ASIA SOCIETY CENTER FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

CELIN BRIEF SERIES

CHINESE EARLY LANGUAGE & IMMERSION NETWORK 2021

SURVEYING CHINESE IMMERSION PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS AND TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES: 2020-2021

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CITATION

Wang, S.C., & Wong, K.M. (2021). Surveying Chinese Immersion Preschool Programs and Teachers in the United States: 2020-2021. In S.C. Wang & J.K. Peyton (Eds.), *CELIN Briefs Series*. New York, NY: Asia Society.

CELIN Briefs are developed by the Chinese Early Language and Immersion Network under the China Learning Initiatives at Asia Society.

INTRODUCTION

The number of Chinese language programs in the formal K-16 education system in the United States has grown since the National Defense Act Title VI of 1958 first introduced Chinese as a foreign language into higher education institutions (Wang, 2012a, 2012b). As time moves on, the Chinese language has been introduced in younger and younger grades in the K-12 system. In the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese was established as one of the Foreign Language courses in high school contexts. From the 2000s onwards, a proliferation of Chinese immersion programs were established in K-8 schools nationwide (American Councils for International Education, 2017; Asia Society, 2005; Asia Society & The College Board, 2008; Wang, Everson, & Peyton, 2016).

A similar upward trend in Chinese language programs in the younger years can be observed by anecdotal evidence from communications within the Chinese Early Language and Immersion Network (CELIN@Asia Society). For example, a number of programs and teachers have requested information or asked CELIN staff to organize sessions or workshops independently or in conjunction with the National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC), sponsored by Asia Society and the College Board. Responding to these requests, CELIN convened an informal meeting in 2017 and created a larger invitation-only meeting at Asia Society in 2020, of Chinese immersion preschools on the East Coast. Meanwhile, several well-established Chinese immersion preschools in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, have organized and conducted the annual Early Childhood Chinese Immersion Forum (ECCIF) since 2018. Representatives from the ECCIF attended the 2020 CELIN meeting at Asia Society as well.

As a result of the February 2020 meeting, CELIN was charged with two tasks. First, to develop a CELIN Brief, *An Emerging Field: Chinese Immersion Preschool Education*, which provide an overview of the emergence of Chinese immersion preschool education in the United States. The Brief also discusses the role and importance of quality preschool education, the advantages of bilingualism and biliteracy, and the reasons why adding the Chinese language in an immersion setting doubles the benefits of preschool education and lays the foundation for global competency and bilingualism and biliteracy in English and Chinese for life. Recommendations about how to build the field are outlined at the end of the Brief.

The second task resulting from the 2020 meeting was to conduct two national surveys of (1) Chinese immersion preschools and (2) teachers and administrators who work in Chinese immersion preschool programs. This Brief reports on the details of these surveys and their findings. It contains four parts:

- Part 1 of this Brief describes the methodology regarding the development, implementation, and analysis of both surveys.

- Part 2 reports on the findings of the survey of Chinese early childhood education programs.
- Part 3 reports on the findings of the survey of Chinese early childhood education teachers, administrators, and teaching aides.
- Part 4 discusses the implications of the surveys and offers directions for future research and field-building strategies.

It is important to note that our focus is on preschool programs, defined as educational programs that serve children in their preschool years, starting at three or four years old until they reach age five or six and are ready to enter kindergarten or elementary school, depending on their local educational contexts and requirements. We also focus on Chinese immersion preschools, in which Chinese is used as the medium of instruction in at last half of its curriculum design and instructional time (*CELIN Chinese Immersion Preschool Education Brief*, Section 2). Survey questions and findings from each survey can be found in Appendices A-D.

METHODS

As mentioned, two surveys were developed in 2020 to understand the landscape of Chinese early childhood education programs in the United States. The first survey sought to examine features at the program level, to be completed by program leaders, principals, or administrators. The second survey investigated the linguistic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and needs of the school personnel (administrators, teachers, and teaching aides; referred to as "teachers" throughout this Brief, as a large majority of respondents were teachers) who work in Chinese immersion preschools in the United States.

Survey Development

A team of researchers developed the program survey and the teacher survey[1]. Survey development followed an iterative process, with the research team meeting at multiple times to discuss categories and constructs, followed by item development. Once complete, the survey was sent to participants in the February 2020 CELIN Meeting for review and suggestions to ensure face validity and content validity. The first survey was piloted with school leaders, and the second, with school teachers, which resulted in a final round of survey iterations. Each survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

In the program survey, the research team asked questions related to the following four constructs: school context, program features, curriculum and instruction, and parent and community involvement. The survey consisted of 25 items, including multiple-choice, short-response, and long-response questions. The survey was conducted in English, as preschool administrators in the United States are assumed to be proficient in English.

