

PAUSD MANDARIN IMMERSION PROGRAM PROPOSAL
Frequently Asked Questions

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A. Choice Program Questions

QA1: Is there a PAUSD policy about developing choice programs in our district?

A: Yes. A policy governing choice programs was approved by the Board of Education in 1997 and updated in 2002, to provide clear guidelines for developing, implementing and replicating large-scale “alternative programs to support teaching and learning, which have long been a part of the PAUSD culture.”

QA2: What is the purpose of the District’s Choice Program Policy?

A: The Board of Education approved the choice policy to support appropriate development of school choice programs in the District. Specifically, the policy “supports alternative programs that are educationally sound and consistent with the PAUSD mission of addressing diverse educational needs of children.”

QA3: What is a large-scale alternative or “choice” program, per PAUSD tradition?

A: These are schools or programs that represent a distinctive instructional strategy or educational delivery model to achieve the District’s mission and goals, with open enrollment offered as a parent choice on a non-discriminatory basis.

QA4: What are the District’s existing choice programs?

A: Programs include Ohlone and Hoover Schools, Spanish Immersion (Escondido/Jordan), Direct Instruction (Terman), Connections (JLS), and Young Fives (Greendell).

QA5: What is the process for reviewing a PAUSD choice program application?

A: The District guidelines were designed to ensure that necessary appraisal and planning takes place before programs are initiated. The application guidelines call for seven steps: a threshold analysis, development of the proposal, district review, board approval, implementation, program

evaluation and program expansion (PAUSD Policy Guidelines for Developing Large-Scale Alternative Programs, December, 2002).

QA6: Where is the Mandarin Immersion choice program in that series of steps?

A: On May 9, the Board of Education approved moving to step three of the process, the district review of the proposal (see section E for more specifics regarding the MI proposal).

B. World Language Questions

QB1: What are PAUSD's goals for student proficiency in a foreign language?

A: The Board of Education goal is "to take the necessary steps to help all students acquire proficiency in a second language." One policy objective is to "investigate various program models for elementary and middle school students and develop a list of options, including the number of languages to be taught."

QB2: What are California's goals for student proficiency in a foreign language?

A: The Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools (2001), recommends a well-articulated K-12 foreign language program and urges school boards to, "recognize the value of providing foreign language opportunities for all students; provide support for expanding foreign language programs until they span all grade levels in the district; and establish programs in languages not commonly taught, especially those of the Pacific Rim."

QB3: What is the role of the community in supporting foreign language proficiency?

A: The State Board of Education encourages local members of the community to volunteer in the classroom, serve as classroom aides, serve as members of language booster groups, and serve on school-organized task forces to make recommendations about language instruction. "Strong foreign language programs result from the combined efforts of school and district administrators, counselors, school boards, state agencies and the public."

QB4: Is PAUSD currently investigating foreign language for all elementary students?

A: PAUSD has not recently evaluated adding a foreign language program at all elementary schools. In November 1994, two separate community-based task forces presented options at a Board of Education Study Session on Elementary Foreign Language. These reports are available online in the March 28, 2006 Board of Education packet (pages 60-154) at http://www.pausd.palo-alto.ca.us/community/board/mtgs_materials/index.shtml In the past month, community volunteers have expressed interest in forming a task force to work with the District to study options once again, but no decision has been made at this point.

QB5: Do immersion programs reduce the odds of establishing other language models?

A: No. Many school districts offering immersion programs also offer foreign language to broader groups of students. An immersion program is not exclusive of offering foreign language study to all elementary students.

C. Language Immersion Questions

QC1: What is a two-way or dual language immersion program?

A: Under this model, native English speakers and native speakers of another language are taught academic subjects in English and the second language. Language is the means of instruction, rather than the subject of instruction.

QC2: What are the goals of a dual immersion program?

A: Generally, the goals are to teach students to understand, speak, read and write proficiently in two languages and develop an understanding of different cultures while learning the skills and knowledge outlined in curriculum standards.

QC3: In core academic assessments, how do immersion students compare to others?

A: Generally, immersion students have performed at least as well as their non-immersion peers on standardized academic tests. For a review of recent research from the Center for Applied Linguistics (2003), see <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report63.pdf>

QC4: What level of language proficiency do immersion students typically attain?

A: Generally, young students immersed in a second language for a portion of the school day can achieve native or near-native proficiency in the new language. Most public school students in California do not begin second language instruction until grade nine, and will not progress as quickly nor attain the same level of proficiency.

