

Child Care Awards of Excellence 2016 Nomination in BC

Dear Evaluation Committee:

It is with great pleasure to nominate Ms. Cindy Cheng for consideration for the 2016 Child Care Award of Excellence (Innovation category) in recognition of her outstanding effort and creative approach in introducing traditional Chinese moral teaching to early child education.

“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” – this seemingly simple statement from Leo Tolstoy’s masterpiece “Anna Karenina” precisely pointed out one of the most important but often mostly understated feature of human society. The profoundness of this statement lies in that it holds true across the spectrum of societies with different culture background, economic status, religious beliefs and political systems.

When contemplating the implication of this statement on early child education, one cannot help asking this crucial question: can we extract the commonality of virtues that lead to a happy and fulfilled personal and family life and inject them into the mind of children who come from very different cultural and social background in this country. How do we teach these three-to-five year old, who are just beginning to explore and understand the complex world around them, the value of life, the existence of good and evil, and the difference between right and wrong without confusing them with all the rhetoric of political correctness and conflicting ideologies that have been plaguing the grown-ups’ world today?

Ms. Cindy Cheng and her Choo Choo Train early child care center seem to have a good answer to that.

My daughter, Claire, was fortunate enough to be among first group of kids to attend Ms Cheng’s daycare center. What attracted me first was the Chinese-English bilingual teaching with a focus on traditional Chinese culture. But I soon realized that Ms Cheng’s work goes far beyond teaching a second language and introducing culinary art of China. The introduction of “Di Zi Gui”, an ancient Chinese code of conduct that teaches children the moral lessons regarding family values, honesty, responsibility, respect and loyalty, was a good example. The uniqueness of Di Zi Gui compared modern Western moral teaching is that it exploited the conciseness and poetic feature of Chinese language for easy remembering and used a large number of ancient stories and folk tales for role modeling. Using the book of Di Zi Gui as a foundation, Ms. Cheng helps children remember and understand the meaning of the moral lessons and desired conducts through stories, stage plays, songs, pictures and movies that reinforce the verbal teaching. She has compiled and invented various learning materials such as flash cards and role-play games to make the learning more effective and fun for children.

Letter of Nomination

Ms. Cheng's work does not stop at teaching and caring for children in her daycare facility, she also actively involves parents in her daily work. Every time a parent goes to pick up or drop off a child, she will take time to explain to the parent her teaching plan, the progress in the class, and her observation of the child. She gives warm encouragement whenever a child remembers to implement the knowledge and lessons learned during the day, but also provides candid advices regarding areas that need further improvement. She constantly reminds us that a consistent message between the family and the school goes a long way to assure the positive outcome for both teaching and parenting.

By focusing on teaching virtues that are emphasized in Chinese culture, but are also beneficial to the wellbeing of family and society in general, Ms. Cheng is setting an excellent example of putting effective moral education in early childcare. My daughter graduated from her daycare more than a year ago, but I am still very grateful for her dedication to the goal of raising every child to be a decent human being, who understands that there are universally accepted values on human integrity. I will always remember what she often said to me that the world in which these children are growing can be unpredictable and dangerous, filled with temptations and frustrations. The best that we as parents or teachers can do to protect our children is to surround their young hearts with love, faith and positive thoughts. These things will form their safe harbor, which can shield them from the storm of life and allow them to draw energy and set the direction towards a happy and fulfilled life.

Jim Huang, Ph. D, P. Eng

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