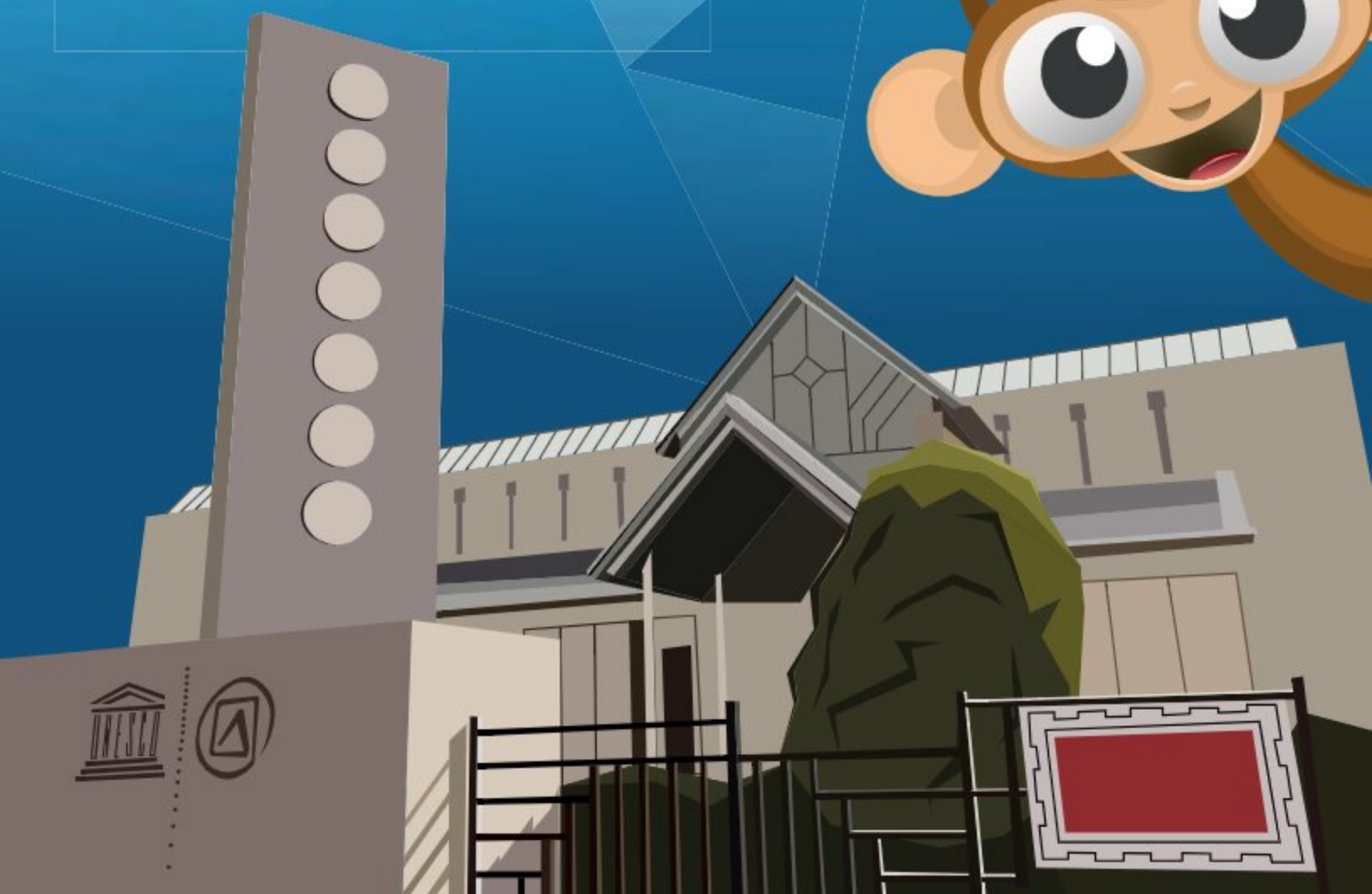




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In September 2024, the ALOHA family embarked on an unforgettable cultural exchange trip to China. Throughout this enriching experience, we explored the role of abacus training in education, engaged with leading experts, and immersed ourselves in traditional Chinese customs.