The teacher survey examined teacher backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and needs related to the following constructs: *personal background information, educational background, teaching experience, professional views, and needs*. The survey consisted of 19 question items, including multiple-choice, short-response, and long-response questions. The survey was translated into Chinese and presented as a bilingual survey with side-by-side translations. The rationale was that many Chinese language preschool teachers might prefer to complete the survey in Chinese.

Survey Administration and Analysis

To achieve a nationally representative sample of Chinese preschool programs in the United States, the survey was distributed through various national organizations for Chinese educators in early childhood education. This included contacts listed on Asia Society's Chinese Early Language Immersion Network (CELIN), the National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC), ACTFL, the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS), and Chinese Heritage Language weekend schools. In addition to sending the surveys to these organizations, program directors and teachers were

encouraged to disseminate the survey within their respective networks, including numerous teacher social media groups. As such, purposive sampling and snowballing methods (Yin, 2011) were followed for this study. The surveys were open from June 1 to July 31, 2020.

Survey data were collected using Google Forms. To report on trends, descriptive statistics were used for some quantitative analyses, and systematic thematic analysis was used for the short- and long-response questions in the surveys.

PROGRAM SURVEY FINDINGS

A total of 19 programs responded to the program survey. Program directors and school leaders completed surveys. Questions were related to the *school context, program features, curriculum and instruction, and community involvement*.

School Context

Approximately one-third of the programs that responded were situated in California (N=6; 32%), followed by New York (N=3; 16%), and the District of Columbia (N=2; 11%). Other areas included Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia (Q1)[2]. The earliest program from the sample was established in 1989. One decade later, between the years of 2000-2010, six more programs were established. The momentum of established programs continued into the most recent decade, from 2011-2020, with eleven new programs. Without question, this upward trend indicates an increased demand and priority for Chinese preschool programs in the United States (Q2).

Of the 19 programs surveyed, nine were publicly funded, and ten were private. The public programs consisted of charter schools (N=4; 44%) and district school programs (N=5; 56%). Private programs consisted of non-profit organizations (N=4; 44%), for-profit organizations (N=4; 44%), and other private entities (N=1, 11%) (Q3). From the sample, just over 20% of programs served communities in low socioeconomic areas, while almost 80% served communities in middle- and high-socioeconomic areas (Q5). Geographically, 7 programs were located in suburban areas, and the remaining 12 were in urban areas. No programs were reported in rural areas of the United States (Q4).

It is important to note that we asked a question about student demographic information in each program, represented by percentages of each race within the program (Q6). Although the survey was piloted, data collected for this question was inconsistent and, hence, is excluded from this report. Indirectly, the next question (Q7) that asked about the languages spoken in children's homes shed some light on demographic information. Twenty different languages were reported, which are shown in Figure 1.

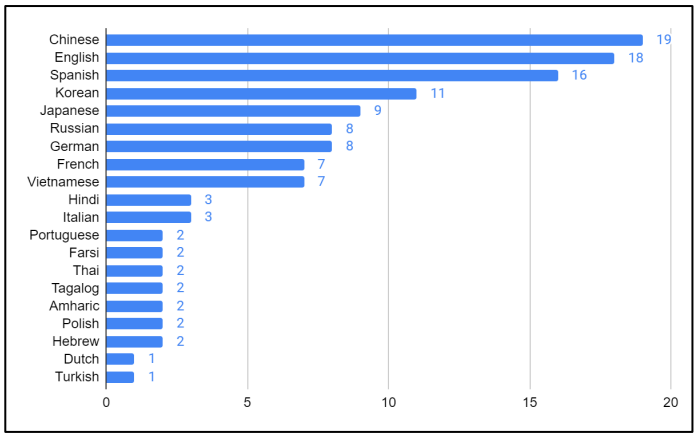

Figure 1. Students' home languages reported by the number of preschool programs surveyed

All programs served children who spoke Chinese (inclusive of all dialects) at home. In addition, English was reported by 18 programs (95%), Spanish by 16 programs (84%), and Korean by 11 programs (58%). Other notable languages represented included Japanese, Russian, German, French, and Vietnamese (Q7). The breadth and diversity of home languages in these Chinese preschool programs indicate that many children are on track to becoming at least trilingual, if they can continue their language development in Chinese, English, and the home language.

Program Features

Chinese immersion preschool programs varied in size across the sample. Just over half of the sample (N=10; 53%)

selected the response 1-100 students enrolled. Meanwhile, 26% (N=5) and 21% (N=4) of the programs selected 101-200 students and more than 200 students enrolled (Q8). Examining the ages of children enrolled in these early childhood education programs, only 5 (26%) included 2-3-year-old children. More commonly reported were programs that enrolled 3-4-year-olds (N=11 programs; 58%), 4-5-year-olds (N=16 programs; 84%), and 5-6-year-olds (N=16 programs; 84%). Likewise, 70% (N=13) of programs ended when children were age 5-6, with few programs extending into elementary school. In this way, while Chinese immersion preschool programs are inclusive of young children, most programs appear to target children aged 3 years old and above (Q13A-13C).

