As I clumsily weave between the two gorgeously costumed dancers from the Colorful China performance troupe, I ask myself the obvious question: “how did I wind up here?” Certainly, Wayne Foley and my “friends” at the Wilson School District deserve credit for the immediate circumstance of my unwitting participation in the evening stage performance of Colorful China at the Wilson High School. Yet more broadly, how did collective efforts in support of Asian Studies bring us to the opening day celebration of our Confucius Classroom and a system that is now delivering Chinese language instruction to more than a dozen school districts in eastern Pennsylvania?

In December 2008, the problem was simple. We had two school districts endeavoring to establish Chinese language in their curriculum, and little or no supporting infrastructure for the teachers in those programs. The challenges were numerous and included a shortage of curriculum materials and a scarcity of certified Chinese language teachers. Additionally, the staff at BCIU lacked the expertise to provide any direct support to the districts.

The moment of epiphany occurred when Sue Calvin successfully engaged the leadership of Ohio State University’s Mandarin Chinese Language FLAGSHIP program and the University of Pittsburgh’s East Asian Center and Confucius Institute. What materialized out of those conversations was a collaboration of resources and expertise that quickly enabled the BCIU to assemble some of the critical and complementary pieces that were needed by the school districts. The leaders of OSU’s programs, Dr. Galal Walker and Kun Shi, were forthcoming with consultation and advice regarding instructional methods and curriculum. Michele Herford, director of Pitt’s Confucius Institute, provided the means for the BCIU to bring trained Chinese language teachers from Wuhan University to quickly supplement district staff and provide much-needed capacity. We will forever be indebted to these individuals and their organizations.

In the period between 2009 and 2011, collaborative programming has grown in several dimensions. We’ve expanded the number of Wuhan guest scholars deployed in eastern Pennsylvania from just two in 2009, to eight teachers in the 2010-11 school year. In addition, we’ve made strategic investments in technology that have enabled us to extend the delivery of Chinese language courses via online direct instruction from our video classrooms at the BCIU. Currently, six school districts and one alternative education school receive classes delivered using this technology.

The Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) provides programs and services to public school districts, nonpublic schools, and other human service organizations of Berks County, Pennsylvania. The BCIU also is a liaison agent between the schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The BCIU launched the Asian Studies Collaborative (ASC) in 2009. The ASC represents a unique collaboration of educators, business persons, and community members who share a keen interest in expanding knowledge of Asian history, culture, and language.

The ASC has been awarded the title of “Confucius Classroom,” which is an extension of the Hanban Chinese Language Council International Confucius Institute Program. Chinese Guest Scholars accomplish language-teaching objectives in a cost-effective fashion through innovative technology that makes distance learning an option in addition to on-site teaching. Through extensive collaboration, our Mandarin language classes reach more than 400 students in eastern Pennsylvania.
From Pine Grove High to Kobe, Japan, and Back

by Darla Rodriguez

Last summer I traveled to Japan, and it was a trip of a lifetime. I never would have dreamed to have the opportunity to travel to Asia if it were not for the Freeman Foundation’s funding of the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA). I have been involved with NCTA since 2009, when I received an email from the Berks County Intermediate Unit regarding a new workshop about Asia. As I am a person that loves using workshops to improve my classroom teaching, I jumped at the chance to take a free course that was taught by Dr. David Ken- ley from Elizabethtown College.

My name is Darla Rodriguez, and I teach High School Fine Arts at Pine Grove Area School District. The Japan teacher study tour was quite valuable as I was able to bring first-hand travel experience to students that hardly travel outside Schuylkill County, let alone the nation. I also implemented NCTA seminar information in my classroom. The students in my nine courses of study are now able to interact with authentic cultural artifacts, to do art-based projects, and to understand Asian culture.

The travel tour was led by Dr. Brenda G. Jordan, Dr. Hiroshi Nara, and Patrick Hughes from The Asian Studies Center at the Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Fourteen teachers attended the study tour, representing both public and private schools from Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The teachers were from different subject areas; teachers of English, world history, art, and fifth grade were all chosen from numerous entries for the study tour. In accordance with the theme of “Making Modern Japan: Ideas, Innovations, Technologies,” the teachers visited sites from ancient temples to modern earthquake research centers. We established our home base in Kobe and made overnight stops in Mt. Koya and Hiroshima.

