



WAH MEI NEWS



Director's Letter 華美特刊

Wah Mei School is fortunate to have had visionary leaders 45 years ago who recognized the importance of children's education. We thank and acknowledge the pioneering group of founders including Judges Lillian Sing and Julie Tang, Al Sing Yuen, Lisa Tang Shek, Ling-Chi Wang, and Wesley Woo who probably couldn't imagine that what they started would turn into a true legacy for our future. It is also fortuitous that one person walked through the doors not too soon after our opening and has made a significant impact on the lives of thousands.

As we look back and honor the struggles of the past via the Lau vs. Nichols Supreme Court ruling, we also celebrate Dorena Lee today. With forty years of service, we could all only hope to be as revered for who we are as much as what we do. Ms. Lee exemplifies the best of our values, traditions and culture of our Chinese American community. The future is bright as we "embrace our legacy".

Ben Wong, Executive Director
www.wahmei.org

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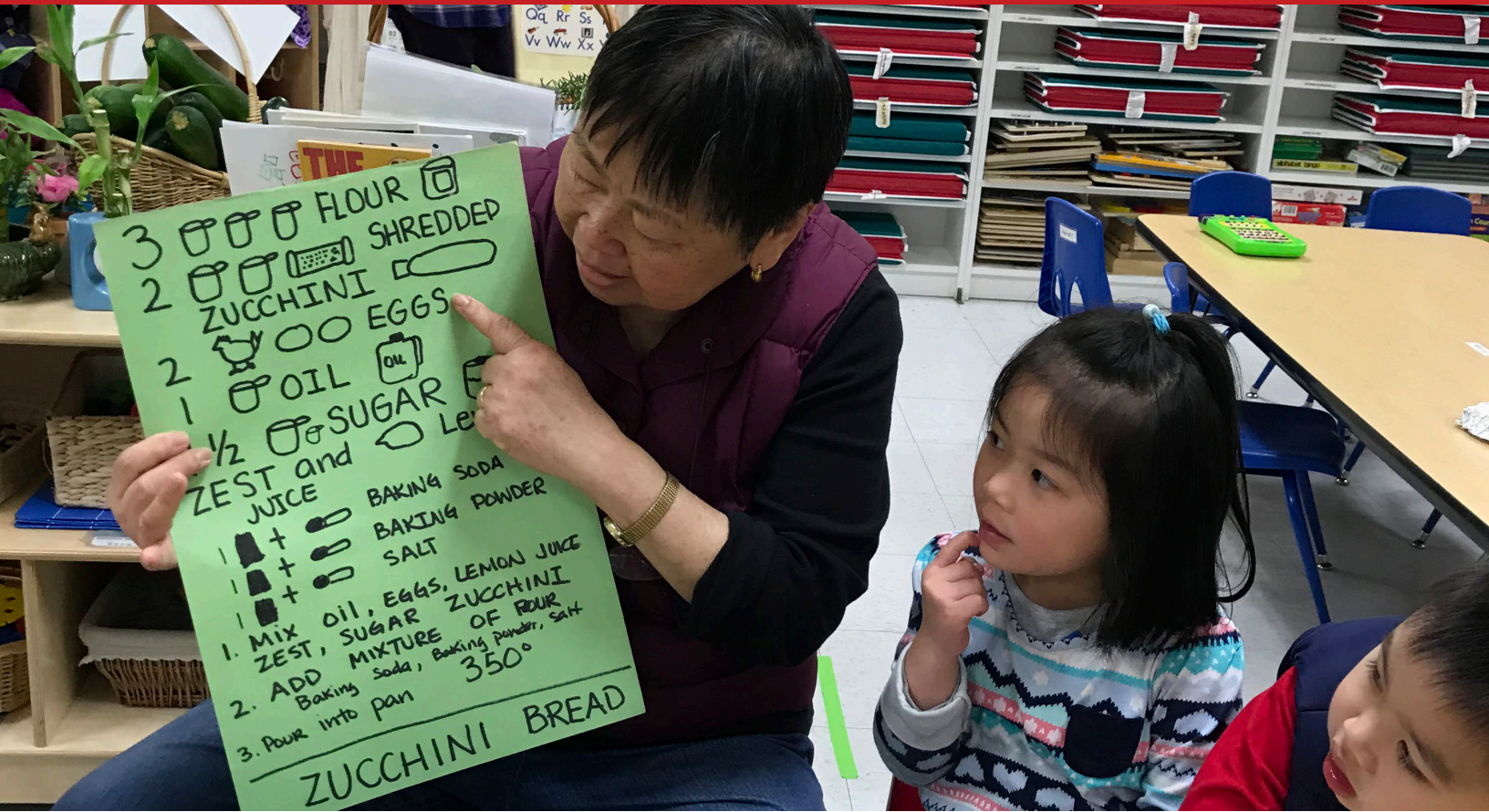
Special Thanks to 特別鳴謝
Angie Lee, Anny Li, Sarah Li, Lori Liao

