



Texas Awarded STARTALK Grant for Chinese Language Programs

The Chinese Language Teachers Association of Texas (CLTA-Texas) and the Dallas and Fort Worth Chinese Schools have been awarded a \$200,000 STARTALK grant to provide Student Chinese Programs and Chinese Teacher Workshops in Texas in 2008. Both of the Student and Teacher Programs are supported by Texas Education Agency. This is the first time that Texas has received a STARTALK grant, one of the programs of the National Security Language Initiative announced by President Bush in 2006. STARTALK funding, administrated by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland, aims at increasing the number and expertise of students and teachers in critical languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Hindi and Urdu.

“The STARTALK grant will be a great help in advancing Chinese language education in Texas,” said Dr. Meng Yeh, the President of CLTA-Texas and a faculty at Rice University’s Center for the Study of Languages. The grant will be used to sponsor Ice Breaking Programs for middle and high students in Dallas. Each Ice Breaking Program offers a four-week Chinese language and culture course in June 2008 and is free for students. The goal of the Ice Breaking Programs is to enable student to gain Chinese language proficiency and culture knowledge through engaging communicative activities and culturally enriched experience. In addition, students will have the chance to enjoy a fun 4-day summer camp. The camp provides students with opportunity to use the skills they have learned in both real-life settings and friendly competitions to earn prizes, such as iPod nano’s. Texas STARTALK Programs follows the successful model developed by the Southern California Council of Chinese Schools (SCCCS), which was awarded the STARTALK grant in 2007. SCCC has provided assistance to Texas STARTALK programs.

STARTALK funding will also sponsor the Chinese Teacher Professional Workshop to improve K-12 teachers’ pedagogical skills. The workshop provides 90-hour instruction on topics, such as *Teaching Chinese as a Second Language: Methods and Approaches*, *Curriculum Design*, *Language Assessment* and *Chinese Language Structure*. In addition, the trainees can participate in a teaching internship during the Ice Breaking Programs to implement their lesson plans and thematic units designed in the workshop. The courses offered in the workshop are free for the participants and are recognized as subject credits for entering teacher certification programs. Texas STARTALK programs plan to recruit 100 students and 25 teachers in Dallas, according to Mr. Ardon Chang, Program Manager of the STARTALK Program and Principal of the Fort Worth Chinese School. For more information, please email tx-startalk@hotmail.com.