

Abacus Culture Being Popular in Silicon Valley

Is this an interest, mission or fatalness? Under the condition of different views and opinions, abacus and mental arithmetic culture has been popularized in Silicon Valley, today's key city of high -tech. This is a coincidence and also a result of the association's hard work. At the early days of the development of computer, it was bean! that computers were locked in the safe of company. Abacus was the magic weapon if computers didn't work. Maybe this brought an opportunity for spreading abacus and mental arithmetic in the city of computer.

Silicon Valley attracts talented persons from allover the world. Among them there are many engineers and starters who are Chinese descents. The percent of Asian descent population is not low in that area, it is easy for people there to recognize and accept abacus. Because their ancestors experienced the period of using abacus, Chinese outstanding culture tradition are rooted in their minds. In the following I will introduce the practice of popularizing, grade -evaluation and academic exchange, which are tasks of each director and teacher of The Association, volunteer parents, students and I, as the first director of The Sino -America Association of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic.

I. Popularizing

The first object of the Sino-America Association of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic is to advocate the development of abacus and mental arithmetic and promote culture exchange. Abacus seems to be a history term in today's mathematics education in U .S .A. Although there was counting tool similar to abacus in Europe in the early age, it had been forgotten in the western society. However, in Asia it has never been forgotten even in the age of computer popularizing. Especially abacus and mental arithmetic popular in 1980s, a continuation of abacus culture, has become a new method to develop children's intelligence and reform mathematics teaching.

Therefore, we focus on introduction of abacus and recognition of abacus and mental arithmetic at first. We publicize abacus and mental arithmetic on the basis of education of Chinese School. The Association is composed of teachers of abacus and mental arithmetic in the Chinese Schools and people who support it. We try our best to take part in the activities of the community, such as introducing how to use abacus, model performance of abacus and mental arithmetic, providing abacus handcrafting. The Association also actively participates in the Chinese Celebration, the Spring Festival Performance in English School and Chinese School, the Mid -moon Celebration and the Day of Children's Art of the community every year .In recent years, The Association also had performance of mental arithmetic, short play *Abacus ancestors* and relay of mental arithmetic as a unit of calculation among six Arts Performance in the Memorial Services for Confucius on the Teacher Day in the area of San Francisco.

It is very important to train excellent teachers for the development of abacus and mental arithmetic. Since 1996 we have held four sessions of training class for teachers, part of them have taught in Chinese schools. In addition, we were invited to introduce the history and development children's summer camp held by The Association of Chinese Schools in north California State.

We had a popularizing performance in Ciji Chinese school in Los Angeles. We also held ordinary teaching seminar irregularly.

II. Grade –evaluation

In 1994, with the support of Boai Chinese School and The Association of Chinese schools in North California State, I began to regularly hold grade -evaluation of skill in abacus and mental arithmetic every year .In 1996, The Sino-America Association of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic was founded and held the third grade-evaluation. In 1999 Examination Hall in Los Angeles in South California was set. In 2000 grade -evaluation in Zhusuan was added.

Grade -evaluation has won trust of parents and other organizations because of its strict and fair practice. The aim to evaluate is to measure children's level. After each evaluation we will set new reference as a standard to pro- mote. The practice proves that you can success if you try your best, which is the motto to stimulate parents, students and us.

We try to encourage students who make progress. We not only give qualifier a piece of certificate and cup, but also hold an awarding activity. The students performed Play *Oh, my god! Power is off*, which cited proof of mental arithmetic in ancient book; Play *The story of abacus*, which told the story of abacus ancestor; Play *Abacus and mental arithmetic class*, which showed various activities in the classroom, Comic Dialogue *Ancient time and nowadays*, which told the similarity and difference between ancient and today's counting tool. All these plays had topics on abacus and mental arithmetic. These activities stimulated student's interest of study and got support and praise from their parents.

We should give appreciation to every Principal of Chinese Schools and other associations in the area of San Francisco. They, acting as honored guests, took part in the awarding ceremony and encouraged children. Parents, who shared happiness with their children, were pillar of all activities.

III. Exchange and demonstration

The Association is still in the primary stage, so academic exchange and demonstrations are very important for its development, they are essential ways to open eyes and learn from others. In1998, The Association invited Ms. Xiao Lilan to give a speech, held discussion meeting with parents and children, had mental arithmetic demonstration. These activities gave experts, teachers, students and parents opportunities to share teacher's result and parents' happiness.

In 1999 we visited Taibei and Gaoxiong, took part in. The Mental Arithmetic and Mathematic Contest of Jingzhun Cup and The International Meeting of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic in 1999 in Taibei. We are all happy for fruitful results. The visit tested students' performance, exchanged teacher's experience and had helpful discussion. It was also a happy trip of folk tradition and culture”.

After that, we began to prepare for The Millennium International Contest and Academic Seminar of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic in August 2000 .The Contest was held in the Meeting Hall of Billmore Hotel in Saint Takelala City, then we had a Get -together at the Asromar

Meeting Center near Menterry Bay, children sang, played musical instruments, performed Chinese Kong - fu, Had short play and exchanged gifts, we also had a teacher seminar and sight - seeing.

In July 2001, we participated in Abacus and Mental Arithmetic Contest and Discussion in Shenzhen and Guangzhou with a delegation. The delegation also visited the Zhusuan association in Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Zhejiang, Shanghai and Beijing. Zhu xian, the director of Chinese Zhusuan Association, entertained us in Beijing. The delegation visited Huangshan Mount, Qiandaohu Lake, and Suhang, Shanghai, The Summer Palace, The Great Wall and Chengdawei Zhusuan Museum. The travel increased children's knowledge.

With the suggestion of Mr. Lin baocai of The Research Association of Chinese Zhusuan, The Association held The First Session of All round Contest and Academic Seminar of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic and Mathematics of World City Cup in August 2002, in order to popularize this work, during the meeting we held a three-day exhibition of ancient abacus and other related things in Saint Hersy Children Discovery Museum. Ms. Mengping from Shenzhen Zhusuan Association and Mr. Wudashipu from Nagoya, Japan, provided part exhibition things .The Association also had abacus hand-making activities by parents, students and volunteers. Children contester had demonstration in the Museum.

3 – Arithmetic All-round Contest and Academic Seminar were held in the Meeting Center in Saint Takelala City. Guests were from ten areas, including Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Taibei, Gaoxiong, Tokyo, Nagoya, Toronto, Los Angeles, Portland and San Franchisco. The Contest was live broadcast on big screen. All guests and parents were able to watch the contest, which was helpful for people to understand Abacus and Mental Arithmetic Contest.

During the Seminar teachers and excellent people discussed the reform of abacus and mental arithmetic teaching, argued influence of abacus and mental arithmetic on intelligent agreement, the seminar came to a successful conclusion after warm discussion.

Courtesy:

(The author is the director of the Sino-America Association of Abacus and Mental Arithmetic in U.S.A.)