



Jonas Clarke Middle School

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November 1, 2013

To: Paul B. Ash, Superintendent
From: Anna W. Monaco, Principal
RE: Clarke Student Trip to China, 2014

I am writing to request permission to send eighteen grade 8 students in good academic standing and four Clarke staff members to China from April 16, 2014, to April 27, 2014. The purpose of this trip is for students studying Mandarin at Clarke to experience both language and cultural immersion in China. International travel provides an authentic experience a local field trip cannot offer. Currently, we offer international trips for middle school students studying French and Spanish, and we would like to provide a similar experience for students participating in our growing Mandarin program.

Our vision for this student-to-student exchange program began in 2007 when the middle school Mandarin program was established in Lexington. Since this time, we have seen the Mandarin program grow at both middle schools from one section of 6th graders at each school to ten sections of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. In 2010, Dr. Flynn and Ms. Jane applied for, and received, a three-year grant from the Asia Society to supplement our Mandarin program with supplies, professional development, and technology. As a recipient of this grant, Clarke Middle School has been designated one of the 100 Confucius Classrooms in the United States and in 2012, the Asia Society matched us with a Chinese partner school.

In April 2012, we hosted the Jinhua Foreign Language School's Principal and Deputy Principal as they visited Clarke and Lexington. Together we traveled to Washington DC to the 2012 National Chinese Language Conference and began a discussion about a possible exchange of our students. In November 2012, I had the opportunity to visit the school in China, observe several classes, and meet with the administration to further our relationship and learn first hand about the experiences our students would have. After attending the Asia Society Confucius Classrooms Summit in Shanghai and visiting the Jinhua Foreign Language School in November 2012, Ms. Jane and I realized that an important first step would be to bring Clarke teachers to China to experience the culture and visit the school in Jinhua. In taking this first step, we have begun to build faculty and community support for this collaborative partnership. After our trip in June 2013, the teachers were eager to return to their classrooms to share with students and colleagues the lessons they learned on their journey through China. In addition, in February 2014 we are looking forward to welcoming a group of students from the Jinhua Foreign Language School and we are planning school and community events during their visit.

The time is right for us to consider traveling with 8th grade students to China to experience the culture, language, and customs. Having been to China twice in the last year, I am confident that the program and itinerary we have planned will enrich students' education by immersing them in the language and exposing them to Chinese cultures and traditions. I have worked closely with the educational travel company EF (Education First), to develop the itinerary, negotiate the price, and finalize the details of the trip. We are proposing that the trip take place over April vacation, ensuring that students and staff miss only two days of school prior to vacation week, and we have locked in a price of \$2,770 per student. In addition, Ms. Jane and I have been working on a fundraising plan that involves inviting principals and teachers from China to Lexington for the purpose of learning about education in the United States. This program has the potential to raise between \$3,000 and \$6,000 each year for the purpose of providing financial assistance to families who may be in need.

Over the last three years, there has been a tremendous amount of thought and planning that has gone into providing this extraordinary experience for our students. It is our vision that this trip will become part of our school culture and that our entire school community benefits from the exchange. During the 2014-2015 school year, we would like to include grade 8 students from Diamond as part of the Mandarin student exchange program.

Thank you for your consideration.