



WHAKATANE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR 2024 MANDARIN TEACHER WHO LEAVES US ON SATURDAY TO RETURN TO CHINA

Dear Whakatāne Intermediate School Community,

I am Huixian YANG, a graduate student from Xiamen University, currently studying International Chinese Education. 2024 has been a truly extraordinary year for me, marking my first overseas internship, where I had the wonderful opportunity to teach Mandarin here in beautiful New Zealand. My time at Whakatāne Intermediate School (WIS) has been filled with unforgettable experiences, and I am deeply grateful for the chance to be part of such a warm and welcoming school community.

One of the greatest privileges of my time at WIS has been working alongside many talented and dedicated teachers who have provided invaluable support and guidance. I am especially grateful to my lead teacher, Rebecca Paterson. Her incredible optimism, energy, and constant encouragement have made a lasting impact on me. Rebecca is not only a brilliant teacher, but also a source of strength and inspiration. She is always ready with a smile, a positive word, and an embrace that made me feel supported, no matter the challenge. Her unwavering belief in me has helped me grow both professionally and personally, and I am so thankful for her mentorship.

Throughout my time at WIS, I have learned that “happy teachers create happy students.” By fostering creativity, recognizing students’ strengths, and encouraging open communication, we create an environment where both students and teachers thrive. I have been lucky enough to teach students who bring their energy and curiosity into every lesson. They have particularly enjoyed activities that blend Chinese language skills with cultural exploration, such as Chinese phonetics, tea culture, paper-cutting, and crafts related to the Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. Activities like Chinese character competitions, calligraphy practice, and singing Chinese folk songs have been met with great enthusiasm. The creativity and joy my students bring to class have been a constant source of inspiration for me. Beyond the classroom, I have been deeply touched by the warmth and kindness of the students and their families. It brings me so much joy when I am greeted with bright smiles and shouts of “Hui Xian” whether I’m on campus or out in the community. Even during challenging moments, I find myself uplifted by the love and gratitude they show me. The thoughtful gifts, hand-drawn pictures, homemade treats, and even hugs from my students have made my experience all the more rewarding.

A special thank you must also go to my wonderful host family, Jodi and her family, who have made my experience in Whakatāne truly special. From the moment I arrived, they welcomed me with open arms, offering me both a home and a sense of belonging. Their kindness, generosity, and support have been beyond measure. They have introduced me to local customs, shared delicious meals, and made sure I experienced the very best of

New Zealand's culture and nature. I am incredibly grateful for the warmth and love they’ve shown me.

Living in Whakatāne, surrounded by nature’s beauty, has been transformative. The landscapes, the mountains, beaches, and wildlife have taught me valuable lessons in environmental awareness and community care. Many of our school activities took place outdoors, and I have been inspired by the resilience of the local community, as exemplified by the motto “Don’t be afraid, just jump it!” Participating in activities such as surfing, tree planting, and walks through the Kiwi and Bird walks has deepened my appreciation for New Zealand’s natural wonders. Beyond teaching, I’ve also had the chance to immerse myself in the peaceful rhythm of life here, enjoying everything from the sounds of the Tui birds to the joy of joining the local tennis club, where I’ve met wonderful new friends.

This year has deepened my understanding of how teaching theory and practice come together, and I’ve learned the importance of continuous growth, communication, and cultural exchange in becoming an effective educator. I am also grateful for the opportunity to explore new places, try new foods, and enjoy the star-filled skies of New Zealand. I feel incredibly fortunate for all the experiences and “firsts” this year has brought me. I am especially grateful to the Whakatāne community and to WIS for their support, kindness, and for providing me with an unforgettable experience.



Thank you, WIS, for being such a wonderful and integral part of my journey.
Warm regards,
Huixian

