

Policy Proposal;

What steps can be taken to strengthen Mandarin instruction and China-focused education in K-12 schools?

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Educational, cultural, and religious exchange has long been central to the U.S.-China relations. From Protestant missionaries in the 1850s to the Qing government's Chinese Educational Mission in 1872—sending students to New England to study arts and sciences—these early exchanges shaped bilateral ties.<sup>1</sup> Even before Nixon and Kissinger's diplomatic breakthroughs, education brought Americans and Chinese closer together.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the United States must reconsider its approach to Mandarin education and cross-cultural exchange. This policy recommendation focuses on addressing the decline in the U.S.-China educational exchange, particularly Mandarin language learning, as Confucius Institutes have closed, the pandemic has passed, and the U.S. has several times over, changed its approach to China.<sup>3</sup> The United States' primary and secondary China and Chinese education is falling behind. It is failing to achieve its previous standards, not competing with students' career goals, and weakening the national security efforts of the United States. This raises the question: Is the U.S. producing enough China experts with the language skills necessary to engage in meaningful educational and diplomatic exchange ; what steps can be taken to strengthen Mandarin instruction and China-focused education in K-12 schools?

### *History of the US.-China Educational topics*

Education has long been both a tool and a casualty of U.S.-China relations. While past exchange programs helped smooth diplomatic tensions, they have also been subject to foreign policy shifts. Similar to other countries deemed as geopolitical concerns, Mandarin is a “critical language” under the National Security Education Act (NSEA) and the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI). This is because to truly understand China, one must be able to visit

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas E. (Thomas Edward) La Fargue, *China's First Hundred : Educational Mission Students in the United States, 1872-1881* (Pullman, Wash. : Washington State University Press, 1987), <http://archive.org/details/chinasfirsthundr0000lafa>.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Daly, *U.S.-China Relations 1968 – 1978*, January 23, 2025.

<sup>3</sup>“How American Foreign Policy Got China Wrong | Foreign Affairs,” accessed May 14, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-reckoning>.

it, and to effectively visit one must know Chinese, and have interest, and support in studying it. Several setbacks, including the dismantling of Confucius institutes (CIs), the lack of funding in Chinese programs, and the perceived lack of future possibilities, have all contributed to a diminishing number of primary and secondary school students studying Mandarin.

The inspiration for this article was the Confucius Classrooms (CC) as that is where I, the author, learned mandarin, was brought to China, and are now on a path to be more invested in Sino-US relations than most citizens are. Confucius Classrooms (CC which are K-12 classrooms associated with CIs college campus; there were over 500 in the US.<sup>4</sup> According to the Trump admin, “push out skewed Chinese language and cultural training for U.S. students as part of Beijing’s multifaceted propaganda efforts.” The Chinese Politburo agrees to an extent- with a member stating “The Confucius Institute is an appealing brand for expanding our culture abroad.”<sup>5</sup> Hanban had put over 10 billion dollars into educational outreach, this means something for schools, free money and easier access to Mandarin and Chinese education.<sup>6</sup> The entire Chicago public school district had its mandarin outsourced to CI. CIs give plenty of resources to schools through CCs, textbooks, videos, and other classroom materials for these classrooms—materials that are often welcome in institutions without established china programs, and even trunks of gifts.<sup>7</sup> CCs also helped provide something the US is lacking; trained teachers; an essential part to Mandarin, and China studies education.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Designation of the Confucius Institute U.S. Center as a Foreign Mission of the PRC,” *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed February 26, 2025, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-confucius-institute-u-s-center-as-a-foreign-mission-of-the-prc/>.

<sup>5</sup> “How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms - POLITICO Magazine,” accessed February 26, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/01/16/how-china-infiltrated-us-classrooms-216327/>.

<sup>6</sup> “How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms”

<sup>7</sup> “How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms”

<sup>8</sup> Hongqin Zhao and Jianbin Huang, “China’s Policy of Chinese as a Foreign Language and the Use of Overseas Confucius Institutes,” *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 9, no. 2 (June 2010): 127–42, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-009-9078-1>.