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Becoming Ms. Lee: A Wah Mei Story

Guest Writer: Ms. Dorena Lee; interviewed by Katie Quan

Ms. Dorena Lee celebrates her 40th year with Wah Mei School as not only a Lead Teacher, but a beloved leader of our community. She has been recognized for her dedication to bilingual education and early childhood development including Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Award Honoree (2017), First 5 San Francisco Excellence in Teaching Award (2017), California Early Childhood Mentor (1997-2017), Ernest M. Pon Memorial Award (2006), San Francisco Child-care Providers Award (2003), and The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT) Teacher of the Year (1983). Her works include The Wah Mei School Songbook and A Bilingual Manual for Preschool Parents (1985). Our 45th Anniversary Spring Gala will honor Ms. Lee for her commitment to Wah Mei children and families. As such, we wanted her to share her story - an all [Chinese] American Wah Mei story.

**I was born in San Francisco.
I am fourth generation on my mother's side.**

In fact, the family came here from Canton, China in the 1800s. My mother grew up in San Francisco. She went to the Oriental School, what is now known as Gordon J. Lau Elementary School (formerly Commodore Stockton). My family had a produce business in Watsonville and eventually started a family produce in San Francisco. My dad is from Toisan (台山) and came here as a teenager. He started as a houseboy and eventually became the house chef or cook. As he drove to work, he always saw my mother waiting for the bus everyday. That's how they met. It's really cute in that sense. They both spoke Cantonese, but because my mother was born here, she spoke a Chinatown Chinese - Chinglish, they called it.

The steadfast part of the whole family was in Chinatown and my parents moved there too when they were married. I grew up in North Beach/Chinatown area so I went through the whole San Francisco school system. I went to Telegraph Hill Co-Op Preschool (which was very unusual in those days). My mother had to find someone to take me to school because she was

working full time. I went on to Jean Parker Elementary, Francisco Middle School, Lowell High School, City College, and then San Francisco State. After school, I used to go to Chinese School from 4-6PM every day following my sister who was sixteen years older than me. She went to Cumberland and I went to True Sunshine.

This was during the 1970s. China was opening its doors to the world and *Lau v. Nichols* and *Brown v. Board of Education* were making waves. The fight for the International Hotel was in full swing. Yellow Power was on the rise. Many people did not think they were getting the best education they could get. I grew up with all that happening. As Chinese Americans, we all spoke Chinese at home, but in school, we were not allowed to say a single word in Chinese. None of our teachers were Asian. We would get in trouble for not fitting the ideal image of "all American". Our culture was covert. Everything we identified as were different worlds.

