

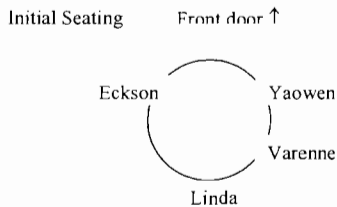
LINDA – Fieldnotes – January 24, 2007

Location: EdZone Office, Ed Gordon Campus

Time: 1:15-2:00

Interview with Yaowen Chang, Instructional Technology and Research Specialist

After confirming our meeting last night, Dawn Arno cancelled the meeting this morning. I did not reach Varenne in time to catch him before he traveled to the Theresa. Eckson and I walked there, hoping to meet him anyway. Not knowing that he was already inside, and unable to reach anyone on the EdZone line, we waited outside the office until 1:15, when I called him on his cell phone and he answered. He and Yaowen, who had been chatting about the project, came to let us in. Eckson and I set off the alarm since we hadn't closed the door properly.



We sat around a large, round conference table in a large room close to the entrance. There was a laptop in front of Varenne and Yaowen. Yaowen handed EdZone brochures to Eckson and me. She was dressed in a multicolored sweater with ¾ sleeves, black pants, and black hi-top sneakers. In the first few minutes we established our various ages, as Varenne pointed out.

In response to Varenne's question of what she does at EdZone, Yaowen replied, "I do everything." She explained that Dawn set up the Reading Buddies program, which sends TC students to local schools to read with students five days a week, 25 minutes per day. EdZone used to work with four schools, and currently they work with three schools. They are looking to assess the program, to show how students are improving. So far they have been able to "get rid of a bunch of Level 1s and push them up to Level 2, at least." Level 1 students might be "third graders (who) still don't know their alphabet."

"It's difficult to have (TC) students commit for the whole semester," Yaowen explained. While they have many volunteers for fall, there's an "attrition rate" for spring semester.

She went on to tell us about the Math Buddies program, which does not target the lowest level students. Varenne asked where they had the program, and she replied, PS 123. She explained that the Math Buddies work in groups with four students, as depicted on the front of the brochure, and as we could see when we visited. "The kids are really into it,

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especially when they can sit on the floor and move around." A lot of students move to Level 4, although Yaowen added that this is not "an evaluation with solid methodology."

Last year they also organized a Saturday program that lasted until Spring '06 (I didn't catch when it began). This was an art and math program, applying shapes to mathematical concepts in pottery, sculpture, and other projects. "That was a really draining program," "working 6 days a week." "I'm getting really old," Yaowen joked. This program "takes a lot of organization."

The interesting part, she said, was working with parents. She prepared psychology lectures, mentioning Dr. Black and mental models. Cognitive psychology. Some joking about brainwashing by TC, "You come out and realize you get brainwashed by TC.)

The majority of children in the program, she explained, are "coming from lower SES, like me." So part of the training was to help parents get better jobs, including computer skills, test prep (was this for their children or for them to get better jobs?), No Child Left Behind, and the digital divide. She mentioned CS 200, at 150<sup>th</sup> and Adam and Clayton and Powell. CS stands for "community school" as opposed to PS, public school, which she explained is "another name" for school.

They also work with other groups, such as training workshops with churches. The Algebra Project "came through us" when they came to New York. They (EdZone) worked with the Board of Education to provide training sessions for math coaches.

Professor Bond did some work at Bronx International High School, where "the kids might have limited literacy skills." They did some programming for students coming from Bronx International High School, the Saturday program. Varenne asked if they did the Saturday program here, in the Theresa office, and Yaowen informed us that they did it at TC, to take advantage of resources. They had to "beg" for space, finding available classrooms (pantomiming with her hand to her forehead as if peering into a window).

At this stage, they are starting to do evaluation. "Like today I went to the schools to check on our little buddies."

I asked about work with churches. "Dawn has her connections in the neighborhood," Yaowen replied. They worked with Riverside Church, or, more specifically, the school within the church.

On Dawn: "I don't know everything she does, she's always running around. Dawn has good relationship with the community. So we get to see a lot of schools." Then some comments about schools that look beautiful but based on report cards ??? not doing well? But then she says, "We can't stereotype and say everything is in chaos."

A few seconds' pause.

Used to have a social work component.

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Points us to artwork on the walls, framed. Takes us to the front desk/entrance to show us the project students did with Adobe Photoshop and word processing programs. It looks like students scanned photographs and played with them in Photoshop. Many of the pieces have students' national flags, which are connected with yarn to where they live now (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, etc.) on a large map of the boroughs, then to a small map of the US, then to a map of Africa, most concentrated in West Africa.

93

She takes us back to the conference table and shows us some of the lectures and topics for parents, including the Digital Divide. "Some of the parents don't even know how to click a hyperlink." Also a comment about how kids can't learn under stress, so "Don't yell at them." She recalls how her mom wouldn't let her watch MacGyver when she didn't do well on an English language exam.

98

She hands us cards advertising "Community Conversation #3" at the TC EdZone, entitled, "Reading Proficiency & Literacy: Ensuring High Level CONTENT in the Curriculum," on a Monday evening in September. She tells us that the community conversations are at the end of the month, "A lot of parents came," and "I had a parent call and ask" about them, but they have just gotten the Buddies programs set up and don't know if or when they will continue the CC. Dawn, she said, will make that decision. She told how she and a parent got locked into the building, since the building is locked at 9pm. "I got to know that parent really well." They had to wait until almost 10pm. Something about PS 30, with a preschool right next to TC.

Parents who really want to come (to what?), who don't speak English all that well and nobody on staff speaks Spanish that well, she directs to the public library for free English lessons. Directing parents to resources.

Blogging as a way for students to reflect and share, private blog so not everyone can see. People need to have internal drive. (?!)

Varenne: How much do you know about the funding? Yaowen: I don't know if I will have a job! Yaowen talks about student scholarships, how students get credit points in exchange for their time in schools. "Trustees donated a bunch of money," "wonderful especially 'cause they are in there five days a week."

94

Yaowen talks about students learning a lot from the program. She tells a story about a white male from Connecticut, who thought he had to lower his expectations. But students learn what you expect from them.

She took us through "the other side" of the Ed Gordon campus, through a hallway with several workstations and computers. She dropped off her laptop at the first desk, and pointed out her artwork mounted on the door of a room to the side. She pointed out paper sculptures made by students, from strips of colored construction paper and white paper. Towards the end of the hall a number of pottery pieces sat on a counter. (I wondered, was the EdZone planning on giving these pieces back? Why would students so readily give up

their pieces?) She took us to a large room with a view of the "gorilla building," which we could see "at night" or by day, as Varenne pointed out, which had more student artwork hanging from the ceiling. She led us out through another hallway, which led to bathrooms. Varenne had to hit a button to exit, and made a joke that older people can also learn.