

2025-2026

REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



ORION
ALTERNATIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MANDARIN IMMERSION

Welcome Packet



GET TO
KNOW YOUR
NEW SCHOOL!

- Meet our Staff
- School Communications
- School Organizations

LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR
PROGRAM

- Fundraising
- Fundraising Calendar
- Volunteering
- Parent Co-OP Program
- MI Community & Vision
- In Summary

MEET OUR STAFF



WINNIE CHEN - PRINCIPAL WINNE 校长 (WINNIE XIÀOZHǎNG)

Winnie began as a Mandarin Immersion teacher and quickly took on roles as a curriculum development specialist, teaching coach, and vice principal before becoming principal in 2023. She is dedicated to creating a positive school culture where every student can feel a strong sense of belonging at Orion. Connect with Winnie: ychen@rcsdk8.net

ELIZABETH ARIAZA OFFICE MANAGER

Elizabeth knows everything and makes sure our school keeps running on a daily basis. She has worked at the school for over twenty years and we are lucky to have her positive energy greeting our students everyday. She speaks Spanish as well as English. Connect with Elizabeth: earaiza@rcsdk8.net



CAROLINE WOO OFFICE ASSISTANT

Caroline has been with Orion for the last 3.5 years and is happy to assist and support our staff, students and parent community. She is primarily English-speaking; however, can speak some Cantonese. Connect with Caroline: cwoo@rcsdk8.net

CRISTINA RYFFEL - LIBRARIAN

Cristina Ryffel is a long time veteran of Orion Alternative. She brings an unmatched passion for literacy (in all languages) that is reflected in our core curricular events such as Author Illustrator Fair during November literacy month. Connect with Cristina: cryffel@rcsdk8.net



MANDARIN IMMERSION

Program TOSA & MI Aides



MI TOSA - Wu Laoshi

Orion's MI TOSA: Mandarin Immersion Teacher on Special Assignment

The MI TOSA position is Principal Winnie's #1 RCMIS funding priority.
Wu Laoshi:

- Serves as the Mandarin Reading Interventionist
- Leads Curriculum Development
- Serves as Instructional Coach & provides professional development for Mandarin Immersion staff
- Coordinates Cultural Events

MI Aides (K-5th Grades)

- Lower student to teacher ratios
- Serve as Fluent Speaker Models in the classroom
- Provide differentiated support for Mandarin & Math
- Critical in our program as most successful MI programs have student makeup of 50% fluent + 50% non-speakers and Orion's MI program tends to have more non-speakers
- Jointly funded by RCMIS & Starship Orion PTO



**'24-'25 MI Aides
Chen & Wong Laoshi**



- **From PTO/Parents/Committees:**

- **Konstella**

- A calendar with school events that can be synced to your account/phone
- Reminders in app and/or email
- Chat with class/groups/committees

- Many classes have WhatsApp groups
- MI classes have email google groups



- **From Principal Winnie:**

- Texts, emails with important notifications or requests.
- Orion Gazette -updates from the principal every other week.

- **From the Teacher(s):**

- Teacher defined -some send weekly email newsletters or use apps like Class Dojo with updates and messaging

- **Additional Communications:**

- **Starship Orion PTO website:** <https://www.starshiporion.org/>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2381301398814851/>
- **Instagram** - @orion_alternative
- **Dr. Baker - Superintendents Newsletter:** Provides general information that applies to all schools in the district

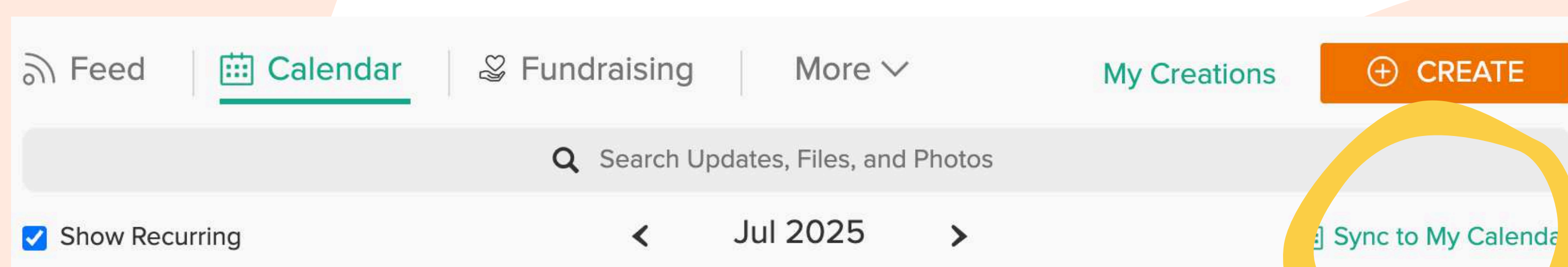
JOIN KONSTELLA!

