

January 19, 2010

Staples High School

## WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION

### **\*AGENDA**

(Agenda Subject to Modification in Accordance with Law)

#### **PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER:**

7:00 p.m., Staples High School, Room 333, Pupil Services Conference Room

#### **ANTICIPATED EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Strategies for Negotiations

#### **RESUME PUBLIC SESSION**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Staples High School, Cafeteria B (Room 301), 7:30 p.m.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION**

#### **WORK SESSION WITH BOARD OF FINANCE:**

Review of health and medical insurance with Board of Education benefits consultant, Robert Pernicka, Senior Vice President, The Segal Company

#### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS (15 MINUTES)**

#### **DISCUSSION/ACTION:**

1. Board of Education Goal-Related Action Plan: Explore Mandarin Chinese as World Language Course Offering at Middle School Level (Encl.) Mr. Fagan
2. Amendment to the Westport Public Schools 403(b) Retirement Plan Dr. Landon

#### **DISCUSSION:**

1. 2010-11 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

\*A 2/3 vote is required to go to executive session, to add a topic to the agenda of a regular meeting, or to start a new topic after 10:30 p.m. The meeting can also be viewed on cable TV on channel 78.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WELCOME USING THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES:**

- Comment on non-agenda topics will occur during the first 15 minutes *except* when staff or guest presentations are scheduled.
- Board will not engage in dialogue on non-agenda items.
- Public may speak as agenda topics come up for discussion or information.
- Speakers on non-agenda items are limited to 2 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with chair.
- Speakers on agenda items are limited to 3 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with chair.
- Speakers must give name and use microphone.
- Responses to questions may be deferred if answers not immediately available.
- Public comment is normally not invited for topics listed for action after having been publicly discussed at one or more meetings.

# WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

---

ELLIOTT LANDON  
Superintendent of Schools

110 MYRTLE AVENUE  
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT 06880  
TELEPHONE: (203) 341-1010  
FAX: (203) 341-1029

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Elliott Landon

Subject: Board of Education Goal-Related Action Plan: *Explore Mandarin Chinese as World Language Course Offering at Middle School Level*

Date: January 19, 2010

Appended to this memorandum are three documents, as follows:

1. A letter from Brian Fagan to the parents of grade five students in all our elementary schools, requesting their participation in a non-binding interest survey, to determine if there is sufficient interest among them to justify beginning a three-year sequence of Mandarin Chinese at the middle school level beginning with the 2010-11 school year.
2. The Grade 5 World Language Interest Survey that accompanied the letter described in item 1 above.
3. Grade 5 World Language Survey Results: Summary of Results and Projections

Should the Board approve the addition of Mandarin at the middle school level, in a worst case scenario we anticipate that we would need an additional 0.2 teacher to accommodate all the world language sections anticipated based upon our projections. However, it is possible that there would be no increase in staffing, dependent upon the world language course selections made by students.

Brian Fagan and I will provide the Board with an updated report at our meeting on January 19 that is responsive to the requests and suggestions made by members of the Board on January 5.



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**CURRICULUM CENTER**  
136 Riverside Avenue  
Westport, CT 06880

**Brian A. Fagan**  
*Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction*  
Telephone: 203-341-1213  
bfagan@westport.k12.ct.us

---

November 11, 2009

Dear Parents of Grade Five Students:

As part of the continuous review of instructional programs in the Westport schools, the Board of Education is considering offering incoming sixth grade students the opportunity to choose Mandarin Chinese as their middle school world language in the fall of 2010. Currently, sixth grade students have a choice of French or Spanish as their world language and these will remain choices for sixth graders entering next fall.

In order to determine if there is sufficient interest to justify beginning a three-year sequence of Mandarin Chinese in each middle school, I am asking you to participate in a non-binding interest survey regarding the language your child will choose to study in middle school. Below you will find paragraphs that describe the French, Spanish, and proposed Mandarin Chinese language program. Please read the descriptions and indicate on the response sheet the language you believe your child will choose to study during his/her three years in middle school. Please note that the world language choice made upon entering sixth grade is a three-year commitment as there is no opportunity to change a student's language in grade seven or grade eight. The next point at which a student can choose to change his/her world language is at the beginning of grade nine when the full array of Staples High School world language offerings (French, German, Italian, Latin, Mandarin, and Spanish) are open to incoming freshmen.

