

SCARSDALE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

World Languages Study Committee Report

April 14, 2008

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Introduction

The World Languages Study Committee was assembled by Dr. McGill and charged with the following responsibility:

To recommend which world language(s) would be added to the curriculum in Scarsdale, if such an action were to occur, and at what point in the course of study such additions would begin.

The committee was convened, based on the formula provided by Dr. McGill and we began our investigations and deliberations in December of 2007. Representation on the committee was designed to include administrators from all three levels, as well as district personnel, teaching and supervisory staff involved in foreign language instruction from the first grade until the end of the high school program. We met eight times as a committee and engaged in discussions that ranged from considerations of the value of learning additional foreign languages, the development of criteria for making decisions, an investigation of which languages to consider, the effects of the current Spanish program on additional foreign language instruction, the experience of others who had offered similar programs, and research that supported their positions. At that point we were ready to make recommendations. They follow in the report.

The Committee

The committee, as constituted by Dr. McGill, consisted of the following:

I. Administrators: Three principals/assistant principals, the Director of Arts and Aesthetic Education, two central office administrators.

Gerry Young, Principal, Greenacres Elementary School – Committee Co-Chair

Duncan Wilson, Assistant Principal, Middle School

Fred Goldberg, Assistant Principal, High School

Robert DiYanni, Director of Arts and Aesthetic Education

Joan Weber, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Administrative Services

Michael McGill, Superintendent

II. Teaching Staff: World language teachers, one elementary, one middle school and two high school; two world language chairs, middle school and high school; one elementary classroom teacher, one interdependence teacher, one librarian, one dean, the STA president.

Paula Magaletti, Elementary Foreign Language

Jose Toscano, Middle School Foreign Language

Sandy Cisco, Co-Chair High School Foreign Language

Carol D'Angelo, Co-Chair High School Foreign Language

Sarah Whittington, Chair Middle School Foreign Language - Committee Co-Chair

Sylvie Corten, Co-Chair High School Foreign Language

Patty Dempsey, Elementary Teacher, Quaker Ridge

Sue Peppers, Interdependence Rep, High School

Sharon Waskow, Librarian at the Middle School

Michael Hiller, Dean, High School

Trudy Moses, STA President

Background

A goal of the Scarsdale Schools is to help students appreciate their own and other cultures and to relate to those from other backgrounds, all as part of an effort to prepare them for an interdependent world. The study of world languages is a direct way of addressing this goal. As well, there are additional benefits to learning a foreign language: improved performance in other academic subject areas and enhanced career opportunities at a later age.

As the report to the superintendent by the Elementary Foreign Language Study Committee of 2001 indicated: The first and most obvious value of learning a second language is that children in such programs learn languages that enable them to communicate with others around the world with whom they would not otherwise have the opportunity to communicate and, similarly, to read materials they otherwise might not be able to read.

Additionally, research indicates that foreign language study enhances intellectual growth and enriches mental development generally. Indeed, there appears to be a favorable correlation between foreign language study and English language and other basic skill acquisition and problem solving. Studies indicate that foreign language programs for children provide academic advantages in the following areas:

A study by Olsen & Brown (1989) found that the English and Mathematics performance levels of students who have studied a foreign language in high school are higher than those of students who have not. In prior research that controlled for variations in students' abilities, the English and Mathematics performance levels of students of students who had studied a foreign language tended to be higher than those of students who had not. (Wiley; Eddy; Bastian; Timpe; Shelton; Olsen & Brown) Detailed studies also suggest that the mental processing skills required to do mathematics problems are also developed by language processing and vice versa.

“In the area of language arts, students of second languages are thought to improve their reading comprehension in the native language and also score higher in reading achievement including vocabulary, cognitive learning and total reading ability.” (Masciantonio, 1977, Rafferty 1986)

As well, there appears to be a positive correlation between the number of years a foreign language is studied and SAT scores. Data from the Admissions Testing Program of the College Board has definitely shown a positive correlation between both verbal and mathematics scores on the SAT and the study of foreign languages. In fact, each additional year of foreign language study correlates to increasingly higher scores. The verbal scores of students who had taken four or five years of foreign language were higher than the verbal scores of students who had taken four or five years of any other subjects. Data from “Profiles, College Bound Seniors,” 1984 and 1990, also indicate that while sheer time spent taking a subject appears to relate to a better SAT score, concentration on foreign languages in particular, for periods of four or more years, results in the highest SAT verbal average of any other subject studies (Cooper, 1987). No other subject area, when isolated, produces these results (The North Carolina State Education Department).

