

# MEMO

**To:** Dr. Gary Burton

**From:** Allyson Mizoguchi

**Re:** Chinese Committee update

**Copy:** Committee members (Mary Brown, Debbie Tofias, Brad Crozier, Pat Tutwiler)

**Date:** 8 June 2009

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This year, our second year of exploring the issue of introducing Chinese language to our schools, we have only recently hit a renewed stride.

Last year, as you'll recall, we prepared a five-year plan for implementing Chinese language instruction in our middle and high schools. Under this plan, we would begin with two sections of Chinese (one at the middle school, and one at the high school) during the 2009-2010 school year. In subsequent years, we would build upon these inaugural sections, resulting in four sections the following year, six sections the following, and so on.

This implementation was based on the reasonable, yet optimistic, assumption that the school budget and staffing situation were not obstacles to our future planning. In reality, we do not have staffing for two new sections of Chinese for the 2009-2010 school year. We are unable to reallocate current staffing for this purpose, and we did not vocally advocate for the addition of 0.4 new staffing. While we did shift 0.2 away from Latin for the 2009-2010 school year, we are allocating this to our Health and Wellness program.

We recognize that to wait for the time when the school budget is primed for this expansion in our language program means inaction. We must push forward now with alternate plans whereby growth of this program does not rely on immediate economic support.

This year, we also entertained the notion of surveying our current language students to be sure that Chinese was the language to implement (as opposed to Arabic, Japanese, etc.). Last year our committee members read current research in this area, and the conclusions are far from unanimous. However, as the school year progressed, we concluded that the time spent surveying students and analyzing results detracted us from what our true focus should be: developing an initial program that is virtually immune to the unpredictability of budgetary shifts and that is sustainable. Both by default and by design, Chinese is our focus.

Mary Brown, high school department chair of Modern Languages and Classics, has been active for several years in Boston-area workshops and conferences devoted to the Chinese language initiative. Most recently, for the third year, she attended a conference for area department chairs on the teaching of Chinese in our schools. At this conference, she was reintroduced to a number of resources that provide grants, exchanges, and programs to begin the implementation of Chinese in our schools. This reinvigorated our desire to actively learn about other avenues through which program design and implementation are possible. Among them are:

- The Chinese Bridge Delegation Program (through which 1200 administrators, principals, and school board members have visited China and its schools)
- Asia Society (Created the handbook: *Creating a Chinese Language Program in Your School*) [www.AsiaSociety.org/nclc](http://www.AsiaSociety.org/nclc)
- Hanban (Office of Chinese Language Council International) [www.hanban.org](http://www.hanban.org)
- The U.S.-China Administrator Shadowing Project (PSP); The China Exchange Initiative (Newton MA)

Exploring these programs in earnest, beginning this summer, represents a departure from our approach last year, when I stated in a memo dated June 2008:

*By our third meeting, we had concluded that introducing a sustained program into our program was our foremost priority. We had briefly considered cultural exchange programs (such as through the Chinese Embassy, and other “shadowing” projects); while these experiences would no doubt be rich and educational, we wanted our efforts to be focused on the education of Wayland students and the formation of a program ultimately ingrained in our language department that would culminate in the Advanced Placement level.*

*Although challenges around funding, staffing, and scheduling remain realities we will have to face, we followed your advice in not allowing them to impede our progress in envisioning a strong and viable program.*

Our approach now will entail the immediate exploration (beginning during this summer) of the following:

- Exchange programs sponsored by the Chinese government (such as through the China Exchange Initiative) whereby a Chinese instructor is hosted for two years in Wayland;
- Outreach to the Confucius Institute at U. Mass-Boston, where a Wayland resident is one of the primary organizers;
- Outreach to area Chinese language teachers, with the express hope of establishing an after-school enrichment program at the high school in lieu temporarily of a full-fledged academic program. (Mrs. Brown will be co-teaching the “STARTALK” Summer Institute for Teachers at Belmont Hill next month, designed for Chinese instructors, at which we hope to establish some strong connections with educators from China.)
- Further publicity to our student and parent community of our new relationship with Virtual High School, through which Chinese classes are available. (We may have one student who will be taking Chinese next year through VHS.)

