

Why Study Chinese?

The rise of China has presented new economic, political and social realities that demand greater U.S. engagement at every level. As a result, there is an urgent need in schools to create programs that will raise the number of Americans who can demonstrate a functional proficiency in Chinese language. There are a great number of reasons for the Chinese language to become a more integrated part of the American curriculum, and some of the most important examples can be surmised quite quickly.

- China's increasing political importance in the Asia-Pacific region is now broadly acknowledged and, particularly in the post-9/11 era, its help has become sought by countries such as the United States on resolving difficult foreign policy issues such as North Korea and continuing the fight against international terrorism. Collaboration with China is becoming increasingly essential for solving a vast range of global issues; from nuclear proliferation and green initiatives to currency exchange problems and outlining modern trade laws, there are fewer world projects can be solved without China's involvement every day.
- China's tremendous economic growth has created new opportunities and challenges for U.S. businesses. Between 1978 and 2002, the annual GDP growth of China leapfrogged continually, eventually reaching 9.4% or what is three times the world average. In recent years (2001-2004) China has accounted for one third of global economic growth, and shows no sign of losing ground.
- China is also well on its way to becoming an immense market for American goods and services in addition to its familiar role as the vital supplier to American manufacturers and consumers. U.S. trade with China exceeded \$245 billion in 2004, second only to trade with Canada and Mexico, and it is expected to increase further.
- As a world civilization that has endured a 5,000 year and mostly exclusive history, modern China is poised to become a major international cultural presence with the ever-expanding reach of its literature, various cuisines, music and film, dance and art, and its contributions to various religions and philosophy. The youth of today's world should be prepared to join the Chinese in conversation and analysis as they draw upon their tremendous heritage and rediscover knowledge and works that will undoubtedly enrich our present world.
- Aside from having been an official language of the United Nations, Chinese has also risen in its recent boom to become the most widely spoken first language in the world. In addition to the mainland's People's Republic of

China, the Chinese language extends beyond to regions such as Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, and Mongolia.

- In cyberspace as well, the last decade has seen Chinese skyrocket to being the second most-used internet language, with the outlook remaining clear that its percentage is expected to grow.
- In terms of the United States' diverse demographics, China is likely to contribute to the projected Asian and Pacific Islander growth of 213 percent over the next 50 years from 10.7 million to 33.4 million. This will become a substantial demographic shift with the Asian percentage of the America's population doubling from 3.8 percent to 8 percent, and addresses the fact that while the vast change remains abroad, it will quickly become a domestic issue for the United States and other nations in the decades ahead.

<http://www.asiasociety.org/education-learning/chinese-language-initiatives/why-chinese>