The U.S. has its own fears about students studying Mandarin and China studies. CIs, almost all of which are now shut down, were seen as an ideological threat under Trump's administration, designated as a Foreign Mission, or a Trojan horse for ideology from Hanban, an organization affiliated with the PRC Ministry of Education.<sup>9</sup> This aligns with China's broader push to make Mandarin the most learned second language and the global expansion of CIs, particularly in the Global South, increasing soft power through the BRI.<sup>10</sup> Across the U.S. government, there was objection for their disregard of conflicts in Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang.<sup>11</sup> CI's and CC teachers were not allowed to bring these topics up, speak their mind about the country, or be a part of the Falun Gong religious organization. Many critics saw CIs and CCs as tools for expanding Chinese influence, though the FBI ultimately found no evidence of criminal activity or malign influence.<sup>12</sup> Still, in 2018, Congress restricted federal funding to schools with CIs, causing their number to drop from over a hundred to just five and leading to the closure of most CCs. Many schools ended their programs not due to concerns over Chinese government policies but because they lost funding, significantly reducing Mandarin learning opportunities in the U.S.<sup>13</sup>

#### *The current state of Chinese education support*

As an act of educational exchange and diplomacy, President Obama along with Xi Jinping set a "one million strong initiative", announced in 2015, aimed to "increase the number of American students learning Chinese to one million by 2020".<sup>14</sup> To complete this, The US had

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<sup>9</sup>"Designation of the Confucius Institute"

<sup>10</sup>"Over 500 Confucius Institutes Founded in 142 Countries, Regions - People's Daily Online," accessed May 14, 2025, <https://en.people.cn/n3/2017/1007/c90000-9277107.html>.

<sup>11</sup>"How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms"

<sup>12</sup> U. S. Government Accountability Office, "China: With Nearly All U.S. Confucius Institutes Closed, Some Schools Sought Alternative Language Support," accessed February 26, 2025, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-105981>.

<sup>13</sup> U. S. Government Accountability Office

<sup>14</sup>Jessica Chan et al., "Learning and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Scoping Review," Review of Education 10, no. 3 (December 2022): e3370, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3370>.

other programs to support critical language learning, and in particular, Mandarin and China studies learning. Many of these programs were shaped by the “know thy enemy” rhetoric concerning The Soviet Union in the Cold War and Japan during WW2.<sup>15</sup>

Two programs came from the state department, the Language Flagship Program, and Language Training Centers Program which both focus on higher education. It also runs the Critical Language Scholarship Program – an intensive overseas language and cultural immersion program, another program for undergraduate students, not secondary or primary schools, as does the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships.<sup>16</sup>

The options available for primary and secondary are far more limited. The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) provides opportunities for some high school students, while the National Security Education Program (NSEP) has increased funding for K-12 language programs. STARTALK offers 1-2 week-long summer programs focused on Chinese and Russian.<sup>17</sup> Though they are supporting language learning; many of these programs endorse single experiences, rather than general and continuous study. This means they encourage gains through these single experiences, and may thrust a student into further interest as 85% of NSLI-Y students continue their target language, at least temporarily and 61% have not previously studied their target language in these programs.<sup>18</sup> These statistics suggest that youth participation in language programs have an effect on later language learning and interest, as 82% said NSLI-Y impacted their educational and workplace goals. Though as will be mentioned later; this does change interest, yet due to the time needed to study Chinese, and become proficient, continued duration investments remain important.

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<sup>15</sup>Wenhao Diao and Emma Trentman, “Politicizing Study Abroad: Learning Arabic in Egypt and Mandarin in China,” L2 Journal 8, no. 2 (August 4, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5070/L28228725>.

<sup>16</sup> “Fast Facts and Statistics - National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y),” accessed May 13, 2025, <https://www.nsliforyouth.org/impact/fast-facts-and-statistics/>.

<sup>17</sup>National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y),

<sup>18</sup>National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y),

Large-scale support for K-12 Mandarin education remains lacking. The Education Department's Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), established under Foreign Language Assistance Act and funded by Title V of No Child Left Behind, had supported around 50,000 students in critical languages, and provided 3-year grants to states and local school districts to establish, improve, or expand innovative K-12 model programs. FLAP had seemed to end in 2011.