A key feature of Chinese preschool programs, for educational and marketing purposes, is the teacher-student ratio. From the 19 programs surveyed, the average number of administrators was 2.32 (SD=1.45), 13.05 (SD=12.92) teachers, and 1.58 (SD=2.69) teaching aids (Q9-11). The overall average student-teacher ratio in classrooms was 1:13; that is, there was 1 teacher for every 13 students in the Chinese preschool programs reported in this survey. The measures of spread (i.e., standard deviations) were relatively large due, in part, to the varying sizes of programs represented in the survey.

From the sample of 19 programs, slightly more than half (N=10, 53%) were full-day programs operating for 4-6 hours. Meanwhile, about 40% of the full sample (N=8) offered extended-day programs beyond 6 hours, while only 1 program (5%) offered a half-day program, from 3-4 hours (Q14A). In terms of the language education model used, about 85% of the preschool programs surveyed adopted an immersion model, while 15% taught Chinese as an additional language. Among those that offered language immersion, interestingly, there was an equal split between the 50/50 model and those who used 90/10 or 80/20 models (50/50 refers to using Chinese 50% and English 50% of the instructional time; 90/10 is 90% in Chinese and 10% in English, and so forth) (N=7, 44% for each category). Three programs were strictly Chinese immersion, with 100% instruction in Chinese (Q15A & 15B).

Curriculum and Instruction

A variety of curricula were adopted by the Chinese preschool programs surveyed. The top two most common curricula were the International Baccalaureate early years program (N=6, 32%) and the Reggio Emilia approach (N=5, 26%). Five other programs created their own school curriculum, and the rest of them mentioned the Better Immersion Curriculum (N=2, 11%), Creative Curriculum (N=1; 5%), Reading and Writing Workshop (N=1; 5%), and Waldorf approach (N=1; 5%) (Q16).

In terms of instructional approaches used in the Chinese preschool programs, program directors were asked to identify their top three priorities from a list of drop-down menu items. The five most commonly adopted approaches for classroom instruction included the following: inquiry-based learning (N=11; 58%), play-based learning (N=10; 53%), interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary learning (N=9; 47%), project-based learning (N=9; 47%), and content-based learning (N=8; 42%). Approaches that catered to the whole child (N=4; 21%), experiential learning (N=3; 16%), and conceptual learning (N=2; 11%) were also mentioned by a few programs (Q17).

Similarly, program directors identified their top three curricular priorities from a list of drop-down menu items. The most common choices included Socioemotional Learning (N=15; 79%), Global Citizenship (N=13; 68%), and Multilingual Development (N=11; 58%). Other curricular emphases represented in programs included STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, N=6; 32%), Humanities (N=5; 26%), Performing and Visual Arts (N=3; 16%), and Physical Education & Sports (N=1; 5%). Although respondents were given the choice of writing in additional curricular priorities, no other topic was mentioned. (Q18).

To cultivate Chinese literacy among young children, program directors selected three priorities that represented their teachers' pedagogical practices. All programs

emphasized teacher read-alouds to facilitate early Chinese literacy in young children. In addition, children listened to stories in Chinese in 17 (90%) of the surveyed programs. Other common literacy practices included early writing skills (N=16, 84%), telling stories to children (N=14, 74%), and encouraging independent student reading in class (N=9, 47%) (Q19).

Parent and Community Involvement

Program directors were asked about practices used to communicate with parents as key stakeholders. Almost all programs used phone calls, text messages, or emails (N=19; 100%) and periodic newsletters and notices (N=18; 95%). Programs also hosted Parent-Teacher Association Meetings and Open House events (N=16; 84%), while social media were quite common as well (N=15; 79%). Interestingly, only 3 programs conducted Home Visits (N=3; 16%) as a form of communication or establishing relationships with families (Q20).

How did programs involve parents (Q21)? In addition to Parent-Teacher Conferences, parents volunteered at school events (N=16; 84%), served as chaperones on school trips (N=15; 79%), and volunteered in the classroom (N=14; 73%). Engaging in a different capacity, parents also held fundraisers for school programs (N=12; 63%) and participated in parent workshops held by the schools (N=12; 63%).

Finally, program directors answered a culminating, open-ended question regarding best practices that they found effective for engaging parents. Four salient themes emerged: showcasing student work, providing parent education, sharing resources, and using communication tools. The following paragraph illustrates some examples offered in the answers (Q22).

