

October 2007 Update to the Report of the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training

In October 2006, the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training, a statewide group of policymakers, educators, and business leaders, released a public report detailing the current status of Chinese language programs in Kansas, opportunities and challenges for future development, and a series of specific policy recommendations. This report was an important first step in starting a statewide discussion on the need for increased Chinese language capacity throughout the Kansas educational system.

One year on, the progress in building Chinese language training capacity in Kansas schools, colleges, universities, and communities has been substantial. Whether measured by the number of students enrolled in Mandarin classes, the growing list of school districts offering the language, or the scale of new initiatives (from enrichment opportunities and summer camps to ambitious grant-funded projects and distance-learning programs), the achievements of the past year have borne out the potential for growth identified in the Task Force report. This update provides an overview of the developments in Chinese language education in Kansas in the 2006-2007 academic year and updates progress on the eleven recommendations made by the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Education.

Growth in Enrollment and Opportunities

Data collected by staff of the Kansas Committee for International Education in the Schools in April 2007 show that Mandarin Chinese is being offered by substantially more schools, colleges, and universities in Kansas, and is being studied formally by far more Kansas students, than was the case a year earlier in spring 2006.

At the post-secondary level, eight Kansas colleges and universities offered Chinese in 2006-2007, up from only five in 2005-2006. These institutions were Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, Johnson County Community College, Kansas State University, Southwestern College, the University of Kansas, Washburn University, and Wichita State University. Enrollments increased approximately 26% from spring 2006 to spring 2007, reflecting growth trends nationally in the demand for Chinese among college students.

Chinese: Post-Secondary	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Classical	Total
Fall 2006	176	26	48	9	10	0	0	269
Spring 2007	0	112	10	42	0	10	11	185
Total 2006-2007	176	138	58	51	10	10	11	
Spring 2006	33	67	9	20	3	9	9	147

At the high school level, the growth of Chinese language programs has been even more striking. In spring 2006, two school districts offered Chinese, Kansas had only one certified teacher of Mandarin, and just 24 students were enrolled in Chinese classes. One year later, Chinese was being offered in eleven districts, with two certified teachers, and 65 enrolled students. Instruction was offered in a variety of forms: traditional classes with teachers in the classroom (Olathe, Shawnee Mission), interactive distance learning classes (Deerfield, Holcomb, Lawrence Free State, Maize, Marysville, Washburn Rural, Winfield), cooperative programs with a community college (Blue Valley), and independent study supplemented by adult education classes (Oskaloosa).

Chinese: High Schools	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Total
Fall 2006	64	0	4	0	6	0	1	0	75
Spring 2007	0	54	0	4	0	6	0	1	65
Total 2006-2007	64	54	4	4	6	6	1	1	
Spring 2006	11	7	2	3	1				24

At the K-8 level, formal programs in Chinese language began to appear in 2006-2007. 25 students enrolled in formal classes in spring 2007 at the Pittsburg Middle School as the first step in USD 250's ambitious Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) funded grant to begin Chinese instruction. Five 7th- and 8th-grade students in Shawnee Mission took daily Chinese classes, while over 100 from the 2nd to 6th grades had regular weekly sessions in Mandarin. Additional enrichment and exposure sessions, as well as after-school programs, were held for Hays, Maize, and Olathe elementary and middle school classes; approximately 1000 students participated in these activities in Maize alone.

Chinese: K-8	Regular Classes	Enrichment and Exposure Sessions	Total
Fall 2006, Spring 2007	142	1040	1182
Spring 2006	0	0	0

Indications are that the rapid growth in Chinese language training in Kansas seen over the past year will continue and even accelerate (especially at the K-12 level) in 2007-2008. As of fall 2008, there are ten certified teachers of Chinese in the state, with formal classes being offered in 21 districts. Expanded IDL options, the new FLAP-funded program in Galena, the launch of Chinese classes in Wichita, and the start of the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Visiting Teacher from China Program (detailed below) are all contributing significantly to the increasing pace of development in Kansas schools.

Making Strategic Progress

The October 2006 report of the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training

included eleven strategic recommendations for jump-starting Chinese programs in Kansas schools, colleges, universities, and communities. Although much work remains to be done, progress over the past year on these recommendations has been significant.

1. Make a public case for the need for Chinese language training. Businesses, legislators, the media, communities, and youth all need to be engaged, informed, and mobilized. The importance of training in Chinese language and culture to workforce development and to the preparation of young Kansans for the jobs and careers of the future should be emphasized.

