



**World Language Advisory Group  
Recommendations Presented to Dr. Baker  
June, 2015**

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

In 2007-2008, the Bellingham School District chartered a World Language Task Force to review the district's world language opportunities for students, new graduation requirements, effective programs and practices, and to develop a proposal for the implementation of a K-12 world language program in our district. Immediately following the development of these recommendations, our nation experienced an economic depression that sent our district into the position of cutting, rather than expanding and enhancing, instructional programs. We were unable to act upon the recommendations from this Task Force for several years.

During this time, the Bellingham Promise was developed collaboratively with our community. The outcomes adopted as part of this strategic plan spell out the importance of developing students who are "multi-lingual readers, writers and speakers" and "well-rounded community members engaged with the broader world".

This school year, a World Language Advisory Group was chartered with a charge of developing a vision for the future of world language programming that supports the Bellingham Promise outcomes of developing multilingual readers and speakers as well as internationally-minded global thinkers and contributors. Membership included parents, teachers, administrators, students and community members (see Appendix A, World Language Advisory Group Members). Several members of the original World Language Task Force in 2007-2008 were on the Advisory Group this year as well.

As a result of our research, our Advisory Group developed a set of guiding principles to inform program development as we implement improvements to our World Language programs:

## **Bellingham Public Schools World Language Advisory Group**

### **Guiding Principles**

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All students should have access to an articulated K-12 world language curriculum at all levels.

World language education helps develop critical-thinking skills.

Community partnerships can support our achievement of the Bellingham Promise's outcome of developing multilingual readers, writers and speakers.

Second language acquisition helps provide the vision and skills necessary to be a global citizen. World language education will help students to participate more fully in the global community and marketplace as responsible world citizens.

World language education helps students to develop insight into their own language and culture as well as others.

Learning a second language will assist learners in understanding a culture significantly different than their own and contribute to more international-mindedness.

Contact with target countries, for the purposes of communication and cultural experiences, is valuable.

International travel experience provides a unique motivation and purpose for learning a second language, as well as cultural understanding within an immersion setting.

Heritage language learners should have opportunities to maintain their mother tongue.

The primary goal of world language education should be real-life communication. World language learning at all levels should provide meaningful experiences using the language for communication.

World language instruction should be taught by certificated teachers proficient in the target language. Students and teachers should use the target language in the classroom as exclusively as possible.

World language curriculum should be organized around broad themes in order to connect language learning to meaningful content.

World language instruction should be delivered in collaborative and student-centered classrooms with differentiated and culturally responsive lessons.

Integration of other curricular areas into world language instruction is valuable.

The integration of technology as an instructional tool allows students to access information and to communicate with their counterparts across the world.

## SCOPE OF OUR WORK

### *Taking stock of the current state of PreK-12 world language program*

The Advisory Group reviewed data of students' participation in world language programs currently offered in our system. At the elementary level, the ability to learn a language depends upon the school you attend, creating an equity concern that counters our district's One Schoolhouse approach. Five of our 14 elementary schools provide world language instruction through a weekly class during the school day; 35% of elementary students are offered world language instruction (half in Spanish and half in Mandarin Chinese). This has been largely influenced at the elementary level by the second language requirement of IB schools.

