A second-grade class at the Yu Ying charter school in Washington, where instruction in all subjects alternates daily between English and Chinese.

Foreign Languages Fade
In Class - Except Chinese

Beijing Helps Spur a Contrary Trend

By SAM DILLON
WASHINGTON — Thousands of public schools stopped teaching foreign languages in the last decade, according to a government-funded survey — dismal news for a nation that needs more linguists to conduct its global business and diplomacy.

But another contrary trend has educators and policy makers abuzz: a rush by schools in all parts of America to offer instruction in Chinese.

Some schools are paying for Chinese classes on their own, but hundreds are getting some help. The Chinese government is sending teachers from China to schools all over the world — and paying part of their salaries.

At a time of tight budgets, many American schools are finding that offer too good to refuse.

In Massillon, Ohio, south of Cleveland, Jackson High School started its Chinese classes in the fall of 2007 with 20 students and now has 80, said Partnarch Draggett, who directs Jackson’s world language department.

“We were able to get a free Chinese teacher,” she said. “I’d like to start a Spanish program for elementary children, but we can’t get a free Spanish teacher.”

(Jackson’s Chinese teacher is not free, but the government pays part of his compensation, with the district paying the rest.)

No one keeps an exact count, but rough calculations based on the government’s survey suggest that perhaps 1,000 American public and private schools are teaching Chinese, up from 300 or so a decade ago. And the numbers are growing exponentially.

Among America’s approximately 27,500 middle and high schools offering at least one foreign language, the proportion offering Chinese rose from 4 percent, from 1 percent, from 1997 to 2006, according to the survey, which was done by the Center for Applied Linguistics, a research group in Washington, and paid for by the federal Education Department.

“It’s really changing the landscape of teaching languages in this country,” said Nancy C. Rhodes, a director at the center and co-author of the survey.

Other indicators point to the same trend. The number of students taking the Advanced Placement test in Chinese, introduced in 2005, has grown so fast that it will likely pass German this year as the third most-tested AP language, after Spanish and French, said Trevor Packer, a vice president at the College Board.

“We’ve all been surprised that in such a short time Chinese would grow to surpass A.P. German,” Mr. Packer said.

A decade ago, most of the schools with Chinese programs were on the East and West Coasts. But in recent years, many schools have started Chinese programs.

China sends teachers here, and even helps to pay their salaries.

The results, released last year, confirmed that Spanish was taught almost universally. The survey found that 88 percent of elementary schools and 91 percent of middle and high schools with language programs offered Spanish in 2008.

The overall decline in language instruction was mostly due to its abrupt decline in public elementary and middle schools; the number of private schools and public high schools offering at least one language remained stable from 1997 to 2006.

The survey said that a third of schools reported that the federal No Child Left Behind law, which since 2002 has required public schools to test students in math and English, had drawn resources away from language programs.

Experts said several factors were fueling the surge in Chinese. Parents, students and educators have seen Chinese’s emergence as an important country and believe that fluency in this language can open opportunities.

Also stimulating the interest has been a joint program by the College Board and Hanban, a language council affiliated with the Chinese Education Ministry, that since 1996 has sent hundreds of American school superintendents and other educators to visit schools in China, with travel costs subsidized by Hanban. Many have started Chinese programs upon their return.

Since 2006, both the State Department and the College Board have also sent more than 300 volunteer Chinese “guest teachers” to work in American schools with federal grants and programs paying $13,000 to subsidize each teacher’s salary for a year. Teachers can then rene for up to three more years.

The State Department has paid for a smaller program to bring Chinese teachers to schools here, with each staying for a year.

In the first two years of its Chinese program, the Jackson District in Ohio said it had provided its guest teacher housing, a car and gasoline, health care, and other support worth about $3,000. This year, the district is paying a more experienced Chinese guest teacher $6,010 in salary and other support, in addition to the $11,000 in travel expenses he received from Hanban, bringing his compensation into rough equality with Ohio teachers.

Ms. Draggett visited China recently with a Hanban-financed delegation of 400 American educators from 30 states, and she came back energized about Jack- son’s Chinese program, she said.

“Chinese is really taking root,” she said. Starting this fall, Jackson High will begin phasing out its German program, she said.

“Founders of the Yu Ying charter school in Washington, where all classes for 200 students in pre-kindergarten through second grade are taught in Chinese and English on alternating days, did not start with a guest teacher when it opened in the fall of 2000. “That’s great for many schools, but we want our teaches to stay,” said Mary Shaffer, the school’s executive director.

