

# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE APRIL 8, 2019

## WAH MEI SCHOOL

*Application No.:* LBR-2018-19-030  
*Business Name:* Wah Mei School  
*Business Address:* 1400 Judah Street  
*District:* District 4  
*Applicant:* Kelly Ng, Development Manager  
*Nomination Date:* February 14, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Gordon Mar  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Established in 1974, Wah Mei School is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to providing affordable Chinese-English bilingual multicultural education and early care programs for children and youth in San Francisco. Wah Mei means “Chinese-American” and holds historic significance as the first and longest serving bilingual preschool in the city. Wah Mei School was borne out of a growing Chinese immigrant experience and as part of California’s Chinese American civil rights movement. Formed by a group of parents, bilingual educators and community activists, Wah Mei paved a way for bicultural education after the landmark Supreme Court decision in Lau vs. Nichols of 1974 that legalized bilingual education in public schools.

Originally conceived as a private elementary school, it opened with 14 kindergarten children at the corner of Lake Street and Arguello at St. John’s Presbyterian Church. However, when it was apparent that the more pressing need was for quality preschool education, Wah Mei modified its program to that of a bilingual preschool. Wah Mei moved to the Campfire Girls Building at 325 Arguello Boulevard in 1976, and to its present site in 1978.

Wah Mei maintains programming that promotes the integration of Chinese and American cultures. Initially started to serve the education needs of children recently immigrated to the United States, Wah Mei evolved to be an inclusive and supportive community for all, helping to bridge language and literacy development among students from a diverse range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as diverse cognitive and linguistic abilities. Their programs support and nurture language literacy in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. In order to meet the needs of every section of the community, 50% of enrollment is reserved for children of low-income families with subsidized tuition. Presently, Wah Mei operates four programs for children and youth aged 2 years 9 months to 14 years old: Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School Program and Summer Camp. They serve more than 260 families each year.

The property is located on the northwest corner of Judah Street and 19th Avenue in the Outer Sunset neighborhood.





## OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

### **CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?**

Yes, the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

25 Lake Street from 1974 to 1976 (2 years)  
325 Arguello Blvd. from 1976 to 1978 (2 years)  
1400 Judah Street from 1978 to Present (41 years)

### **CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the Outer Sunset neighborhood's history and identity.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- Wah Mei School has contributed to the history and identity of the Outer Sunset neighborhood and San Francisco.
- Wah Mei School is associated with the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols* of 1974 that legalized bilingual education in public schools. Wah Mei School was founded by a group of prominent Chinese American parents, bilingual educators, and community activists.
- The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status of "B" (Properties Requiring Further Consultation and Review) due to the age of the building, which was constructed in 1908, for the purposes of California Environmental Quality Act review.
- Throughout its 45-year history, Wah Mei School has been featured in a number of articles, publications and documents including, but not limited to, the following:
  - Wah Mei Director Irene Dea Collier and Head Teachers interviewed on KSFX Radio Community Hour "What is Bilingual Education?" February 1980.
  - "Wah Mei Seeks Funds For Permanent Site." *East/West*, June 17, 1981.
  - "Wah Mei School: Growing Up Bilingually." *Asia Week*, August 13, 1981.
  - "Wah Mei School Began to Provide Both Remedial and Enriched Classes." *East/West*, November 28, 1984.
  - "Wah Mei Preschoolers, Aged 3 to 5, Learn English and Chinese Together." *East/West*, December 11, 1985.
  - "Community Involvement in the '80s." *The Catalyst*, Fall 1985.
  - Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee published *A Bilingual Manual for Preschool Parents*, 1985.
  - The Wah Mei School Songbook published by Ms. Dorena Lee and Chinese Teachers Betty Nascimento and Grace Lam, 1985.
  - Head Teacher Ms. Helen Yee published her children's picture book *My Grandfather and Me*, 1985
  - Chinese Teacher Betty Nascimento was interviewed about bilingual education and Wah Mei School on "Chinese Journal" KTSF Channel 26, March 1991.
  - Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee was interviewed about bilingual education on "Dupont Gai" KFRC Radio, March 1991.
  - "City's Oldest Chinese American School Enriches Local Kids: Sunset Preschool A Success Story." *Sunset Beacon*, April 1995.





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- “Parents Fight to Stop Antenna Over Preschool.” San Francisco Examiner, February 6, 1997.
  - “Bilingual Preschool Featured in Parade.” Asian Week, February 22, 1997.
  - Wah Mei Director Irene Dea Collier published her young adult books Chinese Mythology 2001 and Chinese Mythology Rocks!, 2011.
  - Wah Mei School featured in the Chinese Historical Society of America’s traveling exhibit Chinese in the Sunset, November 2017–November 2018
  - “迎學習熱潮 華美周末中文班擴張” [Welcome Expanded Weekend Chinese Learning]. World Journal, September 2018.
  - “華美中文學校日落區開課” [Wah Mei School Expands in the Sunset]. Sing Tao Daily, September 2018.
- Wah Mei School has been recognized and honored numerous times by the California State Assembly and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for its contributions to the city, having received certificates of honor and letters of commendation from Barbara Boxer, London Breed, Willie Brown, Ed Lee, Carmen Chu, Fiona Ma, Bill Maher, Eric Mar, Kevin Shelley, Katy Tang, Philip Ting, Scott Wiener and Norman Yee. The Board of Supervisors declared March 19, 1994, and May 9, 2014, Wah Mei School Day in San Francisco.

Wah Mei School was nominated in 1982 as an exemplary bilingual program to the U.S. Department of Education by its local branch. That same year, Director Irene Dea Collier was an honoree at an “Outstanding Women” reception sponsored by the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee has been well recognized with receipt of the First 5 San Francisco Excellence in Teaching Award 2017, Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Award Honoree 2017, Ernest M. Pon Memorial Award 2006, San Francisco Childcare Providers Award 2003, and The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT) Teacher of the Year Award 1983.

This year, Wah Mei teacher, Ms. Lee, was honored for 40 years of service and dedication to bilingual education and teaching excellence. Weekend Chinese School Director Ms. Lori Liao is a three-time recipient of the Association of Northern California Chinese School Exceptional Educator Award in 2008, 2011 and 2016.

**CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes, Wah Mei School is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Wah Mei School qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

**Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:**

- A bilingual and multicultural learning environment.
- A mission to serve the needs of the community and provide quality education opportunities and access to all students.
- Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School, and Summer Camp programs.
- Commitment to serving low-income students.
- Signage.





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### **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Bilingual (Chinese/English) education.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Wah Mei School currently located at 1400 Judah Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager  
Legacy Business Program





# Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE APRIL 8, 2019

WAH MEI SCHOOL

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Application No.:</i>	LBR-2018-19-030
<i>Business Name:</i>	Wah Mei School
<i>Business Address:</i>	1400 Judah Street
<i>District:</i>	District 4
<i>Applicant:</i>	Kelly Ng, Development Manager
<i>Nomination Date:</i>	February 14, 2019
<i>Nominated By:</i>	Supervisor Gordon Mar
<i>Staff Contact:</i>	Richard Kurylo legacybusiness@sfgov.org

## ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR WAH MEI SCHOOL, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1400 JUDAH STREET.

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on April 8, 2019, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore





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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Wah Mei School in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Wah Mei School:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- A bilingual and multicultural learning environment.
- A mission to serve the needs of the community and provide quality education opportunities and access to all students.
- Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School, and Summer Camp programs.
- Commitment to serving low-income students.
- Signage.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Wah Mei School on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Bilingual (Chinese/English) education.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on April 8, 2019.

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Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –





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OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
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## Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2018-19-030  
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**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years? ☒ Yes ☐ No

25 Lake Street from 1974 to 1976 (2 years)  
325 Arguello Blvd. from 1976 to 1978 (2 years)  
1400 Judah Street from 1978 to Present (41 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community? ☒ Yes ☐ No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms? ☒ Yes ☐ No

**NOTES:** N/A

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** February 20, 2019

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 4



City and County of San Francisco

**GORDON MAR**  
馬兆明

February 14, 2019

Regina Dick-Endrizzi, Director  
San Francisco Small Business Commission  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 110

Dear Regina,

I would like to nominate Wah Mei School as a candidate for the Legacy Business Registry. Established in 1974 as part of the Chinese American civil rights movement, Wah Mei, which means "Chinese American", is a community based nonprofit, dedicated to providing affordable Chinese-English bilingual and multicultural youth education and early care programs.

Wah Mei is the first and longest serving bilingual preschool in San Francisco, whose mission is to serve the needs of the community and provide equal education opportunities and access to all students. Half of the families receive full or partial tuition subsidies.

Wah Mei is part of the rich Chinese cultural heritage in the Sunset, which developed after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act ending legalized racial segregation in San Francisco. Today, as cultural erosion and gentrification threatens the community, we need to preserve our anchor institutions, especially affordable early care and education providers like Wah Mei.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Gordon Mar".


Gordon Mar

## Section One:

### Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:		
Wah Mei School		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
Maelig Morvan President, Wah Mei School Board of Directors		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:	
1400 Judah Street San Francisco, CA 94122	(415) 665-4212	
	EMAIL:	
	info@wahmei.org	
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
http://www.wahmei.org/	https://www.facebook.com/wahmeischool/	https://www.yelp.com/biz/wah-mei-school-san-francisco

APPLICANT'S NAME	
Kelly Ng	<input type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE	
Development Manager	
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:
1400 Judah Street San Francisco, CA 94122	(415) 665-4212
	EMAIL:
	

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):
C390377	C02696976

OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff	
NAME OF NOMINATOR:	DATE OF NOMINATION:



## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
25 Lake Street (St. John's Presbyterian Church)	94118	Sept. 1974
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Sept. 1974 — Sept. 1976	

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
325 Arguello Boulevard (Campfire Girls Buidling)	94118	Start: Sept. 1976 End: Sept. 1978

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
1400 Judah Street (Calvary United Methodist Church)	94122	Start: Sept. 1978 End: Present

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

KELLY NG

Name (Print):

2/1/19

Date:

Kelly Ng

Signature:



## **WAH MEI SCHOOL**

### **Section 4: Written Historical Narrative**

#### **CRITERION 1**

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

Established in 1974, Wah Mei School presently located at 1400 Judah Street is a 501(c)(3) community based nonprofit dedicated to providing affordable Chinese-English bilingual multicultural education and early care programs for children and youth in San Francisco. Wah Mei 華美 means “Chinese-American” and holds historic significance as the first and longest serving bilingual preschool in the city. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing and high quality bilingual multicultural environment that promotes children’s development while building a supportive community for families.

Wah Mei School was borne out of a growing Chinese immigrant experience and as part of California’s Chinese American civil rights movement. Formed by a group of parents, bilingual educators and community activists, Wah Mei paved a way for bicultural education after the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols* of 1974 that legalized bilingual education in public schools.

Originally conceived as a private elementary school, it opened with 14 kindergarten children at the corner of Lake Street and Arguello at St. John’s Presbyterian Church. However, when it was apparent that the more pressing need was for quality preschool education, Wah Mei modified its program to that of a bilingual preschool. Due to difficulties with the site, Wah Mei moved to the Campfire Girls Building at 325 Arguello Boulevard in 1976. The following year, Wah Mei received an eviction notice and moved to its present site at the corner of 19th Avenue and Judah Street in 1978.