Fulbright scholarships, a goal for many students, are not available for study in China, with Taiwan and other Mandarin-speaking countries taking precedence. As of 2017, only 227,086 K-12 students studied Mandarin—far fewer than the 7.3 million studying Spanish, 1.3 million studying French, and 330,898 studying German 7,363,125.<sup>19</sup> In high school, across the entire nation there are only 1,144 schools with Chinese programs, and concerning K-8 Programs, 34 schools across the nation had them. I am assuming my middle school was one of them, though only 118 schools had K-8 Spanish programs in comparison.

### *Why should children learn Chinese?*

In 2016, only 20 percent of K-12 students in America study a foreign language (compared with an average of 92 percent in Europe).<sup>20</sup> Expanding language studies, and specifically, Mandarin and China studies at a larger scale and earlier age benefits both individuals and the nation. Mandarin requires significantly more time to achieve working proficiency compared to other languages: 600-750 hours for Spanish or French, 900 for German, and 2,200 for Mandarin.<sup>21</sup> This makes early exposure in K-12 education key to developing strong

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<sup>19</sup>“The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report,” June, 17.

<sup>20</sup>“Opinion | Do You Speak My Language? You Should - The New York Times,” accessed May 13, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/opinion/learn-foreign-language.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Chen et al. Jessica Chan et al., “Learning and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Scoping Review,” Review of Education 10, no. 3 (December 2022): e3370, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3370>.

fluency later.<sup>22</sup> If Mandarin is taught in schools with cultural context, students will not only develop linguistic proficiency but also gain skills “essential for diplomacy, international negotiations, and countering adversarial narratives.”<sup>23</sup> Research shows that classroom instruction alone is insufficient—real-world dialogue and immersion improve both language proficiency and educational diplomacy.<sup>24</sup> Developing language skills and cultural knowledge from an early age greatly increases the likelihood of producing future China experts.

Though no level of introduction in childhood can guarantee interest nor fluency in any languages, culture, or future career path – it can increase the likelihood of this happening. We see the possibility of increased levels of study and continue through the results of the NSLI-Y programming, and by all means would increase the number of individuals who speak even elementary Chinese, the way many Americans speak elementary Spanish. It would also provide an insight into China, Chinese culture that is not standard in U.S. citizens, other than the country we are in a trade war with, and have developing tensions. As the most populous country and one of the most influential nations in the world, to have almost no study or undertaking of it, its issues, complexities and culture as well as its long standing issues and parts it tends to cover up, like its ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, its abuse and concentration of Uyghurs, its conflicts with Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mongolia and Tibet. Entering a world where Americans are completely oblivious or our partner and competitors would be a disservice to the U.S. and its future. It is not just about pedagogical language learning; it's a primer for people who can help lead us through struggles of democracy and national security in the future. For this future of

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<sup>22</sup>Ya-Ying Huang and Michael Byram, “Why Not Learn with Children? A Model of Intercultural and Intergenerational Learning through Mandarin as a Second Language in Higher Education,” *Language and Intercultural Communication*, October 9, 2024, 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2024.2409091>.

<sup>23</sup>Ya-Ying Huang and Michael Byram

<sup>24</sup>Kai Chee Lam et al., “Subjective and Objective Needs Analysis of Mandarin Learners,” *International Journal of Chinese Education* 12, no. 1 (January 2023): 2212585X221144897, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2212585X221144897>.

global competitiveness we need people who actually understand China—linguistically, culturally, and politically.

This doesn't mean brushing aside legitimate concerns regarding China's political influence. While fears of ideological sway exist, they shouldn't prevent the U.S. from developing its own Mandarin education programs. It's important to separate learning languages and culture from propagandas. In some circles, simply learning Chinese may seem like a threat to the U.S. and American culture. Teaching about China is not an endorsement of the CCP. There are fully American Chinese programs, like The U.S. College Board, AP Chinese Language and Culture, which is developed in the U.S., using U.S. standards with no outside influence from the CCP and grounded in American values.