Children who have studied a foreign language show greater cognitive development in such areas as mental flexibility, creativity, divergent thinking and higher order thinking skills. (Foster & Reeves, 1989; Landry, 1973; Rafferty, 1986; Ginsburg & McCoy, 1981)

Foreign language study has been shown to enhance listening skills and memory (Ratte, 1968) and the development of second language skills can contribute a significant additional dimension to the concept of communication.

“Children studying a foreign language have an improved self-concept and sense of achievement in school.” (Genesee; Hololobow et al.; Masciantonio)

Children who have studied a foreign language develop a sense of cultural pluralism and openness to and an understanding and appreciation of people from other countries and of other cultures. (Carpenter and Torney, Hancock and Upton, et al., 1976, Lanbert a& Tucker, 1972)

Learning a second language at an early age offers the practical benefits of giving students a head start in language requirements for college and increases their job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language is a real asset. For example, the Nebraska Foreign Language Frame Working (1996) states that learning a foreign language provides a competitive edge in career choices today and in the future. Similarly, employers in New York State, when interviewed by the New York State Department of Labor, expressed a desire for workers who can communicate in a second language.

Our Course of Action

The committee examined the topic with care and sought consensus about an appropriate course of action. We met, as outlined below, to consider the experience and empirical research on the topic.

- December 18, 2007: Introductions, presentation of the charge, group discussion and presentation of the District’s history with foreign languages, our criteria for making decisions about foreign language instruction and our expectations of our course of action.
- January 15, 2008: Reports on the history of foreign language instruction in Scarsdale and on visits made to Mandarin programs. One work group discussed the future of the elementary Spanish program and its influence on the current seventh to twelfth grade foreign language program. A second work group discussed narrowing the choices amongst languages. We agreed to survey the committee members.
- January 30, 2008: Reports on Spanish moving into the Middle School. Discussion of the survey results. Choices narrowed to two: Mandarin and Arabic. Development of a grid to evaluate these frontrunners.
- February 13, 2008: Application and synthesis of the grid information.
- March 6, 2008: Sharing of articles and offers to review for a March meeting. Discussions and decisions on the appropriate starting point for additional language(s).
- March 17, 2008: Robin Harvey, a consultant from NYU discussed the ins and outs of introducing a Mandarin program at the Middle and High Schools and issues of sustainability.
- March 26, 2008: Summaries of research articles, programs, and discussion of where and when to introduce another language
- April 3, 2008: Decisions reached, discussion and review of the draft for our Final Report
- April 14, 2008: Recommendation presented to the Board of Education

Recommendations:

Given the extensive discussions and research conducted, the Committee recommends the following:

1. That we offer one additional foreign language in the Scarsdale curriculum;
2. That the foreign language offered be 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 for consideration in the implementation of 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 we begin the program with two Mandarin teachers in place to facilitate collaboration and solidification of the program.

Explanations:

1. While many additional languages were considered, it was felt that introducing more than one language at this time would dilute the pool of candidates to such a degree that any new offering might not be sustainable. The challenges of learning a language such as Mandarin that does not use an alphabet or syntax similar to English or Romance languages are significant both from the instructor's and from the student's perspective. We would need to focus our resources on making this offering a success. Additional offerings at this time might jeopardize that goal.
2. Mandarin was chosen for a number of reasons: its strategic importance, its connection to 21st century skills, student and community interest, its level of difficulty, its sustainability as a program, and the availability of teachers and resources as compared to the other choices.
3. There was strong consensus that Mandarin begin in the sixth grade, with the possibility of one or more additional entry points, including, for example, a simultaneous start for ninth-grade students. After-school programs were also recommended at the elementary level. While there was considerable discussion about where the program should begin from a philosophical standpoint, it was felt from a practical standpoint that any new language program should not be introduced in competition with the new elementary Spanish program, hence the Middle School start recommendation. Robin Harvey from the NYU program for the certification of teachers of Mandarin indicated that after-school clubs at the elementary and middle school levels would help generate interest in the study of Mandarin, building a base of support which would help to sustain the program over time.