Exploring Education: Cixi's Minghe Primary School

Our journey began with a visit to Minghe Primary School in Cixi, Ningbo 慈溪市鸣鹤小学, renowned for its focus on abacus and mental arithmetic training. Accompanied by leaders from the Cixi Bureau of Finance and Education, we had the privilege of observing firsthand how abacus training is integrated into their curriculum. The ALOHA family was particularly impressed by students performing complex calculations with ease. Zhou Limin, Vice President of the Cixi Accounting and Abacus Association, also presented a special lecture, sharing insights into the methods and benefits of abacus training. See the coverage by the Cixi Accounting and Abacus Association. (<http://waama.org.cn/news/2142.html>)

After visiting Cixi's Primary School, the team enjoyed a sightseeing tour in Cixi, exploring its rich history and scenic landmarks.







A Historical Visit: Nantong Abacus Museum

Following the school visit, we made our way to the Nantong Abacus Museum, the world's largest museum of its kind. With over 4,000 volumes of historical records and more than 2,000 abacus items, the ALOHA family was amazed by the museum's vast collection.



Among the remarkable pieces, we discovered the smallest abacus in the world and an octagonal abacus that broadened our understanding of traditional abacus designs. While we learned the technical aspects of abacus, the biggest takeaway of this museum visit was how this simple tool has bridged people across generations and cultures.







Meeting with Expert: Professor Chen Feiyan

Another key highlight of the trip was our meeting with Professor Chen Feiyan from Zhejiang University, an expert in the field of abacus and mental arithmetic training and early childhood development. Professor Chen and her research team shared fascinating findings on how abacus training enhances visual and spatial processing in children. Students trained in abacus techniques, they explained, develop more efficient problem-solving skills as their brains learn to process complex information in a highly organized and visual way. This insightful exchange offered us fresh perspectives to incorporate into our own educational programs. For more information about the research, scan the QR code below.



A Return to Hangzhou: A Wedding Reunion

Ten years after the 2014 ALOHA International Competition in Hangzhou, the ALOHA family gathered again in Hangzhou for a special occasion – the traditional Chinese wedding of Chen Xiaoli's daughter, Dai Ying'er, to Chen Jintao.

Chen Xiaoli has been an integral part of the ALOHA family for nearly two decades. A significant milestone in this collaboration was her organization of the 2014 ALOHA Mental Arithmetic International Competition in Hangzhou, which brought together over 2,000 participants from around the world. As a prominent mental arithmetic educator in China and board member of the Chinese Abacus and Mental Arithmetic Association, she has dedicated her career to advancing mental arithmetic education both domestically and internationally. Her journey with ALOHA began in 2004, when she led mental arithmetic demonstrations in Malaysia and India, and since then, she has continued to guide students to success in international competitions across Australia, Malaysia, and Indonesia.



From left, Chen Jintao (groom), Dai Lifeng (father of the bride), Chen Xiaoli (mother of the bride), and Dai Ying'er (bride).



The wedding was a perfect blend of tradition and joy, beginning with the customary morning tea ceremony where the couple showed their respect to their elders. The day continued with the exchange of vows and rings, followed by heartfelt speeches from both families. ALOHA family from different countries joined local guests in witnessing this meaningful union, making it truly a global family celebration.

This trip was about more than just learning. It was about building and reinforcing enduring connections and celebrating shared culture. Everywhere we went, from the educational institutions to cultural sites, the abacus was at the heart of it all. This simple tool brings us closer to the people we meet and deepens our shared passion for education. It was a powerful reminder of ALOHA's core values of community and education, and how we work towards the same goals together, no matter where we are.



