

Report of the
**Kansas
Task Force
on Chinese
Language
Training**

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**Kansas Committee
for International Education
in the Schools**
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Executive Summary

Americans are increasingly recognizing the rise of China as one of the most important developments of the 21st century. With China's impressive economic growth and rapid emergence as an international leader, the need to train more American students in the Chinese language is immediate and pressing. How to meet the urgent need for more training in the Chinese language is a challenge now being actively discussed by educational leaders across the United States.

Recognizing the significance of Chinese language programs to the future prosperity and security of our youth, our nation, and our state, the Kansas Committee for International Education in the Schools convened a statewide Kansas Task Force on Chinese Language Training in early 2006. The thirteen-member Task Force surveyed the current state of Chinese language training in Kansas schools, colleges, and universities, evaluated future needs and priorities in Chinese language training, and in this report offers specific recommendations for short- and long-term initiatives. The Task Force's report is intended not as a rigid blueprint for future action, but as an important first step in starting a statewide discussion on the need for increased Chinese language capacity throughout the Kansas educational system.

Kansas clearly has a long way to go in creating a sustainable and coherent educational pipeline in Mandarin Chinese — with only two school districts offering the language in 2005-2006 and only one certified K-12 teacher of Chinese in the state — but Kansas has many resources and advantages that position it well for the rapid development of Chinese language training capacity in the years ahead. With strong statewide leadership, targeted planning, and broadly based public support, Kansas could well emerge as one of the national pacesetters in building K-12 and post-secondary Chinese language programs over the coming decade.

After considering the challenges and opportunities facing Chinese language training in Kansas, the Task Force proposes the following ambitious but attainable goals:

- By 2011, all K-12 students in Kansas should have the opportunity for exposure to Mandarin Chinese, whether in traditional classroom settings, through interactive distance learning (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.

To meet these goals, the Task Force makes the following recommendations to educators, policymakers, and all concerned Kansans:

1. Make a public case for the need for Chinese language training.
2. Emphasize exposure to Mandarin Chinese, especially in elementary and middle schools.
3. Expand distance learning programs.
4. Use existing resources and structures in creative ways.
5. Expand Chinese language training at community colleges.
6. Better articulate programs at different educational levels.
7. Aggressively pursue national grant funding and other opportunities.
8. Develop programs to “prime the pump” in the supply of certified Chinese language teachers.
9. Increase opportunities across the state for lifelong learning of Chinese.
10. Appoint a dedicated world languages consultant at the Kansas State Department of Education.
11. Convene a statewide summit on the teaching of Chinese and other critical world languages in Kansas.

According to an ancient Chinese saying, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Although the development of a robust infrastructure for Chinese language training in Kansas may seem like an intimidating journey, now is the time to take that all-important first step. A broadly based commitment to building Chinese language capacity, especially in Kansas schools, is essential to the future prosperity, dynamism, and well-being of our youth, our communities, and our state.