Since its inception, Wah Mei has maintained programming that promotes the integration of Chinese and American cultures. Initially started to serve the education needs of children recently immigrated to the United States, Wah Mei evolved to be an inclusive and supportive community for all, helping to bridge language and literacy development among students from a diverse range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as diverse cognitive and linguistic abilities. Our programs support and nurture language literacy in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Classes are conducted concurrently in both English and Chinese so the children develop proficiency in both languages. In order to meet the needs of every section of the community, we reserve 50% of enrollment for children of low-income families with subsidized

tuition funding from the California Department of Education and the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education.

As Wah Mei celebrates its 45th anniversary year, this same commitment to bilingual education in a multicultural setting exists today. Presently, Wah Mei operates four programs for children and youth aged 2 years 9 months to 14 years old: Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School Program and Summer Camp. Wah Mei's first year began by serving 14 students; today we serve more than 260 families each year.

Wah Mei School has operated continuously in San Francisco for 45 years and requests consideration for listing on the Legacy Business Registry. Wah Mei has been established at its current rental site for over 40 years and seeks permanency in the Sunset. We are pursuing the purchase of the property to stabilize our childcare space, preserve and protect our standing as a cultural anchor, and continue to serve our community of San Francisco families in need of high quality care. We have also been in search of additional preschool space to ensure programming is secure in the Sunset District. The Legacy Business Program would help Wah Mei School secure a fair term and price for a rental site and enable us to serve the community for another 45 years to come.

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

Wah Mei School has not ceased operations in San Francisco since its founding in 1974.

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

Wah Mei School is a nonprofit organization.

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

Wah Mei School is a 501(c)(3) community based nonprofit organization governed by a Board of Directors. Wah Mei Board members provide leadership and strategic guidance for our programs with fiduciary responsibility to uphold the highest standards of Wah Mei's mission and values. This includes its educators, care providers, parents and students at the Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School and Summer Camp programs. Our Board of Directors consist of community members and parents of present and past students of Wah Mei School. Board members serve three-year terms and may extend their years of service according to, and in recognition of, the agency by-laws.

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please**

**use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation demonstrating the existence of Wah Mei School for 45 years is included in the Legacy Business Registry application.

**f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

Wah Mei School's current location, 1400 Judah Street, is the site of the original Calvary United Methodist Church, built in 1908. The church closed its doors in 2013 due to a dwindling congregation. While the building remains, the church sanctuary and dining hall are underutilized resources. Since 1978, Wah Mei School has rented the basement space of the church and outdoor playground area to operate its preschool program with four classrooms and administrative space in the parsonage.

## **CRITERION 2**

**a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.**

Wah Mei School is proud to be the first and longest serving bilingual preschool in San Francisco. With the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, laws that required the segregation of Chinese in schools, public spaces and neighborhoods where Chinese could live were also abolished, ending more than 60 years of legalized racism and discrimination. The Sunset District became a new, affordable option for Chinese people wanting to move away from the crowded tenements of Chinatown.

Today, the Sunset has a rich culture and identity, which Wah Mei community members are active in preserving. The Sunset is a vital destination for Chinese heritage – one of three such neighborhoods in San Francisco, after Chinatown and the Richmond District. Wah Mei School, through its bilingual multicultural education programs ensures the long term viability of Chinese American cultural identity in the face of continued cultural erosion and gentrification in San Francisco. As Wah Mei strives to build on its inherent value and ongoing contributions to the community by expanding its child and youth development programs for more low-income and working families, it achieves stronger viability and creates the possibility of service to the community for years to come.

**b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

Wah Mei School has a history of participating in and supporting community events such as the San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade in Chinatown, Sunday Streets Sunset/Golden Gate Park and the Cherry Blossom Festival in Japantown, as well as co-sponsoring a number of

educational and cultural events with other community groups such as the District 4 Supervisors Candidate Forum in September 2018 and Sunset Community Town Hall in January 2019; together with the Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center, Sunset Youth Services, Asian Women's Resource Center and the Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco.

Wah Mei School was featured in the Chinese Historical Society of America's *Chinese In the Sunset* Exhibit that traveled through various parts of San Francisco from November 2017 to November 2018, showing at the Chinese Historical Society of America in Chinatown, Sunset Recreation Center, San Francisco Public Library at the Main Branch and Ortega and North Beach branches. The exhibit illuminated the history of racial restrictions preventing Chinese and other people of color from living in the Sunset, how the 1960s civil rights movement and subsequent legislation removed the restrictions, how social attitudes changed, and how different perspectives within the community has led the Sunset to become the vibrant community it is today.

**c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

Throughout its 45-year history, Wah Mei School has been featured in a number of articles, publications and documents including, but not limited to, the following:

- Wah Mei Director Irene Dea Collier and Head Teachers interviewed on KSFJ Radio Community Hour "What is Bilingual Education?" February 1980
- "Wah Mei Seeks Funds For Permanent Site." East/West, June 17, 1981
- "Wah Mei School: Growing Up Bilingually." Asia Week, August 13, 1981
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- Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee published *A Bilingual Manual for Preschool Parents*. 1985
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- Wah Mei School featured in the Chinese Historical Society of America's traveling exhibit *Chinese in the Sunset*. November 2017–November 2018
- “迎學習熱潮 華美周末中文班擴張” [Welcome Expanded Weekend Chinese Learning]. World Journal, September 2018.
- “華美中文學校日落區開課” [Wah Mei School Expands in the Sunset]. Sing Tao Daily, September 2018.

Wah Mei School has been recognized and honored numerous times by the California State Assembly and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for its contributions to the city, having received certificates of honor and letters of commendation from Barbara Boxer, London Breed, Willie Brown, Ed Lee, Carmen Chu, Fiona Ma, Bill Maher, Eric Mar, Kevin Shelley, Katy Tang, Philip Ting, Scott Wiener and Norman Yee. The Board of Supervisors declared March 19, 1994, and May 9, 2014, Wah Mei School Day in San Francisco.

Wah Mei School was nominated in 1982 as an exemplary bilingual program to the U.S. Department of Education by its local branch. That same year, Director Irene Dea Collier was an honoree at an “Outstanding Women” reception sponsored by the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee has been well recognized with receipt of the First 5 San Francisco Excellence in Teaching Award 2017, Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Award Honoree 2017, Ernest M. Pon Memorial Award 2006, San Francisco Childcare Providers Award 2003, and The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT) Teacher of the Year Award 1983. This year, Wah Mei is pleased to celebrate and honor Ms. Lee for 40 years of service and dedication to bilingual education and teaching excellence. Weekend Chinese School Director Ms. Lori Liao is a three time recipient of the Association of Northern California Chinese School Exceptional Educator Award in 2008, 2011 and 2016.

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

Wah Mei School was founded by a group of prominent Chinese American parents, bilingual educators, and community activists. Among them are:

- The Honorable Lillian Sing – retired Superior Court Judge and the first Chinese American female judge in California.
- The Honorable Julie Tang – retired Superior Court Judge of San Francisco.
- Ling-chi Wang – Civil rights activist and Professor Emeritus in Asian-American studies and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.
- Frances Lee – former Chinatown Community College Director.
- Lisa Tang Shek – retired school principal of the San Francisco Unified School District, at the Treasure Island K-8 School and the Chinese Education Center Elementary.
- Alan S. Wong – former YMCA Director.
- The Rev. Wesley Woo – Associate Pastor at St. John's Presbyterian Church, where Wah Mei School was first located in the Richmond District. He was also integrally involved in starting

the Richmond Max-Center (Richmond Area Multi-Services or RAMS). RAMS and Wah Mei were among the first services for the then-newer Chinese population moving into the Richmond District.

- Al Sing Yuen – retired lifelong educator, he served in the San Francisco Unified School District as Principal of Winfield Scott Elementary (now Claire B. Lilienthal School), Principal of Sutro Elementary, and also Vice Principal at A.P. Giannini Middle School.
- Jane Chang Tom – Asian Art Commission.

Former Wah Mei Director Irene Dea Collier was a member of the Mayor’s Advisory Council on Childcare in June 1982 and went on to establish the first Chinese Immersion Program at West Portal Elementary, and taught at Presidio Middle School. San Francisco Board of Supervisors President Norman Yee, Supervisor Gordon Mar and former Supervisor and Board of Education member Eric Mar graduated their children through Wah Mei’s preschool program. Also among our parent alumni are Rosina Tong, Executive Director SFUSD Enrollment Placement Center and former Principal at Chinese Immersion School at De Avila; Wendy Cheong, Principal at Chinese Immersion School at De Avila; and Liana Szeto, Principal at Alice Fong Yu Alternative School. Lenora Lee, Dancer, Choreographer and Artistic Director, is among Wah Mei School alumni. Over the years, our school has been visited by Jane Kim, Carmen Chu, Katy Tang, Jessica Ho, Norman Yee and Mark Leno.

Wah Mei School’s Annual Spring Gala brings together community members and Wah Mei key stakeholders including Wah Mei School founders, board members, parents, alumni, teachers, staff, elected officials and Bay Area business and community members. Attendees have included Ed Lee, Carmen Chu, Norman Yee, Eric Mar, Jasmine Lee and Crystal Lee, Miss Chinatown USA 2018 and 2010 respectively.

**e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

Wah Mei School is a deep part of the fabric and history of the local Sunset District community. Wah Mei is an anchor institution that has served generations of San Francisco families and has a commitment to serving all children, youth and families across a diverse socioeconomic and cultural spectrum. To ensure all families have access to our high quality bilingual programs, we enroll about 50% low-income families with full or partially subsidized tuition with funding from the CA Department of Education and the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education. We provide a universal lunch program to all students in our preschool as part of our total education program; providing children with access to food can help remove barriers toward school success and lead to improved learning and life outcomes. Recently, Wah Mei was awarded a preschool expansion grant from the CA Department of Education that will allow us to serve an additional 35 subsidized children, increasing access to high quality early care and education for low- to moderate-income families.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

While we serve children, youth and families from across San Francisco, Wah Mei School has a commitment to serving low-income and working families. Sixty percent of the children we serve are Chinese, 21% mixed ethnicity, 16% other (including Filipino, Latino, African American), 2% are Caucasian. 70% of the families' home language is other than English. Wah Mei's play based curriculum emphasizes rich Chinese heritage, culture and traditions bolstered daily with core Chinese-English bilingual programs. We prepare our children to be school-ready global citizens, in a fun and developmentally appropriate environment. Our unique mix of language, culture and high quality early care and education keeps Wah Mei School thriving, with a consistently long wait list.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/ structure/ site/ object/ interior?**

Wah Mei School's present location at 1400 Judah Street is the original Calvary United Methodist Church, built in 1908. The building is classified by the Planning Department as Category A (Historical Resource Present) with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act.

**h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

If relocated or shut down, the community would be impacted by losing the oldest and longest serving bilingual preschool in the city, with roots going back to 1974 and the Chinese American civil rights movement in San Francisco. The absence of Wah Mei School would result in the loss of a nonprofit organization that has served thousands of San Francisco families at all income levels and helped the Chinese American community across multiple generations. The longevity of our relationships with Wah Mei School families is evidenced by the intergenerational cycle of enrollment and participation; many parents themselves were Wah Mei graduates and their children are now sharing the same preschool experiences. A third of the teaching staff joined this community as parents, having graduated their children through the preschool or Weekend Chinese School programs. Wah Mei School is an anchor institution that has positively impacted generations of children, youth and families over four decades of high quality bilingual education and programs.

### **CRITERION 3**

**a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

Wah Mei School's mission has always been to serve the needs of the community and provide equal education opportunities and access to all students. Wah Mei accomplishes that by expanding our bilingual programs and offering affordable child and youth development opportunities for more San Francisco families including Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School Program and Summer Camp.



