

The Scarsdale Public Schools World Language Committee Report

December 2008

Executive Summary:

The World Language Committee recommends that Mandarin – Level 1 begin in the high school for the 2009-10 school year or as soon thereafter as practicable.

Mandarin remains the Committee's language choice for its strategic importance in the world economic scene, its connection to 21st century skills, and its interest to Scarsdale students and the community. This recommendation requires one teaching professional, one consultant, program improvement and curriculum funds, textbooks and materials, at an estimated total cost of \$122,048 (Appendix A).

The Committee recommends postponing a decision regarding a change to the current middle school world language offerings pending further review of the implications of such a change for the middle school program. With the initial cohort group of students who started the FLES Spanish program in first grade arriving at 6th grade in the 2010-11 school year, there is adequate time to consider the complexities involved in the various scenarios described later in this report.

Background:

Following the presentation of the World Language Report in April 2008 (Appendix B), Dr. McGill asked the co-chairs of the Committee, Sarah Whittington and Gerry Young to convene a group to discuss this Committee's recommendation and to suggest a course of action. Meetings were held in June, September, October, and November 2008 (see summative meeting notes, Appendix C).

Thoughts that guided the committee meetings are:

- The introduction of Mandarin will cause significant changes in the scheduling at the middle school.
- The arrival of the students who have studied Spanish since first grade will occur in the fall of 2010.
- Pedagogically it makes sense to continue Spanish instruction in 6th grade, following up on the previous five years of instruction.
- Introducing Mandarin and extending Spanish instruction into sixth grade leaves French at seventh grade isolated.

- It is important to be sensitive to the elementary group of students (now in the fifth grade) who didn't have the opportunity to experience the elementary Spanish program.
- It would be advisable to move judiciously in introducing Mandarin into the Scarsdale curriculum. A more gradual implementation would allow for adequate time to develop the curriculum and to sustain the program.

Having discussed the above, the Committee developed four scenarios for consideration:

Scenario 1:

2009-10

Grade 6: Spanish, French, Mandarin

Grades 7,8: Current program of Spanish, French

High school: Mandarin

Language	Days/week	teachers	Curriculum	Program costs
French Grade 6	2 days	1	Current: reg. and/ or L&C	New textbooks and materials
Spanish Grade 6	2 days	2	Current: reg. and / or L&C	New textbooks and materials
Mandarin Grade 6	2 days	1	Development days/consultant	New textbooks and materials
High school Mandarin Level 1	4 or 5	1	Development	New Texts/mat

In the middle school in September 2009, sixth grade students would have three language choices: Spanish, French and Mandarin. The high school would offer Mandarin -- Level 1.

Sixth graders would be able to choose French, Spanish, or Mandarin. The sixth grade world language classes would meet five times over a ten-day cycle. The French and Spanish course offerings at the middle school would require two new professional staff positions and the Mandarin course offerings would require one new professional staff position. The Mandarin position would be shared between the high school and the middle school. These offerings would require curriculum development and new textbook series and materials. The current seventh and eighth grade programs would run as at present.

Advantages:

- New language offerings would be immediate and service students immediately.
- The current fifth grade class would have an opportunity to start language study early.

Concerns:

- There is little time for advanced planning of the three offerings.
- Curricular change is significant with little time to plan. “New” French and Spanish courses for grade 6. “New” Mandarin course.
- The current program in French and Spanish seventh and eighth grade would remain as is.
- Spanish students would arrive from grade 5 in 2010. They would enter middle school with skills that current sixth graders would not have.
- There would be significant increased staffing.
- There would be significant costs in curriculum development.
- There would be significant costs in materials acquisition.

Questions:

- How to accommodate the students who need learning skills assistance?
- How many times per week would the new courses at the middle school be offered? Is twice a week enough to show significant gain in skills acquisition?
- What would happen to the Related Arts callback classes and the reading classes currently offered to the sixth graders?

