

# Coventry Board of Education

Updated

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Local Educator was Among 400 U.S. Education Leaders Who Traveled to China from June 22 – June 30 in an Effort to Build and Expand Chinese Foreign Language Programs in U.S. Schools**

Troy Hopkins, Principal of Coventry High School, was among 400 U.S. educators who traveled to China for a one-week educational tour to learn about Chinese culture and language in an effort to build and expand Chinese language programs in U.S. schools. The event represented a rare opportunity for school decision-makers to experience China firsthand, learn about the culture, and see the dramatic pace of change under way in the world's most populated nation. The trip took place from June 22 through June 30, and is sponsored by Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters in partnership with the College Board. The Coventry Board of Education expended zero funds for this educational tour.

Beyond the benefit of cultural enrichment, this tour provided incentives and strategies for the educators to support the growth of Chinese programs in their own schools and districts.

“We appreciate the support of Hanban, which has enabled more American students to learn the Chinese language, discover the vibrant culture of China, and participate more fully in the cultural exchange between our two countries,” said College Board President Gaston Caperton.

According to a 2008 field study, the number of Chinese programs in the United States has grown by almost 200 percent since tallies were last taken in 2004. Additionally, in the year between 2005 and 2006, the number of students at the higher education level who were learning Chinese jumped by 52 percent.

During the trip, educators had an opportunity to meet with Chinese education leaders, build sister school and city ties, and network with other U.S. school leaders who are bringing Chinese language programs to their districts and schools. Delegates visited Beijing, and traveled in small groups to other cities and provinces to meet with local education commissions.

In the 2009-2010 school year, Coventry High School is offering an on-line Chinese course funded by an Access for All grant. This grant supports the Project Opening Doors grant that is allowing the expansion of our advanced placement program and is offered through the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. Coventry High School has recently added AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP Statistics, and AP Calculus to the program of studies. With continued student interest, Coventry High School will look to expand opportunities for learning about Chinese language and culture in the future.

In an Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) survey conducted in 2004, nearly 2,400 high schools expressed an interest in offering the AP Chinese course in 2006-07, but for many of these schools, this goal may go unrealized. They either are understaffed or have no teacher of Chinese, and many see no prospect of finding the

teachers necessary to build their programs. This increasingly common predicament underscores the critical shortage of qualified teachers of Chinese in the United States.

Chinese is the most widely spoken first language in the world. It is the national language of the more than 1.3 billion inhabitants of China and millions more ethnic Chinese around the globe.

Since 2006, the College Board and Hanban have collaborated on a multi-year initiative to build and expand Chinese language programs in U.S. schools. In addition to this year's educational tour, which has been offered annually four years in a row, the collaboration features other programs especially intended to help educators who would like to create or grow a Chinese language and culture program in their schools or districts.

Established by the Chinese government in 1987, Hanban is the nation's official agency authorized to promote Chinese language and culture internationally, fulfilling a function similar to that of the UK's British Council and France's Alliance Française.

For further information regarding this program, please contact Coventry High School directly at (860) 742-7346.