

## Chinese Language Being Offered in More NJ Schools

I attended an Information session on how to start Chinese language classes in NJ schools. The session was arranged by the NJ Department of Education (NJ-DOE) for social studies/world languages teachers, curriculum supervisors, principals, and school superintendents. It was held on March 21, 2007 at the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) headquarters, in Monroe township, NJ.

The NJ-DOE invitation letter stated that “The expansion of Chinese language programs is a goal of the state’s international education initiative that seeks to prepare students with the knowledge and skills to be able to function culturally, politically and economically in a global society.”

The session attracted more attendees than the NJ-DOE had anticipated. The NJPSA hall had the seating capacity of 100. Many late comers had to stand in the back of the hall. Funding for the session was provided by the Consul General of China, Office of Chinese Language Council International (called HANBAN), as well co-sponsors: ChinaSprouts, the Global Knowledge Exchange (GKE) and the Chinese Language Association for Elementary and Secondary Schools (CLASS).

The session provided information on how school districts can start Chinese language classes in k-12 schools. Priscilla Russel and Roseanne Zippieri, Curriculum Supervisors from Princeton Regional and West Windsor schools, shared their experiences on starting Chinese classes in their schools. Other speakers presented information on the curriculum and resources available for teaching Chinese. In the hallway outside the conference room, there was an extensive collection of resource materials on display, and for sale, for teaching Chinese at various levels. Sources of funding from foundations were also discussed.

Dr Marion Yudow, Director of Rutgers University World Languages Institute informed the attendees that Rutgers is offering an accelerated Chinese Language Teacher Certification program. Selena Cantor, Director of Chinese Language and Culture Initiatives of the College Board informed of various initiatives and resources being made available by the College Board for promoting the teaching of Chinese language through out USA. These initiatives of the College Board are funded by Hanban.

Neither NJ-DOE nor College Board includes Hindi, or any Indian language, in their goals or initiatives. I did meet with the Assistant Commissioner of NJ-DOE at the session who expressed interest in meeting with me to discuss how an information session on Hindi can also be presented. My assessment of the situation is that in the current very tight fiscal state of the Government of New Jersey, NJ-DOE can not take on a new initiative with starting or expanding teaching of Hindi without financial support from either the Government of India, Indian business leaders, or non-profit organizations, or a combination thereof.

I will meet with the NJ-DOE in April, but any discussion will be fruitful only if we have some financial backing. We must learn from the successful experience of cooperation among the Chinese government, business leaders and non-profit organizations as demonstrated by the acceptance of Chinese as the target language to be promoted by NJ-DOE and the College Board and orchestrating this information session to promote Chinese language offerings in all NJ schools. It is well known that the Indian American community is the most well-off community in USA. So institutions do expect support when we ask them to undertake new initiatives for the benefit of our community.

Ved Chaudhary March 24, 2007.