

KCIES Chinese Language Summit

“The sweeping changes taking place in the world and within our society have enormous consequences for today’s young people—and for the preparation they will need to function in the increasingly interconnected world of the 21st century.”

Asia in the Schools: Preparing Young Americans for Today’s Interconnected World, 2001, Asia Society

There is a “world of opportunity” out there and one of the major ways in which we can provide Kansas students with this opportunity, is through language. World languages, including Chinese, have become a crucial part of the 21st century curriculum.

We know this: Language instruction in the US does not reflect today’s realities. While more a million students in US schools study French, a language spoken by 80 million people worldwide, fewer than 40,000 study Chinese, a language spoken by almost 1.3 billion or 1/6 of the world’s population. It is also one of the 6 official languages of the United Nations along with: Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The task of preparing young people for the future falls, to a great extent, on our elementary and secondary schools. It is our task to pass on knowledge and skills that will help our children succeed. Teaching languages, especially Chinese, must play a key role in this preparation.

Asia is a gateway to the future. The US and China are tightly intertwined: global trade and commerce, national security, defense arrangements, global health and environmental

concerns, and the growth of the Chinese American community all link our present and future with China.

Learning Chinese as a language equips students with broad and transferable skills. Additionally, students say they are eager to learn about China and learn its language. Yet our schools have not kept pace. The language offerings have been few. The time has come for us as a state, and the nation as a whole to promote both international education, and specifically the teaching of Chinese to be as common as Spanish and French.

Changes have been occurring on this front. For example, at a national level:

- The 110th Congress has passed and the President has signed into law the America COMPETES Act (America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science Act). This law created the following: an increase in the number of AP and IB programs dealing with math, science, and foreign languages; the development of more math, science, and critical foreign language teachers; and an emphasis on the articulation of critical foreign languages from elementary school through postsecondary education. (since August 9, 2007)**
- President Bush signed the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI); this \$114 million program has 14 components intended to expand the number of Americans mastering critical need languages, increase the number of advanced level speakers, and increase the number of foreign language teachers.”**
- Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese exam was launched in 2007**

- **20 other bills pertaining to languages have been introduced in the current Congress, including the US-China Language Engagement Act. This act provides grants for the establishment, improvement, or expansion of Chinese language and cultural studies instruction for elementary and secondary school students.**

Examples of what has occurred in states:

- **Several states have organized and/or published International or Global Education curriculum. (Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, WI)**
- **And on October 8, 2007, the largest Chinese trade delegation ever to visit Kansas became a reality and a summit was held on Oct. 10 in Topeka, according to the Kansas Department of Commerce. The 50-member delegation from the China Ministry of Commerce in Beijing made a presentation on business opportunities in China. Kansas officials presented information to the Chinese delegation regarding the state's potential for doing business with their country.**

What has KSDE done to support the teaching of world languages including Chinese? Good question. Let me share some of our initiatives:

- **Developed a world languages fact sheet (attached.)**
- **Added an education program consultant position specifically for World Languages and ESL. Phyllis Farrar started in this position in January 2007.**
 - **Phyllis has facilitated a collaborative effort to develop a model Chinese curriculum. The group includes teachers from – Pittsburg, Confucius Institute / Greenbush, Wichita, and Galena. They've met for 2 days in October, and plan to meet 4 more days in January and February 2008.**

- Developed a “Languages” list serv which is available on the ksde.org website
- Signed an MOU with the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) on November 16, 2006.
- Added Chinese to the Visiting International Teacher program
- Worked in conjunction with the Confucius Institute and Huazhong University, staff traveled to Wuhan, China to interview 20 candidates (April 2006) and recommended six of them to be hired as teachers in Kansas. These teachers were provided:
 - An 8 day orientation to Kansas public education
 - Trained mentors for these teachers from school districts that hired them
 - Assisted in the certification process
 - Provided classroom observations and coaching
- Located resources for teaching Chinese via IDL, and for teaching heritage language learners.
- Consulted with 4 districts that are current Foreign Language AP grant recipients (Galena, Pittsburg, Emporia, and Garden City).
- Strengthened the connection between world language instruction and the state’s assessed items in core content areas.
- Are in a review process of the Curricular Standards for Foreign Language drafted in 2000. The first draft of Curricular Standards for World Languages will be presented to the Board of Education sometime this winter, with time for an external review as well as field review, anticipating State Board of Education adoption in Spring of 2008.

- **We are also exploring possibilities for a few collaborative grant projects between the Dept, state universities, and school districts. The purpose is to**
 - **expand the capacity in this state to learn languages starting in elementary school and continue to grade 12;**
 - **increase the ability to test proficiency levels;**
 - **increase the proficiency level of classroom teachers;**
 - **increase the ability to teach in an immersion environment; and**
 - **increase the number of languages in which teachers are certified.**

Excellence in education in Kansas for the 21st century will not only be defined by a child's ability to read and do math, but also by the ability to communicate on a global level. This includes learning Chinese. We must take steps to ensure that every American child is offered the opportunity to learn Chinese enabling them to operate comfortably in this global environment and live up to the demands the future holds for them. Learning Chinese should no longer be a luxury available to a few, rather it should become an essential element of education for all.

Colin Powell said it best when he said:

“The young people of the United States and Asia need to know and understand each other, because they will be building and sharing the same future.”

Thank you.