### *Recommendations*

The first general proposal is to invest further in K-12 Mandarin and China studies by supporting and establishing U.S.-based Mandarin programs. While there are an array of current U.S. based Mandarin programs scattered across the states, they come in generally three forms; The first being the most common, in classroom, non-immersion and in the daily K-12 schooling most children receive in the U.S whether at a private, charter or public school. The second, while also taking place in some public or charter schools is immersion schools and programs, which Utah, currently leads in the U.S for. The last – and a method which is more common for , and targeted towards second generation Chinese American children – is Chinese Schools, or Heritage Schools, or Community Schools (whatever you choose to call them). Though it is not exclusively for Chinese-Americans attending a Chinese ‘Sunday’ school is much more common



among second generation Chinese-Americans, and may take place on weekends, after school or some run nursery/pre-k immersion programs.

The majority of the focus of the recommendation is on the K-12 public and private school instruction. However, understanding and reducing the administrative burden and knowledge cost of the other two options is also an asset to Chinese education. Concerning K-12 education, a concern may be brought up as to why it coincides with the K-8 part as well. Does learning Mandarin or studying Chinese at age 5 really increase the chances of becoming a china expert later in life? For this, the pure pedagogical benefit of language education should suffice, however the difficulty of learning Mandarin for – in this case we assume a native English speaker – also speaks to the reason for encouraging early study. FSI estimates Mandarin is a language that takes 2200 hours of study for general proficiency. If an average student spends 180 days in class per year, and spends an hour in a Chinese class per school day, it would still take 12.2 years to reach general proficiency. That is the entire K-12 career to have only HSK 5 level comprehension. To reach native-like fluency, though not officially stated, would require more, and specific studies in sectors, like medicine, business and law to complete, especially for working abroad, or with Chinese counterparts (Using the University of Pennsylvania available CHIN course list as a basis). Starting Chinese instruction in school at an early age would benefit the objectives of fluency. The pedagogical benefits of early age language learning , and continue are also evident, though less directly to U.S.- Chinese relations. Early language learning can expand worldview, increase listening ability, memory, creativity and critical thinking, and benefits for future workplace success.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>John O’Neal, “Foreign Language Study Important in Elementary School,” Wake Forest News (blog), July 18, 2001, <https://news.wfu.edu/2001/07/17/foreign-language-study-important-in-elementary-school/>.

While federally, increasing legislation for K-12 Chinese education in public schools may seem like a hard draw, especially with funding cuts and the department of education being at risk, statewide legislation for increased access is where the best work could be done. An example of this being successful is in Utah (though primarily in immersion programs). Utah state senate passed Senate Bill 80 (S.B. 80), The Critical Languages Program, and S.B. 41 International Initiatives which lead to Utah's language immersion programs. This bill gave qualifying schools \$18,000 per year for up to six years for immersion programs, and \$6,000 per language per school for courses offered in critical languages (Chinese as one of them), and \$100 per student completing a critical language course. In these classrooms it's not just language that is covered, but culture as well, and in most programs, also have history and media courses. The program has been successful, as in 2018, 13,000 Utahn K-12 students are learning Mandarin, and 34 schools had immersion programs, which is 3% of the students in the US learning mandarin, while only having 1% of the population. A similar program has existed in Delaware, and has been successful according to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.<sup>26</sup>

A reason for needing to increase the government supported funding is due to the aforementioned defunding and shutdowns of CI's and CC's. The Confucius Institutes were npt shut down for no reason. As was mentioned before, CI' were considered threatening to The United States. The State Department deemed CI's a "foreign mission" of the Chinese government and claimed it "an entity advancing Beijing's global propaganda and malign influence campaign on U.S. campuses and K-12 classrooms."<sup>27</sup> The fear from leaders, back in 2018, at least, were that CI's were developing pro-china attitudes, and students shaped in the

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<sup>26</sup> America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Naima Green-Riley, "Th State Department Labeled China's Confucius Programs a Bad Influence on U.S. Students. What's the Story?," The Washington Post, August 25, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/08/24/state-department-labeled-chinas-confucius-programs-bad-influence-us-students-whats-story/>.

mold of what the CCP want's (Even is the CI's supervision went from the government to an NGO, but in China, the government has had interference with those as well).