**Preschool:** Established in 1974, Wah Mei's Preschool serves 81 children aged 2.9–5 years old daily. Our program prepares children to be school-ready global citizens by providing a bilingual play-based curriculum that contributes to their growth in all areas of development: language, social, emotional, physical, creative, cognitive and nutrition. We operate year round, full-day and part-day programs to serve all working families and offer a mixed-income early care and education environment, reserving 50% of enrollment for children of low-income families.

**Weekend Chinese School:** Opened in 1981, the Weekend Chinese School provides Chinese language development and cultural appreciation for 3 to 14 year olds. Current enrollment is 140 students from San Francisco and the greater Bay Area. Held on Saturday mornings, students are exposed to and learn Mandarin and/or Cantonese in a youth development environment that introduces Chinese culture and history.

**After School Program:** Started in the 2018-19 school year, the After School Program currently serves 10 public school students (K-5th grade) primarily attending Jefferson Elementary School and Alice Fong Yu. The program provides homework assistance, creative and language arts, science/math, outdoor recreational activities and Chinese language development.

**Wah Mei Summer Camp:** Serves 50 K–5th graders using youth development principles and practices to provide a bilingual summer day camp experience that includes arts and crafts, outdoor recreation, sports, literacy and language development.

Our programs have economic and social benefits for children and families, and the community at large including helping narrow achievement gaps and providing critical development supports to help children succeed in school and beyond.

**b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

Wah Mei School is committed to deepening its mission of bilingual multicultural education and extending its programs to serve more low-income students across a continuum of ages 2.9 –14 years old. Wah Mei's vision is a bilingual pathway for all students within a child and youth development framework. We offer a truly mixed-income (State/City subsidized tuition plus full tuition enrollment) bilingual and multicultural environment. Wah Mei School is proud to be chosen to receive funding from the CA Department of Education and the San Francisco Office of Early Care and Education. We have received the highest ratings on the many program and administrative quality audits and reviews required by these funding sources on an annual and biannual basis.

**c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical**

**characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

The interior and exterior of Wah Mei School has changed very little in the past 45 years. Most people readily identify and associate Wah Mei School with its exterior signage and “the pink church on the corner of 19th and Judah.” As a licensed preschool, Wah Mei’s high quality program provides for the three basic needs all children have: (1) protection of their health and safety; (2) building positive relationships; and (3) opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience. Our child care environment is arranged per these factors of space both indoors and outdoors, with furnishings and materials that are developmentally and appropriately sized for children. We offer a universal lunch program made daily in-house; parents and visitors often warmly remark that Wah Mei “smells like home.”

**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Not applicable.

ENDORSED  
FILED

In the office of the Secretary of State  
of the State of California

JAN 17 1974

EDMUND G. BROWN, Secretary of State  
By BILL HOLDEN  
Deputy

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION  
OF  
WAH MEI SCHOOL

696976

FIRST: The name of this Corporation shall be the WAH MEI SCHOOL.

SECOND: The purposes for which this corporation are:

(a) The Specific and primary purposes are to operate a bilingual and bicultural school for the education of elementary school age children within the educational, scientific, and charitable meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(b) The general purposes and powers are:

(1) To buy, lease, rent, or otherwise acquire, hold, or use, own, enjoy, sell exchange, lease as lessor, mortgage, deed in trust, pledge, encumber, transfer on trust, or otherwise dispose of any and all kinds of property, whether real, personal, or mixed and to receive property by devise or bequest;

(2) To borrow money and to contract debts, to issue bonds, notes, and other evidences of indebtedness, and to secure them by any or all of the property of this corporation, or to issue them unsecured;

(3) To enter into, make, perform, and carry out contracts of every kind for any lawful purpose and without limit on amount with any person, firm, or corporation; and

(4) To have and to exercise all the powers conferred by the California General Nonprofit Corporation Law on nonprofit corporations, as that law is now in effect or may at any time hereafter be amended.

Notwithstanding any of the above statements of purposes and powers, this corporation shall not except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the primary purposes of this corporation.

(c) No substantial part of the activities of this corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign (including the publishing or distribution of statements) on behalf of any candidate for public office.

THIRD: This corporation is organized pursuant to the General

Non-profit Corporation Law of the State of California and does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof and it is organized for nonprofit purposes.

FOURTH: The county in the State of California where the principal office for the transaction of the activities of this corporation is located is San Francisco County.

FIFTH: The general management of the affairs of this corporation shall be under the control, supervision and direction of the board of directors. The names and addresses of persons who are to act in the capacity of directors until the selection of their successors are:

Name	Address
Alan S. Wong	1280 Ellis, #12 San Francisco, California 94109
Julie Tang	471 4th Avenue, #4 San Francisco, California 94118
Wesley Woo	25 Lake Street San Francisco, California 94118

SIXTH: The number and qualification of members of the corporation, the different classes of membership, if any, the voting, and other rights and the privileges of members and their liability to dues and assessments and the method of collection thereof, shall be as set forth in the bylaws.

SEVENTH: The property of this corporation is irrevocable dedicated to educational, scientific, and charitable purposes meeting the requirement of Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code and no part of the net income or assets of this organization shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer or member thereof or to the benefit of any private individual. Upon the dissolution or winding up of the corporation, its assets remaining after payment of, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of this corporation, shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, foundation or

corporation which is organized and operated exclusively for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes which meets the requirement of Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, and which has established its tax exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. If this corporation holds any assets in trust, or a corporation is formed for charitable purposes, such assets shall be disposed of in such manner as may be directed by decree of the superior court of the county in which the corporation has its principal office, upon petition therefore by the Attorney General or by a person concerned in the liquidation, in a proceeding to which the Attorney General is a party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have executed these Articles of Incorporation, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1974.

Alan S. Wong  
Alan S. Wong

Julie Tang  
Julie Tang

Wesley Woo  
Wesley Woo

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF San Francisco ) ss.

On this 10<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1974, before me, Alfred L. Wong, a Notary Public for the State of California, with principal office in San Francisco County, personally appeared Alan S. Wong, Julie Tang, and Wesley Woo, known to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the within Articles of Incorporation, and acknowledged to me that they executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal on the day and year first above written.





A-4042 - 19<sup>th</sup> Ave, W. Side, N. of Judah St.      Methodist Church.













The Director of Wah Mei School, Irene Dea Collier, was sworn in as a member of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Childcare. Wah Mei School students were invited to attend and met Mayor Dianne Feinstein. 6/82



WAH MEE  
SCHOOL



**Now Enrolling  
Weekend Chinese Program**

Available in Mandarin or Cantonese  
Saturdays: 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

**現在招生  
華美學校週末中文班**

國語班和粵語班  
上課時間星期六上午九時至十一時半

**WAH MEI  
PRESCHOOL**























2014 Southwest Airlines® Chinese New Year Parade  
Wah Mei School sponsored by PG&E  
President's Award











Lillian K. Sing, municipal court judge, was a founder of Wah Mei School. Also in the distinguished list of founders are: Julie Tang, Community College board, Frances Lee, Chinatown Community College Director, Alan S. Wong, YMCA Director, Wesley Woo, minister.

## ASIAN WEEK



LILLIAN SING

## Lillian to be sworn into muni bench

Lillian Sing, the first Asian-American woman to be appointed to San Francisco Municipal Court, will be sworn in to her new job on Thursday, Oct. 15, at 5:30 p.m. at the rotunda of City Hall.

Sing, a former member of the city Community College board of trustees and a member of the Chinese-American Democratic Club, was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown on Aug. 26 after a year of review.

A reception will follow the ceremony.





Dr. Joshua Fishman, the nation's foremost authority on bilingual education, visited our school in December 1978. His visit was announced in the Chinese papers.



← 附圖為博士與本學校教師、學生及家長合照。由左到右：鍾懷，劉婉儀（教師），郭光耀（家長），菲士文博士，謝潔芳（行政主任），李美倫（教務主任）。

## 雙語教育家訪華美學校

（本埠訊）菲士文博士（Dr. Joshua Fishman）。是美國著名的雙重語言文化教育學者。今次來三藩市參觀雙重語言學校。特別抽空訪問華美學校。因為華美是一間由公立及私立支持合辦的雙重語言學校之一。華美學校專為列治文區及日落區的兒童而辦。亦是首期中英雙重語言學校之一。

菲士文博士現正繼續研究不同種類語言的教導。他特別指出除英文之外。並希望保持他們本國之語言。





WAH MEI CHINESE BILINGUAL SCHOOL RAFFLE

華美學校籌款獎券

1st Prize: Round trip to Hong Kong, Orient Charter Tours, Dates Open

2nd Prize: Weekend accommodations at Tahoe Donner

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頭獎：由海機構來回香港機票一張日期自擇

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叁獎：名貴玉耳環一對

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# Wah Mei Seeks Funds For Permanent Site

By TRACY HARRIS

SAN FRANCISCO — The Wah Mei School, SF's first English/Cantonese bilingual preschool, will present a benefit showing of "The Art of the Muppets" Saturday, June 27 from 8-11 pm at the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park. Funds from the benefit will be used toward establishing a permanent site for the school, which presently rents space in the Calvary United Methodist Church at 1400 Judah.

Wah Mei was founded in 1974 and has had three different locations since then, due to high rents and expanding programs. Today Wah Mei serves more than 60 students, aged 2-5, from all over SF.

## CAPACITY

"We're operating at our capacity," director Irene Dea Collier said. Wah Mei's students are broken into two groups, the half-day preschool classes and the full-day child care program. The students have diverse language and cultural backgrounds and come from all over SF, Collier said, adding that not all are Chinese or even Asian.

"Some have a strong Chinese background and come here to learn English. Others have a strong English background and come here to learn Chinese," Collier explained. "What we offer is truly bilingual education. The children learn from each other as much as from the teachers."

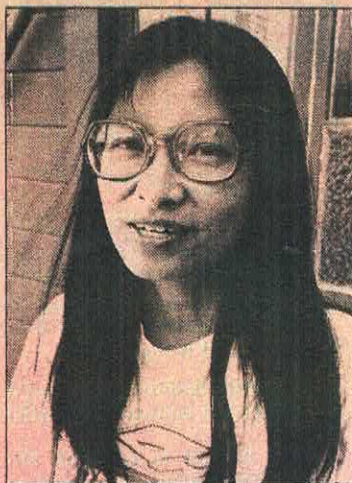
Like the students, Wah Mei's teachers are usually dominant in either English or Cantonese, though most are "fairly bilingual," according to Collier. Teachers use their dominant language in the classroom, so the students have a chance to refine skills, both their Chinese and English, and many of the English-speaking teaching aides learn Chinese from the children.

"It's good for the kids to see the English aides learning Chinese. It makes them feel Chinese is special," Collier said.

## BRIDGE

Part of Wah Mei's philosophy is to make the child's first school experience a bridge between the home and the public schools. Collier, who was born in China and came to the US when she was 5 years old, said she "went through the whole immigrant experience" herself.

The first day of school can be upsetting for any child, and Collier said these problems are compounded when the teacher does not speak the child's language or understand the child's culture, and if the child's parents have trouble communicating with the teachers.



Irene Dea Collier  
(Leland Wong photo)



Dorena Lee  
(Leland Wong photo)

At Wah Mei children are made to feel comfortable with their own bilingualism so that they will not be afraid to speak when they get to public schools, but also will not

forget their Chinese.

"In Europe, there's no problem being bilingual or even trilingual because the countries are all so close," head teacher Dorena Lee said.

"Our society is just getting used to bilingualism," Collier added.