4. Our consultant from NYU indicated that there are excellent online programs that would provide significant advantages to instruction and reinforcement of the language. These can be accessed independently by students. Given the sophistication of the language and the nuanced pronunciation, an on-site language lab would be of great advantage.
5. As the elementary Spanish program is still in its infancy, we need to continue to assess its effectiveness and to plan for its arrival in the Middle School. The committee felt that decisions regarding the Mandarin program need to be in accord with decisions made regarding the development of the Spanish program.
6. There was a strong agreement for the recommendation that a consultant be hired in the 2008-2009 academic year to begin planning the program and developing curriculum, and possibly a teacher to organize after-school activities for elementary, middle, and high school students, to work with alternative programs, and to introduce the community to the idea of Mandarin coming to Scarsdale.
7. There was general consensus that the program be introduced in the academic year 2009-2010. Given the careful manner in which the Elementary Spanish program was launched and the philosophy to proceed with care and with commitment in a methodical way, the Committee felt that the same procedure, as is characteristic of Scarsdale educational goals, should be followed. In order to publicize the program and to formulate the curriculum, as well as provide for the logistical and resource needs, a year of study and planning is highly recommended.
8. The Committee also recommends that two Mandarin teachers be in place when the program starts in 2009, to facilitate collaboration, solidification of the program, and strengthen and enhance feedback.

Suggested Timeline for Implementation of Mandarin Program: A Five-Year Plan

Although there are many possible ways to configure a timeline, here is one that the Committee suggests as a viable place to begin considerations.

N.B. This does not include the planning for the elementary Spanish students that will arrive at the Middle School in 2010.

Academic year 2008-09:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Spring 2008 | interview and hire consultant
*possibly interview and hire one adjunct teacher of Mandarin
(after-school/alternative programs, curriculum development, publicity) |
| Summer 2008 | plan curriculum and program development with consultant
*devise program for the adjunct teacher |
| Fall 2008 | begin work with consultant |
| Spring 2009 | interview and hire one or two teachers |
| Summer 2009 | plan and implement fall courses/programs |

Academic year 2009-10:

Fall 2009 begin program in grade 6
Summer 2010 plan for second year addition/second entry point(HS)
assess first year

2010-2011

Fall 2010 begin new grade 6/continue grade 7/(HS)
Spring 2011 interview and hire one new teacher
Summer 2011 plan and implement fall courses/programs
assess second year

2011-2012

Fall 2011 begin new grade 6, continue grade 7, add grade 8
assess staffing needs
Spring 2012 assess all levels
Summer 2012 plan and implement fall courses/programs

2012-2013

Fall 2012 begin new grade 6, continue grade 7, grade 8
assess staffing needs
Spring 2013 assess all levels
Summer 2013 plan and implement fall courses/programs

General list of costs:

Consultant fees
One/two Mandarin teacher(s) during first two years
Program development
Summer program development days

Materials:

art supplies
textbooks
computer access
language laboratory

Background Synopses

Sub group summaries:

1. Choosing another language and narrowing the choices:

Discussion in this group ranged from choice of languages, to the difficulty of choosing, to appropriate starting times, to questions of fluency levels, to packaging, to combinations, to cultural considerations of what other districts are doing, to links to college programs, to incentives and partnerships, and a number of other interesting concepts/approaches. It seemed that the group needed to narrow the field in order to do the appropriate research on one or a smaller number of languages. No one in the group suggested a large number of languages, although some suggested a small package of them as introductory opportunities in a larger context of global studies. Based on the National Security Education Program Flagship Program's focus on languages critical to national security, the group mentioned Arabic, Korean, Chinese, Persian, Hindi, Urdu, and a variety of Eurasian languages. Members in the group also suggested Japanese and American Sign Language. Since we are offering Spanish at the elementary level, French and Spanish at the middle school level, and French, Spanish, and Latin at the high school level, we may be addressing the Eurasian language component.

2. The Elementary Spanish Program:

One of the basic questions that the sub group discussed for the current elementary Spanish programs is how it will influence the current program grades seven through twelve.

This year the structure of the elementary program has three teachers in grades first, second, and third meeting thirty minutes twice a week.

The teacher typically begins class with a song and TPR (total physical response) activities. She will close with a song.