QC5: Which local public school districts offer immersion programs?

A: Established programs include Fiesta Gardens School (Spanish K-5) in the San Mateo-Foster City School District; River Glen School (Spanish K-8) in the San Jose Unified School District; Meyerholz Elementary School (Chinese K-5) in the Cupertino Union School District; Castro Elementary School (Spanish K-5) in the Mountain View-Whisman School District; and Buena Vista Elementary School (Spanish K-5), Alice Fong Yu Elementary School (Chinese K-8), and West Portal Elementary School (Chinese K-5) in the San Francisco Unified School District.

D. Spanish Immersion Questions

QD1: What is the history of dual immersion programs in PAUSD?

A: PAUSD has offered a dual-immersion program in English-Spanish for 11 years, which began as a pilot kindergarten class in the fall of 1995 and now serves about 175 K-5 students at Escondido Elementary School, as well as classes at Jordan Middle School.

QD2: What was the impetus for launching PAUSD's Spanish Immersion program?

A: In 1994, the Board of Education responded to the recommendations of two committees studying foreign language education programs by encouraging schools to pursue opportunities for foreign language study. The application for an English-Spanish dual immersion choice program was a grass roots initiative submitted for District review.

QD3: Has the District's Spanish Immersion program been academically successful?

A: Yes. When tested in English, PAUSD's immersion students consistently perform as well as, or better than, district peers in standardized math and language arts assessments – by fourth grade. When tested in Spanish, PAUSD's immersion students consistently score in the highest quartile of U.S. native Spanish speaking students in all test areas.

QD4: Has demand and satisfaction been strong for the Spanish Immersion program?

A: Yes. This choice program has consistently attracted between 65-100 applicants for 30 kindergarten openings. A lottery is conducted every spring and a wait list is maintained.

QD5: Is PAUSD planning to expand the Spanish Immersion program?

A: Yes, Kindergarten and 1st grade slots will increase from 30 to 40 students each next fall.

QD6: What is the ratio of Spanish and English instruction in the Program?

A: The current goal is a 50:50 ratio of instructional time in each language by fourth or fifth grade. In Kindergarten, about 90 percent of the instruction is delivered in Spanish, with the percentage of English instruction increasing incrementally in first through fifth grade.

QD7: What is the balance of native English speakers and native Spanish speakers?

A: The student balance in the Spanish Immersion Program is approximately two-thirds native English speakers and one-third native Spanish speakers. After first grade, students must have adequate bilingual skills to fill openings.

QD8: What are the ongoing costs for Spanish Immersion and who pays for them?

A: In 1995, the Spanish Immersion Parents Association of Palo Alto (SIPAPA), was formed to support the program and ensure that it is revenue neutral to the school and District. This year's SIPAPA budget was about \$9,900, which funded a stipend for lead teacher planning, community cultural activities, library books and instructional materials for the kindergarten through eighth grade program.

E. Mandarin Immersion Proposal Questions

QE1: What is the proposed Mandarin Immersion choice program?

A: The proposal is to add an elementary level (K-5) dual immersion program in English-Mandarin, modeled after the PAUSD Spanish Immersion Program.

QE2: When was this choice program proposal submitted for consideration?

A: The proposal was initially presented to the Board of Education in 2002, and not pursued for a variety of reasons, including uncertainties about cost, staff time, location, availability of translated materials and assessments. The Board also cited a moratorium on new programs and concern over the prospect of program cuts due to an unanticipated loss in state funding.

QE3: What is the status of this choice program proposal now?

A: On May 9, the Board of Education approved a District Review of the Mandarin Immersion proposal, which moves the choice program application to Step 3 in a seven-step evaluation process.

QE4: What issues will be addressed in this District Review?

A: The purpose of the District Review is to clarify, analyze and respond to the proposal by addressing nine choice program criteria, including Purpose, Cost, Teachers/Staff, Curriculum/Assessment, Student Selection, Location, Communication/Planning, Evaluation and Unintended Consequences. (PAUSD Policy Guidelines for Developing Large-Scale Alternative Programs, December 2002).

QE5: When will the District Review be completed and presented to the public?

A: The written report and recommendation from the Superintendent on the Mandarin Immersion proposal will be presented at a public Board of Education meeting, tentatively scheduled for January or February 2007.

