

# LAKE PLACID NEWS

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## **EYE ON EDUCATION: Chinese exchange students experience Lake Placid schools**



Lake Placid High School and Chinese-exchange students from the Shang Xue Chuan Qi private school get to know each other in the LPHS library Friday, Feb. 8. (News photo — Griffin Kelly)

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LAKE PLACID – A group of Chinese exchange students stood in a big circle with Lake Placid High School students in the school library. They all took turns tossing a plush globe around and saying “Hello, my name ...” in Mandarin. It translates to “Ni hao, wo juh ...”

After every “Ni hao,” there was a nervous giggle from the American students, not entirely sure if they were saying it correctly. The Chinese students have names such as Gao Rui, Lu Chenghan and Cai Yuyao, but in the United States, they shared their western names – George, Jason and Kimi, respectively.

Recently, Round Lake Campus at North Country School and LPHS partnered to host 18 students from the Shang Xue Chuan Qi private school in the city of Jinhua in the Zhejiang province of China. For two weeks, the exchange students audited American classes, worked on the North Country School farm and went ice skating.

On Friday, Feb. 8, the Chinese and LPHS students met in a cultural exchange effort. Bonding seemed to have started almost immediately with boys from each country giving each other fist bumps. After saying “hello” in each other’s languages, the students divided up into four groups to get to know each other.

Shang Xue Chuan Qi Principal Zhu Qingyun (Shirley) sat with one of the groups. At first, it looked similar to a middle school dance with Chinese students on one side and Americans on the other.

“I’m going to suggest something,” Shirley said. “Can we sit mixed together?”

The students readily swapped seats.

Shirley told the Lake Placid students how school is different in China. There, students don’t raise their hands high in the air if they want to ask a question. Instead, they place their elbows on their desks and bend the arm in a 90-degree angle. Before students enter a room, they bow. It’s not a deep or grandiose bow, just a small nod to signify the entrance. She had one student, Zhou Qingyang (John), show off the type of uniforms students wear in China – a snazzy blazer and slacks combo. There are four different uniforms throughout the year, Shirley said.

The Americans asked standard questions such as “Do you like it here?”, “How is America different from China?” and “Do like the food here?”

The Chinese students are still working on their English, so most of their answers were short – “Yes,” “It’s fun” and “I like french fries” were just a few of their answers.

Then the Americans asked questions such as “If you were an animal, what would you be?” and “What’s something Americans do that you don’t necessarily like?”

John couldn’t find the words for the latter question so he acted it out, standing on his chair and then lying on the table as if he was sleeping. Lake Placid student Anthony, who’s from Taiwan, translated and said, “Some students don’t sit in their seats properly.”

Lui Yufan (James) said it can be difficult adjusting to people’s accents in the U.S.

“Just trying to understand what people say,” he said.

China recently celebrated its New Year and the start of its Spring Festival. Shirley said this was an opportune time to plan an exchange trip.

“Most Chinese families are just eating and getting together, which is, I think, a little bit of a waste of time,” Shirley said with a laugh. “This is the best time to get in the schools. It lets our children know how American students learn and what their lives are like.”

Xu Huiqiang (Jerry) said he likes how the exchange program gives him the opportunity to learn English.

James added, “It’s good for making friendship with local students and understanding American culture.”

LPHS Principal Theresa Lindsay said the school was thrilled to invite the Chinese students.

“(Shang Xue Chuan Qi) has done these types of programs before,” she said, “and we’re hoping that we could do it in the future, too, and plan a trip of our own.”

Round Lake Campus Director Peter Bullock said these types of exchange programs are great for cultural education and help break down stereotypes among people from different countries.

“It reminds me of this old quote that goes, ‘We may misunderstand, but we don’t miss-experience.’”

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