Since this has already been covered in good detail, the more important information regarding the closing of the institutes is the effects they had and the gaps they left in Chinese and China education in the U.S.. Before the shutdowns, there were CI's at over 80 partner universities, estimated at about 86 universities. Those 86 universities had established Confucius Classrooms at 501 primary and secondary schools.

The Confucius institutes also supported building out Chinese instruction for 45 Chicago public schools, from 2005 to 2020.<sup>28</sup> This allowed Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to offer chinese classes to 8,000 -13,000 students. CPS still has Chinese and Mandarin offered at select elementary, middle , and high schools (According to my math, now only at 18 CPS, in 2020, right before the official decoupling of CI and CPS schools), but mostly only at specialized language, charter, magnet or pre-professional schools.

Other public school districts also relied on support and funding from CI's. In Buffalo, New York, Stephen Dunnett, former Vice Provost for International Education at University of Buffalo (UB) asked New York state to get more funding for the K-12 public school system. But eventually was quoted saying "It's shameful that the only way we can offer Chinese ... 3,000 school children are learning Chinese. There is no way for them to learn Chinese if not for this program." <sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Rachele Peterson, "Confucius Institutes in the US That Are Closing," n.d., "Chicago Public Schools Chinese World Language Program | Asia Society," accessed May 13, 2025, <https://asiasociety.org/education/chicago-public-schools-chinese-world-language-program>.

<sup>29</sup> "Outsourced to China by Rachele Peterson | Report | NAS," accessed May 13, 2025, <https://www.nas.org/reports/outsourced-to-china/full-report#WhoAretheStudents?>

It's estimated over \$17 million has been given to 143 school districts for CC's.<sup>30</sup> It is clear, the removal of CI's and CC's left a funding gap, and teaching gap (which will be addressed later). It has also been established that statewide programs do get children in Chinese classes. Due to all of these reasons, I support funding states, or having states introduce bills to create programs devised to support critical language learning. These programs should integrate cultural and historical education, covering topics such as Xinjiang, Taiwan, Tibet, folklore, and popular culture. This would provide students with a well-rounded education while giving them contextual knowledge for engaging with China. This contextual learning would both provide a language background for students, and help them reach proficiency by college, giving them the ability to become fluent after four more, target language years in college, or even set them up for a career where China is a superpower, whether the U.S. wants it to be or not. Giving discretion to the context, making sure to speak truthfully and vulnerably about the CCP could also help alleviate concerns that studying Mandarin or Chinese culture equates to teaching CCP ideology.

The second recommendation is to expand and fund educational exchange programs, particularly for high school students and reduce the administrative burden of being informed and applying. Prioritizing early language learning and continuing to fund immersive study abroad experiences would encourage more students to pursue advanced Mandarin studies and develop expertise in China-related fields. Filling the gaps left by CIs and reviving programs like 'One Million Strong' is key to preparing future scholars. As China remains both a geopolitical competitor but also an important global partner, and the future of both is unstable, these future U.S. leaders must develop the linguistic and cultural competence necessary for effective engagement. As was already explained, programs like NSLI-Y have created continued interest,

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<sup>30</sup> "Hearing Recap: Confucius Classrooms Edition," Committee on Education & the Workforce, September 19, 2023, <https://edworkforce.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=409584>.

both educational and professionally which and merites, constituted support, expansion and promotion. Two suggestions for the expansion and continuation, and promotion of these programs are as follows.

As far as promotion; administrative burden consists of learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs. To apply for a program like STARTALK, NSLI-Y or, any student or their parents needs to both know it exists, and how or when to apply for it. They also have to be accepted , NSLI-Y only has a 22% acceptance rate for its programming, allowing only the already advantaged students to participate. Increasing spending on promotion within schools, especially schools without language programs and for students who may otherwise not have an opportunity to take language classes or these trips.

The third and final recommendation concerning finding and funding teachers to teach. The primary struggle in this case, is not just funding the schools, and having them have money for programs and teachers, but finding qualified, fluent-speakers to teach mandarin. This recommendation comes in two parts; immigration reform and U.S. teaching policy.