Scenario 2:

2009-10

Grade 6: Mandarin—two days per week

Grade 7,8: Current program of Spanish, French

High school: Mandarin-level 1

CHOICE: Mandarin—an elective in culture

Language	Days/week	Teachers	Curriculum	Program costs
Mandarin Grade 6	2	1	development	New texts materials
High school Mandarin Level 1	4	1	development	New texts materials
Grade 7 and 8 Sp/Fr current	5	8	In place	Usual and customary
CHOICE	5	1	development	New texts/mat

In September 2009, the middle school would offer Mandarin two days per week in sixth grade and the high school would offer Mandarin-Level 1. The Mandarin teacher would teach at both levels. The current seventh and eighth grade courses would run as they currently do. To use the expertise of the Mandarin teacher fully, we would offer an elective course in the CHOICE program at the middle school.

Advantages:

- Language offerings would begin as soon as possible.
- Mandarin would begin at both middle and high school levels.

Concerns:

- Significant curriculum development in a short time.
- Amount of exposure to the language is important. More than two sessions per week would be needed to create significant changes.
- an elective in the CHOICE program could create an over-enrollment problem

Questions:

- Would Mandarin at the middle school be sustained once the elementary Spanish students arrive in 2010?
- How many times per week would this course be offered?
- What would the course content and focus be (cultural with some language; an introduction to characters, along with cultural topics; or a traditional approach)?
- How would it affect the Related Arts Callbacks and the reading time in sixth grade?

Scenario 3

2010-11

Grade 6 Mandarin

Grade 6 New Spanish

Grade 7 Current Spanish

Grade 8 Current Spanish

Grade 6 New French

Grade 7 Current French

Grade 8 Current French

High school: Mandarin Level 1 and Level 2

Language	Days/week	Teachers	Curriculum	Program costs
Gr 6 Mandarin	2	1	development	New texts/mat
Gr 6 New French	2	1	development	New texts/mat
Gr6 New Spanish	2	2	development	New texts/mat
Gr 7/8 Fr/Sp Current	5	8	In place	Usual and customary
High school Mandarin 1 and 2	4	1	In place development	In place New text/mat

Sixth graders could choose among three languages. The new sixth grade Spanish course would follow the elementary Spanish program. Sixth grade French and Mandarin would be new courses. The high school would offer Mandarin -- Level 1 and Level 2. The current seventh and eighth grade courses would run as usual.

Advantages:

- There would be three language choices at the middle school.
- There would be two levels of Mandarin at the high school.

- There would be time for curriculum and program development for the sixth grade program.

Concerns:

- It would be necessary to run the current regular (legacy) programs.
- The legacy programs would run their course at the end of three years and then the high school would have to transition its students from these legacy programs.

Questions:

- How many credits of language would be suitable after three years of study in the middle school?
- Would the students indeed have two full years of language study for two high school credits?
- What is the added curricular content with only two days per week in grade 6?
- Would sixth graders need five days per week to award two credits of HS language at the end of grade 8?
- What would happen to the existing skills program if a language course were offered five times per week?
- Where would the students get the skills assistance?

Scenario 4

2010-11

Grade 6: FLES last year (1-6 curriculum)

Adhering to Regents' Action Plan 1 unit of credit at the end of grade 8

Grade 7: French, Spanish, Mandarin

Grade 8: French, Spanish

High school: Mandarin-level 1 and level 2

Language	Days/week	Teachers	Curriculum	Program costs
Grade 6 FLES	2	2	Development	New texts/mat
Grade 7/8 Fr Sp Current	5	8	In place	Usual and customary
Grade7 Mandarin	5	1	Development	New text/mat
High school Mandarin 1 and 2	4	1	In place	Usual and customary

The sixth grade program in Spanish would be the culmination year for the elementary program. All sixth graders would continue their Spanish study. Seventh grade students would have a choice of three languages: French, Spanish, and Mandarin. Eighth grade students would be offered French or Spanish. There would be two levels of Mandarin at the high school.

Advantages:

- Continuing the Elementary Spanish program exclusively in sixth grade supports a program the district has developed over time.