Visits to the Konan Boy’s High School, Motoni Elementary School, Motoyama Middle School, and Konan University in Kobe provided us wonderful comparisons to the U.S. school system. It was important to visit public and private schools and universities to grasp the Japanese educational system as a whole. Students were eager to say “HELLO!” and test out their English. I spent my 32nd birthday in the misty Mount Koya (Koyasan) walking through Japan’s oldest cemetery. It was truly a spiritual experience. Nara was also a spiritual experience, being able to view Todai-ji and the Great Buddha along with a plethora of wild deer!

I have created many lesson plans since my tour. For example, I have my students in Ceramics I class compare traditional Pennsylvania-Dutch motifs to Japanese Kamon designs seen on rooftop tiles. My Painting I class explored the designs painted on Ema Votive Tablets found in various temples in Japan. The NCTA program, in all its glory, has been life-changing both for my classroom

continued on page 7
Return to Middlebury
by Morgan Buchanan

The Middlebury experience is something that cannot easily be put into words. It is definitely unforgettable. Once you go one time you are hooked, and want to go back every year from then on. It is addictive! It immerses you into your language of study, and this gives you a whole new view on things. It is not easy, but it is so much fun. The experience is also very rewarding once you realize how much you have actually learned in one month, or even after one day.

The Middlebury- Monterey Language Academy (MMLA) is a four-week language immersion program. I have spent the last two summers attending the program for Chinese at Oberlin College in Ohio. Like I said, it is addictive. This summer another student from my school, Leif Malm, attended the program for the first time at the location in Vermont. He also had a great time.

When first arriving at Middlebury, everyone is so happy. Yet behind all of the excitement there is nervousness. All of the worry just seems to vanish once everyone gets to meet the amazing staff and teachers. They are always upbeat and energetic. When first getting there, everyone greets you with a happy, “Ni hao,” which means “hello” in Chinese. Then they just start talking to you like they have known you forever.

After the first two days, the English language is given up completely. Everyone, even the teachers, sign a pledge agreeing to speak not a word of English for the whole month. Only Chinese is spoken. The pledge is taken very seriously by everyone. It is probably the hardest part of the program, but also the most beneficial part in the long run. Not being allowed to speak English forces you to find a way to communicate even if you do not know how to say one phrase in Chinese. The people who attend the program become the best charade players in the world. Immersion is the best way to learn a foreign language because you are forced to use that language. In the beginning, it sometimes seems almost impossible. Yet, by the end of the four weeks at MMLA, speaking your language of study seems natural. It becomes so natural that when the program comes to an end you almost have to learn how to speak English again. Sometimes when talking to other people, Chinese slips out and they have no idea what you are saying. This is so great. It gives you proof that the summer was a success.

At MMLA, you do not just learn a language. You also learn about culture. This is a huge part of the experience. Along with daily language classes are elective classes. Here, you learn

continued on page 7

Becoming fluent in Mandarin Chinese is hard work, yet very rewarding!
Never Say Goodbye

By Song Ying 宋莹

Song Ying was a guest scholar at the BCIU in 2010/2011 and taught both on-site and distance learning. She is writing just before departure back to China.

A year has already passed. I feel like it is just the beginning. Time goes quickly when you really enjoy it. I still remember the first day that I came to Berks County. I got used to life here but it is time to say goodbye, although I really don’t want to.

Teaching for only one year is not enough for a person like me who wants to be a teacher for her future career. But teaching here is really an important experience for me. Practice makes perfect. I am very happy to use what I learned from books at college. You will never know how to teach different students unless you have the chance. I was fortunate to come to the BCIU, which is an educational agency that provides support for schools. With one year's teaching and learning, I now have a brief understanding about how to make teaching more vivid and effective.

I have been doing distance learning with high school students and classroom teaching with elementary kids. They are totally different. Distance learning has more focus on students’ concentration and self-control. It requires the teacher to use different ways to grasp students’ attention and not let them get bored. So for me, I have been trying my best to use diverse strategies with my class: a lot of singing, games, projects, and cultural things. Also, I came to the classroom twice a month. We would spend some time doing Chinese sports, experiencing the real culture, and exchanging our opinions. In that way, I built a good relationship between my students and myself. They would not just think that I was only the TV person, but that I was the real person in front of them. They are very sweet and always surprised me. I should admit that when I met with my students for the last time, I burst into tears and couldn’t control myself crying.

Classroom teaching is another thing, and it is really a big challenge for me. I have never taught little kids before. They are cute—always active, enthusiastic, creative, and full of energy. Sometimes, however, they are my “headache;” they keep talking during the class, they go to the bathroom several times, they do not listen to me, and they have a lack of concentration. Yet, even though these things happened, I still liked them very much. Their hugs are the sweetest.
thing for me. They grasped information quickly even if they are not long-time learners.