QE6: When will the Board of Education make a decision on the recommendation?

A: The Board will first discuss and then take action on the Superintendent's written report and recommendation over the course of at least two public Board of Education meetings, tentatively scheduled for January or February 2007. School board agendas are posted online at <http://www.pausd.palo-alto.ca.us/community/board/agenda.shtml>

QE7: What is the next step if the Board of Education approves a recommendation?

A: If the Board of Education approves a Mandarin Immersion program recommendation next winter, implementation planning would proceed next spring.

QE8: What is the earliest start date under consideration for this program?

A: The earliest start date being considered for Mandarin Immersion is August 2007.

QE9: What are the estimated costs for a District review and implementation plan?

A: PAUSD's cost estimate is \$65,000 – \$135,000, depending on whether the project moves past the District review to implementation planning. This estimate includes a consultant, District staff time, demographic data, curriculum materials and staff development.

QE10: How is this District review being funded?

A: These one-time costs will be funded with a U.S. Department of Education Grant or from Palo Alto Chinese Education (PACE) donations – not from district, taxpayer or PiE funds.

QE11: Will the Mandarin Immersion proposal change during the District review step?

A: Possibly. A number of ideas were presented in the Mandarin Immersion proposal (April 2006). These suggestions will not necessarily be the final recommendations by District staff. The purpose of the upcoming District Review is to clarify, analyze and respond to the proposal, and prepare a report and recommendation to the Board of Education.

QE12: What is the proposed balance of English speakers and Mandarin speakers?

A: Student Selection is among the criteria to be studied in the District Review. Typically, immersion programs balance two-thirds to one-half native English speakers with one-third to one-half native Mandarin speakers. This question will be addressed in the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007.

QE13: What is the proposed ratio of Mandarin and English instruction?

A: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment are among the criteria to be studied in the District Review. Some immersion programs seek a 50:50 ratio of instructional time in each language by fourth or fifth grade. Typically, 70 to 90 percent of kindergarten instruction is delivered in the second language, with the percentage of English instruction increasing incrementally in first through fifth grade. This question will be addressed in the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007.

QE14: What is the proposed dialect and form of writing envisioned for the program?

A: This will be studied in the District Review. The proposal suggests that along with traditional Chinese characters, Mandarin phonetics (zhu yin) would be taught as fundamental building blocks, which can be conceptually transferred to English phonetics. The pin yin (English character), Chinese phonetic system (computer input is through pin yin), and simplified Chinese characters would be taught in fourth and fifth grades. This will be addressed in the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007.

QE15: What is considered a start-up cost for a choice program?

A: PAUSD choice program guidelines describe start-up costs as "those expenditures necessary to begin a new program, but which will not continue after the program becomes fully operational." They include, but are not limited to, program planning, staff development and supplies. PAUSD policy anticipates the need for start-up costs in choice programs and provides that, "parents of

students in the program may be required to provide for these additional costs through contributions."

QE16: What are the estimated start-up costs for a Mandarin Immersion Program?

A: A description of the program's short- and long-term fiscal plan, including start-up costs, will be included in the District Review report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007. The PAUSD preliminary estimate for program planning and curriculum development is \$60,000-\$80,000 per year for six years.

QE17: What is the proposed source of funding for these estimated start-up costs?

A: The applicant's proposed source of funding for all start-up costs is a U.S. Department of Education Grant or donations from Palo Alto Chinese Education (PACE). During the six-year period of planning and curriculum development for the Spanish Immersion program, parents assumed responsibility for raising funds for Spanish-language books and educational materials, similar to other District booster groups.

QE18: What grant opportunities are available to fund these start-up costs?

A: The U.S. Department of Education sponsors grants designed to fund K-8 second language program development in critical languages (Mandarin, Arabic, Russian). In 2003-'04, San Francisco Unified School District received \$174K, San Mateo-Foster City School District received \$175K, and Cupertino Union School District received \$175K.

QE19: Will PAUSD be applying for a U.S. Department of Education grant?

A: Yes. PAUSD is submitting a grant application for \$175,000 to the U.S. Department of Education this June, with a response anticipated in time for the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007. Grant approval is non-binding but contingent on cost-sharing with local funds.

QE20: What is considered an ongoing cost for a choice program?