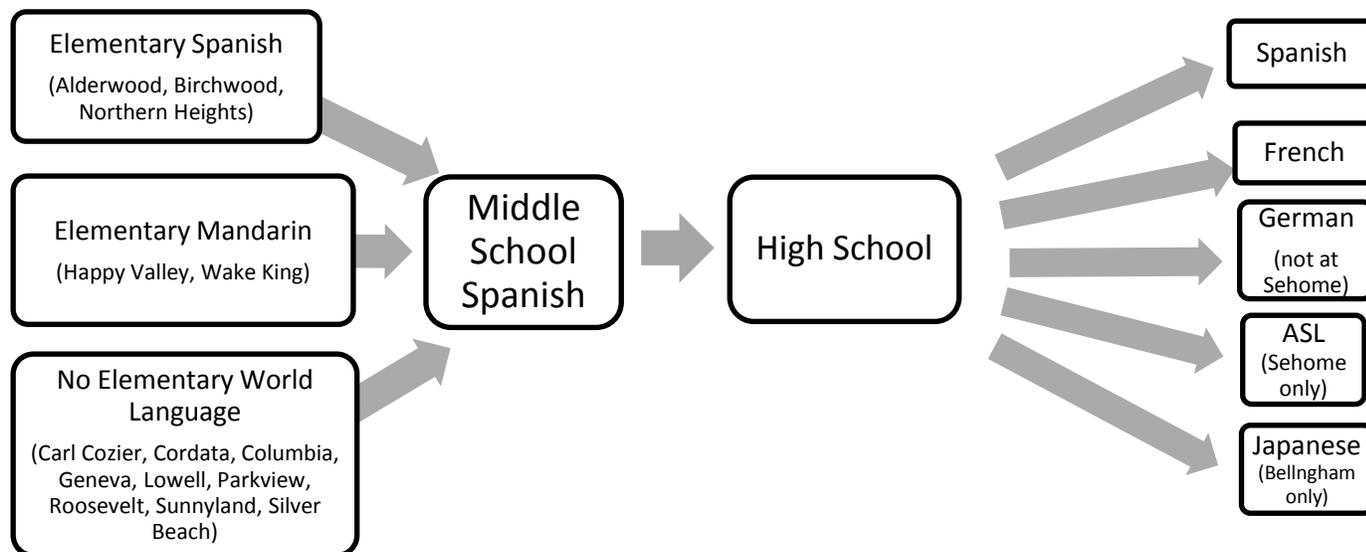
At the middle school level, the only language offered is Spanish and it is offered at all four of our schools, starting in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at two of our schools and at 7<sup>th</sup> grade at the other two. With the current scheduling model, students can select Spanish as an elective, but must choose between other electives such as music and the arts. In the first quarter of the 2014-15 school year, 21% of our middle school students were enrolled in Spanish. This year, we have 185 students in the middle schools taking Spanish I for high school credit. One middle school offers a heritage language class in Spanish, providing instruction to twenty-four native 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish speakers, providing literacy instruction in their native language. These students earn high school credit in middle school for this course as well. There are four students from one middle school who attend their feeder pattern high school during the zero hour to take French.

At the high school level, language offerings expand to provide more languages choices. All 3 of our comprehensive high schools offer Spanish and French, two offer German, while Japanese and American Sign Language (ASL) are taught at one school each. Several recommendations developed by the Task Force in 2008 have been put in place, including the opportunity for students to earn credit for proficiency. From April 2012 to April 2015, 341 bilingual students took the World Language Credit for Proficiency Assessment, earning a total of 865 World Language High School credits in 21 different languages.

Upon examining the experience of language learning from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, our world language program offerings lack a coherent, continuous pathway. While only about one third of our students start learning a language at the elementary level, half of those students take Mandarin Chinese and cannot continue learning that language at the middle or high school level. Only one language (Spanish) is offered at the middle school level, which greatly influences the number of students who explore other languages at the high school level:

<b>Bellingham School District 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment in World Languages, Fall 2014</b>					
Spanish 1	Spanish 2	French	German	ASL	Japanese
274	165	76	62	30	7

## K-12 World Language Pathways for our students with our current offerings (2014-15):



### ***Reviewing the recommendations from the 2007-8 World Language Task Force for relevance:***

In June, 2008, following a year of work, a World Language Task Force made recommendations to the superintendent that were not fully implemented. The current World Language Advisory Group wanted to honor that work by reviewing the recommendations to determine what might still be relevant. Since these recommendations were developed, there have been significant changes in our district, including the development of the Bellingham Promise and an increased interest in developing globally-minded students. The current Advisory Group determined that the criteria for world language selection developed in 2008 are still current and relevant and should continue to guide selection of languages to offer:

#### **Criteria for the selection of World Languages in Bellingham Public Schools:**

1. Career Opportunities
  - Will the language enhance student career opportunities in the rapidly globalizing world they enter as graduates?
  - Is the language important because of usage or significant politically, economically, culturally, or socially?
  - Is the language important for United States national interests, scholarly regard, business, foreign diplomacy, commerce, or other government programs?
2. Connecting to Existing and Potential Resources and Structures
  - How does this language connect to what we are currently offering?
  - Will we be able to identify and hire highly qualified teachers of the language?
  - Will students have opportunities to continue developing proficiency in the district (K-12) with this language?
3. Number of Speakers (Heritage Language Learners)

- How many speakers use the language locally, nationally, and globally?
  - Will the language promote involvement of non-native speakers and families within our community?
  - Is the language culturally and linguistically important to local residents?
4. Global and International Perspectives (Diverse Cultures)
- Does the language support understandings of diverse cultures?
  - Does the language give balance to languages of European and Non-European origin?
  - Is the language used in educational institutions, broad case or print media, or written and oral literature of the cultures?