Many children grow up ashamed that they or their parents speak Chinese, Lee continued, but she tries to encourage them to be proud of their Chinese language ability. On school field trips, she encourages the children to use English to ask questions or to talk to people at the place they're visiting.

## INSTRUCTION

A typical day at Wah Mei includes a gamut of activities. Singing, dancing and play activities are conducted in Chinese and English. Language basics such as numbers, the days of the week, and reading a calendar are taught in both languages. Older students also receive reading-readiness instruction in English to prepare them for public schools.

The students are broken down by age and ability—not language preference—into small groups for part of the day, and at other times the whole school joins in "family type" activities.

Cultural awareness is another part of Wah Mei's curriculum, but according to Lee includes more than merely acknowledging Chinese culture.

"A lot of times 'culture' centers around Chinese New Year. I don't like to emphasize that — that's not all there is to culture. We teach Chinese music and Chinese stories, but we try to expose the children to different cultures, not only Asian," she said.

One parent of a South American Wah Mei student visited the school in traditional costume and performed some native dances for the children, Lee said, adding that after the visit she stressed to the children that the visitor was after all, just another person, and didn't always wear native dress.

"Our program is academic but we stress socialization, communication, feeling good about themselves and being open to differences," Lee, born and raised in SF, said.

## NUTRITION

Though Wah Mei's students come from a variety of national and racial backgrounds they share at least one common interest — they all love to eat. Science and nutrition are an important part of Wah Mei's curriculum, and that includes teaching the children to cook (and eat) different types of food.

Only healthful, natural ingredients are used at Wah Mei, Collier said. The children have prepared pizza, tacos and salads as well as Chinese foods. Children cook in the classroom once a week, but breakfast, lunch and two snacks are served daily.

"If the children make the food themselves they're more likely to eat it," Collier said. "For example Chinese don't eat too many raw vegetables, and salads often end up on the floor when we serve them." If the children have the fun of "chopping, tearing and getting involved" in the preparation, she said, they will be more likely to eat the finished product.

Because of federal budget cuts Wah Mei will need at least \$3,000 to keep its nutrition program going next year, Collier said.

"The food program (including daily meals) is one of our most successful programs. We keep quality high and believe in cooking on site, but that takes money," Collier explained.

## SUBSIDIES

Wah Mei is funded through the state Department of Education, fund-raising, and tuition, which, including meals, costs \$120 a month for half-days, \$220 a month for the full-day program. Some state subsidies are available for low-income families. Wah Mei's budget this year totaled \$130,000.

Proceeds from the June 27 Muppets show will help continue Wah Mei's food program, and help finance establishing a permanent site for the school. Though Collier said the church in which they're presently located "has been very good" to them, they can never be sure of having a permanent home there.

A permanent site would also help Wah Mei expand its

programs, perhaps to include school-aged children, Collier said. This summer Wah Mei's is making its first attempt to program for older children with a bilingual science day camp that will run from June 29-Aug. 7, for children

aged 4-9.

Tickets for "The Art of the Muppets" may be obtained from Wah Mei, and cost \$25 for one adult, or \$35 for a family. For information on the fund-raiser or the summer science camp, call the school at 665-4212.



# Wah Mei School: growing

ASIAN WEEK

## English and Chinese taught at preschool

Edilberto G. Lim

At first glance, the cream-colored, immaculate-looking structure on the corner of the 19th Avenue and Judah Street strikes one as just another Methodist church. But the Calvary Methodist Church also houses in its basement a Chinese bilingual and bicultural preschool called the Wah Mei School.

As one enters the school's Judah Street entrance gate, children's laughter and outbursts of delight and excitement can be heard.

This preschool's history says that in 1973, the idea for Wah Mei School began to take shape in the minds of the Richmond Bilingual Committee, which consisted of community representatives and bilingual educators who were interested in promoting bilingual and bicultural education—Cantonese and English. Upon its establishment at its present site (the school pays rent to the church), Wah Mei became the first Chinese bilingual preschool in San Francisco, and has since drawn praise from parents for its academic curriculum balanced with a strong creative arts program.

Mrs. Irene Dea Collier, the school's director and a recent winner of the "Plumtree of the Year" award from the Association of Chinese Teachers, says: "Our student population is composed of children who come from homes that have either Chinese or English as their dominant language.

age.

"Through this school, we intend to create a learning environment that enhances both the home culture and that of the dominant society as well. We believe that in addition to academic skills, children need to be provided with situations at school that will enable them to achieve self-confidence, respect for others and skills of cooperation and sharing."

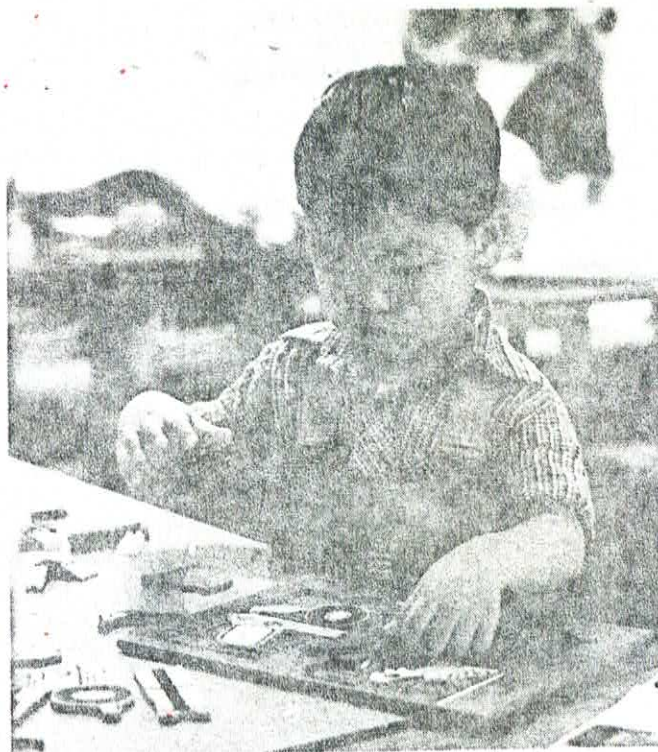
Many of the children at Wah Mei come from low-income families usually with both parents working full time, says Collier. "There is no one at home to take care of them."

"Around 60 percent are children of immigrants who have a limited knowledge of the English language. I'd say that linguistic concern is the primary reason for enrolling their children here. Parents want their kids to be bilingual. The Chinese-speaking parents want their children to learn how to speak in English because it is necessary, but at the same time not to neglect the family's Chinese heritage and culture, while the English-speaking parents are very much interested in having their children learn a foreign language."

At Wah Mei, the children, through their daily interaction with each other and with their teachers, are provided with a bilingual English-Cantonese experience."

### Three programs

Wah Mei serves children from



A Wah Mei preschooler assembles a puzzle.

Photo by Malcolm Collier

ages 3 to 5. It has three separate programs, two of which may be combined. These two are the State Preschool Program and the Private Program. Both programs offer the same educational emphasis; however, enrollment and eligibility requirements differ slightly.

The State Program is a free 3½-hour program funded by the California Preschool Program for children of low-income, non-English speaking backgrounds. Many children enrolled here come

from single-parent families. In this program, the parent(s) are strongly encouraged to be directly involved in their child's education by attending seven out of 10 parent workshops.

They also participate in the classroom two hours per month seven out of 10 months, as well as take part in fundraising events for the school.

The Private Program is a non-profit, half-day or full-day program that is funded through private tuition. Here, parents sign a contract with the school to respect school regulations regarding tuition payment, sign-in and sign-out procedures, and pick-up and drop-off schedules.

Like parents whose children are enrolled in the State Program, they also participate in the school's occasional fundraising activities like garage sales and movie showings. For the Private Program, the tuition fees are: \$120 for a half-day program, 8 a.m. to noon or 1-5 p.m., or \$220 for a full-day program, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The third program is the full-day Childcare Program, which is also state-funded and available for low-income families. Here,



Play at the beach with Wah Mei School.

Photo by Helen Lee

A teacher and two children assemble a puzzle.

Photo by Malcolm Collier



# up bilingually

August 13, 1981

parent participation is mandatory.

The preschool programs operate on a 10-month basis and follow the same calendar as the San Francisco Unified School District, while the childcare program is a year-round program, operating for 250 school days.

In addition to these programs, Wah Mei offers a tuition-funded Summer Science Day Camp, a bilingual, environmental approach to learning about the natural world for children ages 4-9.

For each of the six summer weeks, children explore a specific part of the natural world; for example, plants, trees and flowers (first week), insects (second week), bird life (third week), and so forth.

For these weeks, other activities are organized, involving science, Chinese language, art and music, plus, of course, field trips, which are clearly the most eagerly anticipated activity for the children.

"Through this program, we intend to make good use of summer as a fun-learning experience for these energetic kids," said Collier.

## Curriculum

Wah Mei's school curriculum and instructional program for preschool pupils consists of:

**Reading**—Learning the ABCs, writing their names, developing good listening habits, learning to recalling details in sequence, classifying objects and pictures.

**Mathematics**—Counting, recognizing and writing numbers, measurement, weights, shapes, time (calendar).

**Language Development**—Identifying common objects in both English and Chinese, finger plays, creative dramatics, rhymes and riddles, puppet plays, listening to stories and folk tales, and

A teacher reads a story to a small group. Photo by Malcolm Collier

encouraging the children to tell their own experiences and make up their own stories.

**Social Studies/Multi-cultural Education**—presenting books and toys from other cultures in a non-stereotyped framework and learning how to play and work together, thus accepting each other's differences.

**Physical Development**—developing muscles and training eye-hand coordination, incorporating a variety of games, relays, body movements set to music and free play.

**Science**—studying animals, birds, insects and plants with an ecological approach.

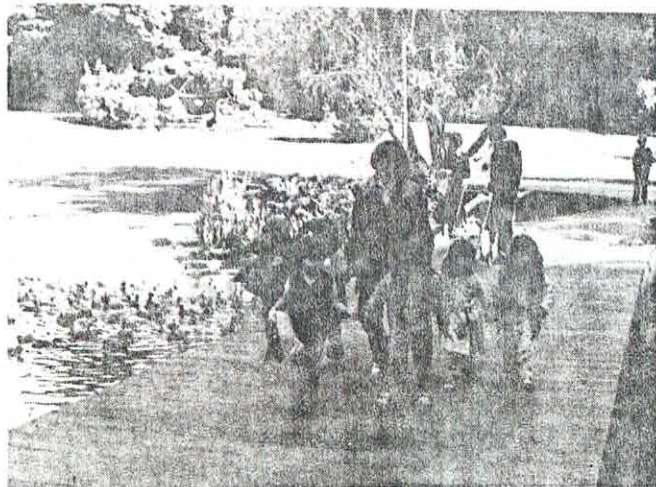
**Music**—teaching songs in



Field trips and free play are important parts of Wah Mei's program.







A Wah Mei class on a field trip to Strybing Arboretum in Golden

Gate Park.

Photo by Malcolm Collier

English and Cantonese, and exposing the children to a wide variety of music from classical to rock, from Chinese folk to contemporary music.

The Field Trip Program is believed to be important in the early years of the child in building concepts and knowledge of reality through which vocabulary is increased.

Field trips are scheduled once a week. At times, such trips are connected a unit under study; other times they provide the children outdoor play experiences in such places as Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach.

Wah Mei occupies 2,100 square feet and has four rooms for the half-day preschool programs, one spacious room for those enrolled in the childcare program

- equipped with individual sleeping cots for the kids to lie on during nap time, a long kitchen to prepare nutritious and well-balanced meals and snacks that the kids themselves help prepare, two bathrooms (four more will soon be added), and a good-sized cemented yard equipped with play structures designed and constructed by architecture students of UC Berkeley.