Instead, Yu Ying recruited five native Chinese speakers living in the United States by advertising on the Internet. One is Wang Zuei, who immigrated to the United States in 2001 and graduated from the University of Maryland.

After just four months, her pre-kindergartners can already say phrases like “I want lunch,” and “I’m angry in Chinese,” Ms. Wang said.

Experts attribute the surge in Chinese language classes to parents’ belief that fluency can open opportunities down the road.

Growth In Chinese Language Courses
Declines in overall decrease in foreign language instruction in American schools, more middle and high schools are offering classes in Chinese, according to a national survey.

Change in foreign languages offered in middle and high schools

By KATHERINE ARNOLD
WASHINGTON — In the last decade, American high schools have cut back on foreign language instruction, a government-funded survey found, but perhaps not as much as they could have.

The survey found that 68 percent of American schools offered foreign languages in 2008, compared with 82 percent in 1997.

The survey also found that 88 percent of elementary schools and 91 percent of middle and high schools with language programs offered Spanish in 2008.

The overall decline in language instruction was mostly due to its abrupt decline in public elementary and middle schools; the number of private schools and public high schools offering at least one language remained stable from 1997 to 2006.

The survey said that a third of schools reported that the federal No Child Left Behind law, which since 2002 has required public schools to test students in math and English, had drawn resources away from language programs.

Experts said several factors were fueling the surge in Chinese. Parents, students and educators have seen Chinese’s emergence as an important country and believe that fluency in this language can open opportunities.

Also stimulating the interest has been a joint program by the College Board and Hanban, a language council affiliated with the Chinese Education Ministry, that since 1996 has sent hundreds of American school superintendents and other educators to visit schools in China, with travel costs subsidized by Hanban. Many have started Chinese programs upon their return.

Since 2006, both the State Department and the College Board have also sent more than 300 volunteer Chinese “guest teachers” to work in American schools with federal grants and programs paying $13,000 to subsidize each teacher’s salary for a year. Teachers can then rene for up to three more years.

The State Department has paid for a smaller program to bring Chinese teachers to schools here, with each staying for a year.

In the first two years of its Chinese program, the Jackson District in Ohio said it had provided its guest teacher housing, a car and gasoline, health care, and other support worth about $3,000. This year, the district is paying a more experienced Chinese guest teacher $6,010 in salary and other support, in addition to the $11,000 in travel expenses he received from Hanban, bringing his compensation into rough equality with Ohio teachers.

Ms. Draggett visited China recently with a Hanban-financed delegation of 400 American educators from 30 states, and she came back energized about Jackson’s Chinese program, she said.

“Chinese is really taking root,” she said. Starting this fall, Jackson High will begin phasing out its German program, she said.

“Founders of the Yu Ying charter school in Washington, where all classes for 200 students in pre-kindergarten through second grade are taught in Chinese and English on alternating days, did not start with a guest teacher when it opened in the fall of 2000. “That’s great for many schools, but we want our teachers to stay,” said Mary Shaffer, the school’s executive director.

Instead, Yu Ying recruited five native Chinese speakers living in the United States by advertising on the Internet. One is Wang Zuei, who immigrated to the United States in 2001 and graduated from the University of Maryland.

After just four months, her pre-kindergartners can already say phrases like “I want lunch,” and “I’m angry in Chinese,” Ms. Wang said.

"Big Benefits Are Seen From Eating Less Salt"

By PAM BELLECO

It’s a popular refrain that more people need to adjust their salt intake to help lower their blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease. But reducing dietary salt is easier said than done, especially for those who are used to eating salty foods.

The good news: A new study shows that reducing sodium may be beneficial in a number of ways besides lowering blood pressure. In fact, the researchers found that eating less salt could help improve overall health.

The study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found that people who eat less salt have lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, and lower rates of heart disease.

But even those who are used to eating salty foods can benefit from reducing salt intake. The researchers found that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

One of the key benefits of eating less salt is that it can help reduce the swelling and sodium buildup in the body that can lead to heart failure.

The study also found that people who eat less salt have lower rates of kidney disease, which is a major risk factor for heart disease.

The researchers also found that eating less salt can help reduce the risk of stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.

The study, which was funded by the National Institutes of Health, included more than 100,000 participants from across the United States.

The researchers concluded that reducing salt intake is a simple but effective way to improve overall health and reduce the risk of heart disease.

The study results are important because they show that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

But even those who are used to eating salty foods can benefit from reducing salt intake. The researchers found that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

The study results are important because they show that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

The study results are important because they show that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

The study results are important because they show that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

The study results are important because they show that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.

The study results are important because they show that even small reductions in salt intake can lead to significant improvements in health.