First, program directors advocated showcasing student work to better engage parents. For example, teachers recorded students reading passages and stories aloud or shared videos of songs and rhymes (with translations) performed in class, shared with parents over digital platforms. Program directors recommended holding a Literacy Night at school, so that students could read to or with their parents. Literacy Nights also served as a form of parent education, as teachers modeled early Chinese literacy practices for parents. Additionally, schools hosted parent education workshops, which included teaching effective language learning strategies, like Total Physical Response, to parents. The third strategy involved resource sharing. In addition to the videos of songs and rhymes mentioned earlier, teachers shared lists of new or relevant vocabulary words for parents to review or reinforce with their children at home. Teachers shared recordings of books read aloud in Chinese and also allowed children to bring leveled readers home to read to or with their parents. The final strategy was related to establishing effective communication channels with parents. This included recommended apps for communication on smart devices and using parent portals on learning management systems.

TEACHER SURVEY FINDINGS

The teacher survey examined teacher (and some teacher aide and administrator) backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and needs related to the following constructs: *Personal background information, educational background, teaching experience, and professional* views *and needs*. The survey consisted of 19 question items, including multiple-choice, short-response, and long-response questions. A total of 54 teachers responded to the survey.

Personal Background

There was a broad but somewhat equal distribution of ages represented in the sample, ranging from 20- to over 60-years-old. Collectively, the number of teachers between the ages of 20-40 and 41-60 were about the same, constituting almost one-half of the sample (46% each). The largest group of teachers were between 41-50 (N=17, 32%), and the smallest group were over 61 years old (N=4, 7%) (Q1).

All but 1 teacher was born outside the United States (N=53; 98%). Interestingly, when asked about how long teachers had been in the United States, there was an equal distribution of periods. Specifically, 20% (N=11) of participants had resided in the United States for 0-5 years, 24% (N=13) for 6-10 years, 26% (N=14) for 11-15 years, and 30% (N=16) for 16

years or longer (Q2). Despite this variation of residency in the United States, 94% (N=51) of participants reported that Chinese (inclusive of all dialects) was their native language. Other native languages included English, Tamil, and French, each represented by 1 participant (Q3).

Respondents self-reported their language proficiency in Mandarin and English. A majority of them self-assessed their Chinese proficiency as advanced or superior (N=47; 87%), and the remaining, intermediate. In terms of English proficiency, about three-quarters of the respondents (N=40, 74%) reported they were at advanced or superior levels. Eleven teachers (20%) self-reported intermediate English language proficiency, while 1 teacher reported novice English language skills (Q4).

Educational Background

The survey asked teachers to report their degrees and certifications (Q5 & Q6). Interestingly, about 65% of the Chinese teachers surveyed (N=35) reported earning a master's degree, while 9% of them (N=5) had earned a doctoral degree. Almost a quarter of the sample (N=13; 24%) reported a bachelor's degree as their highest degree, with only 1 participant reporting a general high school diploma. Moreover, when reporting on where these degrees were earned, again, 65% of them (N=35) received degrees from the United States, with 30% (N=16) receiving degrees from foreign institutions in Chinese-speaking countries (e.g., China), and 6% (N=3) receiving degrees from foreign institutions in non-Chinese-speaking countries (e.g., Australia).

Delving deeper into the degrees earned by teachers in the sample, participants were also asked about the concentration/major of their degrees. Generally speaking, although there was variation in their reported disciplines, slightly over half of them (N=28, 52%) were related to education (general, early childhood, school counseling, music education, and educational technology), and the other half (N=26, 48%) were related to language, language education, and linguistics, such as Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language; Chinese Language Teaching; Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages; or a major in English, Chinese, or linguistics (Q7).

The sample consisted of 2 teacher aides, 5 administrators, and 47 teachers. Teachers were asked about details regarding teacher certification. From the sample, 13 participants (24%) were not certified, including 8 teachers, 2 teacher aides, 2 administrators, and 1 participant seeking work. Approximately half of the teachers (N=26; 48%) and 2 administrators were certified in elementary education, while another 22 teachers (41%) and 1 administrator were certified in early childhood education (Q8A). These certifications were primarily obtained in the United States (N=44), with the majority earned in New York (N=12) and California (N=12). Other states represented included North Carolina (N=4), Massachusetts, Oregon, New Jersey (2 from each state), Connecticut, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia (1 from each state). Taiwan (N=2), Holland, and China were the foreign entities mentioned (Q8B). Eight (62%) of the non-certified teachers indicated an interest in pursuing certification, while the remaining 5 were undecided (38%) (Q8C).

