

Learning Chinese as a Business Opportunity for Ohio

U.S. companies exported \$71.4 billion in goods to China in 2008, up from \$16.3 billion in 2000. The rapid expansion of China's market is attracting widespread attention, including that of the State of Ohio, which has seen an increase in exports to China from 2000 to 2008 by 400% to approximately \$1.8 billion USD.

According to the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), exports to China in 2008 show an increase of 21.4% over the same period in the previous year. As a result of this increase, China was Ohio's 4th largest export market in 2008. The steady advancement of trade with China will continue to be an invigorating sector of Ohio's economy.

Equally as important, the establishment of three Ohio International Trade Offices in Shanghai, Beijing, and Hong Kong signals Ohio's commitment to export products and attract direct foreign investment into the state from China. (No other single nation has more than one Ohio International Trade Office.) According to the Organization for International Investment, one of every 22 jobs in Ohio is related to foreign direct investment, with 48 percent of those jobs in the manufacturing sector. Although China currently plays a minimal role in foreign investment in Ohio, the potential is significant because of China's rapid economic growth and tremendous foreign exchange reserve.¹

There are dozens of Ohio companies operating in China today.² The opening of branch offices in China is an indicator of the need for a talented employee pool to fill future job opportunities for Ohio companies both at home and in China. This pool of talent will need to be well trained in Chinese language and culture, in order to bring added value to business relations and development.

The number of K-12 schools offering Chinese has grown steadily year-to-year, and national enrollment in college-level Chinese

language programs continues to rise. These are trends we need to continue to support, as early-age language study is directly correlated to higher proficiency.

The OSU Chinese Flagship has been a pioneer in Chinese language education, and Chinese Flagship again exercised its foresight in developing a K-12 Chinese program in 2005, thanks to federal support from the National Security Education Program. The K-12 Chinese Flagship Program was established to provide technical support to Ohio schools that are committed to offering Chinese. The goal of this program is to build a strong foundation to prepare students in anticipation of future academic and career opportunities.

Since the 2005-06 school year, the number of Ohio districts and schools offering Chinese has risen from 8 to 66. In this year alone, about 2,500 high school students are enrolled in Chinese language programs across Ohio, and 4,000 elementary school students enrolled in Chinese exploration programs. More schools are planning to start Chinese language programs next school year.

As the program develops and continues to be implemented across the state, we look forward to working with Ohio corporations to provide valuable insight to the program and support students as they embark on the most important journey of their lives.

1. According to an ODOD June 2006 report (Office of Strategic Research, *International Corporate Investment in Ohio Operations*), there are 11 Chinese operations in Ohio with a total employment of 930. That includes six operations from Hong Kong with an employment of 706.

2. According to ODOD, some of the Ohio companies with operations in China include Ashland, Chrysler Corp., Diebold, Eaton Corporation, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Nordson Corporation, Procter and Gamble, Sherwin-Williams, Timken Company, and Wayne-Dalton.

(Updated 02/24/08, OSU K-12 Chinese Flagship Staff)