The program for each ensuing year is written over the summer prior to the start of classes. The content is theme based. There is reinforcement and connection to other disciplines whenever possible. With regard to first grade, students do not print or write. In second grade there is some printing and spelling. Reading and writing commence in third grade.

Students enjoy simple plays like Little Red Riding Hood, where the teacher constructs the scenes with vocabulary and sentences that the students can easily and naturally handle.

The group offered the following thoughts/issues/concerns/needs for looking ahead:

- Structural questions
- Content sequence
- Exit criteria/requirements
- Place for special learning issues
- Ability levels at the end of the elementary program

- Staffing/numbers/days per week
- Schedule and time
- Rooms
- The choice of foreign language
- How to ascertain which students will wish to continue in Spanish and those who may want to switch to French
- The pivotal nature of grade 6
- Grade 8 transition to the high school
- The expectations for continuing in Spanish at the middle school level
- What are entry points? (e.g. new comers to the district)
- Class visits at all levels

The Committee members agreed that these were important and urgent questions that need to be addressed, but that this study is beyond the charge and scope of this Committee.

Article Research summaries:

Article Review #1

Weber, George, Top Languages: The World's 10 Most Influential Languages, Language Today, Ed. Kingscott, 3:12-18, ISBN 1369-9733, 1997.

George Weber calculates the importance of languages using the following variables:

1. Number of primary speakers: max. 4 points*
2. Number of secondary speakers: max. 6 points*
3. Economic power of countries using the language: max. 8 points*
4. Number of major areas of human activity in which the language is important: max. 8 points*
5. Number and population of countries using the language: max. 7 points
- *6. Socio-literary prestige of the language: max. 4 points (plus an additional point for being an official UN language)

Weber ranked Arabic #5 and Chinese #6 after English, French, Spanish, and Russian. Although the author argued, in 2006, that the ranking has been unaffected over time, he may not have accounted adequately for the influence of recent economic growth in China.

He offered the following comments on Arabic and Chinese:

"Arabic is the only language apart from English and French that is used in an international "field." It is the language of Islam and as such used in countless Koranic schools between Morocco and Indonesia. It is also the only major international linguistic stream of influence that is quite independent of the West and as such is little noticed or appreciated there."

"Despite its huge number of native speakers, Chinese is not an internationally influential language. Its use is concentrated in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and widespread communities all over the world, especially large ones in Southeast Asia. With its continent-sized

home base it seems sufficient unto itself. Chinese has been the historical language of learning in much of the Far East and has been a major influence in the past on the Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, and some other people."

Article Review #2: Foreign Language Teaching in Other Countries

Pufahl, N.C. Rhodes, D. Christian, "What We Can Learn From Foreign Language Teaching in Other Countries," ERIC Clearinghouse of Languages and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, EDO-FL-01-06, September 2001.

The Center for Applied Linguistics conducted a study, collecting information from 22 educators in 19 countries. They note that when comparing students globally, "The U.S. students lag far behind in their foreign language capabilities." The following points highlight the answers of respondents as they discussed successful aspects of foreign language education in their countries:

1. "beginning foreign language study early" (many begin by age 8)
2. "a second foreign language is offered or required in the elementary grades"
3. "the importance of a well articulated curriculum framework"
4. "a well trained teaching corps"
5. the use of technology for "access to information and entertainment" and for "interaction and collaboration with speakers of other languages"
6. "integration of language and content learning"
7. "communicative teaching methods"
8. "focus on language learning strategies"
9. grouping students based on "proficiency rather than age or grade level"
10. "near-universal introduction of languages at the primary level"
11. "Foreign Language as Core Subjects" * "at least one foreign language is compulsory for all students"
12. Some countries emphasize assessments* "The only national or regional examinations that include language proficiency assessments are school-leaving examinations administered at the end of secondary education."

The overall message seems to be that the U.S. should start language instruction early, take it seriously, fund it well, and conduct further research to improve the state of the field.

Some committee members noted personal family experiences where, for example, studying in Spain, relatives learned multiple languages (English, German, French) and began their study of languages in elementary school. They have reached a high level of proficiency. Others related that their children learning another language starting very young have reached a significant fluency level and maintain it by use at home.

