



Each weekend, in twenty-two cities across the country, thousands of students attend classes at their local Tzu Chi Academy. The humanistic education that Tzu Chi offers at these academies is focused not simply on knowledge learning, which most traditional Chinese schools provide, but also on nurturing children's character through activities such as storytelling with Jing Si Aphorisms, tea ceremony, environmental protection exercises, and so on. Many parents choose to send their children to Tzu Chi Academy each weekend because of this humanistic education.

These classes are based on the Jing Si Aphorism Teaching model developed by the Tzu Chi Teachers Association. Through this model, teachers adapt Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms into curriculum that stresses manners, character, and life education. Teachers first choose Jing Si Aphorisms that are age-appropriate, simple, and easy to remember, then they bring the concepts to life through storytelling and inspire their students to live their lives with such values and character. The purpose of providing humanistic education is to foster children with vision and character to guide them through their lives.

Teachers Lead by Example

In order to successfully deliver Jing Si Aphorism lessons, teachers first study Jing Si Aphorisms themselves. Through their own experience, they provide a model of high moral standards in their classrooms. They create a loving atmosphere with bright smiles and caring attitudes and give students a feeling of home at school. Thus, students become more active and sharing in this warm environment.

"Dharma Master Cheng Yen taught us that in order to start a cycle of love, we should treat children with sincerity so children will respond with sincerity," said Xiufang Shen, a Tzu Chi Academy teacher in Cupertino, California. In such a learning environment, both teachers and students have the support to review what they learn from their own mistakes and purify their minds.

Zhimei Wang, an eighth-grade teacher at San Jose Tzu Chi Academy, shared that older children do not like to simply follow teachers' directions. In order to inspire them, she looks for learning opportunities in real life that students can learn from. Ms. Wang has confessed to her eighth grade students that she used to punish her own children when they made mistakes but always felt very sorry afterwards. She also for them to interact with their parents and tells them about touching moments in her own life. "I hope they will remember that only if we keep a peaceful, clean Earth can we enjoy our own lives. Children in the United States have more resources, so they should take more responsibility in society."

Tzu Chi Academy Seeds of Goodness

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