#### The first chance at school

"Not all of the kids adjust right away, though," says Collier. "Some kids who've lived in homes without other children find it strange and frightening to suddenly be taken here.

"Expectedly, they cry whenever their parents have to leave

them, and it takes the kids a week or a week and a half to get used to the new environment. Most view the school as another new experience to take part in."

Wah Mei tries to maintain a strict 1-6 adult to child ratio. The quality of this school's "personalized" educational program demands a small school enrollment of not more than 44 children on the site at any time. Ninety percent of the teaching staff are credentialed teachers with degrees in elementary or early childhood education.

The remaining teachers are those with either teaching credentials from Hong Kong, or are in the process of attaining their teaching credentials here. For the Summer Science Day Camp program, five dedicated, high school students from the CETA-funded Summer Youth Program serve as teachers' aides.

"Monetary rewards are not great for a preschool teacher," adds Mrs. Collier. "But our teachers are an extremely dedicated batch who find great satisfaction in being able to mold a child's intellectual and social development for the better.

"Preschoolers should be given varied opportunities to manipulate, experience and interact with learning activities provided by both teachers and aides. With a school environment such as this, children will not only be given a solid academic and social foundation, but they will also eventually leave the school with a yearning to learn further.

"It is important that a child's first learning experience away from home be a pleasant and enriching one."



# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## in the '80s

### *A Model Preschool in Two Languages*

LIKE OTHER PRESCHOOLS, Wah Mei's two-classroom facility in San Francisco overflows with toys and books. Alphabet trains and bright crayon sketches cover the walls. But in this school, every object and toy has two names—one in Cantonese and one in English.

Wah Mei School was the first Chinese-American bilingual school in the city. It was founded as an elementary school in 1974 by a group of Chinese professionals who felt their American-born children were lacking exposure to the Cantonese language and culture. The institution's 10-year history has been highlighted by accolades, including a nomination as a national model program for bilingual education.

Steve Quan, a business analysis supervisor in Chevron Chemical Company (CCC) headquarters, became involved with Wah Mei when his oldest son began attending the school four years ago. Shortly thereafter, he was elected the school-board president, which involves volunteering time at the school for monthly board meetings, budget preparation, fund-raising and other activities.

As president, Quan's main job is making sure the non-profit preschool runs as a viable institution. Thanks to contributions from Chevron and other donors, they are able to keep the school "in the black."

"Although we began as an elementary school, lack of space forced us to

switch to a preschool and day-care program," said Irene Dea Collier, director for the past seven years. Finding an appropriate site has also been a problem. "As a preschool, we've resigned ourselves to years in church basements."

Space shortage hasn't affected the school's popularity. Wah Mei has a waiting list of 200 to 300 children for only 72 places each year. "Some people have tried to apply for the school before their kids were born," Quan said.

A place in Wah Mei is worth the wait. Its unique approach to multicultural education brings together students from different economic and cultural backgrounds. Their goals are

not only to prepare the children for elementary school, but also to teach the values of both the Chinese and American cultures.

"Accepting the language is key," Collier said. "We teach them words through songs, rhymes and activities. Three to five years old is the optimal age to become bilingual."

Although many parents support bilingual education, not all can afford the \$350-per-month tuition. State grants provide some assistance for specific programs; but when the school needs to purchase a major article, the leaders turn to the local community and the business world for support.

*Steve Quan, president of Wah Mei school board, and Irene Dea Collier, director.*



Bruce Smith



# Wah Mei Preschoolers, Aged 3 to 5, Learn English and Chinese Together

The school, whose name means "Chinese" and "American," was started 11 years ago by a group of Chinese American community leaders with help from the SF

Foundation and a women's Presbyterian group. It was the first Chinese bilingual school in the city. The school began as a kindergarten with the idea of becoming an elementary school.

"They never found a real good location, so it changed into a preschool the second year, said Collier.

Prior to joining Wah Mei, she worked as an administrative assistant and teacher's trainer both in SF and in a Navajo reservation school in Arizona.

Her own three children, now aged six to ten, went through Wah Mei School and "graduated" at age five. Collier herself will be leaving at the end of December, with plans of pursuing her Masters Degree and involving herself

more with community-based organizations, such as The Association for Chinese Teachers.

The school is open from 8 to 5, and the bilingual program is in effect from 9 to 4. Two-thirds of the children attend only the morning or afternoon session, and 24 stay all day.

There are four certified preschool teachers and aides in each of the classrooms -- a one-to-six ratio. The different ages are mixed together so that "the older ones can learn responsibility in looking after the younger ones. Half the schooltime is given to each language.

Among the activities, said Collier, are "ABC's, counting, writing their name, teaching them to sit still and listen to a story... to develop their observation and memory skills. A lot of art, a lot of science, a lot of field trips."

For about the first year, she said, the children "will only answer back in simple words.

"It seems to happen about mid-second year: they suddenly become fairly fluent. It's like a baby imitating sounds. There will be some children who become completely bilingual, but other children who never seem to progress beyond the songs they sing."

Success, she explained, "depends on the confidence of the children ... how willing are they to make mistakes.... I would say 75 percent of the children do gain fluency. When they enter a regular school, they're strong academically but they often lose their bilingual abilities unless it's kept up."

Wah Mei, said Collier, is "not just interested in language development, but supporting students' self-image.

Multicultural and cross-cultural education is important.

"For example, public speaking. Many of them do very well in academics, but as far as getting up in front of a group.... It's not emphasized in the schools. So we're trying to encourage schools to do that. We start off getting them in front of the class to sing a song that everybody knows... or to talk about something in front of the class."

Asked whether it's hard for the preschoolers to adjust to Wah Mei, she said, "I think it's hard for a preschooler to adjust anyway, because for many of them it's the first time they've been away from their family."

## Wah Mei School Produces Video, Text, Songbooks

SAN FRANCISCO - Wah Mei School will celebrate the completion of several curriculum projects produced by its staff on Dec. 12 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

The projects include Helen M. Lee's *My Grandfather and Me*, Dorena Lee's *A Bilingual Manual for Preschool Parents*, Royce Bruce's video tape *Playing Together*, Pak Yu Kong's video tapes *Chinese Calligraphy* and *Chinese Painting*, and *Wah Mei School Songbook* by Grace Lam, Dorena Lee and Betty Chung Nascimento.

The school is located at 1400 Judah Street. 12/11/85 E/W



# City's Oldest Chinese American School Enriches Local Kids

## Sunset Pre-School A Success Story

By Shawna McCoy.

Chloe Wong was always ready to leave when her Mom came to pick her up from her other preschool. But, now that she attends Wah Mei her mother has to practically drag her home.

This could be a problem because her mother Jane Chin sometimes double parks and says her daughter hardly acknowledges her when she arrives because she enjoys the school, the kids, and the teachers so much.

Located at 1400 Judah street, at 19th Ave, Wah Mei is in the two room basement of the Calvary Methodist Church. There is the smell of food cooking, in a room with little tables and chairs, children's drawings on the wall and two clocks, one with English characters, the other with Chinese characters.

Founded in 1974, Wah Mei, located in the Sunset, was the first bilingual preschool in the city, teaching in both English and Cantonese. Now 70 children strong, it still remains popular with at least three applications for every open spot.

Setting it apart from over a dozen bilingual preschools that have organized in the city since, the non-profit preschool incorporates Chinese and American culture along with immigrant inclusion programs.

"The founders did a great job of laying down the ground work for Wah Mei which makes it what it is today," said Chin, president of the board of directors.

## Surfriders

Continued from page 12

sue around Noriega and Quintara streets. "According to Army engineers and the City of San Francisco, the ocean is going to

Three programs are offered for different levels of income, two of which are state-subsidized, for the 50 percent of students who are low income.

But to get money means applying for grants and annual fundraising. On April 17, "The World of Make Believe ... Only a Dream Away," will be the school's annual fund-raiser where there will be lunch, a raffle and a student performance.

Lupita Yee sends her 5-year old son Jordan to Wah Mei to expose him to Chinese culture as well as get a well rounded preparation for public school. "I want my son to learn Chinese in a bilingual school," Yee said. "The teachers are very nice, very patient and they're very structured."

Most of the children who attend Wah Mei are Chinese, both immigrants and US born, but the school encourages children of all cultures to attend.

Students come from the Sunset District as well as from around the City and Chinatown to attend Wah Mei. Some of their parents have only recently immigrated to the United States.

According to Lisa Quan director of Wah Mei, the school helps with the transition to a new society. A four page booklet explaining the school is in both English and Chinese, a monthly newsletter sent to parents is also in Chinese.

Teachers visit the home of each child enrolled to see where they are coming from and get to

Surfrider believes the long-term solution to environmental problems is education. This year, the chapter started a lecture tour of local schools, giving students a brief but comprehensive overview of the natural and man-made forces which impact the

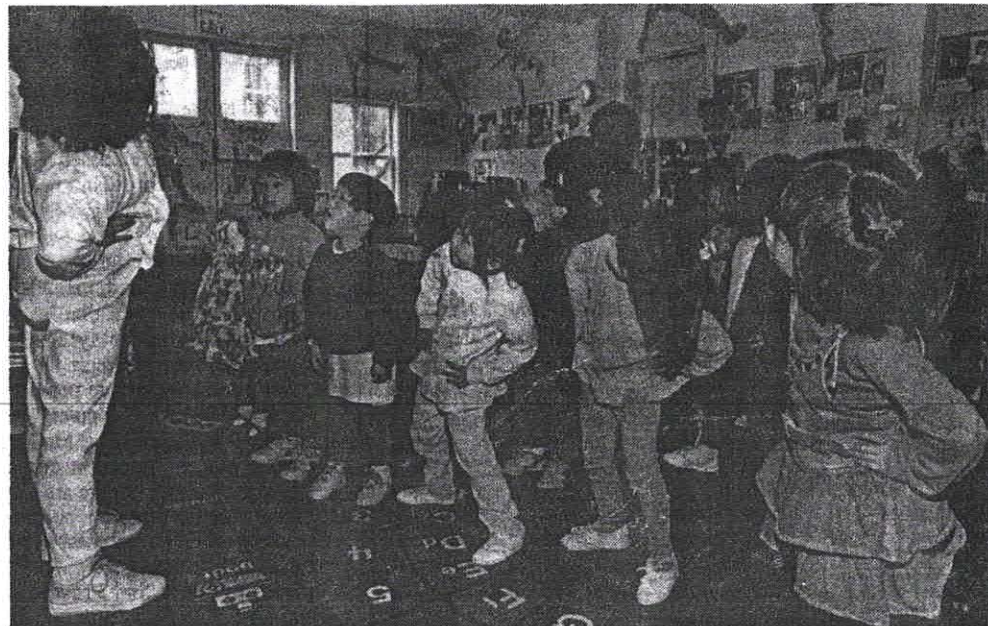


Photo: Christine T. Anderson

Three-, four- and five-year-olds at Wah Mei School on Judah Street learn English and Cantonese in a supporting environment and attractive atmosphere. Here the children are exercising and counting in Cantonese.

know them individually.

"People are different, not everyone needs the same thing," Quan said. "We work with children that have individual needs. With children who have individual cultural needs."

The school has always had one of the highest adult/child ratios in the City. There is one adult of every six to seven children.

The staff includes 10 teacher and teachers aids, as well as both parent and student volunteers, from both high school and college.

The "Teddy Bears Class Schedule," is designed for both half day and full day programs. The center is open till 6 p.m.