NAIS WORKSHOP ON MANDARIN CHINESE

Some highlights and main points are as follows:

- Start before 12 - brain fossilizes around that age and can't control the tongue for pronunciation
- Hanban has developed textbooks through Chinese AP (AP Chinese 1st time in 2007)
- www.hanban.org
- Chinese government pays for head of schools to go to China before they start a Mandarin program. Chinese government pays for Chinese teacher's salary for a year as room and board are provided by the school district. Now there are very good graduate students, highly motivated who are part of this program. A lot of support has to be built in for the Chinese teacher to acclimate and stay beyond a year.
- www.chinabooks.com

Punahou Schools in Honolulu

- Start Chinese instruction in 7th and 8th grades
- Teach simplified and traditional Chinese
- Use Discovering Chinese, Volumes I-IV with CD rom
- Start with traditional Chinese and then go to simplified to make students happier
- Exposure program in elementary school uses My First Chinese Words (lower elementary) and My First Chinese Reader (upper elementary)

Criteria for Textbook selection

- Age
- Type of student
- Type of program: FLES, FLEX, Immersion
- Traditional or simplified characters?
- College texts or not
- Supplementary materials: drill, exercise, video, audio, tests , too much? Too little?
- Cultural material
- On-line supplementary material
- Amount of pinyin
- Amount of grammar

CAIS, an immersion school in San Francisco

- Authentic materials
- Traditional and Hanyu Pinyin
- Learn both Traditional and Simplified by graduation
- Computer is revolutionizing the writing and improving the ability to write in Chinese
- 7 off-site after-school programs
- Summer school
- SAT2, Intermediate, Advanced (AP)
- High school and alumni classes

- Now emerging materials of higher quality and include support materials
- Administrator workshops for those starting and for those sustaining and expanding programs
- Teacher Acculturation with China Connections (culture of education - teaching 16 students versus 60 - American teacher/parent conferences)

Things to do when starting a program

- Be clear on purpose - culture - include other disciplines, bring in festivals
- Include communication - film, email, OPI (rich opportunities for culture)
- Include literature
- Advanced study
- Select a teacher
- Language level (CAIS will assist for Chinese teacher selection)
- Classroom practice (CAIS will assist with acculturation)
- Select materials
- Exchange with home stay by third year after starting program to sustain interest
- Professional development (CAIS, ASIA Society, CLASS, HANBAN)

Pitfalls

1. Expectations (purpose)
 - Literature in third year??
 - Parents' expectations
 - Assessment (not just AP) (NOELLA, STAMP, SOPI/student interview)
2. Adequate resources
 - Computers enabled
 - Audio visual
3. Geopolitical worldview
 - Opportunity
 - Flags and one China policy
 - Stability
 - Tibet

It is imperative to decide for how long you are going to try the program (i.e., 6 years)

Supplemental ways to learn Chinese that would appeal to Twenty-first century learners:

ChinesePod.com offers free pod casts, PDF downloads of the pod casts with pinyin, an English/Chinese dictionary, blog discussions, speaking practice, flashcards and individual lessons with Chinese teachers over Skype. The pod casts are free but there are fees for additional services. They are offered at four levels of difficulty and last 10-15 minutes each. The basic cost is \$9/month and a discount is offered to students. The website claims that over 10,000 people/day use this service.

Students may:

Study Chinese on the go, on their iPod or mobile phone.

Have lessons delivered daily through RSS feeds.

Tag vocabulary lists and discover related words tagged by others.

Stay in touch with lesson discussions in a Conversation section

ECPod is a site, which offers free Chinese video pod casts on a variety of topics. The site "prides itself (sic) on the intrinsic value of not just book-learning but all the other qualitative factors that come from cultural exchange*cultural innuendo and colloquialisms" Its objective is to offer interactive teaching tools for members to learn Chinese and English as well as to promote Chinese culture to the world. The short videos are created by members and are offered in a range of difficulty.

Askasia.org/students offers games for writing Chinese, youth produced audio slideshows in Mandarin and English. Topics include contrasting old Beijing with modern Beijing or student views of arts in China. Additional features cover cultural and current issues designed to appeal to young people.

Chinaprep.com offers summer travel experiences to students who have a broad range of Mandarin skills. Trips include language classes, site visits and travel.