Basically, I use the TPR (total physical response) to teach kids, especially during the summer camp when I taught on my own. I initially felt a little bit nervous because I had around 60 students from K-3. Many thanks to Schuylkill Valley School District Superintendent, Dr. Lausch, for he arranged everything so well. He asked for lots of helpers to be with me: the principals from the middle and elementary schools, the middle school art teacher, and my high school students. We had a great time together, and the kids really learned a lot. During the eight-day program, one class learned basic greetings, how to introduce themselves, family member names, numbers, and animals. The other class, which is the higher level, learned face and body parts, transportation, and clothing. They also did crafts and cultural things: chopsticks, pinwheels, dragon masks, a fashion show, family loving cards, paper cutting, and folding paper airplanes and boats. I even asked them to write Chinese characters. They did a wonderful job, and I could not ask for better kids.

The people here are really awesome and kind to me. Although I left my home, I still felt warmth and happiness. I think they are like my family. I quite appreciate what they did for me and gave to me. Thank you, Mr. Miller, it is you that brought me here and believed in me and that I could do a good job. Thank you, dear Sue, it is you that took good care of me and everything about me. Thank you, Bonnie, Connie, and Pam, it is you that gave me helpful suggestions and told me the ways to deal with the students. Thank you, Summer, it is you that gave me support and encouragement and always stood by my side. Thank you, Steve and Jim, it is you that were my technology backup and always made me happy. Thank you, Marcella, Judy, Beth, Kevin, Rich, Michael, Christine, Leroy, Jill, Mary, and the other nice people at the BCIU, it is you that always treated me so well and helped me a lot in my life here. Thank you to Dr. Lausch and your wife and to Mr. Schell, you all supported my teaching and let me know more about the USA. Thank you, Beth Lambi and Sherry, you really treated me like a friend instead of a foreign stranger and shared your family and experiences with me. Thank you, my Chinese friends here, Kim, Luling, Dr. Mei, Joe, Wenjuan, Baoqing, Xiaomei and so on, it is you that made me feel at home; I was not afraid of loneliness when I was with you. Thank you, my high school students, Jessi, Anika, and Emily, it is you that made my life colorful and let me be proud of myself because you were so wonderful. And thank you, the people around me whom I love and who love me, it is you that helped me deal with the difficulties and gave me laughter.

Growing up is a mix of happiness and pain. It is my first time to go so far away from my family for such a long time and to live independently by myself. I learned a lot. I think I became the person I would like to be: to view things in a different way, to be tolerant about others, to have a heart full of gratitude, and to be responsible.

Tears fill my eyes. It is a year that I will never forget. Dear friends, although I will leave soon, it is not the end. This is a small world, full of surprises and wonders. Maybe someday in the future, somewhere, we will meet each other again. Please do not forget me and never say goodbye. I will truly miss you.
It is Hard to Say Goodbye
by Wang Sheng

After I had been here for three months, a lot of American friends asked me “Do you enjoy yourself at Oley?” My answer was always “Yes, very much!” Coming to Oley was an unexpected yet fortunate event, because I was initially supposed to teach at a university. Now one year has almost gone, and I have to say I could not have completed my job successfully without the support of my host family, the Cambrias, my colleagues, and the BCIU.

I am going to miss my students. During this school year, I have taught 229 kids from elementary to high school. Pennsylvania’s winter is very long compared to my hometown’s winter, which only has two or three snows a year. Every morning it was a struggle to wake up and go to work, but once I saw my kids’ faces, I felt all of my passion and energy return. I love them all, even though some of them didn’t want to give me their homework.

In sixth grade, there was a little boy who always complained that I gave him too much homework or that the homework I gave was too hard. I always pretended to threaten that I will kidnap him, take him to China, and never let him come back, because a Chinese teacher would give 10 times more homework than an American teacher would. After I said this, he always handed his homework in on time.

The overwhelming majority of Oley Valley kids have good behavior and a great ability to learn. When I observed my students’ sense of discipline, respect, and fundamental skills, I always mentally thanked their former teachers. The children eagerly learned something new every day. This eagerness in their eyes encouraged me to design more and more new and interesting Chinese culture lessons and games. I always thought that they deserved my best teaching because they were the cutest students in the world. As a teacher, I am not only teaching but also learning from them. China is a very competitive country; I can feel pressure from my classmates all the time, and it can lead to jealousy sometimes. I was moved when I saw my students giving their classmates encouragement and high fives for even the smallest achievements. I love to watch them help and encourage each other generously. Of course, they even taught me some English words and idioms when I got words stuck or started using “Chinglish” (Chinese English).