Students get to school between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning and can do puzzles, draw pictures or play table games.

Around 8:30 breakfast is served, cooked in house kitchen

by a full-time cook.

The children then break up into large groups to have singing, movement exercises, story time, etc. all in English. This program is also repeated in Chinese later in the morning.

Small groups break up to hone in on the individual needs of each child. These groups practice language and pre-read-

ness skills. After lunch, half day students go home and full day students repeat almost the same schedule except large groups do English and Chinese at the same time.

School statistics, over a four year period, show approximately 78 percent of the youngsters move on to public school and around 22 percent go to private.

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# WAH MEI NEWS



## Director's Letter

Our foggy Sunset microclimate is a sure sign that Summer is here! We are so proud and pleased to launch our first ever Wah Mei Summer Camp this year! For Kinder-5th grade school-aged children, the 8-week summer day camp highlights the importance of engaging children in fun and active enrichment activities that help mitigate the impact of Summer Learning Loss... and of course, it wouldn't be Wah Mei if the camp didn't focus on being bilingual.

We are excited to also share that our Weekend Chinese Program, enjoying continued success over 20+ years, has outgrown our Judah & 19th Street site. Wah Mei is partnering with Lawton Elementary School to locate our Weekend Chinese Program there starting Fall 2018. We are thrilled to advance a community partnership with this neighborhood SFUSD school as we continue to guide the organization towards program expansion and deepen our mission of bilingual education.

Our Summer edition newsletter includes a touching story of one of our long-term staff, Ms. Lori Liao in an article of perseverance, hard work, and the joys of Wah Mei! It's Wah-Mei-Zing!

  
Ben Wong, Executive Director  
[www.wahmei.org](http://www.wahmei.org)

## In this issue:

**01** Director's Letter

**02** Expanding Past Horizons

*Featuring: Adam Lam and  
Lori Liao*

**03** The Art of Giving:  
A Wah Mei Story

*Featuring: Lori Liao*

*Katie Quan graduated Wah Mei School in 1998 and is a guest writer for Wah Mei News. Her work is dedicated to community, art, and advocacy. [katiequan.persona.co](http://katiequan.persona.co)*

# Expanding Past Horizons

Since 1974, Wah Mei School's commitment to bilingual, multicultural education still rings true. While known for its Cantonese and Mandarin preschool program, Wah Mei services continue to expand. This year, we launch our inaugural Wah Mei Summer Camp. Long-time Weekend Chinese School Director, Lori Liao, and new Summer Camp Director, Adam Lam, give us a peek into their programs & views of multiculturalism outside of a standard school curriculum.

## Tell us about your programs.

**Lori:** Our Weekend Chinese Program offers Mandarin and Cantonese classes. We accommodate for all different levels and our lessons focus on speaking, listening, reading, writing, and Chinese culture and history. Our Weekend Chinese for Preschoolers program is centered around a play based curriculum. Each session is 16 weeks or 32 weeks and is held on Saturday mornings from September through May.

**Adam:** Wah Mei Summer Camp is a bilingual youth enrichment program that offers children from K-5 the opportunity to expand their language capability while exploring cultural diversity. No prior Chinese language skills are necessary to participate so don't miss out on this fun, engaging, and highly-enriched summer program. Camp runs from June 11 to August 18, 2018.

## How do you incorporate bilingual and bicultural education into classrooms?

**L:** I have been working with Wah Mei School for eighteen years, but I still feel like we have many more ways to explore how we teach Chinese. Rather than simply focusing on writing and reading, we want to make learning language more interesting for children. We do not assign homework – even if some parents request this. Rather, we encourage our students to listen and to speak. Because our world and our technology changes, our pedagogy should continuously change as well.

**A:** Our summer camp attracts a diverse range of youth who want a fun summer program that supports dual language exposure. We have “language

adventures” where program leaders intentionally promote bilingualism. With theme based projects, we hope to give them a taste of the Chinese language. However, the hope is that they do not see this as “school,” but accept all aspects of education as an overall “summer experience.”

## For Lori, your classes are on Saturdays and Adam, your sessions are during the summer. These are typically seen as “days for leisure,” but why should children have these programs where learning is continuous?

**L:** Many of our parents want their children to take in as much language as they can – even if they are enrolled in immersion schools. They want them to continue learning their Cantonese and Mandarin while practicing culture and traditions.

**A:** I've always enjoyed working with kids and seeing their development. Whether it's an *aha!* moment or helping them through a problem, I believe that is the most rewarding part. The summer camp is not only a great opportunity to give back to the community, but also give children a summer experience that goes hand in hand with a bilingual program. Children should always be learning and the summer gives them a unique opportunity to do so.

## What do you hope to accomplish for the future?

**L:** Our Weekend Chinese Program will be relocating to Lawton Elementary on September 8 as we will continue expanding upon our teaching methods.

**A:** I want to see our camp build upon a foundation where we can continue growing. We aim for not only a highly enriched program, but a safe place for children to build upon over the school year and beyond.

---

*Weekend Chinese Program begins on September 8, 2018 at Lawton Elementary School, 1570 31st Ave., San Francisco. To register, and for more information, email Lori Liao at [chineseschool@wahmei.org](mailto:chineseschool@wahmei.org).*

*Wah Mei Summer Camp runs from June 11 to August 3, 2018 at Chinese Immersion School at De Avila, 1250 Waller St., San Francisco. To register, and for more information, email Adam Lam at [summer@wahmei.org](mailto:summer@wahmei.org).*







# The Art of Giving: A Wah Mei Story

*By Katie Quan featuring Lori Liao*

While one might see her typing busily on a computer or running around taking care of Wah Mei operations, it takes only about three seconds to see that Ms. Lori Liao's smile makes the warmest of welcomes and the perfect cure to see on a cold, cloudy San Francisco day.

Born and raised in Taiwan, Ms. Liao studied apparel design in school, and eventually established a successful career as a real estate agent. After having children, she decided to stay home and tend to them. The family bought a new house and in her free time, she loved nothing more than seeing operas, enjoying the music and shows. Taiwan provided amazing opportunities to grow and blossom as a woman, as a mother, and as a person.

Eighteen years ago, little did she know her life would change with just one phone call. As her in-laws came to an age where care was needed, she and her husband decided to pack up their belongings and leave everything they had to come to the United States. Unfortunately, due to the poor economy in 2000, after selling their furniture and estate, and paying for numerous fees, they were left with only \$400 to start a new life for a family of five.

**“The first couple years in America, I had seven part-time jobs. Every day, no rest. Seven days a week. I worked at our laundry shop. I tutored. I took care of my children. I went to City College. I did my assignments. This was all very stressful, but there was no choice.”**

While income was difficult to attain, what frustrated her the most was learning English. As a former real estate agent whose primary method of communication is speaking, being unable to master English became a struggle. However, with help from close family friends, she attended City College for child development and English courses, helped her parents-in-law with their laundry shop, and work any other part time jobs they could manage.



One day, she dropped off her youngest child at Wah Mei when the school's office called her. *Anthony's mommy!* They chirped. A new Chinese School teacher position had opened up. They needed a Mandarin teacher and Ms. Liao, as a native speaker, was at least confident in her own language abilities. If she prepared well, teaching would be no problem. However, she learned quickly about teaching children. Laughing, she recalls the early days, "I had a testbook. Two and a half hours was not enough time for me! When students asked, 'Do we have recess?' and I said 'No. We don't have a recess.' The students were only five or six years old, but they said, 'Teacher, I hate you!' I learned later that recess had to be fifteen to twenty minutes and soon after, our relationship gradually became better."

## **Today, she is Wah Mei's Operation Manager and Director of the Weekend Chinese Program.**

Wah Mei Weekend Chinese School currently has more than 140 students all year long, and the enrollment is increasing. Since starting at Wah Mei, Ms. Liao received the Association of Northern California Chinese School Exceptional Educator Award in 2008, 2011, and 2016 and is leading ways to empower communal and collaborative learning.

"Children can learn multiple languages," she nods with

pride, "They know which teachers speak Mandarin and they know which teachers speak in Cantonese." She encourages parents to speak their native language with their children, "Speak to your children in your language and you can teach them your ideas, your family philosophy, and your family history. I talk to my kids a lot so they know where they come from."

Ms. Liao pauses to take a breath as she reflects upon her own life.

**"I want to be better. I don't  
want to complain and sigh. Life  
is hard, but life is beautiful and  
I am okay now."**

After all these years, I asked Ms. Liao what her favorite part about Wah Mei was and her answer brought tears to her eyes. "Wah Mei is a nonprofit and it helps both newcomers and low-income families. Parents can go to work and we will take care of their children. Wah Mei helps the community and I am very appreciative. When we came, we had no money, no income, but my children could go to school. That's why I stay at Wah Mei. Diana gave me a chance and after, I wish to help more people, more women like me. All of this comes from her and now, I continue this and help others too."

She refers to Wah Mei as a garden: "We can plant many flowers and trees. Teachers are like the gardeners – we water the flowers, feed them, teach them, and then finally when the time is right, the flowers will be moved. Wah Mei is their first school and so it's important for them have a good start in life. Then, they move on and we wish the best for each student and each flower."

---

*Today, Ms. Liao can be found working in Wah Mei's office. When she is not helping Wah Mei parents with any academic, financial, or personal issues of their own, she can be found tending to her family. Her oldest daughter, Tiffany Yu followed her path to teach Mandarin in San Francisco. Her second daughter, Jennifer Yu, works as a Registered Nurse and will be obtaining her MSN in 2019. Her son, Anthony Yu, will be graduating from college with a BA in Computer Sciences. For the first time in a long time, Ms. Liao can finally say she is home.*



## Our Mission

To provide a safe and nurturing high quality Chinese-English multicultural environment that promotes children's development while building a supportive community for families.

## Our Values

We appreciate and foster the unique attributes and experiences of each child and families. We are child centered and provide a safe, open environment for every child.

We are committed to maintaining trusting and collaborative relationships, and have a strong network of partners and supporters in our community.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values of Wah Mei School. We are committed to providing an emotionally and physically safe space for each of our students, their families, and our staff.



## Community Participation

Families are encouraged to participate in their children's educational program by becoming involved in classroom activities, fundraisers, special events, field trips, Wah Mei Board, and various committees.

**Wah Mei School is proud to be the first Chinese American bilingual preschool in San Francisco.**

Since our first class in 1974, our program has successfully helped children develop Cantonese and Mandarin capabilities. Our children also develop Chinese cultural appreciation through appropriate developmental activities that emphasize both learning and playing in a fun environment.

**Today, Wah Mei School offers a variety of program services providing a greater resource for children and families.**



**Wah Mei School**  
1400 Judah Street  
San Francisco, CA 94122  
[www.wahmei.org](http://www.wahmei.org)

**Phone:** (415) 665-4212

**Fax:** (415) 665-4116

**Email:** [info@wahmei.org](mailto:info@wahmei.org)

Wah Mei is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



# Wah Mei School





# Wah Mei School

## Preschool Program

Our preschool program provides a learning environment that emphasizes our rich Chinese heritage, culture, and traditions. We prepare children to be school-ready global citizens, in a fun and developmentally appropriate setting. We offer a play based curriculum where children are encouraged to creatively explore through activities including music, songs, art, and movement.