- Offering Spanish two days per week allows time for the Related Arts, reading, and skills programs to run simultaneously.
- Mandarin -- Level 1 at the high school for the 2009-10 is a start at a full language course in that works its way well into the above scenario in 2010.
- The three choices for seventh grade language courses facilitates the Regents' Action Plan for level 1 credit, also respecting the integrity of our elementary Spanish program.

Concerns:

- Unclear that increased language skills in the elementary program are identified or validated.
- Need to consider the language programs sixth through twelfth grades in changing the beginning level courses at the middle school.

Questions:

- How can increased skills be measured and accommodated in the middle school program?
- How would increased language ability affect the high school sequence?

Appendix A

December 2008 Funding Proposal

one teaching professional	100,000.00	
one consultant	7500	(\$750.00/day)
program/curriculum funds	10,000.00	(one teacher, one coordinator 5 days each)
textbook*	4548	(*package price \$181.93)
audio CD*		(1 class of 25 students)
video DVD*		
workbook*		
total	122,048.00	

Appendix B

World Language Committee Report April 14, 2008

The recommendation as presented at the April 14, 2008 Board meeting is as follows:

- 1. That we offer one additional world language in the Scarsdale curriculum;*
- 2. That the world language offered is Mandarin;*
- 3. That instruction in Mandarin begin in the sixth grade, with the possibility of additional entry points as outlined;*
- 4. That instruction in Mandarin be supported by on line resources and the use of a language lab;*
- 5. That the further development of the elementary Spanish program (currently in third grade and arriving at the middle school in September 2010) be considered as a significant factor in how we implement the Mandarin program;*
- 6. That a consultant for Mandarin be hired in the academic year 2008-2009 to begin planning and developing the program;*
- 7. That the Mandarin program be introduced in the academic year 2009-2010;*
- 8. That the program begin with two Mandarin teachers in place to facilitate collaboration and solidification of the program.*

Appendix C

**Summary of World Language Committee Meeting Notes
June, September, October, November, 2008**

A preplanning meeting was held in June to review the recommendations of the April report and to discuss a plan to make the introduction of Mandarin operational. The Committee first reviewed the structure and timeline of the April proposal and determined that it needed to take an in depth look at the introduction of Mandarin at the middle school and high school, especially focusing on its impact on other language offerings and scheduling.

Thoughts that guided the discussion are:

- The introduction of Mandarin will cause significant changes in the scheduling at the middle school.
- The arrival of the students who have studied Spanish since first grade will occur in the fall of 2010.
- Pedagogically it makes sense to continue Spanish instruction in 6th grade, following up on the previous five years of instruction.
- Introducing Mandarin and extending Spanish instruction into sixth grade leaves French at seventh grade isolated.
- It is important to be sensitive to the elementary group of students (now in the fifth grade) who didn't have the opportunity to experience the elementary Spanish program.
- It would be advisable to move judiciously in introducing Mandarin into the Scarsdale curriculum. A more gradual implementation would allow for adequate time to develop the curriculum and to sustain the program.

Conclusions from that discussion:

The optimal time to expand world language choices would be at the 6th grade level. This would allow incoming 6th graders the option of choosing one of the three world languages offered: Introductory Mandarin, Introductory French or a more advanced level of Spanish. Students would then pursue the study of the language they elect for their three years in the middle school. This model would limit scheduling changes to one school year (2010-11) rather than extend them over multiple school years.

Offering a Mandarin -- Level 1 high school course with interdisciplinary connections (to the social studies curriculum, for example), would capitalize on the enthusiasm for this language study. Introducing a Mandarin -- Level 1 course would mean hiring a teacher who could then assist with curriculum design for levels two and three and also develop after-school activities. After-school club experiences would expose elementary and middle school students to Mandarin and begin to build a base of support that will be needed to sustain the Mandarin program over the years.

It would be advisable in the near future to hire a consultant knowledgeable about the introduction of a Mandarin program. This individual would help us understand what is involved and to establish and manage the program. The consultant would recommend how best to:

- decide on an approach to instruction;
- determine the viability of a commercial program versus a program of our own construction;
- find out about the availability of qualified staff;
- develop a timeline for implementation in Scarsdale.

