

[Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for Elementary Chinese and Immersion Programs](#)

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World language education in the United States is an integral component of our ever-changing global society. Students must have the necessary skills to participate successfully in school, the workplace, and their lives. These skills include intercultural competence and interpersonal skills, which are learned and enhanced in language classes. Across the country, more and more young learners have the opportunity to study Chinese in elementary school, where they can gain a solid foundation in Chinese language and culture and become proficient speakers. The design of these programs is integral to their success in learning Chinese language and culture.

This Brief, for Chinese language teachers, curriculum developers, and program administrators, provides information and strategies for effective *curriculum planning, instruction, and assessment*. It includes components needed for a successful elementary school experience and strategies for engaging children in their learning. It draws heavily on knowledge and resources developed by and lessons learned from STARTALK, a U.S. Department of Defense-funded project whose mission is “to increase the number of U.S. citizens learning, speaking, and teaching critical-need foreign languages” in grades K-16.

The STARTALK program is guided by [six principles](#), which are described in the Brief, with references:

- Designing and implementing a standards-based and thematically organized curriculum
- Facilitating a learner-centered classroom
- Using the target language and providing comprehensible input for instruction
- Integrating culture, content, and language in a world language classroom
- Adapting and using age-appropriate authentic materials
- Conducting performance-based assessment

The Brief introduces each principle in detail, and provides examples of curricula, units, lessons with sample activities, and videos that illustrate how these principles can be implemented in the elementary school classroom. It also compares the similarities and differences between the U.S. and Chinese educational systems to deepen understanding of international Chinese teachers in U.S. classrooms.

In addition to providing both guiding principles and classroom strategies for immediate use and ideas and information for future exploration, the Brief offers advice for educators in Chinese early language programs: Plan learning experiences that address the unique needs and interests of young learners; follow the Backwards Design Model to develop thematic units to guide culturally rich content-based instruction; understand the power of using the target language most of the time; and engage students in authentic and age-appropriate real-life experiences.

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