Teaching Experience

Participants were asked to answer questions related to their roles in the program, the age groups they taught, years of work experience, and language of instruction used. Their salaries were also captured in an optional question that provided brackets for them to select. First, 85% (N=46) of the respondents were teachers, 9% (N=5) were administrators, 2 were teacher aides or paraprofessionals, and 1 was unemployed (Q9). Almost 91% were employed full-time (N=49), while the remaining 5 (9%) were part-time (Q10A). This is interesting to note, as the survey was completed during June and July of 2020, when COVID-19 had left many in the United States unemployed. 40% of the administrators who completed the survey (N=2) stated that they also taught in the classroom, while 60% (N=3) remained strictly in administration and school governance (Q10B).

Teachers reported a range of teaching experience in early childhood education contexts. The largest group of teachers had 0-5 years of experience (N=23, 43%), followed by teachers with 6-10 years of experience (N=15, 28%), 11-15 years of experience (N=9, 17%), and more than 16 years of experience (N=7, 13%) (Q11). It is interesting to note that, regardless of teachers' age, almost half of the workforce sampled (43%) were novice teachers, which coincides with the development of the field.

Participants also reported teaching students of various ages. With the option of selecting more than one answer, 6 participants taught 2-3-year-olds, 16 taught 3-4-year-olds, 18 taught 4-5-year-olds, and 31 reported teaching 5-6-year-olds (Q10C). The trend of having more participants teaching in the older grade levels may correspond with findings from the program survey that indicated higher enrollment numbers among 4-5- and 5-6-year-old children.

Regarding the language of instruction in Chinese immersion preschool classrooms, approximately three-quarters of the sample (N=41, 76%) used only the Chinese language, and less than one-quarter of them used both Chinese and English (N=12, 23%). One participant created a quadrilingual classroom, using Chinese, English, Spanish, and French (Q12).

Finally, teachers were asked to report their salaries according to a range, as an optional question (Q13). All participants chose to disclose their salaries. The most common range of salaries reported was $51-70K per year (N=26, 48%), and the next range was more than $71K (N=13, 24%). Among the rest of the salaries reported, $31-50K per year was 18% (N=10), and $10-30K was 10% (N=5). These findings need to be interpreted within the geographic location of programs, as most programs were located in large cities with high living costs. The variation of salaries within the samples and the comparison with that of the national average preschool teacher salaries are discussed in the next part of the paper.

Professional Views and Needs

When asked in an open-ended question about the greatest rewards in teaching, participants responded with a variety of answers (Q14). A word cloud is used to analyze the words and phrases in their responses, where words repeated more often are represented with larger and darker font, and vice versa. Figure 2 showcases respondents' sense of rewards: "language," "kids/child," "love," "Chinese," "early," "learn," "development," and "culture" are larger in size than other words. Taking a closer look at participant responses using the word cloud as a lens, the following themes were collectively generated by the researchers: being a part of a child's language development; fostering a child's love for language, Chinese, and culture; laying the foundation for learning and building skills; providing a warm environment; helping children build a capacity for understanding, friendship, and relationship; and inciting joy, excitement, and curiosity in young children.

Figure 2. Word cloud of greatest rewards in teaching

Similarly, participants were asked an open-ended question related to the greatest challenges they faced (Q15). Analyzing all responses with a word cloud, again, facilitated a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by teachers. Looking at Figure 3, challenges include receiving "support," "parents," "time," and "kids." Using the word cloud as a lens, the following themes emerged: lack of supports from administration; lack of time for helping kids develop different skills and document their progress; using effective and differentiated instructional strategies; providing comprehensible input using only Chinese; finding adequate age-appropriate curriculum, materials, and resources; keeping students engaged and motivated; working with parents;

managing the classroom; dealing with low enrollment; and working with low salaries, compensation, and benefits.

Figure 3. Word cloud of greatest challenges in teaching

Related to finding a support system, respondents were asked to whom they reached out for help and support and networks they tapped into for professional discussions (Q16A & 16B). Teachers shared that they most often went to fellow teachers when they encountered challenges or tried to solve issues themselves. They reported sometimes turning to administrators, colleagues from other programs or schools, or professors and experts in the field. Rarely did they turn to parents.

When seeking to engage in professional discussions, Chinese teachers turned to several sources (Q17). The most common avenues for professional discussions were WeChat and Whatsapp groups (N=31; 57%). This was followed by ACTFL (N=25; 46%), the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS) (N=22; 41%), and the National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC) (N=20; 37%). Moreover, 10 participants (19%) engaged in Early Childhood Associations, while 8 (15%) turned to the Chinese Early Language Immersion Network (CELIN) at Asia Society.

To better understand the needs of teachers who completed the survey, findings indicated that the three most "strongly needed" initiatives included teaching materials (N=34), professional development workshops (N=34), and opportunities to join professional organizations (N=28) (19A). Meanwhile, the initiatives that participants indicated they "do not need" included job boards (N=23), certification courses (N=15), and curriculum (N=8) (Q19B).