A Consultant's views:

This Committee welcomed Robin Harvey from NYU program for certification of teachers of Mandarin. Robin summarized that Mandarin is the official dialect of northern China and Taiwan. She began studying Mandarin in college and as an American she has become fluent, indicating that this took many years of intense work and that her first semester of college she had doubts about whether she would succeed.

Questions that our group raised as a starting point for the discussion are: What do we need to know to sustain a program? What should we avoid? What does she need to know about us? What is the sustainability of Mandarin and how would we accomplish this with Spanish growing in numbers and with our elementary program?

Robin iterated that study abroad of Middle School and High School students, and college is imperative. There is government funding for programs. Concordia Language Village and Middlebury College have long-standing and sound programs. Additionally with the Internet and email capabilities there are e-pen-pals, online programs, and videos of students in their daily lives. The Confucius Institute exists in several cities and is sponsored by the Chinese government.

What are the ways to find certified teachers? There are two ways: hire newly graduated students who are trained to teach Chinese but need to be sponsored for a green card in the United States, or hire visiting teachers from China who come usually for a year's stay. There are also Heritage programs, but the teachers are not always certified.

When should we introduce the language—middle school or high school? An example Long Island school has elementary three days per week with an art component, and then students

at the middle school and high school level have class four or five days per week. Goals of the program are important and there is a need for constant exposure of the language. Ideal is offering a class daily.

The introductory year is generally a “pen-less” Chinese. If there is access to computers, then the process accelerates. By the second year characters writing and reading, along with transliteration using the pinyin system.

For what do beginning programs aim? Middle school should focus more on conversational and less in depth on characters. High school would add reading and writing. AP and Regents exams are aimed at heritage speakers. The SAT II are more geared for non-native speakers.

What is the practicality of students being able to have a conversation in the setting after two to three years in the language? The style of the class is important and needs the communicative approach. Chinese education is changing and becoming more open to Western styles and thus, the Chinese student emerging demonstrates these differences. To facilitate the conversational aspects, after-school programs in elementary and middle school levels are important. Some New York City schools set up intra-class writing exchanges or use web cam with a Chinese school. There are on-line dictionaries readily available that work for students. The teachers must be cheerleaders. Complementary programs with art and cultural events are important enhancers.

What are the overviews for each level? The advantage to starting earlier is the improved manipulation of characters. Students should have completed a home stay at the minimum two to three years of Chinese study and aim for the AP by the end of twelfth grade.

Why study literature? It provides a backdrop for communication and through the study of literature, philosophy emerges.

What materials exist for Chinese programs? There are many textbook series with on line accessibility.

How would you design a program in grades six through twelve, given no parameters, other than schedule? Have an after-school elementary program as a way to excite children. Starting in sixth grade develop a middle school program with a textbook series, designing the curriculum to communicate, write notes, incorporate computers, pod casts at home. The program should emphasize the pinyin, simplified characters. By sophomore or junior year, it would be possible to study classical Chinese poetry as a beautiful separate language.

Some suggested resources are the Minnesota State program, Chicago Public Schools, Ohio, and Oregon immersion programs.

School Visitations

Several committee members made visits to schools with established Mandarin Chinese language programs. Reports were made on visits to Great Neck South High School, Mamaroneck High School, and Packer Collegiate. These schools have been offering Chinese for a number of years (Great Neck – eleven years; Mamaroneck – twenty years; Packer Collegiate – five years)

Each school introduced Mandarin Chinese at a different entry point (sixth grade, ninth grade, eleventh grade – language/culture). As the programs evolved, it became evident that the study of this language needed to start early and all three school districts now begin instruction in the sixth

grade. They believe that an earlier start will help guarantee that the students continue to study Chinese. They can become acquainted with the characters and practice the tones with more frequency. It also enhances a student's opportunity to reach AP level of instruction. The establishment of a Chinese club and the availability of exchange programs complement their programs. All of the programs had a high rate of attrition after the study of level II. This was attributed to the difficulty of Chinese as well as to the desire to study a full sequence of another language.

Each of these school districts encountered problems trying to find Chinese teachers. Many instructors are qualified but do not have the methodologies if they were not trained in the U.S. Many felt isolated and had difficulty with assimilation. Teacher acculturation is a priority. It is essential that they have support from the school community. Chinese parents from their districts participate in the interviewing process. New York University has a certification program and it is a valuable resource.