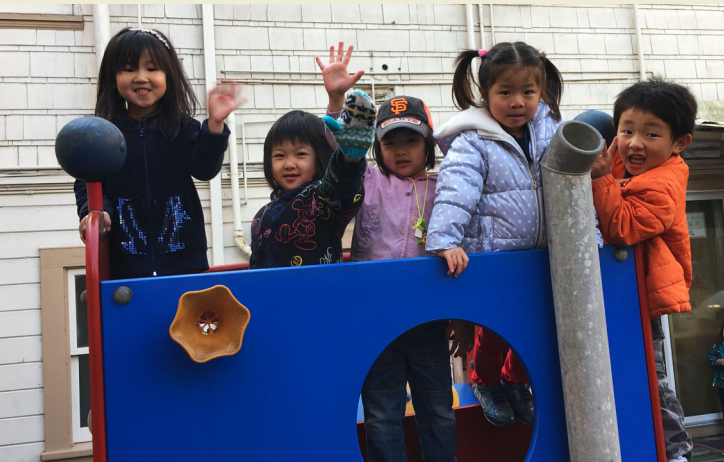
**Full Day Program:** 7:30am - 6:00pm

**Half Day Program:** 8:30am - 12 noon  
or 1:00pm - 4:30pm

We offer fee-based and subsidized programs for children aged 2 years 9 months - 5 years old. Wah Mei participates as a San Francisco First 5 Preschool for All program site.

Wah Mei serves breakfast, a hot lunch, and one afternoon snack daily. All meals meet USDA requirements and only wholesome foods are served.

Applications are accepted year round. Site visits are strongly recommended, please contact the school to schedule.



## Weekend Chinese Program

Cantonese and Mandarin classes at different levels are available. The program enrolls children 3 to 15 years old on Saturday mornings from September through May.



### Weekend Chinese for Preschoolers (Ages 3-5)

Activities are centered around a play based curriculum. Each session is 16 weeks. Parents may choose Cantonese and/or Mandarin

Cantonese: 9:30am - 10:20am

Mandarin: 10:30am - 11:20am

### Weekend Chinese Classes (Ages 5-14)

Conversation, reading, and writing skills, as well as the appreciation of Chinese culture and history are emphasized. Each session is 32 weeks. Parents may choose Cantonese or Mandarin.

Cantonese or Mandarin: 9:00am - 11:30am

For more information, email  
[chineseschool@wahmei.org](mailto:chineseschool@wahmei.org).



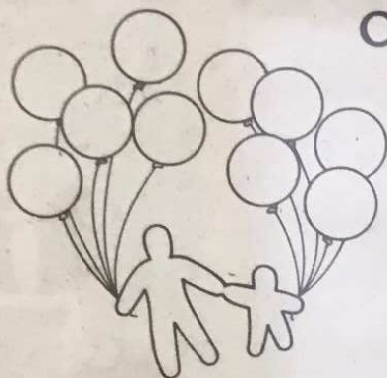
## Wah Mei Summer Camp

An exciting youth development program that offers children (grades K-5) exposure to Cantonese or Mandarin language while exploring cultural diversity. Activities are focused on team building and experiential learning, community adventures, and discoveries. No prior Chinese language skills are necessary to participate in this fun, engaging, and highly-enriched summer program. Camp is 8-weeks, or two 4-week sessions in the summer. It is "Wah-Mei-zing!"

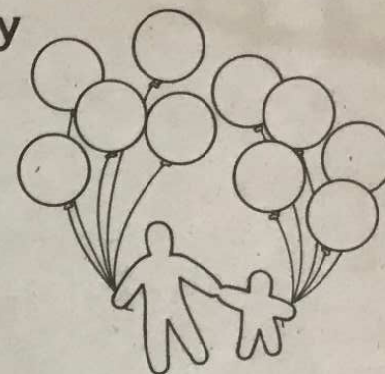
For more information, email [summer@wahmei.org](mailto:summer@wahmei.org).







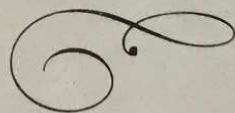
On the Occasion of its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
the  
State Department of Education's  
Office of Child Development



## Commends

Wah Mei School

for Caring Services to California's Children  
This 10<sup>th</sup> day of August 1982



Wilson Kille  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Francis L. Walker  
Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction



CITY AND COUNTY



OF SAN FRANCISCO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

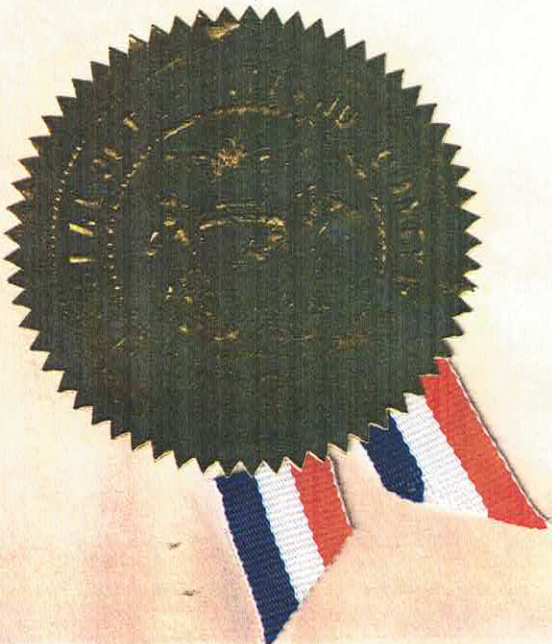
### *Commendation*

BE IT KNOWN, That the Board of Supervisors, at its meeting of the date shown hereon, on motion introduced by the subscribing Supervisor and unanimously adopted by the Board, the following commendation was duly authorized:



In recognition of your outstanding contribution to the City and County of San Francisco as a Founding Member of the Wah Mei School Board, in the provision of Chinese-American bilingual education to preschool age children. Your support of the Chinese-American community and your concern about issues relating to childcare is commendable.

On this Tenth Anniversary of the Wah Mei School, the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco applauds your efforts.



President of the Board

Wendy Nelder

Subscribing Supervisor

Wendy Nelder

ATTEST:

Clerk of the Board

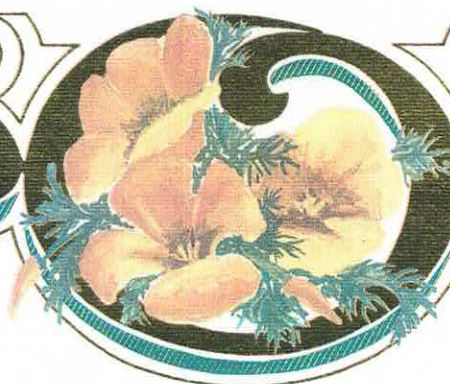
John L. Taylor

November 26, 1984

Meeting Date



# certificate of RECOGNITION



*Presented to*  
**WAH MEI SCHOOL**

**MARCH 19, 1994**

**IN HONOR OF  
ITS TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

On this day it is fitting that we pay special recognition to Wah Mei School as we celebrate its Twentieth anniversary.

On behalf of the Third Senate District and the State of California, it gives me great pleasure to commend the Wah Mei School. As the first Chinese American bilingual preschool in San Francisco it has successfully promoted bilingualism and multiculturalism in our City. Its outstanding contributions through a commitment to education and understanding have touched many lives.

I hereby designate March 19, 1994 as "Wah Mei School Day" and extend my best wishes to its staff, volunteers and board of directors for continuing fulfillment and success in the years to come.

*Walter Munk*

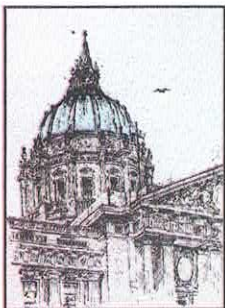
SENATOR





# Proclamation

City and County of San Francisco



*Whereas the City and County of San Francisco wishes to congratulate Wah Mei School on its 20th year of providing exemplary bilingual and multicultural preschool programs; and*

*Whereas 50% of the children served are recent immigrants to the United States; and*

*Whereas Wah Mei provides a familiar environment to help these monolingual and limited-English speaking children acclimate to their new home; and*

*Whereas the school and its staff have received numerous honors and recognition for a successful model bilingual preschool program; now*

*Therefore Be It Resolved That I, Frank M. Jordan, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, do hereby recognize and honor Wah Mei School for its dedication and success in serving children and do hereby declare March 19, 1994 as ...*

## Wah Mei School Day in San Francisco

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City and County of San Francisco to be affixed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank M. Jordan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'F'.

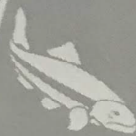
Frank M. Jordan





*California State Assembly*

*Certificate Of*  
***Recognition***



PRESENTED TO:

*Wah Mei School*

IN HONOR OF:

*Celebrating 25 years of Bilingual Education*  
*May 8, 1999*



*Kevin Shelley*

A handwritten signature of Kevin Shelley in dark ink.

MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY

*12th* ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE




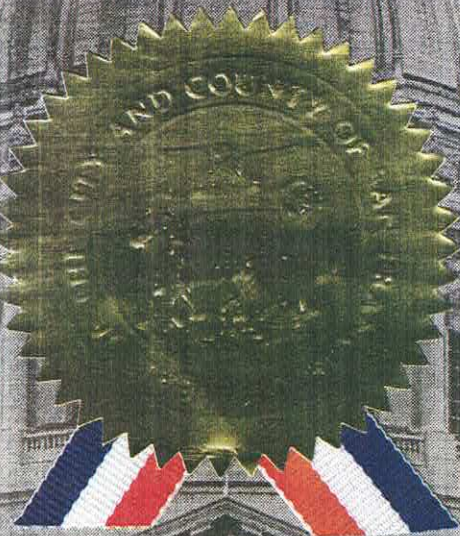
# Certificate of Honor

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS City and County of San Francisco

*The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco hereby issues, and authorizes the execution of, this Certificate of Honor in appreciative public recognition of distinction and merit for outstanding service to a significant portion of the people of the City and County of San Francisco by:*

WAH MEI SCHOOL

The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco commends your organization for your extraordinary contributions to the community and congratulates you on your 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



*Carmen Chu*

Supervisor Carmen Chu

Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors

May 15, 2009



# Certificate of Honor

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS City and County of San Francisco

*The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco hereby issues, and authorizes the execution of, this Certificate of Honor in appreciative public recognition of distinction and merit for outstanding service to a significant portion of the people of the City and County of San Francisco by:*

### Wah Mei School

In honor of your 40 years of exemplary service to the children and families across San Francisco.

The citizens of the City & County of San Francisco and the Board of Supervisors bestow its highest commendation to Wah Mei School and wish it many more successful years in preschool education.

Congratulations.

  
Supervisor Norman Yee

Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors

May 9, 2014













# Proclamation

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

*Whereas, Formed by the Richmond Bilingual Committee that was comprised of community representatives and bilingual educators, Wah Mei School opened its doors in 1974 to become the first bilingual Chinese-English preschool in San Francisco; and*






*Whereas, Wah Mei School is committed to providing high-quality programming and services in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment that promotes each child's social-emotional, physical and cognitive growth and competency through age-appropriate experiences for all young children of San Francisco; and*

*Whereas, Over the last four decades, Wah Mei School has continued to promote multiculturalism through economic and cultural diversity and the development of the whole child to become pioneers in Chinese bilingual early childhood education; and*

*Whereas, The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco recognizes May 9, 2014, as the 40th anniversary of Wah Mei School; now, therefore, be it*

*Resolved, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco commends and congratulates founders Julie Tang, Lisa Tang Shek, Wesley Woo, Al Sing Yuen, among others, and Wah Mei School on the occasion of its 40th Anniversary for serving young children and their families throughout San Francisco and beyond; and, be it*

*Further Resolved, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco declares May 9, 2014 Wah Mei School Day in San Francisco.*

  
  
Eric Mar, District One  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
May 9, 2014  
  
  




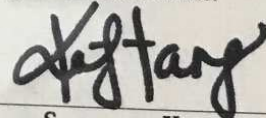
# Certificate of Honor

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS City and County of San Francisco

*The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco hereby issues, and authorizes the execution of, this Certificate of Honor in appreciative public recognition of distinction and merit for outstanding service to a significant portion of the people of the City and County of San Francisco by:*

### WAH MEI SCHOOL 43<sup>RD</sup> ANNIVERSARY

On the occasion of the 43rd anniversary celebration of the first Chinese American bilingual preschool in San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco extends its highest commendation to Wah Mei School for your commitment to promoting multiculturalism and meeting the needs of each child and family for past generations and for generations to come.