I will never forget my host family, the Cambrias. They are such a nice family, loving everyone selflessly, including myself. Before I got here, they had already bought a new bed, a rice cooker, and had even debugged my room’s TV until every channel came in. Anticipating my homesickness, Dawn bought a Chinese cookbook to learn how to make me feel more comfortable about the food. She is a very sensitive and intelligent lady. Just a few weeks later, she already knew my favorite tastes and could give me the right food suggestions at restaurants. Every week, she would wash my clothes and iron all my shirts and pants. When I would relax with friends, she would prepare snacks in a bag. Worried I might be bored, she always asked if I want to go to somewhere and encouraged me to invite my classmates to come over to hang out. She even tried to help me to find an American girl friend! Due to her inspiration, I joined the church choir of Glad Tidings AG, where I made a lot of great friends. Every Friday night after a week’s hard work, we would go out as a family to have a big dinner with some relatives. This taught me the value of spending time with family. For Christmas, I got a lot of gifts from them and even $100 from Dawn’s mom. Before that, I thought giving gift money in the New Year
about things such as food, Chinese dance, popular songs in China, and calligraphy. The electives really help you get a better idea about what it is like in China. We also learned how to play some Chinese games and watched Chinese TV shows and movies. It makes you feel like you are in China standing on the Great Wall.

I would definitely recommend this program to anyone who really wants to learn a new language. It teaches you many things. One thing is that it is okay to make mistakes, for it is from the mistakes we make that we learn. If no mistakes are made, then what is there to learn? It also teaches you that in order to learn a new language you have to be okay with embarrassing yourself from time to time. One time I called calligraphy the sofa! The program teaches you language and culture, and through this it also teaches you simple things that will help you succeed in life. When entering into the program you enter into one big family.

Kobe, Japan continued

environment, my students, and my spiritual self. It truly was a trip of a lifetime that has impacted my teaching through bringing the world to a tiny school in Schuylkill County.

If you are interested in the many opportunities that NCTA can give you as a teacher, please visit www.nctasia.org to learn about upcoming seminars in your area. Travel blogs from the China and Japan study tour programs can be viewed from a sidebar at http://noborders.ucis.pitt.edu/nctalib/
Darla Rodriguez can be contacted via email at d.rodriguez.art@gmail.com.

The MMLA program is not an easy one, but through all of the frustration and hard work comes outstanding achievement, memories, and friendships that are sure to last a lifetime.
Asian Studies Collaborative | Berks County Intermediate Unit | 610-987-869 | www.berksiu.org/asc

Innovative Technology Aids Mandarin Learning

by Susan Thomas,
Brandywine Heights

Ni Hao! Wo jiao
Susan Thomas. I am
the facilitator of
two Chinese classes
at Brandywine
Heights High
School. I am the
department head
for World Languages
at BHASD and
a teacher of
German. Technol-
ogy has made it
possible for my school (and many others) to offer courses which
may previously have been deemed unworkable. It will be inter-
esting for all educators to begin seeing the area of long-distance
teaching and learning expand.

The teacher/classroom setup is fairly simple for me, but I imagine
the ease of facilitation is due only to excellent IT departments.
My classroom has a television that we use primarily for sound, a
camera that allows the off-site teacher to see the students, a mi-
crophone that makes it possible for the off-site teacher to hear
the students, a projector, and a promethean board that provides a
larger screen for the students to see the teacher and the content
(videos and Powerpoints). All of these things work together
through a polycom that connects our two locations.

As a traditional classroom teacher, I was very eager to learn how
distance learning would work, especially given the level of inter-
action required when teaching a language. I am truly impressed!
My general role as facilitator is helping with the great paper shuf-
fle, managing immediate needs of students, and assisting the off-
site teacher when needed. Papers need to move from teacher to
student, from student to teacher, and often back again. I can re-
ceive
handouts for students through interoffice mail or email;
once received, the papers are placed in a holding area until they
are needed. When students complete work that the teacher
needs to see, I scan the papers and email them. I can send
continued on back cover

Halloween with a Chinese Flair
by Liu Sixie

The Peking Opera, which is rooted in Chinese culture, is
quite different from Western drama. It has a history of
over 200 years. It is initially difficult to understand, even
for Chinese youngsters. Yet as long as you are willing to
explore the artistic characteristics and cultural connota-
tions of the Opera, I can tell you from personal experi-
ence that you will find it very interesting.