The case for Mandarin/The case for Arabic

After several meetings that included group and sub-group discussions, reports of school visitations, article reading, and a consultant visit, the committee found three languages to consider: Mandarin, Arabic, and Hebrew. Since the latter did not surface in the district survey and because students may study Hebrew after school, the committee focused on Mandarin and Arabic. In order to evaluate the choices objectively, the committee used the following grid for discussion and evaluation purposes:

- meets district goals of love of learning, interdependence, multicultural focus, access and equity
- value of learning the language
- connectivity to twenty-first century skills
- meets National Standards of language study
- meets community expectations
- considers students' interests
- sustainability of program sequence
- level of difficulty
- utility: professional and personal
- availability of teachers

Both Mandarin and Arabic were equal in meeting district goals, meeting National Standards, and level of difficulty. Differences began to surface as the committee discussed why study each language and for the value of learning each language. Considering the likelihood of meeting a speaker of the language, the committee determined that there are 867 million speakers of Mandarin and 186 million of Modern Standard Arabic and, thus, Mandarin is probably more likely to be the language encountered for Scarsdale students. Delving further into research, the committee discovered that Arabic is a diglossic language, meaning that what is written and what is spoken may vary as one changes region or country.

In regard to connectivity to twenty-first century skills, the use of technology for the teaching of Mandarin is widespread. Students are taught a Romanized alphabet (Pinyin) and

can use free software to transliterate into characters. The People's Republic is also encouraging the teaching of simplified characters. The use of software in Arabic may not be as developed.

In the district survey of two years ago, the community responded with Mandarin as a clear acknowledgement of global interests. The students recently endorsed this language in an editorial in the high school newspaper. On a professional level the utility of both languages is not in dispute, but on a personal level, the committee asked which language would open more doors for our students and concluded that Mandarin would better serve our students' goals.

A dynamic and well-prepared teaching professional is essential to program development and sustainability. In the public school systems, these teachers need to have New York State certification. The teacher would need knowledge of curriculum development. One of the stellar teacher certification programs in the area is Master's program in the Teaching of Chinese at the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University. Both Great Neck South High School and Packard Collegiate have teachers from this program and attribute some their success to these graduates.

There are several Mandarin programs in this area that are more than ten years old. Whereas, based on the New York Times survey, there are only five programs of Arabic, most of them only two or three years in existence.

When to begin:

From a philosophical perspective, we are in agreement that it is better to begin language instruction as early as possible. There is a great deal of research supporting the notion that when students begin language instruction at an early age they are able to reach higher levels of proficiency as they progress with their studies (Pufahl, Rhodes, Christian, 2001). In other words, the earlier students begin to study languages the better they will be at listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Guerra, 1960). Our support of the early study of languages extends to all of the languages we offer (Spanish and French) or will offer (Mandarin). In other words, in an ideal world, all of the languages we offer would begin as early as possible.

In 2006, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) adopted the following position statement on early language learning:

“Since research shows that an early language learning experience generally results in the development of native or near-native pronunciation and intonation, it is recommended that students be provided the opportunity to learn a second language as early as possible in school. This early language learning experience not only helps to develop native-like pronunciation but also promotes higher levels of proficiency if the student continues in a well-articulated sequence of language learning. Research corroborates additional benefits including strengthening of literacy in students' first language, raising standardized test scores in other subject areas, and developing comfort with cultural differences. These benefits accrue with instruction that is continuous throughout the school year, connected grade to grade, and more frequent than twice per week, adding up to at least 90 minutes per week, at both the elementary and middle school levels.” (<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4743>, 2006))

From a practical perspective, several concerns and logistical issues were raised about beginning additional language instruction in the elementary schools. These include how students would choose a language, scheduling, staffing, space, finances, and the impact on Spanish. Apparently, many elementary school students and parents agonize over their choice of musical instrument, and perhaps deciding on a language to study for several years at that age could be daunting. The teachers of the current Spanish elementary program do not have their own teaching space and

currently cart their materials from room to room. Currently there is not enough classroom space to house offering two languages simultaneously. Students have two thirty-minute lessons of Spanish per week. Because there is no time period specific to world language, time is taken from the other academic subjects, thus reducing content exposure time. When the decision was made in 2001 to begin Spanish at the elementary level, the choice of languages, i.e., Spanish and French, was not included at this earlier age because of financial concerns.