***Review of current research and exemplary models:***

The Advisory Group reviewed current research from the Center for Applied Second Language Studies to learn more about levels of instruction required to gain proficiency, how early language programs impact proficiency levels, and factors to consider in K-8 programming. This research recommends at least 720 hours of instruction (about four years in a typical high school program) to reach a proficiency level near Intermediate-Mid according to the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Guidelines. The factors that have the biggest impact in K-8 programming on developing proficiency are time and intensity. Immersion programs lead to the highest proficiency levels. More instructional time with more frequency over time (several times per week over the course of the whole year for multiple years) are most effective for non-immersion programs. Beginning language instruction at the elementary level increases likelihood of developing basic communication by 70%.

The Advisory Group also consulted with Michele Aoki, Seattle School District, and former OSPI World Language Program Director. According to Aoki, dual language immersion is the most typical model currently being initiated across the country and state, is the most cost effective and the most impactful at helping students reach higher levels of proficiency and supporting English Language Learners. Successful models have been developed over time by expanding programming and language opportunities at the middle level first, and then growing the language expansion to the elementary to feed into the middle level and the high school to meet the middle school language learners' needs when they move up.

Our Advisory Group reviewed current research on how best to support the growing number of Heritage Speakers in our schools. Learning in one's primary language is overwhelmingly the most effective instructional model for heritage speakers; therefore providing instruction in their native language, either through a dual language or heritage language model, is growing across the nation and state. Denying heritage speakers the opportunity to learn with the most proven and research-based practice is viewed by many as a civil rights issue. English Language Learners experience primary language loss and loss of identity and culture when not learning in their primary language. The effects are evident in Bellingham when looking at graduation rates: overall- 78%, limited English- 48%, Hispanic/Latino- 61%.

Our Advisory Group also reviewed several FLES (foreign language in the elementary schools) models across the country that have been called out as exemplary models. These programs highlight a need for increasing time and intensity of programming and instruction as students' progress up through the grade levels. These models incorporate language instruction starting at the primary level with shorter classes a couple of times per week, and increasing time and frequency up through the grade levels. They also offer an opportunity for students to explore a second world language in middle or high school.

Our Advisory Group hosted several presentations from a variety of visitors as well. The elementary world language teachers in our district shared a variety of instructional materials and schedules they are utilizing to teach language at the elementary level. A visiting teacher from China and the principal of Happy Valley Elementary shared the success they have had at developing a Chinese Language and Culture program for elementary students at Happy Valley. The American Sign Language teacher at Sehome High School teaches an ASL class that is gaining in popularity and supports many students with acquiring the two credits of World Language required by our district for graduation. The Assistant Director of WWU's Center for Service Learning described opportunities to form partnerships that could enhance language and culture opportunities for our students. An international culture and language exchange company presented information about travel and leadership opportunities they provide abroad for students and teachers.

***Site Visits:***

The Advisory Group sent teams to visit three reputed high quality World Language Programs in our state: Bellevue School District, Seattle International Schools and Madison Elementary School in Mount Vernon.

During these visits, our Advisory Group experienced a variety of immersion programs at all levels, most of which provided a track of immersion within the school. Most of these immersion programs were developed to support English Language Learners as part of those districts' efforts to close the achievement and opportunity gaps that exist for ELL's. The immersion programs were offered at select schools within the district, most of which were chosen based on a significant number of native speakers as part of their demographics. None of these three districts make their immersion programs available for all district students; the program only served a small percentage of students in the schools and district. Programs were both neighborhood models as well as district-wide magnet schools, and highly sought after by English speaking families as well as native speakers. The results these programs are achieving in levels of proficiency in both languages, as well as increasing academic achievement in all content areas for ELLs, outperform similar demographic schools not implementing immersion models.

***Gathering Input from Stakeholders:***

In an effort to hear from our community about their desires, we conducted a survey for families, students and staff. We solicited their input about what languages they would like to see offered, how important it is to have a continuous exposure to one language over time, and how important having exposure to several languages is. The results of the survey showed 63% selecting "K-12 continuous experience" as Very Important and 38% selecting "experience with more than one language" as Very Important. Respondents were also asked to select languages they would like to see taught at each level (see Appendix B, World Language Survey Summary Analysis). Additionally, the advisory group heard feedback from many world language teachers in our district that informed our recommendations.

