



A Message from the VIA Headmistress

Every summer, when dozens of Chinese parents entrust their junior high school children into my hands, and to VIA, I acutely realize that I also must take on the full expectations of the child's family and friends.

Faced with these new children, I always harken back to my own experience in coming to the United States in 1990 as an international graduate student. Although at the time I was ten years older than my current students, I still vividly remember my inner experience: feeling confused and helpless. I remember how I found various aspects of American school life extremely difficult and how lost I was in a new, foreign culture so many miles from my home and from what I loved and knew. In the following year in my life in the States I bought a car. Over the next few years my husband and I spent countless hours driving to and from the airport to pick up every one of my fellow university Chinese students to help them through the beginning of this rough transition time.

I did not want my experience to play out in the lives of any foreign students and now, especially not in lives of the students under my care.

Today, Chinese parents realize the great benefit that American schools can be for their children. Chinese student enrollment in American schools is at an all time high and is unprecedented in Chinese history. There are more than thirty thousand young, Chinese students who are now alone, across the ocean in American high school. These students quite often stumble if not fall or fail completely during their first months here. Too often, most Chinese parents focus only on getting their children into well known schools; almost completely overlooking how difficult the transition can be to American schools. We at VIA are very lucky to be trusted by the parents of our students as we have the opportunity to watch, participate and guide this important period of the students' lives. What can we offer to these students?

At VIA, we have a broad knowledge of Chinese and American culture, we have a love for the students just like their parents, and we have the professional skills necessary to educate the students well and to get them into well fitted American schools. With all of the above we will:

- Educate our students to think independently, to understand how to judge right from wrong. We familiarize our students with the norms of American high

schools and help them to understand the significant differences and expectations of the Chinese and American educational systems.

- Instruct our students to not only be fluent in speaking English, but also have enough language skill and study skill for academic pursuits. By the time they go to high school, they can calmly and confidently deal with their new life and not panic.
- Prepare our students to not only learn to live together in community, but also learn to overcome social shyness. They will learn how to communicate with classmates and teachers through shared common experiences. But most importantly, they will have the experience of learning how to make new friends from all different countries at a young age which will serve them for the rest of their lives.
- Ensure our students are physically fit and that they have the ability and experience to participate in the many sporting activities that are readily available in American culture. We help them to understand the true spirit of competition and we instill in them a strong determination to succeed and the importance of teamwork.
- Encourage and often require our students to participate in school activities; we ask them to take on leadership roles and continue to demonstrate their talent within certain clubs or organizations, we ask them to continue to broaden their horizons, and to serve others through different volunteer activities.

There is no doubt that these young students will change the future of China for the better, and quite possibly, the world. Because these students get exposed to the two great civilizations of East and West at a young age, they will become better citizens of the world, and will contribute to its development and its well-being. VIA will strive to help them in the United States in the first year through their varied academic pursuits, their social involvement, their psychological development, their knowledge of how to stay physically fit, and their self mastery. With these skills, our students will be able to fully engage in the full scope of high school academia and it will leave them well prepared for a future of learning and life laid on a solid foundation.

This is my mission.

This is VIA 's mission.

Helen Wu