When I went to college, I was originally going to do social work or library technology, but switched to elementary education. I've always worked with younger children. I went through Cameron House Friday night club meetings and taught Sunday school at my church. When I graduated, there were a lot of Asian American teachers who could not get regular teaching jobs because schools were flooded with other teachers. I worked as a teacher's assistant and won a fellowship to Sacramento State. They were looking for people to earn a Masters Degree in bilingual and cross cultural education and at the time, they were the only ones who offered it. My Masters program had 30 people of color, two where were Asians - all in diverse Educational fields (Administration, Behavioral Science, Counseling, and Teaching).

I was the only Chinese teacher.

When I interviewed for the Fellowship, I sat in front of three people. They asked me to name some Asians who were significant to California history. I couldn't think of any names. There were no books, no materials about Chinese Americans. That's really sad. One of the interviewers, who was Chinese, later said to me, "You could have named any name. They don't know any names either." Later, books emerged where I learned California was rich with Asian American history - but things like learning your grandfather worked on the railroads and your Watsonville family pioneered refrigerated packed lettuce to be shipped to the east were things your parents would never tell you because it wasn't safe to know too much.



A NEW CHAPTER

A lot of the leadership who started Wah Mei were beginning to become well recognized in the community. They were very worried about retaining culture and the Cantonese language. People like Julie Tang, Lillian Sing, and Ling-Chi Wang advocated for Wah Mei's success. There were many more people - some controversial names, but because they were activists, they didn't always abide by everyone's rules. Due to their efforts, Wah Mei became the first bilingual school in San Francisco. Wah Mei started with a kindergarten class and I was looking for substitute opportunities. There was very little information about child development at the time. It was a lot like babysitting.

At the time, I didn't know anything about Wah Mei. I took classes that taught me how to teach Chinese from a Chinese American point of view - for mainly elementary school levels. However, when I interviewed at Wah Mei, the Executive Director, Irene Collier, squashed my application and said, "No, I want you to apply here full time." At the time, I knew nothing about child development. I remember the very distinguished panel of community members so I knew they were really concerned of wanting the school to fly. They had a Chinese teacher, Chung Sin Sang (Betty Nascimento) and they hired me as the English teacher. I had so little experience that the staff would whisper, "She doesn't know anything about child development." They were right. I really hustled to learn more.

**People had passion for me.
I didn't have very good
self esteem.**



Any chance I have to help someone else is a chance worth taking.

All the kids I grew up with were born in the United States. I think at some point, we all face this identity crisis. All of us had to work through the questions of Who am I? What do I do? You may eat rice everyday, but that doesn't make you as "Chinese" as you think. After all, we weren't allowed to be so "Chinesey." Those answers all affected us. Being Chinese American allows me to see an international and transnational perspective.

Because we are state funded, we do have people who come out of crisis. All those policies that happen, you automatically connect to that struggle as you experience that flow of people from various backgrounds.

One reason why Wah Mei is so different is because of our bilingual program. You have a lot of programs that will include a language component, but they're not bilingual or multilingual, deliberately teaching a language that's unique to us. Then, there are the families and the parents. We are away from Chinatown and in the Sunset, there's a community where families want their child to learn Chinese. We have parents who want to retain language and culture. We have other families who want their children to learn English and be ready for school. It's a safe place for them and they feel supported and secure all the way through. When you have people willing to push themselves to those levels because they want to create safe spaces for others, that's incredible.

Throughout the years, Wah Mei parents have come to me and said, "You're different! I'm putting my child in your class" and "You like kids, don't you! I can tell" which is very strange because you would automatically think that being a teacher would mean that they like children, but that's not

always true. At the end of the day, I love to make students laugh. I've been called the "funny teacher" several times. Students may not remember me when they look back at Wah Mei, but I love knowing that I've been part of their early development

They do come back and now; I'm always touched to see where students have gone. I remember going to a parent's restaurant and they called her up at school and made her talk to me. I felt so bad! I said, "I'm so sorry! Your parents wanted me to talk to you!" I bump into former students and families wherever I go. My girlfriend said, "If you see one more person that you know, I'm going to scream" because every time we go out, including one time in LA, we bump into somebody. I have students of the students I had.

Every now and then, they come back and it's nice to see everything that's happened to them.

The parents keep the memory alive of Wah Mei - there's still a connection.

They have pictures and they can still consider them coming here because Wah Mei still exists. It's neat to see what's happened to students. I've gone to weddings, funerals, gone to their homes to have dinner. It's been very meaningful. I guess that's why I've been here for so long. Working here is always exciting. Students are never the same. Time always goes by so fast. The day always goes by so fast. Even though Wah Mei has grown and changed and moved forward, it's still a place where people can feel like family.

Ms. Lee would like to acknowledge the people who have helped her find her way and through Wah Mei for the past forty years. She would also like to thank her husband who brought her to the Wah Mei interview. Without him, it would have been a much longer trek to 19th Avenue and Judah.

The Fight for Bilingual Justice

In January of 1974, the parents of Kinney Kinmon Lau and other Chinese students with limited English proficiency changed the face of language learning in America.

In the Supreme Court case of *Lau v. Nichols*, public interest lawyer, Edward H. Steinman argued that the lack of supplemental language instruction in public schools for non-native English speaking students violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Thus, approximately 1,800 non-native English speaking students could not thrive within the public school system.

Meanwhile, San Francisco Unified School District and its president, Alan H. Nichols, argued otherwise, stating the uniform policy was used for all students in the district, providing equal protection, and Fourteenth Amendment not violated. Local courts, who have debated on the matter, ruled in favor of Nichols, allowing racist ideology institutional. However, it was actually the Supreme Court unanimously ruled to overturn the lower court's ruling in favor of Lau, stating that while the school district provided equal treatment for students, the lack of understanding class material deprived students of having a "meaningful" education.

Lau continues to be an important decision in bilingual education history.

Prohibiting the "sink or swim" mentality, the ruling require additional English instruction mandatory, effective to all public schools. As such, SFUSD was ordered to create a master plan, otherwise known as the Lau Remedies, to accommodate Chinese, Latino, and Filipino students. This served as a blueprint for other school districts. Today, almost five million students (9% of all public school students) are English learners. A 2005 Pew Hispanic Center study find that foreign born teens with prior education difficulties vary from country to country, but still have greater dropout rates regardless of country of origin. Yet, we are making baby steps towards progress. The Lau consent decree now extends to five public schools in San Francisco that serve detained and incarcerated students who are non-English proficient. As immigrant demographics increase, we understand language access will continue to be still an issue in the United States.

Lau v. Nichols is the foundation in which Wah Mei School stands on. Our mission is to create an education accessible to all and it will take all hands on deck to tear down barriers to make that change happen.

在1974年1月，Kinney Kinmon Lau 與其他不太精通英語的中國學生家長一起改變了美國語言學習的現狀。

在最高法院 *Lau v. Nichols* 的案件中，公眾利益律師，Edward H. Steinman 提出在公立學校系統中缺乏對非英語學習生提供教學輔助，違反了1964年民權法案。因此，將近1800名非英語學習生不能在公立學校系統中成功學習，發揮所長。同時，三藩市聯合校區和當時校區的校監，Alan H. Nichols則指出校區實行統一的政策，提供平等的保護，並不違背第十四條修正案。地方法院就此案件作出判決，支持Nichols一方，繼續允許種族歧視主義及形態的制度。然而，案件經過不斷的上訴，最高法院全體一致地推翻地方法院的判決，支持Lau的一方，指出學區在

1954 BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

A landmark case declared racial segregation for public schools unconstitutional and all schools are equal in quality.

1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

Signed by President Lyndon Johnson, Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, prohibiting unequal requirements for voter registration, racial segregation in schools, employment, and public accommodations.

1965 THE HART-CELLER ACT

Otherwise known as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the Hart-Celler Act abolished the National Origins Formula, by which the US restricted much of immigration from "unwanted" continents. This Act prioritized family reunification, students, skilled laborers, and refugees.

1968 SFSU ETHNIC STUDIES STRIKE

Students at San Francisco State University fought and demanded for the inclusive history. Their list of demands centered around the study of language, bicultural history, and identities of color. This remains to be one of the longest student strikes in American history.

1968 I-HOTEL

The International Hotel was home to many manong and Chinese bachelors. Milton Meyer & Co issued eviction notice in 1968 with plans to turn the lot into a parking garage. This would become a ten year battle for housing rights in San Francisco.



1971 LEE V. JOHNSON

Lee v. Johnson stopped San Francisco's Unified School District from segregating Chinese students based on ancestry. This integrated nearly 3 thousand Chinese students back into the public school system. However, only 1000 were provided supplemental English courses.

1974 LAU V. NICHOLS

Lau v. Nichols was a US Supreme Court case in which dramatically transformed bicultural education. The Court unanimously decided that the lack of supplemental language classes in public schools for limited English speaking students violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

1974 WAH MEI SCHOOL

Richmond Bilingual Committee forms Wah Mei School, opening with 14 kindergarteners and 20 state preschool children. It is located on the corner of Lake and Arguello in the St. John's Presbyterian Church.

1998 ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SCHOOL INITIATIVE STATUTE

Prop 227 changed the way that non-native English students were taught in California. It required California public schools to teach with English-only instruction. This would eliminate most bilingual instruction. It provided an intensive "sheltered" English immersion programs for students not fluent in the language.

2016 CALIFORNIA MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION ACT

Introduced by Sen. Ricardo Lara, the California Multilingual Education Act gave California public control over dual language acquisition programs. As a result of Prop 58, it would be easier for California's 1.4 million English language learners (1/3 of student enrollment) to enroll in bilingual classes in which students are taught in their native language and gradually transition to English.

平等對待所有學生的同時，缺乏可以理解的課室材料令學生失去「有意義」的教育。

Lau繼續是雙語教育歷史中一個重要的決定。為防止這種“成敗全靠自己”的觀念，法院的判決規定所有公立學校均必需增加英文學習課程。因此，三藩市聯合校區被要求創立一個總體計劃，也稱為「Lau Remedies」以支持中國、拉丁美洲和菲律賓的學生。這個成為了其他公立校區的藍圖。今天，將近5百萬學生（有9%是公立學校的學生）是英語學習生。一個由Pew Hispanic Center在2005年的學術研究指出，有優先教育困難的外國青年少年在不同的國家都有差別，但不論來自哪個國家，依舊有很高的退學率。然而，我們正在進步中邁出小步。現在，Lau的准許法令已經延伸到三藩市的5間公立學校，它們的服務對象為被拘留和監禁的非英語學生。隨著移民人口的增加，我們明日語言援助將繼續會是美國社會的一個問題。

Lau v. Nichols 是華美學校創辦的基礎。我們的宗旨是創立一個開放給全部人的教育，這樣的改變需要全體動員的參與來拆下所有障礙。



Credit: Mickey Kwok

李老師四十年的奉獻

祝賀李老師服務華美學校四十週年！李老師不僅是主導教師，也是我們社區深受愛戴的領袖。她一直致力於雙語教育和兒童早期發展，並獲得多個獎項，包括在2017年獲得亞太島嶼居民遺產獎，2017年獲得第一批舊金山卓越教學獎，1997年到2017年被評為加州兒童早教的導師，2006年獲得Ernest M. Pon紀念獎，2003年舊金山育兒獎，和1980年中文教師協會最佳教師獎。她的作品包括《華美學校歌集》和《學前家長雙語手冊》(1985)。我們的45週年春季聯歡晚會將向李xx老師致敬，感謝她對華美兒童和家庭的奉獻。因此，我們想讓她分享她的故事——一個美籍華人與華美學校的故事成為李老師: 我和華美的故事 我出生在美國三藩市，是母親那邊的第四代移民。

