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## Schools beef up emphasis on teaching kids to speak Chinese

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By the time they graduate, more than 80 percent of the kids at all-Hispanic McCormick Elementary School will be speaking Spanish, English -- and Chinese.

All of the students except pre-kindergartners and fifth-graders at the Little Village school are learning Chinese, and the fifth-graders will be added next year, Principal Virginia Rivera said.

Mayor Daley, fresh from a visit to China, and Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan chose McCormick as the place to announce Thursday a nearly 50 percent increase in students being taught Chinese.

The expansion will add more than 1,000 students at all-African-American Howland Elementary in North Lawndale, mixed-race Alcott Elementary in Lincoln Park and all-Hispanic Madero Middle School in Little Village.

"This school can be replicated all over the city," Daley said. "I want to give the same opportunities to all the children of Chicago."

Duncan said students who master Chinese will be able to compete with "anyone in the world."

Growth of the schools' Chinese World Languages Program, which includes learning about China's culture and history, was made possible by a gift of 1,000 Mandarin Chinese-language textbooks from the People's Republic of China. Xu Jinzhong, Chinese consul general in Chicago, made the presentation.

The program already is being offered in Mandarin Chinese at five elementary and seven high schools.

Daley, Duncan and their Chinese guests dropped in on May Cheung's kindergarten class. She named things in Chinese and the children pointed to them, ending with a surprised but delighted Daley.

Cheung later translated what she'd said: "Where is your nose, where are your eyes, where are your feet -- where is Mr. Daley?"