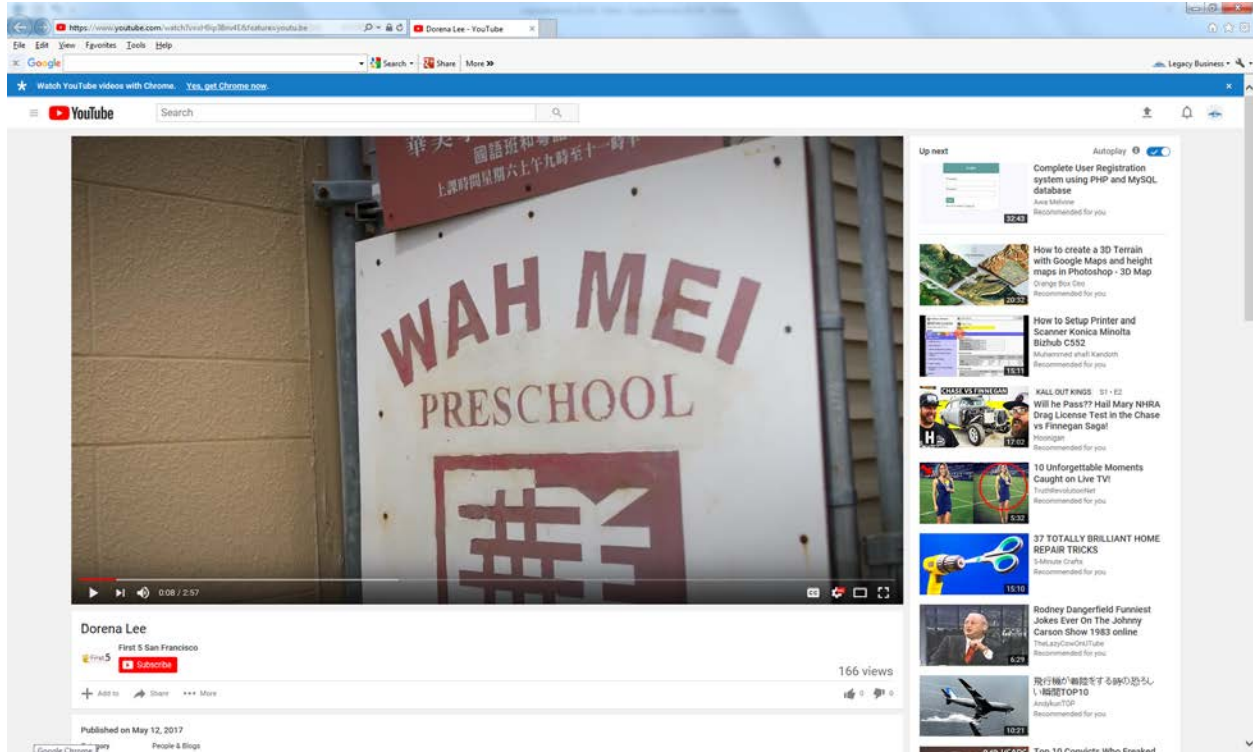
Supervisor Katy Tang  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
May 18, 2017





# Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xH9ip38nv4E&feature=youtu.be>



First Five San Francisco Excellence in Teaching Video of Head Teacher Dorena Lee  
Published on May 12, 2017

*Filing Date:* February 20, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2019-002485LBR  
*Business Name:* Wah Mei School  
*Business Address:* 1400 Judah Street  
*Zoning:* RH-3 (Residential-House, Three Family) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 1774/021  
*Applicant:* Kelly Ng, Development Manager  
1400 Judah Street  
San Francisco, CA 94122  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Gordon mar, District 4  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822  
tim.frye@sfgov.org

## BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Established in 1974, Wah Mei School is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to providing affordable Chinese-English bilingual multicultural education and early care programs for children and youth in San Francisco. Wah Mei means “Chinese-American” and holds historic significance as the first and longest serving bilingual preschool in the city. Wah Mei School was borne out of a growing Chinese immigrant experience and as part of California’s Chinese American civil rights movement. Formed by a group of parents, bilingual educators and community activists, Wah Mei paved a way for bicultural education after the landmark Supreme Court decision in Lau vs. Nichols of 1974 that legalized bilingual education in public schools.

Originally conceived as a private elementary school, it opened with 14 kindergarten children at the corner of Lake Street and Arguello at St. John’s Presbyterian Church. However, when it was apparent that the more pressing need was for quality preschool education, Wah Mei modified its program to that of a bilingual preschool. Wah Mei moved to the Campfire Girls Building at 325 Arguello Boulevard in 1976, and to its present site in 1978.

Wah Mei maintains programming that promotes the integration of Chinese and American cultures. Initially started to serve the education needs of children recently immigrated to the United States, Wah Mei evolved to be an inclusive and supportive community for all, helping to bridge language and literacy development among students from a diverse range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as diverse cognitive and linguistic abilities. Their programs support and nurture language literacy in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. In order to meet the needs of every section of the community, 50% of enrollment is reserved for children of low-income families with subsidized tuition. Presently, Wah Mei operates four programs for children and youth aged 2 years 9 months to 14 years old: Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School Program and Summer Camp. They serve more than 260 families each year.

The property is located on the northwest corner of Judah Street and 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Outer Sunset neighborhood. It is within a RH-3 (Residential-House, Three Family) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District.



## STAFF ANALYSIS

### *Review Criteria*

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1974.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Wah Mei School qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. Wah Mei School has operated continuously in San Francisco for 45 years.
- ii. Wah Mei School has contributed to the history and identity of the Outer Sunset neighborhood and San Francisco.
- iii. Wah Mei School is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The school is associated with Chinese languages and culture.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. Wah Mei School is associated with the landmark Supreme Court decision in Lau vs. Nichols of 1974 that legalized bilingual education in public schools. Wah Mei School was founded by a group of prominent Chinese American parents, bilingual educators, and community activists.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No. The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status of "B" (Properties Requiring Further Consultation and Review) due to the age of the building, which was constructed in 1908, for the purposes of California Environmental Quality Act review.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Throughout its 45-year history, Wah Mei School has been featured in a number of articles, publications and documents including, but not limited to, the following:

- Wah Mei Director Irene Dea Collier and Head Teachers interviewed on KSFJ Radio Community Hour "What is Bilingual Education?" February 1980
- "Wah Mei Seeks Funds For Permanent Site." East/West, June 17, 1981
- "Wah Mei School: Growing Up Bilingually." Asia Week, August 13, 1981
- "Wah Mei School Began to Provide Both Remedial and Enriched Classes." East/West, November 28, 1984
- "Wah Mei Preschoolers, Aged 3 to 5, Learn English and Chinese Together." East/West, December 11, 1985

- “Community Involvement in the ‘80s.” The Catalyst, Fall 1985
- Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee published A Bilingual Manual for Preschool Parents. 1985
- The Wah Mei School Songbook published by Ms. Dorena Lee and Chinese Teachers Betty Nascimento and Grace Lam. 1985
- Head Teacher Ms. Helen Yee published her children’s picture book My Grandfather and Me. 1985
- Chinese Teacher Betty Nascimento was interviewed about bilingual education and Wah Mei School on “Chinese Journal” KTSF Channel 26. March 1991
- Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee was interviewed about bilingual education on “Dupont Gai” KFRC Radio. March 1991
- “City’s Oldest Chinese American School Enriches Local Kids: Sunset Preschool A Success Story.” Sunset Beacon, April 1995
- “Parents Fight to Stop Antenna Over Preschool.” San Francisco Examiner, February 6, 1997.
- “Bilingual Preschool Featured in Parade.” Asian Week, February 22, 1997.
- Wah Mei Director Irene Dea Collier published her young adult books Chinese Mythology 2001 and Chinese Mythology Rocks! 2011
- Wah Mei School featured in the Chinese Historical Society of America’s traveling exhibit Chinese in the Sunset. November 2017–November 2018
- “迎學習熱潮 華美周末中文班擴張” [Welcome Expanded Weekend Chinese Learning]. World Journal, September 2018.
- “華美中文學校日落區開課” [Wah Mei School Expands in the Sunset]. Sing Tao Daily, September 2018.

Wah Mei School has been recognized and honored numerous times by the California State Assembly and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for its contributions to the city, having received certificates of honor and letters of commendation from Barbara Boxer, London Breed, Willie Brown, Ed Lee, Carmen Chu, Fiona Ma, Bill Maher, Eric Mar, Kevin Shelley, Katy Tang, Philip Ting, Scott Wiener and Norman Yee. The Board of Supervisors declared March 19, 1994, and May 9, 2014, Wah Mei School Day in San Francisco.

Wah Mei School was nominated in 1982 as an exemplary bilingual program to the U.S. Department of Education by its local branch. That same year, Director Irene Dea Collier was an honoree at an “Outstanding Women” reception sponsored by the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. Head Teacher Ms. Dorena Lee has been well recognized with receipt of the First 5 San Francisco Excellence in Teaching Award 2017, Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Award Honoree 2017, Ernest M. Pon Memorial Award 2006, San Francisco Childcare Providers Award 2003, and The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT) Teacher of the Year Award 1983.

This year, Wah Mei teacher, Ms. Lee, was honored for 40 years of service and dedication to bilingual education and teaching excellence. Weekend Chinese School Director Ms. Lori Liao is a three-time recipient of the Association of Northern California Chinese School Exceptional Educator Award in 2008, 2011 and 2016.



***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business***

**Location(s) associated with the business:**

- 1400 Judah Street

**Recommended by Applicant**

- A bilingual and multicultural learning environment
- A mission to serve the needs of the community and provide quality education opportunities and access to all students
- Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School, and Summer Camp programs
- Commitment to serving low-income students
- Signage

**Additional Recommended by Staff**

- None



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No. ###

HEARING DATE: MARCH 20, 2019

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

*Case No.:* 2019-002485LBR  
*Business Name:* Wah Mei School  
*Business Address:* 1400 Judah Street  
*Zoning:* RH-3 (Residential-House, Three Family) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 1774/021  
*Applicant:* Kelly Ng, Development Manager  
1400 Judah Street  
San Francisco, CA 94122  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Gordon mar, District 4  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822  
tim.frye@sfgov.org

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION  
APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR WAH MEI SCHOOL  
CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1400 JUDAH STREET, (BLOCK/LOT 1774/021).**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on March 20, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.



**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission** hereby recommends that Wah Mei School qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission** hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Wah Mei School.

***Location(s):***

- 1400 Judah Street

***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:***

- A bilingual and multicultural learning environment
- A mission to serve the needs of the community and provide quality education opportunities and access to all students
- Preschool, Weekend Chinese School, After School, and Summer Camp programs
- Commitment to serving low-income students
- Signage

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission** hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2019-002485LBR to the Office of Small Business March 20, 2019.

Jonas P. Ionin

Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: