



News Release

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Report: Increase in Chinese Language Programs Requires Renewed Commitment to Realize Long-term Goal

Report Released at the Conclusion of National Conference on Chinese Language Programs in US

NEW YORK — More U.S. students than ever before are beginning to learn Chinese, but in order to attain success, the momentum must be accompanied by an infrastructure of support for high-quality programs.

This is the dual message to national leaders and educators issued by the College Board and Asia Society on the state of Chinese language and culture programs in the United States. The National Chinese Language Conference, held April 17-19, was the largest ever meeting on Chinese language in the United States. With more than 700 participants from 44 states as well as China, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore, the U.K. and Israel comprising administrators, teachers, policymakers and advocates from K-12 and higher education, it was the first time all key stakeholders in the Chinese field have assembled to consider ways to collaborate further.

The report, “Chinese in 2008: An Expanding Field,” released at the conclusion of the conference held last week in Washington, D.C., affirms significant progress since a 2005 report by Asia Society called for efforts to expand the number of programs. Visit www.AskAsia.org/Chinese to see the complete report.

“Today’s economic competitiveness and national security challenges mandate a larger pool of highly proficient speakers of a wider range of world languages, including Chinese,” concludes the 2008 report.

Though a comprehensive survey of student enrollment is not available, data collected for the report indicates that the number of Chinese programs in the United States has grown by almost 200 percent since tallies were last taken in 2004. Additionally, in the year between 2005 and 2006, the number of students at the higher education level who were learning Chinese jumped by 52 percent, stated the report.

Labeled as “unprecedented” by the report, the expansion is viewed as the result of interest from multiple sources in the study of China, including government, education and the public and private sectors. Innovations in technology as well as a greater emphasis on immersion experiences have also contributed significantly, said the report.

Programs like the College Board’s own AP[®] Chinese Language and Culture program have helped put Chinese on an equal footing with more commonly taught languages, such as French, German and Spanish, the report said. “AP Chinese has seen rapid growth and is expected to increase 50 percent by May 2008 to approximately 5,000 exams,” said Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board.

While encouraging, the report cautioned that the momentum must now be utilized strategically so that new programs are given the structure to establish strong roots and provide the opportunity to students to proceed with proficiency and literacy development.

“Without serious and systematic attention to the next phase of growth, there is a danger that the seedlings could fail to thrive or even wilt,” the report said.

In addition to this push for structure and coordination, the report stressed the need for qualified teachers, better availability of Chinese programs to elementary-school-age children, better communication and coordination between high school and college programs, and better access to Chinese education programs to students outside metropolitan areas.

The conference was organized by the College Board and Asia Society, in collaborations with a number of professional organizations concerned with languages, federal agencies and Hanban, the Chinese agency that promotes international awareness of Chinese language and culture.

The three-day conference included plenary sessions for teachers and administrators who currently host Chinese language programs or seek to initiate programs; cultural presentations and keynote speeches from such global dignitaries as Madam Xu Lin, director-general of the Office of Chinese Language Council International and chief executive of the Confucius Institute Headquarters; U.S. Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J.; and His Excellency Zhou Wenzhong, China’s ambassador to the United States.

“The conference was a milestone in our efforts to develop graduates with the global competence and multilingual communication skills needed in an increasingly global community,” said Vivien Stewart, vice president for education at Asia Society

Dedicated to furthering Chinese language proficiency and understanding of Chinese culture, the College Board debuted its AP Chinese program in 2006. The College Board, in partnership with Hanban, also sponsors the Chinese Guest Teacher Program and an annual trip to China during which U.S. educators and administrators can familiarize themselves with China’s culture, language and education systems.

Asia Society is working with partners in the public and private sector to address the disparity between our need for more Chinese language programs in American schools and our current limited capacity.

The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,400 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT[®], the PSAT/NMSQT[®], and the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®]). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

Asia Society

Asia Society is the leading global organization working to strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. We seek to enhance dialogue, encourage creative expression, and generate new ideas across the fields of policy, business, education, arts, and culture. Founded in 1956, Asia Society is a nonpartisan, nonprofit educational institution with offices in Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Manila, Melbourne, Mumbai, New York, San Francisco, Shanghai, Seoul, and Washington, D.C.

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