

Notes from China: July 2015

Hope this finds you all well and enjoying summer festivals, barbecues and frozen daiquiris.



As you may already know, this is my last semester teaching in China. It's been a great 10-year run and I would highly recommend it, whether you are just starting your teaching career or ending it. I have spent the last eight years at Anqing Normal University. Last night the Foreign Affairs Department and the Foreign Language Department held a farewell dinner for me. It was a lovely evening with many compliments being thrown my

way. To my great surprise and delight I was presented with a certificate which makes me "A Permanent Teacher of Anqing Normal University". This is by no means Professor Emeritus status, but it is no small potatoes either. Apparently I can come back and lecture whenever I wish. Quite an honour I have to say, and beats the proverbial golden handshake.

Cheers,
Stephen

P.S. Recently I was asked to write a blog for an ESL forum on advice for ESL teachers coming to China for the first time. Below is what I submitted.

Welcome to China

Some suggestions for new teachers in China.

1. Be responsible and well prepared for your lessons. The days of relying on your foreign face to wow your students have long since passed. Nowadays, Chinese students expect, and rightfully so, a foreign teacher to take his/her work seriously. Remember the principal reason you are coming to China is to teach.
2. Be tolerant and understanding of the Chinese culture, customs and way of life. Remember that you are a guest in China, so don't expect people to bend to your set of rules.
3. Familiarize yourself with the laws as they pertain to foreigners and be respectful of them. Read your contract with your school carefully to see what you can and cannot do. When in doubt, check with the school authorities.

4. Try to get involved with the school's organizations or community groups. This will not only make your life more interesting but provide an opportunity to communicate more with Chinese people. In addition, limit your contact with the expatriate community if you really want to experience China.
5. Your Chinese colleagues are a great source of information and advice. Ask them questions about teaching issues and/or daily life concerns. They are, for the most part, very helpful.
6. You may want to consider teaching in a second- or even third-tier city as opposed to, say, Beijing or Shanghai. In this way you will get a truer picture of Chinese life if that is what you want.
7. Make an attempt to learn some basic Chinese. This will not only help you to communicate in your daily life but will enrich your understanding of Chinese culture.