Interest in the teaching of foreign languages (and especially Chinese) in our schools remains high in Kansas as it does around the country. Media reports on the need for new investments in language training in America continue to proliferate and President Bush has recently proposed enhancements to the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) which seeks to develop capacity in strategic languages like Mandarin Chinese. Organizations like the Kansas World Language Association, Kansas Committee for International Education in the Schools, and the Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas have been active in advocating for enhanced foreign language training in the state. Nevertheless, much more can be done to raise public awareness of this issue and to engage elected officials and the business community in efforts to build Chinese language programs at the K-12 and post-secondary levels.

2. Emphasize exposure to Mandarin Chinese, especially in elementary and middle schools. Learning Chinese should be introduced to Kansas students from a young age as something enjoyable, valuable, and achievable.

Pioneering programs in offering exposure and elementary training in Chinese language to elementary and middle school students began in 2006-2007 and will be expanded significantly in 2007-2008. For example, after-school and early exposure programs have been offered in several districts, including Pittsburg, Shawnee Mission, and Hays; Chinese language summer camps were held at the Confucius Institute in Overland Park and in the Shawnee Mission school district. Pittsburg is now offering Chinese at the middle school level and plans to build the program, year by year, through high school. Several school districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area are currently exploring PK programs in Chinese.

3. Expand distance learning programs. The delivery of Chinese language training through interactive distance learning (IDL) and online instruction is well suited to Kansas, given the state's geography and demographics.

In 2006-2007, the IDL program organized by the Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas and the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center (Greenbush) brought introductory Mandarin classes to seven Kansas school districts and 45 high school students. In 2007-2008, this program has expanded to 62 students in nine high schools across the state and in Arkansas, with classes at the first- and second-year levels. IDL instruction in Chinese is also originating from Pittsburg and Maize (through Greenbush) and the South Central Kansas Education Service Center (Clearwater), bringing Mandarin to six additional high schools. IDL is also being used to provide Chinese within the Wichita district, with classes taught by a certified Chinese teacher at

Wichita North High School. Kansas has been a leader nationally in the delivery of Chinese training by IDL and continued growth in these programs appears likely.

4. Use existing resources and structures in creative ways. Student familiarity with and interest in Chinese language can be effectively promoted by working through existing curricula, supplementing familiar programs, and tweaking proven models.

In addition to the new Chinese language summer camps and after-school programs around the state, a variety of after-school, enhancement, and teacher training sessions will be offered by IDL in 2007-2008 by the Clearwater Service Center and Greenbush (in partnership with the Confucius Institute). Professional development programs for K-12 teachers on Mandarin Chinese have also been offered by the KU Center for East Asian Studies. Integrating the study of Chinese history and culture into social studies, reading, art, and other subject areas is an important means of supporting and enriching offerings in Chinese language; programs to provide teachers the background to do this are offered by the Kansas Consortium for Teaching About Asia, the KU Center for East Asian Studies, and the Global Learning program at Wichita State University. Despite such activity around the state, much room remains to develop new resources and new programs to facilitate exposure to the Chinese language and Chinese culture in Kansas classrooms.

5. Expand Chinese language training at community colleges. Priority should be given to developing Chinese language programs, and world language programs more generally, in the state's community colleges.

Johnson County Community College remains the only two-year institution in the state offering Chinese language courses. As instruction in Mandarin at the K-12 level continues to expand, demand for Chinese classes at the post-secondary level will naturally increase. Efforts should now be underway to encourage Chinese language offerings at community colleges, perhaps using distance learning technology or involving partnerships with Kansas colleges and universities already providing Chinese in their curricula.

6. Better articulate programs at different educational levels. To create an effective pipeline for students through the schools and on to college or university, better articulation of Chinese language programs (especially between high school and post-secondary institutions, and between community colleges and universities) should be studied and implemented.

As instruction in Mandarin Chinese spreads through Kansas schools, the need to better articulate secondary and post-secondary programs is certain to increase. As K-12 curricula in Chinese are designed in individual school districts and at a statewide level, the issue of articulation with community college and university programs, as well as alignment with AP Chinese standards, should be addressed.

7. Aggressively pursue national grant funding and other opportunities. Schools across the state should actively seek funds to expand Chinese training through grants like the Teachers of Critical Languages Program and the Foreign Language Assistance Program.

Pittsburg and Galena have both won FLAP grants from the U.S. Department of Education to develop new programs in Chinese language. Administrators from several Kansas districts and Greenbush have participated in College Board sponsored study tours to China and Asia Society conferences designed to encourage the establishment of K-12 Chinese programs. As further opportunities for funding arise, especially under the federal National Security Language Initiative, Kansas school districts and educational organizations should be well positioned to gain support for new Chinese language projects.