而我的家人在19世紀就從中國廣東移民到這裡了。母親在三藩市長大，上的是東方學校，現在被稱為Gordon J. Law小學(原士德頓準將)。我家人本來是在沃森維爾做生意的，後來把生意轉營到三藩市。父親十幾歲時從廣東台山市來到這裡。他一開始是一名男僕，後來成為了一名廚師。父母的故事相當可愛--每天他開車去上班時，總是看見我母親在等公共汽車，然後就這樣相識了。他們都說廣東話，但因為母親生於美國的緣故，她說著被



稱之為中式英語的唐人埠式中文。唐人埠是我們整個家族堅定的港灣，父母結婚後也搬到了那裡。在唐人埠長大的我，體驗了三藩市的所有教育系統。媽媽是全職工作者，在我參加電報山合作幼兒園時，(這在當時是很不尋常的)她不得不託人送我上學。後來我上了Jean Parker小學，Francisco中學，Lowell高中，市立大學，然後是三藩市州立大學。還記得每天的課後4點到六點，我都跟著比我大十六歲的姐姐去學習中文，她去的是金巴倫中文學校 (Camberland)，而我去的是真陽光中文學校 (True Sunshine)。

20世紀70年代，中國正在向世界敞開大門；劉氏訴尼科爾斯案(Lau v. Nichols)和布朗訴教育委員會案(Brown v. Board of Education)掀起了波瀾；對國際酒店的抗爭正進入高潮；黃色力量也在崛起；許多人都認為他們沒有得到最好的教育。我正是在這樣的背景環境下成長的。作為華裔美國人的我們，在家裡說中文，但到了學校，不允許用中文說一個字。老師都不是亞洲人，我們會因為不符合“全美國”的理想形象而惹上麻煩。我們的文化被隱蔽，我們認定的一切都是屬於不同世界的。

上大學的時候，原本打算從事社工或者圖書館技術方面的我轉向基礎教育這個領域。我總是和年紀較小的孩子一起工作。我參加卡梅倫之家週五晚上的俱樂部會議，並在教堂的主日學校教書。畢業時，因為學校有太多其他的老師，很多的亞裔教師無法找到正規的教學工作。我做過教師助理，並獲得了薩加緬度州立大學的獎學金。他們在尋找雙語和跨文化教育碩士學位的人選，而且在當時，他們是唯一提供這個學位的高校。我的碩士課程有30名西班牙人和2名亞洲人，他們都來自不同的

教育領域(管理、行為科學、諮詢和教學)，而我是裡面唯一的中文老師。

參加獎學金面試時，我坐在三個面試官面前。他們讓我說出一些對加州歷史有重要意義的亞洲人的名字。我想不出任何名字因為當時並沒有關於美籍華人的書籍和資料。這是非常悲哀的。一位是中國人的面試官後來對我說：“你可以說隨便一個名字啊，因為他們也不懂。”後來，這些書籍陸續出現了，從書裡我才學會了原來加州是充滿著亞裔美國人的歷史的。然而，像祖父修鐵路，還有之前家人在沃森維爾將冷藏打包好的生菜運往東邊這些事情，是父母永遠不會告訴你的，因為他們擔心知道得太多並不安全。

新的篇章-很多創辦華美的領袖者開始逐漸得到社會的認可。他們對能否保留中華文化和粵語非常擔心。Julie Tang, Lillian Sing, Rolland Lowe, and Ling-Chi Wang 等人都是致力於華美成功的倡議者。還有其他更多的人——包括一些有爭議的名字，因為他們是積極分子，並不總是遵守每個人的規則。正因為他們的努力，華美才成為了三藩市第一所雙語學校。華美從開設幼兒園課程開始，而我一直在尋找代課的機會。在當時幼兒發展的信息相當貧乏，幼兒發展更類似於保姆。