As we were in the season of Halloween, I thought that
the colorful masks of the Peking Opera could be the stu-
dents’ special Halloween makeup. At the same time,
they could learn something about the Opera. These
masks that Brandywine Chinese 1 and Chinese 2 classes
created are representative of Peking Opera facial
makeup. There are a thousand types
of makeup, and different types
have different meanings. A red
face means uprightness and
loyalty, a black face means
rough and forthright, a blue
face means bravery and pride,
and a white face means
treachery and cunning.

I was so happy to see what
they did. They were so beautiful!
Life in America
by Peng Xuejun

It has been two and a half months since the first day we arrived in America. Sometimes when I think about this, I can hardly believe that it has been such a long time. I clearly remember the moment that we were warmly welcomed when we arrived at the airport of Pittsburgh. We in the BCIU group – Ke Qin, Liu Sixie, Zhang Yuhong, and myself, Peng Xuejun – really had a great time. Now I will introduce our life in three parts: training, teaching, and daily life.

When we were still in Pittsburgh, we took part in a series of trainings about teaching skills and culture. The most impressive training was the demonstration class from a Spanish teacher, who taught us Spanish without English explanation. It was supposed to be that we hardly understood anything. However, the teacher used material objects and gestures to help us understand, and finally we could totally understand her and played a Spanish game at the end of the class. It made us realize that we can teach Chinese in Chinese. Another significant demonstration class was our own class. We were divided into groups by teaching districts to demonstrate assigned topics. It was the first teamwork assignment for our BCIU group. Sixie and I wrote the teaching plan, Ke Qin made the presentation, and Yuhong demonstrated the class. All in all, we succeeded.

In the middle of August, we took another workshop at the BCIU that benefitted us very much. During the workshop, our group and four other teachers for Berks Country – Guo Yuchen, Li Moyi, Guo Leiyin, and Ren Ying – worked together. In the training, we studied the routines of using target language, the Standards Aligned System in Pennsylvania, and the most important thing: curriculum and relevant information. We eight teachers studied, discussed, and shared points that we can learn from. We learned a lot from this workshop, especially many rules, skills, and rubrics we would use in practical teaching. On behalf of us

continued on page 10
eight teachers, I’d like to send our sincere thanks to our supervisor, Sue, our lead teacher, Summer, and Pam, who hosted this workshop. We really appreciate their work and help. Thanks so much!

After the workshop and the preparation time, we finally began our teaching on August 29. My first class at Great Valley was on-site. I would like to say thanks to Mr. Miller for driving me to the school. In my opinion, the first class was the most important and impressive class for a teacher. I still remember how excited and nervous I was at the moment when my students came into the classroom. The first class was a name class, which means I gave students Chinese names in class, and we played a “Chinese Name Investigation” game. It was really a happy class. Now, my students and I are more and more familiar with each other and we sometimes have a nice chat before class. There are so many words that can describe my kids: smart, enthusiastic, quick-learning, active, and confident. I really appreciate the hard work and effort they put into learning Chinese. Now they know how to greet, introduce themselves, ask names and ages, and they can sing the Chinese song “Two Tigers” and know culture contents. What’s more, Sixie, Ke Qin, and Yuhong have all done a great job in their teaching. They all have a happy atmosphere in their class.

Distance learning and teaching is a brand-new item for us. At first, we were not used to facing the camera. But now we really enjoy our teaching.

Outside the office, we four teachers live together in an apartment and enjoy our spare time. We cook Chinese food on our own and go shopping together. For vacation, we went to Philadelphia and New York City to have fun. All of us love The Phantom of the Opera on Broadway.

So far, we really love the life of Berks County and the BCIU, and we love our teaching and our students. We’d like to thank everyone who helps—Mr. Miller, Sue, Summer, Steve and Jim, Judy and Beth, Pam, and our co-teachers. Thank you all very much!
Celebrating the Confucius Classroom

by Susan Calvin 孔淑珍

The Asian Studies Collaborative program of the Berks County Intermediate Unit has been awarded the Confucius Classroom designation by Hanban, the educational branch of the Chinese government. Confucius Classrooms are an extension of the government-affiliated Hanban Chinese Language Council International Confucius Institute program. The Asian Studies Collaborative applied for and received Confucius Classroom designation through the Confucius Institute at the University of Pittsburgh.