8. Develop programs to “prime the pump” in the supply of certified Chinese language teachers. In order to meet the state’s long-term need for certified Chinese language teachers, immediate action must be taken to start the flow of students through the existing training and certification program at the University of Kansas.

Two important new initiatives to meet the growing demand for certified Chinese teachers in Kansas are now underway:

- In November 2006, the Kansas State Department of Education signed a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) to allow certified teachers from China to teach in Kansas schools for periods of up to three years. KSDE, working with Hanban, Huazhong Normal University (Wuhan, China), and the Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas, screens, provides orientation for, and mentors teachers from China for placement in Kansas school districts. In 2007-2008, six visiting teachers from China are teaching in Kansas. Mirroring the Visiting Teacher from Spain Program (which has a successful track record of more than five years), the new China program provides Kansas districts the opportunity to place highly qualified and well-trained Chinese teachers in classrooms now.
- Starting in fall 2007, the Confucius Institute is offering five \$7500 Accelerated Chinese Teacher Certification Scholarships to students in the KU School of Education licensure program in Mandarin Chinese. Over the coming years, a regular flow of certified Chinese teachers ready for employment in Kansas schools will be available through this program.

9. Increase opportunities across the state for lifelong learning of Chinese. Community Chinese language courses like those offered by the Confucius Institute and Johnson County Community College should be extended across Kansas.

The Confucius Institute at the University of Kansas has offered community Chinese language classes in Lawrence and Overland Park since fall 2006 and enrolled more than 250 students over the first year. Community extension classes from JCCC have also been in high demand. Using distance learning technology, the Confucius Institute plans to offer introductory courses in conversational Mandarin to adult learners in Topeka, Wichita, and Parkville/Kansas City Northland in spring 2008.

10. Appoint a dedicated world languages consultant at the Kansas State Department of Education.

Phyllis Farrar was appointed as World Languages and ESL Program Consultant at KSDE in January 2007. In addition to supporting the work of language teachers across the state, she is leading a review of the Kansas Foreign Language Standards and coordinating the Visiting International Teachers Program with Spain and China. This commitment to world languages by KSDE will bring long-term benefits to Kansas students, teachers, parents, and communities.

11. Convene a statewide summit on the teaching of Chinese and other critical world languages in Kansas.

To build on the work of the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training and forge a broader consensus on the need for increased emphasis on Mandarin Chinese and other strategic languages in our schools, a statewide summit of legislators, policymakers, business leaders, and educators should be convened.

A day-long Kansas Summit on Strategic Language was held on December 19, 2006 in Topeka and was attended by over 100 education and business leaders from across the state. Information from the Summit is available at www.KansasintheWorld.org. A follow-up event, an intensive workshop for administrators and teachers on starting Chinese language programs in Kansas schools, will be held on December 4, 2007.

Looking Ahead

China's prominence in world affairs, and especially in the global economy, continues to grow today. The importance of Chinese language programs to the future prosperity and security of our youth, our nation, and our state is even more apparent now than when the report of the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training was released in 2006. Over the past year, a variety of institutions and individuals around the state have risen to the challenge of expanding Chinese language capacity, taking advantage of the resources available here in Kansas and creating pioneering programs in schools, colleges, and communities. Sustaining this progress, ensuring high standards, and bringing Chinese to even more Kansas students will require energy, commitment, and collaboration, but the broadly based and growing support for Mandarin Chinese among educators, parents, policymakers, and the business community in Kansas bodes well for the future.

The fundamental goals articulated by the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training in 2006 seemed ambitious indeed at a time when only 24 Kansas school students were studying Mandarin. Today, these goals still appear bold, but after a string of impressive accomplishments in Chinese education in Kansas, they seem more attainable than they may have just a year ago:

- **By 2011, all K-12 students in Kansas should have the opportunity for exposure to Mandarin Chinese, whether in traditional classroom settings, through IDL or other distance learning platforms, in after-school and summer programs, or as part of introductory world language sessions.**
- **By 2016, Mandarin Chinese should be one of the three most-taught languages in Kansas schools, measured both by the number of students enrolled and by the number of schools offering the language.**

For more information on this Update, please contact William M. Tsutsui (bttsutsui@ku.edu, 785-864-9435) at the Kansas Committee for International Education in the Schools. The 2006 Report of the Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training is available online at www.KansasintheWorld.org