Sign up to join the school:

<https://www.Konstella.com/cd/KU7S9V>

Join your classroom

Sync your calendar: log in > go to calendar > find the button on the top right > sync my calendar



Check out the school calendar and early release dates here: Resources tab on the PTO website: <https://www.starshiporion.org/>

SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS



Redwood City Mandarin Immersion Scholars (RCMIS)

RCMIS was founded as a fundraising nonprofit organization to support Mandarin Immersion in Redwood City. Volunteer with us or join our board to make an impact on Mandarin Learning at Orion. If you are interested, reach out to info@rcmis.org for more information.

Starship Orion Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Starship Orion PTO is looking for MI community members to help out across many committees ranging from community building events like Mid Autumn, Lunar New Year and Dragon Boat Festivals, STEAM, Garden, budgeting and more. Commitments range from 1-5 hours per month. Check out Konstella for committees that might be of interest to you.

School Site Council

Attend monthly School Site Council meetings to get an idea of how Orion is run. Council members work closely with Principal Winnie a to direct the vision of the school as a whole.

Mandarin Immersion (MI) Advisory Council

The MI Advisory Council is made up of parents, Orion administrators and MI teaching staff. Council goals include strengthening and upholding Orion's Redwood City Mandarin Immersion Program as a distinguished, world-class immersion program.

Council members:

- Facilitate and support academic excellence and Mandarin language fluency
- Foster community building and cultural appreciation across PTO and RCMIS
- Develop and iterate on MI program missions and values
- Recruit and support incoming families for continued growth of the program

Attend these meetings to give feedback to Principal Winnie and school administrators about the MI Program.



PTO FUNDRAISING

\$1,000 per Family

FUNDRAISING SUPPORTS

- School wide enrichment programs including STEAM, Music, Art & Garden
- Classroom Supplies
- Instructional Aides for Co-op & MI
- Tutoring
- Fieldtrips

Donate to the PTO
here



OUR 2025-2026 STARSHIP GOAL

Our goal for this school year is \$500,000.

Donations are voluntary. We encourage generosity for those that have more, to lift up others to help them succeed in our wonderful school community.

PAYPAL DIRECT DRIVE DONATIONS

The PTO direct drive runs from the start of school to October 31st. Funding commitments for the following year are made based on the amount of funding the community contributes by December 31st.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

- Direct Donations
- Thursday Bake Sale Market
- Read - A - Thon
- Spring Auction
- Dine Outs



All donations are
tax deductible
EIN: 94-3179780

**Ask if your company
matches donations**

REDWOOD CITY MANDARIN IMMERSION SCHOLARS

RCMIS FUNDRAISING

\$2,000 per Student

FUNDRAISING SUPPORTS

- Mandarin-Speaking Teaching Aides (K-5) critical for modeling fluency in the classroom
- MI TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) supporting:
 - Mandarin Reading Intervention Support
 - Curriculum Development
 - Teaching Coach for Mandarin Immersion staff
- MI program continuity efforts TK - 8th grades

Donate to RCMIS
Here:



Ask if your company
matches donations

All donations are
tax deductible
EIN: 82-3449819

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Give - Visit *RCMIS.org* to
donate.

Volunteer -

Give the gift of your time by
joining our board. For more
information, reach out to
info@rcmis.org.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Donations are welcome anytime (even outside of direct drives). Like the PTO, donations received earlier in the school year help to ensure the following year's staffing commitments can be made in alignment with the school district's schedule

- **August - September:** RCMIS Mid-Autumn Festival Direct Drive runs from the start of school to September 30th
- **January - February:** RCMIS New Year to Lunar New Year Direct Drive

2025-2026 FUNDRAISING CALENDAR

While donations are accepted year round, here are the major fundraising drives across Starship Orion PTO & RCMIS:

- **August - October 2025 | PTO Fall Direct Drive Fundraising**
 - Kicks off at Maze Day August 6th and runs through October 31st
- **August - September 2025 | RCMIS Direct Drive - Mid-Autumn Festival**
 - Kicks off at Maze Day August 6th and runs through September 30th
- **November 2025 | PTO Read-a-Thon**
 - November 1st - 30th
- **January - February 2026 | RCMIS New Year to Lunar New Year Direct Drive**
 - Kicks off on January 6th and runs through February 17th (Lunar New Year)
- **TBD 2026 | PTO Spring Auction**

Note: Please support your class by contributing to class funds. Ask your class coordinator for more information. Your chosen after-school program may have donation drives of their own.

VOLUNTEERING

Talk to your class coordinator about signing up!

