

# Learning Chinese on an e-Learning Platform

MyChinese360, like the name Molly Licalzi, is internationally known. Both the program, a Texas-based project that teaches American students Mandarin Chinese via webcams, and the Eastern Suffolk BOCES Administrative Coordinator for Curriculum and Assessment who is leading the movement in New York State for learning this world language, are achieving success in the first year of implementation here. The interactive online venture allows children to develop conversational skills while discovering the importance of Mandarin in today's world culture.



The need for America's secondary students to learn the Chinese language - which 15 years ago brought about disbelief in one local community when school administrators suggested it - is thought to be as important as the South Asian economy is significant. Every Chinese student studies English, but teaching American students Chinese has been slow coming. Among visionaries who saw the need were College Board members who sponsor a guest-teacher program with the Chinese government. MyChinese360, which the College Board has partnered with, provides a high-tech program drawing on China's availability of instructors. Currently over 40 schools nationwide are participating, including several in Pennsylvania, Texas, and Louisiana. Ms. Licalzi, on behalf of New York schools, is working in partnership with the founders of the online program and with instructors in Beijing. "It is," she said, "a clear demonstration of how the world is shrinking and global education is expanding."

This new way of studying abroad using cyberspace provides the opportunity for world language students to communicate with instructors via webcams, even though they are about 7,000 miles apart. The real-time classes consist of 10 secondary students, allowing for more one-on-one time, during the hour-long sessions.

Asked recently how districts can afford this instruction in a slumping economy, Ms. Licalzi replied that the \$660 cost per student per semester is a bargain when compared to bringing over certified Mandarin Chinese teachers.

The first district to be up-and-running with the opening of the 2010-11 school year was Babylon UFSD. Several others, including East Hampton UFSD, are starting in October, with more planning to begin when the course becomes credit-bearing. After successfully completing Mandarin I and II, students in the third year will create their own avatar and explore China's restaurants, order from menus, shop in stores exchanging currency, and stroll city streets asking for directions. For additional information on myChinese360, contact Ms. Licalzi at (631) 244-4269 or [mlicalzi@esboces.org](mailto:mlicalzi@esboces.org).

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