Finally, when asked about the technological tools and applications used in their teaching, teachers noted various resources used in their daily teaching experiences (Q18). The following resources were most frequently noted, in alphabetical order: Class Dojo, Facebook, Flipgrid, iChinese Reader, Pinterest, Quizlet, Seesaw, Teachers Pay Teachers, WeChat, YouTube, and Zoom.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The two surveys described in this Brief collectively investigated the landscape of Chinese preschool education programs in the United States in 2020-2021, examining the perspectives of teachers and teacher aides, as well as program leaders, principals, and administrators. Findings from the two surveys confirmed that the field of Chinese immersion preschool education is emerging and growing, particularly in the last decade. This trend is evident in both public and private schools, indicating an increased representation of programs for diverse communities in suburban and urban settings. What is glaringly absent from the sample are programs from rural or midwestern states. Moreover, only about 20% of the represented programs served children from lower SES backgrounds. Still, what is exciting is that these institutions are serving children from a range of language backgrounds and are nurturing children to become bilingual or trilingual (Figure 1). The implications are clear, which are discussed below at the teacher, program, and field levels.

Implications for Supporting Chinese Preschool Teachers and Expanding Teacher Preparation Pipelines

The teacher workforce in Chinese preschool programs is highly educated, with a majority possessing graduate degrees (65% having a master's and 9% holding a doctorate; a total of 74%) in a variety of specializations, including language, language education, early childhood education, child development, or other relevant fields of study. This is strikingly higher than the national data that call for a

bachelor's degree for lead teachers working with children birth through age 8 (Fact Sheet: Troubling Pay Gap for Early Childhood Teachers, June 14, 2016, U.S. Department of Education).

Indeed, educational degrees go hand in hand with salary and compensation. In the teacher survey, approximately half of the Chinese immersion teachers responded that their salaries ranged from $51 to 70K (N=26, 48%), after which, in descending order, the next salary ranges were more than $71K (N=13, 24%, including those of administrators), $31-50K (N=10, 18%), and $10-30K (N-5, 10%). The following table lists the national average and median salary of teachers coming from states mentioned in our surveys:

Table 1. Annual National and State by State Median Salary of Early Learning and Elementary School Teachers (2016)

Category	Child care workers	Head Start teachers	Pre-school teachers	Preschool special education teachers	Kindergarten teachers
National Median	$20,320	$28,995	$28,570	$53,990	$51,640
California	$24,150	$34,156	$31,720	$70,670	$63,940
District of Columbia	$23,010	$68,100	$39,940	N/A	$52.010
Georgia	$19,050	$27,000	$28,190	$48,300	$53,840
Michigan	$19,620	$27,613	$27,740	$51,320	$52,460
New Jersey	$22,070	$35,468	$35,160	$62,700	$61,350
New York	$25,450	$39,050	$31,100	$57,380	$60,120
North Carolina	$19,650	$26,139	$25,970	$49,520	$39,930
Oregon	$22,240	$27,065	$27,680	$67,850	$56,900
Washington	$23,520	$30,241	$27,810	$60,170	$55,020
West Virginia	$18,890	$31,987	$30,640	N/A	$47,880

(Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of Education, 2016, pp. 3-7)

It is important to note that most of these Chinese immersion preschools are located on the two coasts of the United States in large metropolitan cities, which often result in high living costs, which is also reflected in the table. Although our data did not align the salary range with states, it is safe to infer that Chinese immersion preschool teachers' salaries are slightly higher than the national average and are closer to those of preschool special education and kindergarten teachers. The fact that Chinese immersion teachers have a language specialty and 74% of them hold master's degrees and above explains why their salaries are at the higher end of the spectrum.

On the whole, preschool teachers' salaries are low, and there is a grave disparity in wage pay among teachers in preschools in different settings, including Chinese immersion preschool programs. Yet,

> [pre]school is a critical means of expanding educational equity and opportunity by giving every child a strong start. … And research has shown that taxpayers receive a high average return on investments in high-quality early childhood education, with savings in areas like improved educational outcomes, increased labor productivity, and a reduction in crime. … Yes, preschool teachers are paid less than mail order clerks, tree trimmers and pest control workers. … In fact, most early childhood educators earn so little that they qualify for public benefits, including for the very programs they teach targeting low-income families. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, Fact Sheet, p. 1)

Certainly, this is a national issue that begs for more rigorous discussion in the field.

