaches the first-grade Chinese in DC, Ms. Zhao has worked with children from many different language backgrounds. Although it is a first-grade class, most students are only 4-5 years old, and many of them have little or no Chinese environment at home. At the beginning, some students were too shy to say a single word in Chinese. For young learners like these, she has focused more on building interest, comfort, and a sense of connection. She uses games, pictures, songs, stories, and lots of interaction to help children feel safe and excited to participate before gradually developing their language

skills. She always encourages students to express themselves bravely instead of being afraid of making mistakes.

Ms. Zhao observes that many students' growth happens little by little. Some children spend the first ten minutes of class crying, then slowly begin saying a few words, and eventually start speaking in short sentences and communicating in Chinese with confidence. Watching them grow from shy and nervous to confident and expressive is one of the most touching and meaningful parts of teaching for her.

Ms. Zhao thanks all the parents who support their children's Chinese learning journey. She hopes students can not only learn the language, but also connect with culture and the wider world through Chinese.

Young Chinese- Developing Speaking Skills, Level 2

This is a beginner Chinese language course, which is suitable for 7-9 year-old Non-Chinese backgrounds students. You will learn 110 characters/words and 75 disyllables, read 12 texts and tell about the contents.

Young Chinese- Developing Speaking Skills, Level 3

This is an intermediate Chinese language course, which is suitable for 8-10 year-old Non-Chinese backgrounds students. You will learn 110 characters/words and 70 disyllables, read 12 texts and tell about the contents.

Ms. Ping Ji (G2-3)

Ms. Ping Ji currently teaches at American Chinese School of Greater Washington and has nearly ten years of experience teaching Chinese overseas. She has taught using the Ma Liping curriculum, MeiZhou Chinese, and the New Shuang Shuang Chinese series, and is known for a teaching style that is both systematic and inspiring.

Ms. Ji holds a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences and is a senior expert in pharmacokinetics. Over her more than twenty-year professional career, she has published over 40 peer-reviewed scientific papers. Her rigorous scientific training and interdisciplinary background contribute to her strong focus on logic, structure, and cultivating students' ability to think critically in Chinese learning.

In her Chinese classes, Ms. Ji places great emphasis on cultivating two core abilities in students: knowledge and wisdom. She not only helps students build a solid foundation in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and applying the language, but also guides them to understand the logic behind the language itself, encouraging analytical thinking. At the same time, she integrates the richness of Chinese culture into her lessons so students can truly connect with and appreciate the cultural heritage behind the language.

Ms. Ji believes that giving back to society should not be limited to a

Monday-Friday job; community service requires the participation and dedication of everyone. This is also why she continues to teach at Chinese school on weekends. In her view, Chinese education is not simply about teaching a language — it is about passing on Chinese culture and connecting the next generation to their heritage. Through her efforts, she hopes to open a door for children to better understand Chinese culture while also contributing to the community.

When asked what impresses her most in teaching, Ms. Ji mentioned her students' enthusiasm in class — especially their willingness to answer questions actively and ask thoughtful questions of their own. As the ancient Chinese saying goes: "A teacher is one who transmits wisdom, imparts knowledge, and resolves doubts." She has always believed that truly valuable questions should come from students themselves, rather than from teachers constantly asking questions while students passively respond. In today's education system, there can sometimes be too much emphasis on "learning whatever the teacher teaches," without enough independent thinking. Therefore, she consistently encourages students to think actively and ask questions boldly. "Without questions, genuine thinking rarely begins. Learning how to ask questions is the true starting point of learning." That is why she feels especially gratified whenever she sees students actively raising their hands and asking questions in class.

Ms. Ji believes that the greatest challenge for children learning Chinese overseas is often the lack of a Chinese-speaking environment and cultural atmosphere. Therefore, learning Chinese should not stop at language acquisition alone; it should also involve a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, integrating Eastern and Western perspectives, and drawing wisdom from history and tradition.

She believes that the future will require children to possess a global perspective and a broader worldview. Weekend Chinese classes provide exactly such a platform — allowing students to encounter different cultures through language learning, broaden their ways of thinking, and gradually develop the ability to communicate and understand across cultures.

Ms. Ji explained that the DC Chinese class has only 75 minutes to complete each lesson, so there is no break during class time. Yet students often feel that time passes very quickly. Many times, when the teacher announces that class is over, students immediately ask in surprise, "How did class end so fast?"

In every class, students learn many new Chinese characters and vocabulary words. Unlike traditional methods focused mainly on memorization, Ms. Ji places special emphasis on practical usage, sentence construction, and deeper

understanding of each character and word. Students eagerly compete to raise their hands and create sentences using newly learned vocabulary. Because the lessons focus on comprehension and application rather than rote memorization, students are often able to absorb and internalize what they learn directly in class. This greatly increases both their interest and participation.

When teaching texts, Ms. Ji focuses heavily on interactive discussion and deeper meaning. Even a very simple sentence can lead to at least five different questions, while a single paragraph may inspire further logical and analytical discussions. Through this approach, she guides students' thinking and greatly increases their enthusiasm for learning. Students come to feel that every Chinese lesson is an exploration rather than an exercise in memorization.

In teaching Chinese culture, Ms. Ji emphasizes understanding traditions from their origins while connecting Eastern and Western perspectives, helping students truly integrate and comprehend the ideas behind cultural practices.

For example, when teaching about the Mid-Autumn Festival, she asks questions such as:

*Why do people celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival?

*Why is it celebrated in the eighth lunar month?

*What Western holidays are similar to it?

*What is the difference between the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Lantern Festival?

*What is the difference between the lunar calendar and the solar calendar?

*Why does the date of the Mid-Autumn Festival change every year?

*What shape is the moon at the beginning of the lunar month?

Students become deeply engaged in thinking through these questions and are often amazed to discover how much knowledge and cultural depth can come from a seemingly simple lesson.

Finally, Ms. Ji would like to share a message for both students and parents:

"In the near future, the world will be very different from today, and children will face much higher expectations. Mastering two languages and understanding two cultures will become a unique and invaluable advantage." She hopes students will cherish the rare opportunity provided by Chinese classes, stay ahead of the times, bravely explore the future, and become the new generation of innovators, pioneers, and creators.

The Washington D.C. Weekend Chinese Program at the Venus Campus of the American Chinese School warmly welcomes more families to join us. Here, children can learn Chinese, connect with their cultural heritage, and build confidence — preparing themselves to grow and shine as future bridges between Chinese and American cultures.

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*上课时间:每周日下午 12:30-3:00 pm

*地点: Chinese Community Church (501 I Street NW, Washington DC 20001)

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