

---

## STARTALK: Queens University of Charlotte's Summer Institute in Chinese

**STARTALK: Queens University of Charlotte's Summer Institute in Chinese** is a free program made possible by a federal government grant that offers high school students the opportunity to intensively study Mandarin Chinese at the novice, intermediate and advanced levels.

STARTALK enables students to develop proficiency in Mandarin Chinese and understand the Chinese culture, while encouraging students to continue studying the language and promoting intercultural dialogue. Using a variety of authentic materials and supporting technologies, students will engage in communicative and cultural activities in an immersion setting, both in the classroom and community.

Learn more about the national STARTALK program here: <http://startalk.umd.edu>.

### **Why Study Chinese?**

For many Westerners, China is somewhat of a mystery. Yet the Chinese civilization is over 4,000 years old, and Mandarin Chinese is the most widely-spoken language in the world with over a billion people. Not only that, but the Chinese economy continues to grow at a rate that leads some to believe it could soon surpass the United States as an economic superpower. The economic futures of both countries are intricately intertwined, and from this point on, those who speak Mandarin Chinese are a major asset to employers of companies doing business with China or wanting to tap into the Chinese market.

The ability to speak Mandarin Chinese gives individuals more than just an impressive credential on their resumes. China and Taiwan both offer exciting travel opportunities, and travel is much easier if you can speak the language. Learning Chinese opens doors to a fascinating new culture with thousands of years of history. Whether your interests are in business, history, architecture, music, or cuisine, knowledge of Chinese language and culture will enrich and inspire students personally, professionally, and academically.

### **STARTALK Curriculum**

The 2011 curriculum will be updated to ensure continued relevance for returning participants and adherence to STARTALK best practices. Our program is theme-based and follows the model articulated in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, with components that address Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities.

In-class, online, and community activities will focus on actively integrating communication with an awareness of Chinese cultural practices, products, and perspectives, some of which are only accessible through the target language.

Specific activities and formative classroom assessment measures will address learning goals outlined in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*. A variety of learning activities will address the interpersonal, interpretive and presentational modes of communication and students will engage in ongoing reflection through our online community on Ning.com.

Participants will be placed into one of three levels: beginner, intermediate or advanced. Class sizes are small, with a projected student-teacher ratio of 9:1. Upon completion of the program, we expect students to know and do the following:

- **Beginner Level:**
  - Understand everyday words, phrases and questions about themselves and their personal experiences when people speak slowly and clearly
  - Ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics
  - Use simple phrases and sentences to talk about themselves and their surroundings
  - Read phrases and write simple notes comprised of 100 characters (simplified or traditional Chinese)
  
- **Intermediate Level:**
  - Understand more complex sentences and short passages about their social and academic experiences when people speak slowly and clearly
  - Use more complex sentences to describe their social and academic experiences
  - Interact with people in different social contexts by using appropriate words, phrases, and sentence structures
  - Read and write more complex sentences and passages using 250 characters (simplified or traditional Chinese)
  
- **Advanced Level:**
  - Understand longer spoken passages at normal speed and follow some broadcasting programs
  - Read passages excerpted from the media on familiar topics
  - Express ideas and feelings more freely in writing
  - Engage in cross-cultural thinking and interaction
  - Negotiate face-to-face interactions, as well as other formal and informal speaking encounters
  - Read and write more complex sentences and passages using 500 characters (simplified or traditional Chinese)
  
- **All Levels:**
  - Appreciate and understand typical Chinese cultural artifacts and social practices
  - Compare and contrast Chinese and American culture
  - Develop attitudes conducive to appreciating intercultural differences
  - Locate resources in Chinese both online and in the community that will be of continued value and interest

**NOTE:** Instructors are aware that students learn differently and come from a variety of educational backgrounds. Curriculum design will be differentiated to provide opportunities for success to a diverse group of learners. Small groups will be used to facilitate interaction and individualized attention, and all activities will be devised with an additional task built-in for students who finish early. The social networking component gives students who may not be as vocal in class the opportunity to interact at their own pace, which in turn builds confidence in class. Instructors will use a variety of informal formative assessments catering to different learning styles and class levels, and instruction will be adapted based on the results.

#### Sample Class Activity

- **Step 1** – Essential lesson vocabulary will be introduced, and each student will create several note cards with the Chinese word on one side and a pictorial representation on the other.
  
- **Step 2** – Students will practice these words using their flashcards. Then, they will warm up by playing "password" in small groups. In this game, one person draws a card and uses circumlocution in Chinese to explain the word as best they can without ever saying it. Students will negotiate meaning and try to guess the term, asking the clue-giver questions for clarification. All students will take turns guessing and giving clues.

- **Step 3** – Students will be provided with "scenario cards" depicting target culture situations, such as things that could happen when visiting China (getting lost, needing information on a restaurant, making a purchase, etc.). These scenarios will be related to the vocabulary practiced in the password game, which will be fresh on the students' minds. Students will assume roles to act out and resolve these scenarios in small groups, periodically changing groups and situations to gain experience with a variety of peers and topics. The language facilitator and instructor will roam the room to assist struggling students. Props will be included to stimulate conversation and reduce stage fright.

### **STARTALK Program Goals**

1. To enable students to achieve beginner, intermediate and advanced language proficiency in Mandarin Chinese.
2. To develop students' understanding of Chinese cultural practices, and compare them to students' own cultural practices.
3. To provide content that integrates communication and culture, and a curriculum that is aligned with STARTALK standards.
4. To provide immersion instruction that is activity-based and interactive, and addresses the needs of a diverse community of learners.
5. To use a variety of authentic materials and supporting technologies to develop the three modes of communication and to enhance student learning and motivation.
6. To adequately assess student learning in a thorough and meaningful way, with verifiable evidence of outcomes.
7. To provide a safe, effective and friendly learning environment.
8. To provide adequate administrative and institutional support in order to ensure the success of the program.