Almost all of the Chinese immersion teachers who responded are foreign-born (98%), and 43% have taught between 0-5 years, considered to be relatively novice teachers. The implication gleaned from these data shows that a majority of teachers need support and professional development for how to better understand the sociocultural contexts and multifaceted identities of learners in the classroom. Workshop topics could include understanding American culture, parents, and family practices; learning and hearing about the lived experiences of multicultural/multiracial families with layered identities (e.g., Chinese American, African-American, and Latino/Latino-American families); and understanding frameworks and critical discourse surrounding race, class, gender, and exceptionalities. Teachers would also benefit from topics of early literacy development, reading and writing, child development emphasizing first and second language

acquisition, and childhood bilingualism and biliteracy development with implications for teaching. In the survey, teachers also identified wanting professional development on technology integration, classroom management, engaging and communicating with challenging parents, and identifying and building a career path. These may be facilitated by highlighting best practices among colleagues within and across early childhood programs.

Additionally, one of the most critical teacher-related implications from this Brief is consideration for the continual and sustainable development of the field through the supply of Chinese immersion teachers. First, there is a lack of certified or certifiable U.S.-born teachers who are English-Chinese bilingual and familiar with early childhood science. This explains why most Chinese immersion teachers are foreign-born and come to the U.S. through advanced study at U.S. universities. To an extent, these pathways also explain why the field has such a high percentage of teachers who hold a master's degree or above. The United States needs to take a big-picture view in addressing the teacher supply shortage issue in conjunction with the teacher education programs offered by institutions of higher education, along with immigration and visa-granting laws to build a pipeline of teachers from multiple points in the life cycle of their professional lives (i.e., preparation, certification, recruitment, retention, professional development, and career advancement) (Ingold & Wang, 2010; Wang, 2014). This is a national issue with implications for all world languages in PreK-12 programs, which cannot be resolved overnight. It is wise to develop a long-term plan and systematically build up the teacher supply chain for language immersion preschools and beyond.

Implications for Individual Programs

In addition to providing support and professional development for teachers, programs should carefully and strategically consider parent and community involvement. Considering the shifting demographics of communities enrolling in Chinese early childhood programs, engagement of parents in the program should be tailored to meet the unique needs of communities. As revealed by the responses to Questions 20-24, in addition to opportunities for parents to volunteer at school events, school trips, and in the classroom, early childhood education programs should also include a parent educational component. Program leaders and teachers reported in the surveys that best practices in parent engagement include providing parent education on language and bilingual development as well as sharing resources with parents to bridge student learning between school and home. For example, considering the different language backgrounds of families represented in programs, educational materials may raise awareness of similarities and differences between the various home languages and Chinese to foster the development of both languages (e.g., Amaral, 2001). Raising awareness can be done through various communication channels, including a strong and active social media presence.

Perhaps most important from the equitable access and marketing perspectives, engagement and advocacy efforts should go beyond current parents to reach out to potential families, especially those in marginalized groups and with low socio-economic status. This is critical to offering equitable learning opportunities to all children. At the very least, families should be aware of the benefits of Chinese immersion education and available resources in the community.

Implications for Research and Partnerships

Additional key areas warrant further research to support the growth of Chinese early childhood education programs. First, to add to the growing literature on bilingual and biliteracy development, Chinese early childhood education programs can make a tangible contribution to scholarship by diversifying current research areas that primarily examine English and Spanish language combinations. Considering that the Chinese language system does not have a sound-to-script correspondence like English or Spanish language systems (Shen & Jiang, 2013), and that Chinese is character-based and each Chinese character represented by a single morpheme and syllable, research on

early Chinese-English biliteracy development is of utmost importance.

Relatedly, research collaborations with programs can continue to uncover best practices in program development. Considering the unique sociocultural contexts of children enrolled in these programs – ranging from Chinese heritage language backgrounds to non-Chinese backgrounds – programs may recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach to program development is not appropriate. Further research may help provide program leaders with a nuanced understanding of how to develop Chinese immersion programs that are effective and reflect the communities they serve.

Finally, with the increasing number of Chinese programs, developing strategic partnerships with universities, researchers, and educational organizations will be mutually beneficial. By establishing synergistic relationships, stakeholders can uniquely contribute to the overarching goal of enhancing Chinese language learning in the United States. For example, fostering collaborations between education programs and universities will provide graduates with degrees that specialize or concentrate in Chinese language teaching while also serving as a pipeline for job placement. Research programs can work with program leaders and teachers to reliably and systematically understand how to improve Chinese teaching and learning. Organizations such as Asia Society (including CELIN at Asia Society) can provide networking opportunities to enhance Chinese language learning visibility and propel the field forward through public discourse. Federal and state governments and foundations might also provide grants and other resources to advance our understanding of teaching, learning, and educational leadership in Chinese language programs.

Implications for the Field of Chinese Immersion Preschool Education

Borrowing the position statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), "All children have the right to *equitable learning opportunities* that enable them to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society" (2019). As revealed in the data from our national surveys of Chinese immersion preschools and teachers, this is not the case. To date, most Chinese immersion preschools are on the two coasts of the United States, with few in between or in rural areas. Public funding and policy should consider how to institute more quality Chinese (or any language in addition to English) immersion preschools in a wide variety of U.S. locations.