At its September 23rd meeting, the Committee reviewed the history of the original committee including the original mandate, the investigations taken to arrive at conclusions and the recommendations presented to the board in April. The Committee also reviewed the discussions of the June meeting, including the possible impact that a new language would have on Latin studies at the high school and the goal of developing an implementation plan prior to district budget time, so that projected costs could be included in the 2009-2010 budget review.

It was suggested that the impact of the planned implementation model be reviewed with middle school leaders. Sarah Whittington, Jose Toscano, and Duncan Wilson were to look into the ramifications of the proposed model and to report back to the committee.

The Committee invited a consultant from New York University, Robin Harvey, to the October meeting to help flesh plans for implementing the Mandarin program. There was agreement to separate the two levels of implementation (middle and high school) and to proceed with high school implementation in 2009-2010. This would allow implementation at the high school level while work continued on significant changes that will be required at the middle school level for implementation in 2010-2011.

The Committee discussed the various courses and legacy courses and how they would progress through time. This discussion provided a picture of changes and implementation that would be required to establish a new language program and sequence and helped set the stage for a long-range view of how a sequence might unfold.

The Committee reviewed the idea of introducing Mandarin in the CHOICE program or in other venues, but did not come to a specific conclusion. It would not be advisable to create strains in the CHOICE program by eliciting student interest that outweighed the number of slots for students, with the result of creating a lottery system for enrollment.

At the October 20, 2008 meeting, the Committee reviewed and discussed a set of scenarios, detailed below. These summarize various approaches to the implementation of a Mandarin program and to the elementary Spanish program transition process, when the students arrive at the middle school in 2010. The Committee decided to conduct surveys to determine interest in the introduction of Mandarin to the World Language Program. The surveys were administered to eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students, and their parents (Appendix D).

At the November 10, 2008 meeting, the Committee further discussed the scenarios and the complexity of the transition issues for elementary Spanish in 2010 at the middle school.

Appendix D

Summary of Surveys Regarding Introduction of Mandarin to World Language Program

Number responding	Currently taking			
	Spanish	French	Latin	
HS grades 9-11	962	689	196	62
grade 8	283	220	61	
Student total	1245	909	257	62
HS parents	431	308	86	30
Gr8 parents	162	118	31	
Parent total	593	426	117	30
Grand total	1838	1335	374	92

Number responding	Continuing current language	
	yes	no
HS grades 9-11	809	95
grade 8	270	12
Student total	1079	107
HS parents	370	44
Gr8 parents	139	18
Parent total	509	62
Grand total	1588	169

Number responding	Interested in Mandarin		
	yes	maybe	no
HS grades 9-11	109	466	385
grade 8	26	131	121
Student total	135	597	506
HS parents	52	143	229
Gr8 parents	27	67	68
Parent total	79	210	297
Grand total	214	807	803

Number responding	Replace current language with:				
	Spanish	French	Latin	Mandarin	None
HS grades 9-11	66	21	25	68	125
grade 8	12	8	21	12	
Student total	78	29	46	80	125
HS parents	66	22	19	66	
Gr8 parents	7	9	2	20	
Parent total	73	31	21	86	
Grand total	151	60	67	166	125

Summary of Surveys Regarding Introduction of Mandarin to World Language Program
continued

	Add another language		have two now
	yes	no	
HS grades 9-11	228	615	62
grade 8	151	121	
Student total	379	736	62
HS parents	106	300	
Gr8 parents	63	92	
Parent total	169	392	
Grand total	548	1128	62

	Which to add			
	Spanish	French	Latin	Mandarin
HS grades 9-11	39	37	84	141
grade 8	12	14	89	39
Student total	51	51	173	180
HS parents	20	25	47	95
Gr8 parents	13	16	26	36
Parent total	33	41	73	131
Grand total	84	92	246	311

	Know Mandarin	
	yes	no
HS grades 9-11	45	914
grade 8	16	250
Student total	61	1164
HS parents	25	394
Gr8 parents	20	138
Parent total	45	532
Grand total	106	1696