

# Ready, Set, Teach!

FUZHOU, CHINA

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## SABEH Goes to China

### Did you know...?

- SABEH has been leading teacher training programs in China since 2005.
- Fuzhou is considered a medium-sized city by Chinese standards— with a population of over 7 million.
- Chinese class sizes can be as large as 60 students.

### Inside this issue:

SABEH Goes to China	1
Getting Ready for Training	1
New Ideas	2
A Class Favorite	2
Getting Used to It	2
Using Authentic Texts	3
Time for Fun	3
Saying Goodbye	3

During the summer of 2015, I was one of twelve American teachers who had the opportunity to travel to Fuzhou, China, with SABEH (Sino-American Bridge for Education and Health). As the leader of the elementary school trainer group, I trained 79 Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language. Our capable colleagues at the Fujian Institute of Education supported this program logistically and financially.

My lessons taught about regionally celebrated holidays such as Day of the Dead, Mardi Gras, and St. Patrick's Day while focusing on ideas for teaching techniques the Chinese teachers could use in

their own classrooms.

I also emphasized SABEH's "Three Keys" for language instruction: Increase Comprehension, Increase Interaction, and Thinking Skills. The goal of these keys was to inspire a transformation from quiet classrooms to classrooms that foster communication and from places of memorization to places where critical thinking takes place.

Towards the end of the two week training, Chinese teachers taught sample lessons to show how they could blend American teaching techniques with the lessons in their textbooks.

On the final day, American and Chinese teachers performed in a talent show. Performances ranged from singing and dancing to puppet shows and humorous skits.

When it was finally time to say goodbye, there were few dry eyes in the room. Teachers from all over Fujian Province had made close bonds with each other and with their American trainers. Many Chinese teachers commented that the summer training was an experience they would never forget. I feel confident saying on behalf of all twelve American teachers that we feel the exact same way.

## Getting Ready for Training

American teachers had a few hours to set up classrooms a day in advance. In Chinese classrooms, desks are usually arranged in rows. Imagine the Chinese teachers' surprise when I rearranged the desks to make table groups of four people!

I posted index cards labeling as many things as possible in the classroom, such as the electrical outlet and the curtains. Chinese teachers could use the labels to teach themselves new vocabulary while getting ideas for how to use labels in their own classrooms.



It took some time to learn how to use the technology in the classroom!

## New Ideas

pre-assessment  
visuals  
KWL chart  
sentence starters  
labels  
background knowledge  
making connections  
content clues  
differentiation  
fold the line  
glossary  
think pair share  
modeling  
jigsaw  
thinking aloud  
Venn diagram  
story map  
partner vocabulary  
four corners  
talking chips  
cloze  
word wall  
word bank

Plano's taxonomy  
open-ended questions  
wait time  
interview  
board game  
class letter  
graphic organizer  
sticky questions  
rubric  
random calling strategies  
I do, we do, you do  
gallery walk

**These are the techniques I taught during my lessons.**

Before beginning the training, I surveyed the Chinese teachers to find out about which teaching techniques they already knew about and used in their

classrooms. I found that many people were familiar with cloze, word banks, and interviews, but they had never heard of the other ideas on the list.

During my training class, we used some of the techniques only once. Others we used over and over, discussing how it is possible to use the same idea for many different lessons.

Some of the ideas, such as KWL charts and Venn diagrams, were extremely popular. It turned out that some of the teachers' textbooks had Venn diagrams in the back, but they did not know how to use them!

Other ideas were met with a bit of resistance. Any activities that required moving around the room or having all of the students talking at the same time were not received as well as I had hoped. With class sizes reaching 60 students, the Chinese teachers were worried about logistics such as physical space, noise, and classroom management. A few of the ideas, such as using open-ended questions, seemed to be so new to the teachers that they were a little uncomfortable with the idea. At the very least, each teacher walked away with a few new ideas to try!

## A Class Favorite

One of the teachers' favorite techniques from my class was the word wall. I explained that word walls can be used in different ways. Some teachers create the word walls for the students so that students can look at the words for help with spelling.

I wanted to show them a different type of word wall— one for teaching vocabulary. Sometimes I added words to the word wall. Other days, I told the Chinese teachers to choose a chal-

lenging word from a text to put on the word wall. They had a choice of whether to explain the meaning of the word using pictures, words, or both. Throughout the training, teachers continued to add new words to the word wall. I often saw the Chinese teachers looking back at the word wall for help when they forgot the meaning of a word.



## Getting Used to It

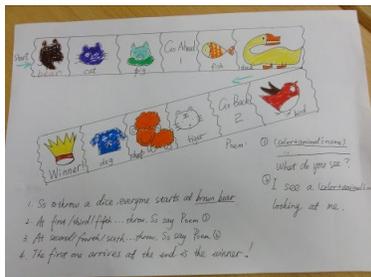


On the first day of the training, my classroom was quiet. The Chinese teachers usually just stared at me when I asked questions. Being used to more interaction with my students, I felt like I was delivering a lecture.

Little by little, I eased partner work and activities requiring spoken communication into class sessions. At first, the Chinese teachers were hesi-

tant. As they got to know each other better, they started to feel more comfortable speaking in English. I often saw them smiling and having fun during the activities. They gained confidence with their English skills and began to enjoy using class time to build relationships with other teachers. Although few people ever asked questions in class, more people started to actively participate during lessons.

## Using Authentic Texts



I discovered that most of the Chinese teachers were unfamiliar with creating teaching materials since they were used to teaching right from a textbook. During the training, they worked together to practice creating teaching materials based off of *Scholastic News* magazines.

As their final project, each Chinese teacher needed to plan an activity or create materials to use for teaching vocabulary or a grammar concept from a book by Eric Carle. The teachers then did a gallery walk to gain



more ideas for how to teach English using the same book.

Thanks to the generous support of a Learning & Leadership Grant from the NEA Foundation, I was able to give each Chinese teacher

a brand new picture book to take home!



## Time for Fun

Throughout the training, I had noticed that the Chinese teachers often stayed after class. Some of them played music, and others collected money while glancing at me secretly.

On the last day of the training, I found out what they had been doing. Each class had been preparing a performance for a talent show! Some of the classes performed traditional Chinese dance, while others preferred to dance to hip-hop music. Some classes had

practiced songs, and others performed puppet shows or skits. One class even put together a parody of a dating game show that closely resembled a stand-up comedy routine.

As each group had a chance to perform, my cheeks started to hurt more and more from smiling so much. What a fun way to end the training!



This class somehow purchased costumes and choreographed a dance in only a few days!

## Saying Goodbye



The end of the program was filled with picture-taking. Everyone wanted

to take a picture with the American trainers with her own cell phone. It was a small taste of what it might be like to be a celebrity!

On the last evening, the American trainers and representatives from the Fujian Institute of Education met together for an elaborate farewell banquet. Hopefully, we will meet again one day!



Members of the Fujian Institute of Education, such as Belinda, worked tirelessly to ensure the program would be a success.