A: The cost of classrooms and teachers are expected to be the same as in other District classrooms. District policy states that choice programs, once established, must be "fiscally sound within existing financial resources and similar to the cost of other school programs." The ongoing costs for other choice programs have been modest, such as library books, instructional materials, cultural activities and staff development for Spanish Immersion.

QE21: What are the estimated ongoing costs for a Mandarin Immersion program?

A: At this point, there aren't clear-cut answers, but a description of the program's anticipated ongoing costs will be part of the fiscal plan included in the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007. The preliminary PAUSD estimate for district-level program coordination, program development and an art specialist is \$60,000-\$80,000 per year, while ongoing costs for Spanish Immersion are about \$10,000 per year.

QE22: What is the proposed source of funding for these ongoing program costs?

A: This question will also be studied in the District Review and addressed in the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007. The proposed source of funding for these ongoing costs is a U.S. Department of Education grant or parent-based fundraising (non-District funds), similar to the Spanish Immersion program model.

QE23: Could teachers or aides be funded with private (non-PIE) donations?

A: According to PAUSD policy, staffing at school sites, including any site where a Mandarin Immersion program might be located, must be funded with district per pupil allocations or centrally raised funds.

QE24: Is Mandarin being offered in the District at the middle or high school level?

A: Yes. Based on student interest (registration), four classes of Mandarin will be offered for the first time at Gunn and Paly this fall. The College Board will offer a Chinese Advanced Placement test for the first time next spring, which will give students an opportunity to earn advanced standing in college. More information on curricular offerings will be included in the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007.

F. Other Questions

QF1: Where would the proposed Mandarin Immersion Program be located?

A: Program location recommendations will be made to the Board of Education in January or February 2007. This fall, the Superintendent's Attendance Area Advisory Group (including representatives from all schools), will study location scenarios for this program, as well as overall enrollment growth, boundaries, and the feasibility of re-opening a 13th school. They will have significant data, criteria and background information (e.g., the Spanish Immersion program was piloted at Fairmeadow and moved to Escondido as the program grew).

QF2: How do choice programs affect neighborhood schools and how is this addressed?

A: Successful integration in the neighborhood school environment is critical for this program. The specific location issue will be studied in the District review of attendance areas, but the framework for the issue is highlighted in PAUSD policy: "The Board acknowledges that groups of teachers and/or parents may have concerns with programs of choice within a school, because of possible effects on the culture of the school, and therefore expects reasonable care to address these considerations." For Spanish Immersion, a Transition Committee was established to facilitate community acceptance and help resolve challenges when the program was located at Escondido. In a subsequent District update, the principal, enrolled parents and site council were recognized as key to the positive incorporation.

QF3: What are the traffic impacts of adding a choice program?

A: Traffic is an important school safety issue in general, as the number of students per school

grows. Evaluating locations and addressing traffic impact is part of the District Review for a choice program and this will part of the report to the Board of Education in January or February 2007. The goal is to encourage walking, biking and carpools and model successful practices developed at Ohlone, Hoover and Escondido.

QF4: What are the implications of student attrition in an immersion program?

A: Some attrition is normal but careful planning is important so that class size goals are met at the end of the six-year program span. In most immersion programs, students need to be bilingual to fill openings after first grade. The attrition in PAUSD's Spanish Immersion program has been low, and class sizes in the fourth and fifth grades average 26-28 students. The District review will study anticipated enrollment per grade level per year and report recommendations to the Board of Education in January or February 2007.

QF5: Is the District considering a French, German or other immersion program?

A: No. Since 1994, the District has received immersion proposals only for Spanish and Mandarin.

G. For More Information

Mandarin Immersion presentations to Board of Education (March 28 & April 25, 2006):

http://www.pausd.palo-alto.ca.us/community/board/mtgs_materials/index.shtml

PAUSD Guidelines for Developing Large Scale Alternatives Programs:

http://pausd.org/parents/programs/choice_schools.shtml

Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools (K-12):

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fd/documents/foreign-language.pdf>

Spanish Immersion Parent Association of Palo Alto (SIPAPA)

<http://www.sipapa.org/>

Palo Alto Chinese Education (PACE)

<http://www.geocities.com/paceforkids/>

Note: This FAQ draft was drafted and reviewed by two board members in order to provide information on a number of common questions for the Town Hall public forum on May 30, 2006. This document will be updated and posted (www.pausd.org), as the remaining board members, PAUSD staff members and community members contribute additional knowledge.

B. Mitchell Draft: May 30, 2006