Further, immersion preschool programs should be available to children of all backgrounds, including lower socioeconomic and underrepresented groups. This is especially poignant, as many Chinese immersion programs are the result of parental demand. Yet, not all parents know how to access resources and advocate for their children to have the best education possible. This, unfortunately, perpetuates the perception that Chinese immersion programs are elite, serving only a small group of families who want their children to become bilingual and biliterate global citizens of the world (Weiss, 2019). The reality for the 21st century, however, is that all children need the opportunity to become globally competent. Public and private funding and policies may consider how to afford equitable learning opportunities to as many children as possible. Languages may be different, but the opportunity to develop bilingualism and biliteracy should be available to children of all backgrounds and abilities.

Indeed, the United States, a nation of immigrants, continues to treat languages as a problem rather than a resource (Ruiz, 1984). After many decades of struggle and advocacy, education policy and funding are finally focusing their attention on language learning and school achievements of English Learners as a right (Lau v. Nichols, 1974, see Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education; Ruiz 1984). Still, under the thin veil of the label English Learner, English learners' English language development is perpetuated as a problem, where the prioritization of learning English often comes at the expense of losing their home language.

The challenges are a double-edged sword, as the majority of English-speaking children are also losing out. For

children from English-speaking households in the United States, because their English is usually not viewed as a problem, they are left with the ideology that foreign language study is a luxury that is reserved for bright or college-bound students. They, too, are deprived of the equitable opportunity to study another language until high school with the mindset of "doing time" to meet the minimum high school graduation requirements. We are missing the golden window for children to develop bilingualism and lay a foundation for literacy and learning when they are young.

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call for all of us, halting the way society has always worked and laying bare inequitable systems that have governed us. As we move into a post-COVID era, we need to take this opportunity to re-evaluate how mismatched our educational policy and practices are with the new world order. The needs of our future workforce and leaders are beyond the basic skills of math, reading, and writing in English only. Language Immersion Preschools for All may hold a promising key for us to unlock our thinking to build bilingualism and multilingual literacy as part of the foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions that young children critically need to navigate the world that they inherit from us. The least we can do is provide them with the tools they will need.

Based on the findings and discussions so far, this Brief and its sister Brief, *An Emerging Field: Chinese Immersion Preschool Education*, propose the following seven recommendations as a plan of action for the field to move forward. They are

Recommendation 1. Advocate for and build the Chinese immersion preschool field through engagement and collaboration.

Recommendation 2. Develop a framework about *Language Immersion Preschools for All* and a *Guide for Chinese Language Immersion Preschools*.

Recommendation 3. Conduct research, build the knowledge base, and disseminate information, best practices, strategies, and resources.

Recommendation 4. Develop Chinese language program evaluation and child assessment tools for Preschool to Grade 2.

Recommendation 5. Provide workshops and professional development for parents, teachers, and key stakeholders.

Recommendation 6. Collaborate with policy makers, universities, teacher organizations, community-at-large, and publishers to increase the supply of teachers and materials.

Recommendation 7. Identify and share funding, opportunities, and resources.

CONCLUSION

Without question, the number of education programs that focus on Chinese language development in the United States has grown significantly in the past decade (CELIN, Asia Society, 2017). In line with theory and best practices, many educational programs ascribe to a "start young" philosophy to immerse and expose children to the Chinese language in the preschool years (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2016). With exposure to Chinese before setting foot in first grade, children develop oral language and emergent literacy skills that serve as important scaffolds in the later years of additive bilingual schooling. With the increase in Chinese language programs and diverse approaches to language teaching and program development, this Brief aims to take stock of the field of Chinese preschool programs in the United States, examining the current landscape of Chinese early childhood education programs, investigating practices in program development, and understanding who the Chinese language teachers are and how they view teaching and learning in these programs. With a better understanding of the current landscape of Chinese immersion preschool programs, teachers, program leaders, university partners, and organizations will be able to better support Chinese educational programs (Wang, 2014) and encourage Chinese language

development among heritage and non-heritage language speakers in the United States.

The outlook is encouraging for Chinese preschool program education. With a growing interest in learning Chinese among diverse heritage and non-heritage language communities and strengthening collaborations with key stakeholder groups, society may move away from a monolingual norm and bring forth a new generation of bi/multilingual citizens. This Brief invites readers to imagine the possibilities and power of this generation of change agents who can make the local community and the world a better place for all.

ENDNOTES

[1] Joy K. Peyton participated in the initial development of the surveys, along with Shuhan C. Wang and Kevin M. Wong.

[2] We try to align the findings with the questions on the surveys. Q1 means Question 1 and so forth.

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