DISTRICT VOLUNTEER FORM AND REQUIREMENTS

New Volunteers



Returning
Volunteers



Espanol



VOLUNTEER WITH STUDENTS

Examples:

- Lunch/Yard Duty - 11:00-1:00
- Library - 11:00-12:00pm
- Art Volunteer
- STEAM Volunteer: Science Olympiad
- Math Festival volunteer: Julia Robinson Math Festivals
- Field trip chaperones
- Help prepare Teacher materials
- Assist with Teacher-led lessons
- PTO Community Building Events

Certain volunteering opportunities require fingerprinting clearance
unless closely supervised by a teacher.

Look out for the fingerprinting
station available during
Back to School Night on 8/28

Orion is home to two programs. Get to know our neighbors:



Parent Co-op Program



Orion Alternative Elementary School's Parent Cooperative Program offers a nurturing learning environment where students develop positive values of self-reliance, initiative, kindness, resourcefulness, courage, creativity and joy.

Orion's strength is built on the participation and commitment of families. We request each co-op family to contribute 72 flexible hours of volunteering time per school year, in or out of school hours.

Cornerstone Programs:

- Author Illustrator Fair
- Multicultural Studies
- Art in Action Classes

Culture of Orion

- Prioritizes Whole Child Education and Social-Emotional Skills
- Global Citizen Curricular Focus
- Teacher and Family Collaboration
- Community Building with Whole School

Volunteer Opportunities:

- Library Support and Readthn
- Art Docents/Aides
- Event Planning
- In-Class Support
- Weekend Garden Days



Learn more at:
<https://www.starshiporion.org/>



MANDARIN IMMERSION

社区合作带给我们成功

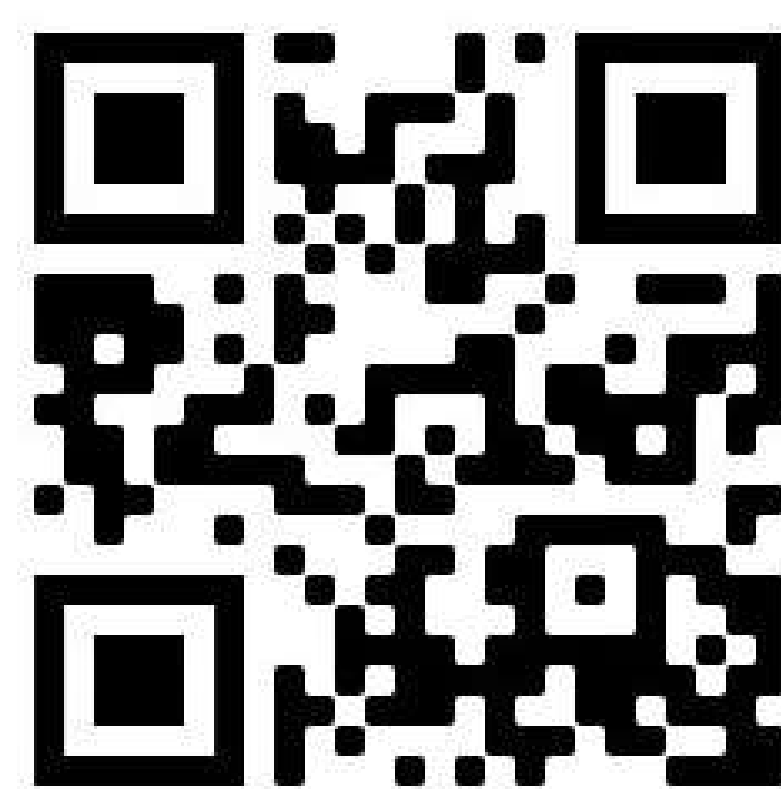
"Community collaboration brings us success"

VISION

Orion MI Students will:

- Express themselves in Mandarin
- Understand and appreciate Chinese Culture
- Become lifelong-resilient learners

Visit [our website](#)
for more info:



Mandarin Immersion Culture

- Community engagement through school-wide events like the Mid-Autumn/Harvest, Lunar New Year, and Dragon Boat Festivals
- Developing Mastery in Mandarin
- Cultural Immersion & Outreach
- Encouraging global citizenship



MANDARIN IMMERSION

In Summary

VOLUNTEER

Parent volunteers drive the success of the MI program. Volunteering is a great way to meet fellow families and make friends! Talk to your class coordinator or representatives from RCMIS or Starship Orion PTO. All skills and interests are welcome!

FUND THE PROGRAM

Starship PTO

\$1,000/**family**

[Donate here](#)



RCMIS

\$2,000/**student**

[Donate here](#)



Your donations maintain a high level of educational enrichment for your MI student(s). All donations amounts are welcome. Maximize your impact by checking with your employer about corporate matching. Please also support your class by contributing to class funds. Ask your class coordinator for more information.