

## World language opportunities guide CR student back to China



**Caesar Rodney High School** graduate Jared York, an alumnus of the Delaware Chinese Lincs program, now is enrolled in a university in China, where he also teaches English to children.

*Editor's Note: This month 28 Delaware public high school students are studying in China as part of the Delaware Chinese Lincs program, a four-week summer language, culture and STEM immersion initiative held in Hangzhou. While in China, these students will engage in Chinese language lessons, STEM-related field experiences, presentations on Chinese clean energy solution, and cultural presentations, along with excursions to Beijing and Shanghai. This guest piece is by Jared York, a 2016 graduate of Caesar Rodney High School in the Caesar Rodney School District, who participated in the program while he was in high school. Today, Jared is the only American in a regular, four-year program in his university in China.*

If I were to describe my connection to China in only one word, I would use “有缘.” This Chinese word lacks an adequate English translation but describes a situation similar to “fate.” My connection to China began when I was given the opportunity to take part in a Chinese language course at **Caesar Rodney School District’s Dover Air Force Base Middle School**. I am from a military family that moved quite often, and most-recently was stationed in Germany. The middle school I attended in Germany offered a German language elective, and I loved it. Needless to say I was devastated when I learned after

the abrupt move to Delaware that foreign language classes were not yet offered in many middle schools here.

Then in 8<sup>th</sup> grade I was chosen to be a “guinea pig” for an online Middlebury language course offered in Chinese. I jumped at the chance; languages have always been a passion of mine. The course went well, and I continued to self-study during the summer before my freshman year. I entered high school in Chinese II and was in Advanced Placement Chinese by sophomore year, receiving a score of 5 on the AP examination.

But the real test of my Chinese language skills came during the summer of my junior year when I received notice that I was accepted into the Chinese Summer LInCS program. I was beyond ecstatic at the prospect of being able to visit China, the country whose language and culture I had only read about and studied in textbooks. The trip was free and my two best friends were also accepted into the program. The time that we spent together made us closer and gave me some of my most unforgettable memories.

In China, we spent each day trying new foods and exploring the beautiful country by bus, plane, and on foot. We climbed the Great Wall, had Peking roast duck at a famous restaurant in Beijing, and went to the top of the iconic Oriental Pearl Tower in the skyline of Shanghai. I made it my rule to only use Chinese while I was there to communicate with locals, and by doing so, my grasp of the language skyrocketed in only a month’s time.

Upon returning I had so many feelings and reflections on the whole experience that I could not wait to share. I even gave a speech in Chinese to former Governor Jack Markell and to Chinese dignitaries from the Wanxiang Automotive company who funded the DE Summer Chinese LInCS program! But amidst all the excitement and celebrations of the success of the program, I continued to feel that something was pulling me back to China. It was sort of like the feeling you get before you go on a trip that just maybe you might have forgotten something very important like your house keys or wallet. That feeling continued to follow me throughout the majority of my senior year of high school.

That year, while many of my classmates were excited with the prospect of being accepted by their dream colleges, I only had one thing on my mind: money. I come from a large family. My mom, a single mother with seven kids, always puts our needs first, but I knew the talk about college was going to be emotional. After I was told I needed to find a job after high school to make money for college or go to a free community college, I felt very helpless and devastated. Then I remembered the affordability of college tuition prices in China. I started researching colleges in China and available scholarships.

I constructed a plan and followed it closely. First I had to take and pass at least the HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) level 4 language test to be eligible to even apply to a college in China. I decided to take the level 5 for scholarship reasons and ended up scoring 287 points out of 300. The college I was interested in was amazed by my score – not many foreigners who take the proficiency test are able to score so high – and encouraged me

to apply for the Chinese Government Scholarship. In the summer of 2016 I was admitted into Jiangnan University in Wuxi, China on a full ride scholarship to study international business and economics, of which my room and board, medical insurance, and tuition fees were covered for all four years. I also receive a monthly stipend of 2500 RMB, equivalent to approximately \$366, which may not seem like much but stretches quite far in China. I am usually able to put away at least 1000 RMB in the bank each month. I also found many opportunities for part-time jobs teaching children English in order to put more money into savings to help my family as well as use some to go out and explore China whenever I have free time.

While I occasionally look back and wonder what my life would have been like had I stayed in America, I am very content with the choices I have made and proud of what I have achieved. Not only will I graduate from college in four years with no college loan debt, I will also have accumulated some savings. I am grateful to all those who helped me get to where I am today, including my friend and now partner who helped me with the application process, and for the Chinese Summer LInCs program that gave me the experience of a lifetime and opened my eyes to all the many opportunities available to me. Oh, and I have finally found what I left behind in China those few years ago: my heart.

For more information on the Delaware Summer Chinese LInCs program, visit <http://dechineselincs2017.weebly.com/>.