A Confucius Classroom is a five-year agreement between a school and the Hanban to promote student Chinese cultural and linguistic studies. Through this agreement, the Asian Studies Collaborative will receive funding and resources to extend the program’s outreach.

The Asian Studies Collaborative celebrated the opening of their Confucius Classroom on November 9, 2011, with events that showcased area students and the rich culture of China. Three- to five-year-olds from the BCIU Early Childhood Center performed several songs. Wilson School District first-graders connected using videoconference equipment and sang “If You’re Happy and You Know It” in Chinese. Students from Lancaster Country Day School, Twin Valley School District, Brandywine Heights Area School District, and Great Valley School District performed poetry, tongue twisters, and a song from the Peking Opera. The program concluded with an interactive performance by the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, whose dance troupe members invited the audience onstage to learn the steps of a Chinese ribbon dance.

In partnership with World Artists Experience, an evening dance performance by the group Colorful China was hosted by Wilson School District. This event was open to the community and showcased China’s 56 ethnic groups. Wilson School District students and audience members alike participated onstage with the dance troupe. The following day, the Colorful China group took part in a school assembly at Brandywine Heights Area School District.

At the conclusion of this event, the Confucius Classroom hosted tours of their distance learning studios and innovative video control center, including five studios equipped with videoconference codecs, touchscreen computers, and document cameras. This technology allows them to effectively offer Chinese language classes to numerous schools. All classes are recorded and streamed to the video control center, which contains six large flat screen TVs that are monitored by a technician.

The Confucius Classroom Opening was a wonderful event that signified the importance of the Confucius Classroom designation, and it was well-received by schools and the community.
UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 17, 2012
Understanding “Wa”: How to Build Better Relationships in a Japanese Work Environment
http://japanphilly.org/catalog/36

MAY 8
ASC Spring Conference

JULY 8-13, 2012
2012 NCTA Teaching East Asian Literature in the High School Workshop
www.iu.edu/~easc/outreach/educators/literature

JULY 29 TO AUGUST 3, 2012
Seminar on Korean History and Culture
www.koreaacademy.org

For more information on any of these events (and more):
www.berksiu.org/asc

Technology Aids Learning continued

objects not easily scanned via picture or interoffice mail. I sign passes and address building-level questions. Occasionally I assist with lessons, as I learn Chinese along with the students.

One might ask what happens if the technology fails. I am thankful that in the fifteen months of our program, we have experienced very few down times. In case of a technology interruption, enrichment activities, as well as supplemental practice materials, can be used.

Additionally, as a language teacher myself, I am in a good position to keep students engaged on topic. I can take things that they have been working on and keep them practicing by singing songs, writing Chinese characters, and reviewing character flashcards.

I feel that distance learning has been a great opportunity to collaborate and incorporate methods into my own teaching toolbox. It has been a valuable part of my professional development. The off-site teachers and I have conversations about how to differentiate, how to teach vocabulary, and how to motivate students. Watching others is a great way to learn, as I get to observe them teach and I can adopt effective practices for use with my own students. I have worked regularly with the teachers assigned to the BHHS classes and I have also seen their substitutes in action. All of these experiences have made for a very rich experience.

Distance learning has been successful in introducing the students at BHHS to Chinese. Instructional technology is an important component of education today. I feel that BHHS is using very effective and current tools to prepare our students for the future, and this is exactly what public schools should be doing.

Collaboration continued

As we seek to add complementary programming to support the language already in place, we have worked with new partners to help us incorporate programming from other existing sources. Most recently, this has taken the form of cultural events like our tour of the Chinese Embassy and performances by groups such as Colorful China. We owe our ability to host offerings like these to the generous support and partnership that we have formed with Betty McGinnis and the World Artists’ Experiences group that she created in 2002.

BCIU’s Asian Studies Collaborative is a demonstration of what can be accomplished via thoughtful partnerships between educators, communities, and the government. So my question shifts from, “how did we wind up in this place?” to that of, “where do we go from here?”

Our team believes that the road ahead will be challenging, at least in part because of the many economic issues and difficulties facing us. We also believe that those very same conditions strengthen the value of this collaborative and that our success in expanding the resources that are available to our schools and community serve as the model for the future.

In the coming months, our Asian Studies programs will broaden to incorporate additional community outreach partnerships and to extend our programming resources beyond Chinese language and beyond the cultural and geographic boundaries of Asia. We will proceed with the prudent growth of programming that serves our schools, mindful of our commitment to vet and deliver programming of the highest quality.

It has been a fascinating journey so far, and we look forward to a New Year with great anticipation.