Getting native Chinese speakers from China and staying on visas has become increasingly difficult, and expects to only become more difficult as time goes on. For many, applying for and risking the lottery for a HB-1 visa is the path to teaching Chinese, as it is in HudsonWay Immersion School in New York. If demand grows, or plateaus and the availability for visas decline, so too must the programs offering fluent teachers.<sup>31</sup> In Utah, as spoken about before there are 40 teachers from China, most of whom are guest teachers on J-1 visas for “visiting scholars” teaching their courses, only allowing temporary status as stays and allowing

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<sup>31</sup> “Paid Program: Schools US Immigration Policy Makes It Tougher to Hire Chinese Teachers,” ChinaWatch (blog), October 26, 2018, <https://partners.wsj.com/chinadaily/chinawatch/schools-us-immigration-policy-makes-it-tougher-to-hire-chinese-teachers/>.

for no professional development. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department had run the Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP) , a program which was implemented by American Councils for International Education.<sup>32</sup> This was a program that brought Chinese, Mandarin speakers from China, and partnered them with a school in the U.S. to teach Mandarin for a year. This program began in 2006, and has run its last year, ending at the end of this semester, the last teachers finishing in June this year (2025)<sup>33</sup>.

For those facing fears that people coming from China may bring with them CCP ideologies, or being CCP operative - the trend doesn't stop with those educated in China, Chinese nationals coming to teach in the U.S. It is hard for those educated in the U.S. to stay in the U.S. Yang Ying, who attained Miami University of Ohio and graduated with a bachelors in Early Childhood Educations, says her peers were not even able to stay in the U.S. to teach.

Even if someone attended graduate school in education, in the U.S. increasing numbers of Chinese international graduate students, are taking courses to become Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) instructors, rather than Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL) , (Masters in)Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language ((MA)TSFL), Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) programs. While there are some MATSFL and one TCSOL programs, encouraging students to enroll in those programs, or Universities to offer them would assist in regaining viable teachers.

In extension of that, concerning visas offering a form of Optional Practical Training Extensions (OPT) for Mandarin language teachers who were educated in the US for high school, undergrad or graduate education would both alleviate concerns about CCP ideology, as it encourages U.S. based study under U.S. based programs , and would allow for trained educators

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<sup>32</sup> “Chicago Public Schools Chinese World Language Program | Asia Society,” accessed May 13, 2025, <https://asiasociety.org/education/chicago-public-schools-chinese-world-language-program>.

<sup>33</sup> “Apply - Mandarin Teachers | TCLP,” accessed May 14, 2025, <https://tclprogram.org/apply-mandarin-teachers>.

to stay and teach. This as well as supporting the J-1, and HB-1 application process, and resuming, and furthering the pairing of schools to interested educators through TCL, would increase viable opportunities.

### *Conclusion*

The U.S. cannot continue to treat Chinese education and the U.S.-Chinese educational connection and exchange as internal issues. It is a strategic one, dealing with soft power, and intellectual advances. The U.S. has seen language learning ties with soft power initiatives from the CCP, and has yet to counter it with its own educational measures and funding. In this process they have lost programs and teachers and time, valuable time to educate the next generation of china scholars in a time of increased competition. What is needed now is a committee to increase, expand and build out programs and commitments to teaching Chinese and China studies, grounded in American values. This is all illuminated by knowing that to understand China, people need to understand its language and culture.

Though simple language learning is a play of soft power, this is not ignoring the risks associated. However, if pulling back leaves the U.S. less prepared, less informed and less competitive in the increasingly concerning future, it is not worth it. The U.S. needs a generation that is informed, prepared and ready to have dialogue with China, and understand what is going on. This starts with the changes mentioned in this proposal, increased state funding for K-12 in-school programs, continuing to support programs like NSLI-Y and providing opportunities for you, and providing opportunities for skilled native speakers to teach Chinese.

Education here is not just about career advancement or the pedagogical gain but the capacity to engage with China in the coming years. It's growing students into leaders through struggles of democracy and national security in the future.

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