***Work groups developing recommendations:***

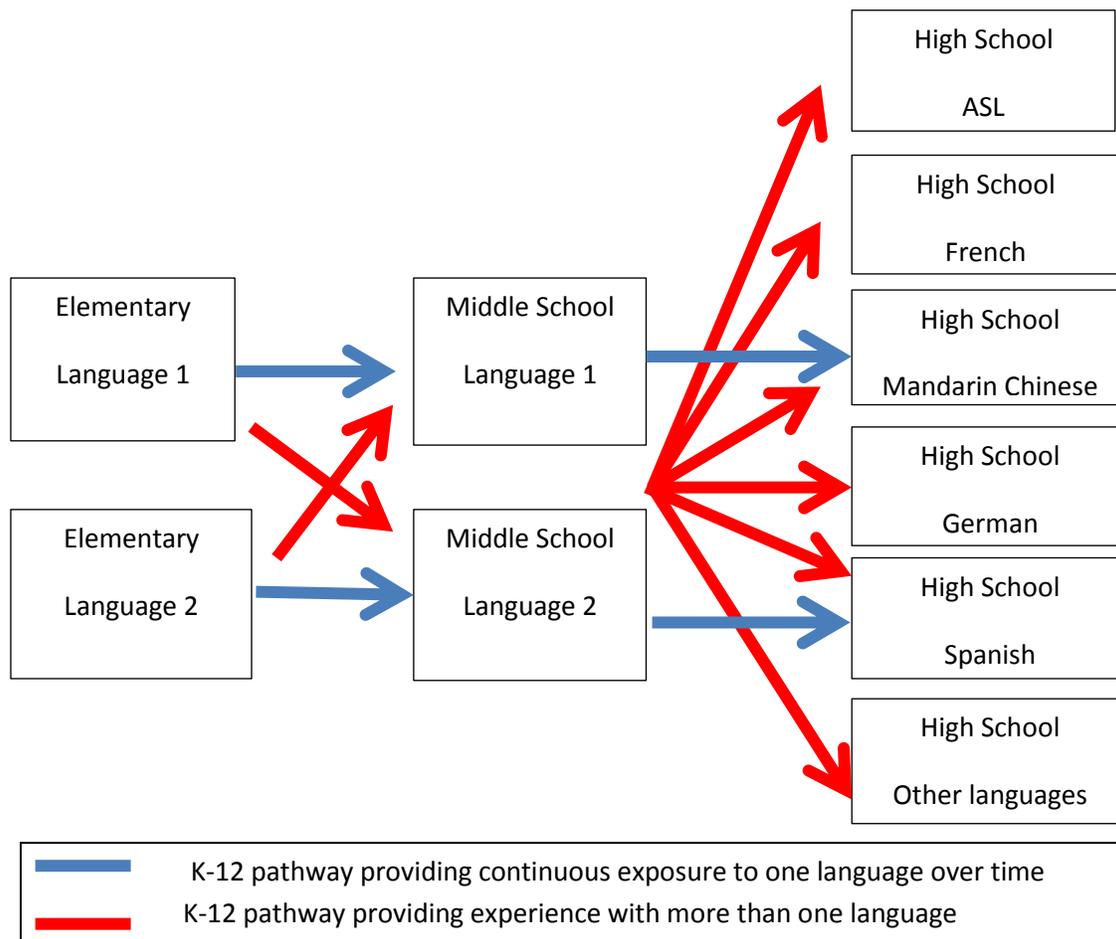
The Advisory Group broke into smaller work groups to consider the implications of the research to specific areas and develop ideas for our recommendations within those areas: methodology, models, community partnership, travel opportunities, heritage speakers and proficiency expectations. Their recommendations had several overlapping themes that were consolidated into our Advisory Group Recommendations to the Superintendent.

## ADVISORY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SUPERINTENDENT:

There are several promising practices already in place that are noteworthy and the Advisory Group recommends these components of a quality world language program be continued and expanded:

- Opportunities for students to meet graduation requirements by demonstrating proficiency in a language other than English
- Using ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, which provide multiple ways for competency to be determined, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and the use of a variety of authentic assessments
- Assessing students through a variety of ways that demonstrate real-world application of the language and provide evidence of how well students hold conversations with native speakers, understand written and spoken language, and present information in ways that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

**Recommendation 1: K-12 Programming:** All students in K-12<sup>th</sup> grade should engage in world language learning as part of their core instructional program and have the opportunity to either engage in a K-12 continuous experience with one language or a K-12 experience exploring more than one language.