There are also logistical concerns to address as the FLES program comes to the Middle School sixth grade in 2010. Adding an additional language at the sixth grade will raise similar questions. Whether we add a language or not, the Middle School will have to address questions of space, staffing, and scheduling in preparation for 2010. Currently, French and Spanish are offered to seventh and eighth graders utilizing eight French and Spanish teachers who share six full sized classrooms. We do not yet know what the Spanish program in grades six, seven, and eight will look like as students who have experienced the FLES program filter through the Middle School. We do know that Foreign Language will be offered at all three middle level grades starting in 2010. If an additional language were added in Middle School, it should also be added to the sixth grade.

The consultant recommended that after-school clubs in Chinese culture and language offered in elementary and middle school could help to generate interest in studying Mandarin in high school. The consultant mentioned that a state-of-the-art language lab is an essential tool for the teaching of Mandarin. It would surely benefit the instruction of other languages as well.

If Mandarin is offered in ninth grade some questions remain: Will students be able to take more than one language? Will Mandarin be offered as a language and culture option or as a level-one course? How many students need to sign up to merit offering the course? Will four years of Mandarin be guaranteed to those who sign up in ninth grade?

There was concern that adding a difficult language at the high school level would significantly add to the intense academic pressure of our students. Perhaps this language study would provide an edge in the post high school qualifications, but proficiency would not be attained in only three or four years of high school study. The argument for the opportunity to study two languages in the high school could provide a positive alternative. There was a suggestion that an interdisciplinary course might also be a viable option to consider.

Funding:

The federal government has identified several languages, including Arabic and Chinese, which it deems critical to United States security. In order to promote greater numbers of people who are fluent in these languages, the government has appropriated funds to be awarded to either state education agencies or K-12 schools to start new programs or support existing ones. This funding comes under the name FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) and provides three year grants on a competitive basis. The awards, ranging from \$50,000.00 to \$300,000.00, are given

to programs that show promise of continuing on beyond the period of federal funding and that can be duplicated by other local educational agencies. There is also a program that schools may participate in through the Chinese Education Department (Hanban) that brings Chinese teachers to the United States for one year. These teachers are awarded a small stipend by the Chinese government, but school districts where these teachers are placed must provide transportation, medical coverage, and meals. These teachers are not certified and require a great deal of support from the host school district. STARTALK is another government program that seeks to expand and improve the teaching of strategically important world languages. This program awards grants for summer programs serving teachers and high school students.

An example curriculum:

British Columbia grades 5-12 Curriculum

The Website www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/manchi512/chitoc.htm is a complete curriculum guide for a Mandarin Chinese program for grades 5-12.

The document is organized by grade. Within each grade the program focuses on four areas.

- 1. Communicating**
- 2. Acquiring Information**
- 3. Experiencing Creative Works**
- 4. Understanding Culture and Society**

Within each focus area information is organized by:

-Prescribed Learning Outcome Statements

All outcome statements meet the standards for the provincial education system.
The statements are expressed in observable terms.
The outcomes are benchmarks that will permit the use of criterion-referenced performance standards.

-Instructional Strategies to Achieve the Outcomes

Techniques, methods, and activities are presented in order to deliver the curriculum and to meet the needs of all students

-Suggestions for Assessments

Specific and general assessments are provided

-Learning Resources Recommended by British Columbia

The learning resources included have been reviewed and evaluated by British Columbia educators.

Some examples:

Grade 5 - Communicating (learning outcomes)

1. exchange simple greetings
2. introduce themselves and others, using appropriate family-relationship terms in the context of the immediate family
3. repeat and respond to simple requests
4. respond to and give basic instructions
5. use common expressions and vocabulary for familiar objects

Strategies include use of visual cues, songs, music, dance, drama, and game playing,

Grade 12 - Communicating (learning outcomes)

1. exchange ideas and thoughts on topics of interest
2. express plans, goals, and intentions
3. give reasons and information to support points of view on various issues
4. use idiomatic expressions
5. interact in situations drawn from real life

Strategies include listening, speaking, reading and writing activities such as filling out job applications, creating journal entries, letters, reports, role-playing, and having class discussions on a specific topic

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