#### **French**

Students who begin their study of French in the middle school will be immersed in the beauty of the French language and French culture. They will learn conversational French in theme-based units utilizing dialogues, books and studies of people living in French-speaking countries around the world. In sixth grade students will learn the basic skills necessary to communicate with each other and discuss their everyday lives. They will learn speaking skills needed to enjoy ordering in a restaurant, shopping for school, food and clothes, getting around town, and even organizing a trip to French-speaking country. Recitation of poems, participation in skits, songs and games and other readings, listening to music and watching movie clips from authentic French sources will also contribute in enhancing students' learning in the middle school. As students progress in their study of French people, language, and culture, they will also improve their listening and speaking skills. As part of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum students use their improving skills to engage in substantial written correspondence with French pen-pals from Westport's sister city in Marigny, France. French students will work in a positive and nurturing environment that encourages them to learn this new language, becoming real-life speakers of French, well-equipped with language skills needed for success in the future.

#### **Mandarin Chinese**

Mandarin Chinese at the middle school level is a unique opportunity for Westport students to receive an early introduction to this world language in a nurturing and supportive environment. At the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, students will gain familiarity with the distinctive tones of Chinese as well as the correct stroke order for writing Chinese characters. Through games, in-class recitations and skits, students will begin to demystify this ancient language, becoming adept at expressing themselves with simple greetings, counting, naming colors, and introducing family members. Within thematic units students develop a level of comfort in reading, writing and speaking simple Chinese. As the pace of the program accelerates in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students will be introduced to basic grammatical concepts as the focus evolves to a communicative approach with the target language being spoken more often in the classroom. Throughout the three-year sequence, students will gain an appreciation of the vital connections between the Chinese language and Chinese culture as simple poems from the Tang Dynasty, ancient stories with moral lessons and the intricacies of calligraphy appear in the curriculum. With an abundance of cultural opportunities presenting themselves in local venues, there will be opportunities for field trips as well as speakers to

visit the middle school classrooms. The middle school Mandarin curriculum will help students develop confidence in their ability to make themselves understood through verbal and written communication in Mandarin Chinese.

### Spanish

Spanish in the Westport middle schools is a vibrant language experience which transitions incoming sixth graders to a more formal path of study while maintaining an advanced conversational and aural component. In sixth grade students will utilize the substantial foundation of knowledge they have acquired in elementary school to expand their vocabulary and speak in whole sentences with greater ease. Theme based topics studied include school subjects, the family, the home, and leisure/sports activities. Students engage the Spanish language through a mixture of games, songs, books, grammar practice, cultural experiences and most importantly, realistic and consistent employment of the concepts they learn in class. The emphasis at all times is on meaningful communication in Spanish, and students speak in the target language everyday in class. In seventh and eighth grades, students move toward a more rigorous study of grammar in preparation for their entrance into the language program at Staples High School. At the middle school level, students studying Spanish will have fun and learn in a safe environment that encourages them to take risks as real-life speakers of the Spanish language, as they develop the language skills necessary for success in the future.

Please indicate the language your child will choose to study in middle school on the enclosed response sheet and return it your child's grade five teacher by December 4, 2009. Please note that this is a survey of your interest and you can make a different language selection from the choices available during the middle school scheduling process in March, 2010.

Thank you for completing this interest survey.

Sincerely,

Brian A. Fagan

GRADE 5 WORLD LANGUAGE  
SURVEY

# Grade 5 World Language

## Interest Survey

Please check one box to indicate the language your child has interest in learning in middle school.

French

Mandarin Chinese

Spanish

This is not a binding decision. A different language selection may be made during the middle school scheduling process in March, 2010.

Please return to your child's fifth grade homeroom teacher by December 4, 2009.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE 5 WORLD LANGUAGE  
SURVEY RESULTS

## GRADE FIVE WORLD LANGUAGE SURVEY

### Summary of Results and Projections

Surveys Distributed: 424

Surveys Returned: 286, which is a return rate of 67%

#### Overall Results by Language:

Mandarin	81/286 = 28%
French	71/286 = 25%
Spanish	134/286 = 47%

#### Language Selection by Middle School Elementary Feeder Schools

##### Bedford Middle School (GFS, LLS, SES)

Mandarin	46/180 = 26%
French	45/180 = 25%
Spanish	89/180 = 49%

##### Projected Enrollment by Language at BMS

Mandarin	26% of 239 <sup>1</sup> = 62 students/3 classes
French	25% of 239 = 60 students/3 classes
Spanish	49% of 239 = 117 students/5 classes

##### Coleytown Middle School (CES, KHS)

Mandarin	35/106 = 33%
French	26/106 = 25%
Spanish	45/106 = 42%

##### Projected Enrollment by Language at CMS

Mandarin	33% of 129 <sup>2</sup> = 43 students/2 classes
French	25% of 129 = 32 students/2 classes
Spanish	42% of 129 = 54 students/3 classes

---

<sup>1</sup> 2010 – 2011 NESDEC projected enrollment for BMS grade six adjusted to account for students who are not anticipated to enroll in a world language.

<sup>2</sup> 2010-2011 NESDEC projected enrollment for CMS grade six adjusted to account for students who are not anticipated to enroll in a world language.