- Provide coherent language learning pathways for students that allow students the opportunity to experience:
  - K-12 with the same language.
  - K-8 with one language and explore a second language in High School.
  - K-5 with one language, switch to another language in Middle school, continue with that language in High School or take a 3<sup>rd</sup> language in High School.
- Explore ways to support Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers to integrate ASL into their instruction.
- Elementary schools offer World Language instruction in grades K-5 at least twice per week for 30 minutes.
- Increase Middle School language offerings so all middle schools offer priority languages taught in their feeder schools.
- When the district reaches the goal of providing more course offerings each day at the Middle School level, create requirements for participating in world language classes and consider increasing additional language offerings at the middle school level.
- Explore opportunities for Middle School students to attend High School during the zero hour while in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to take World Language courses for credit.
- All High Schools offer the priority languages offered within their feeder schools.
- At the Middle School and High School level, utilize the criteria for selecting world languages, student interest and current offerings and staffing to determine additional languages that will provide a variety of language offerings.
- As languages are selected using the criteria at specific schools, insure principals at all levels have an opportunity to provide input and consider their own communities while simultaneously creating a K-12 world language program and structure that considers limits within the capacity of our schools and a balance of European and non-European languages.

**Recommendation 2: Heritage Language Instruction:** Increase opportunities for Heritage Language learners through immersion.

- Encourage and support the development of dual language immersion programs in schools with high levels of English Language Learners using the roll up model recommended by the World Language Task Force in 2008. Develop a master plan for dual immersion using the Center for Applied Linguistics' Guiding Principles for Dual Language.
- Encourage and support the offering of content area courses in a language other than English in schools where there is a significant number of heritage speakers of that language.
- Incorporate family engagement strategies that encourage families to maintain and support their first language in the home.
- Engage heritage speakers in our schools by making them more visible, providing them with leadership and role model opportunities, and increasing multicultural and multilingual awareness.
- Support clubs and activities in various languages (i.e. - Club de Lectura).
- Support teachers and school communities in heritage language maintenance and instruction and expansion of opportunities for heritage language learners

**Recommendation 3: District Leadership and Curriculum Alignment:** Provide district leadership to oversee the development of World Language programs and coordination of ELL programs across K-12:

- Increase participation in credit for proficiency and implement Seal of Biliteracy

- Coordinate and oversee partnerships, resources and opportunities with local colleges and universities, other community members and international exchange and travel opportunities.
- Launch and facilitate a committee to develop the curriculum of World Languages from K-12, as part of the summit model, as a Teaching and Learning Advisory focusing on developing multilingual readers and speakers and well-rounded community members engaged with the broader world. The work of this group would include alignment of standards, instruction and assessment in World Language instruction across the system.
  - Instruction integrated with culture, history, geography, literature, and other fields
  - Incorporating ACTFL standards
  - Utilize the NCSSEFL-ACTFL (National Council of State Supervisors for Language) Can-Do Statements to help students, parents and educators measure proficiency
  - Develop common assessments for each course
  - Increase proficiency levels for all students, at least to an intermediate low level
  - Align linguistic and cultural proficiencies within instruction

**Recommendation 4: Global Interactions:** Seek opportunities for students and staff to interact globally with others.

- Bring teachers from other countries to our district through organizations such as OSPI, Hanban and Confucius Institutes, schools and universities in other countries, or other organizations and partnership opportunities that facilitate teacher exchanges and sister school relationships.
- Support Bellingham School District teachers to lead study abroad opportunities and revise policy to enhance this current practice and expand opportunities for students to travel abroad
- Utilize technology to connect students and staff across the globe

**Timeline**

The Advisory Group provides the following suggestions for implementation to support these recommendations:

<b>Level</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>Phase I Implementation</b>	<b>Phase 2 Implementation</b>	<b>Phase 3 Implementation</b>
<b>District</b>	World Language Advisory Group develops recommendations	Identify district leadership to oversee World Language, convene curriculum committee to work on alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment	Continue curriculum, instruction and assessment alignment work	Continue curriculum, instruction and assessment alignment work
<b>Elementary</b>	5 schools offering Mandarin Chinese or Spanish FLES, no immersion	All schools explore and select one language to offer, develop professional development model for ASL for K-1, explore and develop pilot immersion for 1 school.	Implement FLES world language model in all schools. Implement pilot immersion in one elementary at the K-1 level.	Continue immersion program into 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade at pilot school, add other immersion
<b>Middle</b>	All schools offer Spanish, 2 starting in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, 2 starting in 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	Explore language offering expansion in alignment with languages taught at elementary feeder schools, expand Heritage Language opportunities at all schools	All schools offer priority languages taught at feeder schools at 6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> grades	All schools offer priority languages at all grades, explore opportunities for 8 <sup>th</sup> graders to take additional languages
<b>High School</b>	Offerings: Spanish, French, German, ASL, Japanese	Consider expanding language offerings with consideration to priority languages being taught within the feeder pattern.	Expand Heritage Language opportunities at all schools. Continue to consider expanding language offerings with consideration to priority languages being taught within the feeder pattern.	Continue to expand opportunities for heritage language learners and expanding language offerings with consideration to priority languages being taught within the feeder pattern.

## Appendix A, World Language Advisory Group Members

### World Language Advisory Group

#### Members

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- Co-Chairs:
  - **Stephanie Korn**, Director, Dept. of Teaching and Learning
  - **Rob McElroy**, Executive Team
  
- Elementary Representatives:
  - **Wendy Barrett**, Northern Heights Elementary
  - **Kristi Dominguez**, Early Learning Coordinator
  - **Analisa Ficklin**, Wade King Elementary
  - **Anne Franzmann**, Birchwood Elementary, First grade
  
- Middle School Representatives:
  - **Larisa Shuvalova**, ELL specialist, Kulshan Middle & Bellingham High
  - **Sally Unger**, Spanish, Shuksan Middle School
  
- High School Representatives:
  - **Diane Cooper-Schick**, Spanish and German, Squalicum High School
  - **Byron Gerard**, Options High School
  - **Sonya Morrison**, French, Sehome High School
  
- Parents/Community Members:
  - **Mark Gardner**, Columbia Elementary and Whatcom Middle School
  - **Dean Hagin**, Wade King Elementary and Fairhaven Middle School
  - **Ming Lin**, Happy Valley Elementary and Fairhaven Middle School
  - **Mariam Rashid**, Carl Cozier Elementary
  - **Maria Rodriguez**, Sehome High School
  
- High School Students:
  - **Oriana LoCicero**, Bellingham High School
  - **Dana Ringler**, Sehome High School

## Appendix B, World Language Survey Summary Analysis

### World Language Survey Summary Analysis

The World Language Advisory Group has been meeting since December 2014 and is comprised of teachers, staff, parents and community members. Thus far, its work has included hearing from experts in this field; visiting regional schools and districts with exceptional world language offerings; and reviewing best practices and current research on exemplary programs. To gain feedback from students, families, staff and community members in Bellingham Public Schools, the World Language Advisory Group shared out a survey on March 16 and closed the survey on March 23.

A total of 1,369 individuals took the survey. They identified as the following:

- Parents/Guardians, 999 respondents
- Staff, 245 respondents
- Student, 101 respondents
- Community Member, 14 respondents

Respondents were asked to select the top three languages they would like to see taught at the elementary, middle and high school level. The top five selections for each level were the same, though the order changed.

Middle and high school top choices in order of preference:

- Spanish
- Mandarin Chinese (Third choice for elementary school)
- American Sign Language (Second choice for elementary school)
- French
- German

The most consistently added language under the “other” option was Arabic. This language was added 18 times under elementary and middle school, and added 23 times under high school. No other languages were included with such prominence.

Organizing the survey findings by respondent description shows a difference in language preference.

- Students selected **American Sign Language** as their top choice for each level.
- Parents/Guardians, Staff and Community Members selected **Spanish** as their top choice for each level.

Regarding the final two questions asking if “K-12 continuous experience with on language,” or “experience with more than one language” was important there was mixed results. The collective responses resulted in 63 percent selecting “K-12 continuous experience” as Very Important. The

results for “experience with more than one language” were close at 38 percent Very Important and 42 percent Somewhat Important. When looking at the results by each respondent group, various preferences are evident.

Students selected “continuous experience” as 52 percent Very Important. The results for “experience with more than one language” was almost even with 41 percent Very Important and 39 percent Somewhat Important.

Staff selected “continuous experience” as 61 percent Very Important. The results for “experience with more than one language” was 30 percent Very Important and 47 percent Somewhat Important.

Parents/Guardians selected “continuous experience” as 65 percent Very Important. The results for “experience with more than one language” was even with 40 percent Very Important and 41 percent Somewhat Important.