我對華美一無所知。我接受的教育是教我如何從華裔美國人的角度來教授以小學階段課程為主的漢語。在華美面試時，執行董事艾琳 (Irene Collier) 緊緊地拿著我的簡歷說：“不，我想你在這裡全職工作。”可是當時，我對兒童發展一無所知。從一個非常傑出的社區小組中，我得知他們十分關心學校的發展。他們已經有一個中文老師鐘新桑 (Betty Nascimento)，他們僱我為英語老師。我的經驗如此之少，以至於工作人員會小聲說：“她對幼兒發展一無所知。其實他們是對的，我熱切地想去了解更大家對我充滿熱情，而我也沒有過強的自尊心，對我而言，任何可以幫助到別人的機會都是值得抓住的。和我一起長大所有的孩子都出生在美國。我認為在某種程度上，我們都面臨著這種認同危機。我們所有人都必須解決“我是誰”的問題。我該怎麼做?每天吃米飯也並不意味著你就像你所認為的那樣是“中國人”。畢竟，如此“中國化”是不被允許的。那些答案都影響了我們。作為華裔美國人，讓我看到了國際和跨國的視角。因為是國家資助的，我們確實有人走出了危機。所有這些發生的政策，當你經歷來自不同背景的人的流動時，你會自然而然地與那些抗爭聯繫起來。對華美的老師和教育工作者來說，對來自不同地方的家庭帶來的任何東西都是很敏感的。我們努力滿足每個人的教育需求。



我真的非常珍惜這些家長把他們的小孩送來華美學習，他們確實是很重視學習另一種語言。

華美如此獨特的一個原因是我們的雙語課程。很多其他的課程都會包含有語言的部分，但它們不是雙語或多語言的，而只是英語。另一個原因是我們的家庭與家長。離開唐人埠，我們坐落在日落區這樣一個有很多家庭都希望他們孩子學習中文的社區。我們既有家長想要他們的孩子可以保留中文和中華文化，也有想讓孩子學習英語為上小學做好準備的。對他們來說，這是一個安心的地方，他們在這裡感到全程無憂和被支持。當有人因為想創造安全安心的空間給他人而願意把自己推到那個水平時，這是很不可思議的。

這麼多年來，一直都有華美的家長對我說：“你與眾不同！我要把我的孩子留在你的班裡”，“我看得出你真的很喜歡孩子”！人們總自然而然地認為當老師就意味著他們喜歡孩子，然而事實也不一定如此。在一天結束之際，我喜歡逗學生們笑。正因為如此，我多次被稱為“有趣的老師”。當學生們回來看華美的時候可能已經不記得起我了，但知道自己已經成為他們早期發展的一部分，我感到非常的欣慰。

我喜歡逗學生笑，他們叫我“有趣的老師”。他們確實回來了。知道學生們都去了哪裡，我總是很感動。記得

有一次我去了一家學生家長開的餐館，他們給還在學校裡的她打電話，讓她和我通話。我很不好意思地對學生說：“太抱歉了！你父母想讓我和你聊聊！”無論走到哪裡，都會遇到以前的學生和家庭。我的朋友打趣地說：“如果你再碰到一個你認識的人，我會尖叫的。”那是因為每次我們出去，都會遇到熟人，即使在洛杉磯。

我的學生裡也有學生的學生。他們會時不時地回來，知道他們的近況我很高興。家長對華美的記憶也是依然鮮活的——他們保持與華美的聯繫。他們保留著母校的照片，因為華美依然存在，他們還可以回來母校看看，我也很清楚的看到學生身上發生的一切。我參加過學生的婚禮，葬禮，去學生的家裡聚餐。這一切都非常有意義。我想這就是我在華美學校待這麼久的原因，難以改變。在這裡工作總是令人興奮，從不無聊，學生從來都不一樣，而時間也總是過得很快。即使時光荏苒，華美在不斷地成長、改變和進步，但它仍然是一個讓人感覺像家的地方。

李老師想要感謝那些在過去四十年來幫助她找到通往華美之路的人。她也要感謝她的丈夫，是他帶她來華美面試的。如果沒有他，去第19夾Judah街的路程會遠得多！