



## **DCLC Profile: Tutor Joyce Meyers & Student Emma Zhang Inside a Tutor and Student Learning Pair**

by Sally Sapega

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When Emma Zhang moved to the United States from China in 2016, she already had a solid education—an undergraduate degree in engineering and a master’s degree in business. But she knew that in order to truly “make it” in her new country—which included a desire to start an IT consulting business with her husband—she needed to take her education to a new level.

Thanks to her excellent schooling in China, Emma had a good foundation in reading English, but she needed to sharpen her ability to speak and write in English. And she also wanted to learn as much as she could about her new country—the history, the culture, the politics. Volunteer Tutor Joyce Meyers and the Delaware County Literacy Council (DCLC) have been helping her every step of the way.

Joyce and Emma started working together in January of this year and not even the pandemic proved to be an obstacle. They now meet virtually twice a week (one of their sessions on Skype is shown above). Lessons focus on improving Emma’s language fluency, reading comprehension, written expression and conversation, and learning about life—past and present—in the United States. Joyce, who’s a former lawyer and English teacher, adapts her lessons to Emma’s interests and progress. “I come up with things useful to her that will help her develop skills,” explains Joyce. For example, they discuss articles in the *NY Times* or the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as a way for Emma to expand her English vocabulary and better understand her new country.

***[Continuation of DCLC News & Notes September 2020 article]***

“We’re keeping up with the news and in the process, she’s learning about politics, culture, business, technology and what’s going on in the economy,” says Joyce.

Emma also does weekly writing assignments which Joyce reviews with her, but, as Joyce wryly notes, “she already has a better command of English grammar than some Americans.”

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—DCLC Volunteer Tutor Joyce Meyers

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The one-on-ones also include learning about idioms. But while most Americans understand *Hit the sack, a blessing in disguise, and being on the ball*, for those with English as a second language, “it’s interesting ... but hard,” says Emma.

The sessions are not all about work. “We talk about things happening in our lives,” declares Emma. “It’s more like talking with a friend.” And the learning goes both ways. While Emma learns the ins and outs of American life, Joyce learns about China—what it was like growing up in the country, how life here compares to China. “It’s fascinating getting her perspective,” says Joyce.

Emma is also becoming a part of the community in which she and her family live. She loves the slower pace of suburban living. “Life was much busier in China with a lot of people.... very crowded!”

She volunteers at her daughters’ elementary school with Girls on the Run, a nonprofit that helps to empower young girls by teaching life skills—including leading healthy lives and forming healthy relationships—through lessons and running. She was so impressed with the program that she enrolled her own daughters as well. And while it’s important for Emma and family to learn about their new country, Emma wants to keep Chinese traditions alive. “We speak Chinese at home and my daughters go to Chinese school on weekends.”

While Emma’s dream of a family IT business is still in the brainstorming stage, Emma is determined to keep up with her tutoring sessions—virtually for now but hopefully a return to in-person at some point. And Joyce is more than happy to accommodate. “It’s so gratifying to be her tutor. Emma never misses a session, does assignments, and always asks intelligent questions,” says Joyce. Equally important, “I’m contributing to the future of her family in a concrete way.”

Joyce Meyers and Emma Zhang are great examples of the hard work and dedication demonstrated day in and day out by volunteer tutors and adult students at the Delaware County Literacy Council (DCLC).