

Vision for Language Education/Immersion

1. What do you think CPS can provide to its students/graduates to succeed in a globalized economy?

We will need to provide them with skills the world economy will require. This includes technology, communications, and literacy in math and language as well as cultural proficiency. Students should be proficient in at least one language in addition to English.

2. What is your vision on the world language programs at CPS?

We should provide instruction in those languages which are important to our community and to our global economy at large. It is important that our student be able to grow up capable of speaking to their neighbors and fellow students as well as graduate being to communicate with their neighbors and commerce partners.

3. What is your vision for how your foreign language goals would be implemented?

As part of an overall strategic plan that incorporates foreign language into the entire curriculum and as fast as our resource allocations will allow.

4. What are your goals for foreign language learning options in elementary school? In secondary school?

Secondary school languages are most beneficial when they are coupled with elementary grade introduction and proficiency. High schools should follow on to what students already know and should make the learning of language one that is exciting and interesting and not as another form of task one undertakes to keep some regulator happy.

5. What languages do you consider to be the most important for students to learn in the 21st century?

At this point, our major commerce partners are speaking Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, and Arabic. I see these as continuing to be important. An argument could be made for French as well, but not as powerful an argument as the four listed here.

6. How important is an immersion foreign language option in elementary schools compared to foreign language exposure?

Both are effective strategies. It would be difficult to provide an analysis of the benefit of one over the other.

7. Will you support expanding the current immersion elementary schools and/or creating new ones to accommodate additional demand from families?

It is inappropriate to be making commitments about what we will and will not support given the overwhelming level of competing priorities, economic issues, and fast paced societal change. As you might expect, during an election, all kinds of people want us to commit to serving their needs and it is irresponsible to be making commitments at this time.

8. I have friends with children in immersion schools in NY and CA and they are very well planned out for K-12. I would like to know if any of the candidates are in favor of strong, cohesive immersion programs that will span K-12. For Amigos? For King Chinese Immersion? For Ola/Portuguese Immersion?

I have a long history of supporting these programs. As noted above (see 7), our ability to continue to support these programs rely on many variables that must be assessed each year.

Recruitment

9. Recruitment of students from the "free lunch" demographic to Cambridge's immersion programs has been very disappointing in recent years, what can the District do to improve this performance?

I believe we have been very successful with the incoming Kindergarten program at the Amigos school. We have been working with Karen Mapp-an expert on family engagement and we have hired three community liaisons to work with our diverse communities. These efforts should help. I would also like the city to offer immersion preschool programs.

10. The recent adjustments to the controlled choice system are strangling the Cambridge immersion programs. Please explain how these adjustments support the immersion programs.

If there are specific recommendations that do not disrupt our effort to support a truly diverse base of students, I am open to consider them. My visit to an Amigos kindergarten class last week was met with compliments from the teacher about our policy changes. She was excited that half the children in her class were now bilingual and that the class was diverse. .

11. How do you believe the controlled choice adjustments can be changed to adequately support and ensure the survival of Cambridge's immersion programs?

I am open to considering changes that support both choice and diversity. I am also open to giving some new programs space to grow within the structure of an overall plan.

Language Best Practices

12. The research on language immersion best practices consistently supports at least 6 years of continuous immersion learning for at least 50% of the learning time. Why is Cambridge pursuing a different strategy with the Portuguese and Chinese immersion programs? What research supports Cambridge's approach of providing foreign language instruction for less than 50% of the learning time in the upper elementary grades?

I spend considerable time within the Portuguese community in Cambridge who support the Ola program as is. They feel supported by the new leadership in the building.

There is a process taking place at the King School that is expected to be completed in December; and we should wait until we see the proposed plan. We should have a work session and have an open discussion about your question.

13. Given that only children born September - March are eligible for Junior Kindergarten, children born April - August who enter a language immersion program in Kindergarten (instead of JK) miss an entire year of language learning. What should happen to address this language-learning gap for the JK-ineligible kids?

We are working with the city council to provide universal early childhood education and it appears to be a priority of both bodies. I have also spoken at a recent city council hearing that we should offer early childhood immersion programs.

14. What do you believe are the some of the challenges that immersion programs face in Cambridge?
- a. Having programs that are attractive to a diverse group of learners.
 - b. Children having difficulty entering the program after kindergarten because they are not proficient enough in the language leads to smaller class size in later years.

15. What kind of dual language model training do teachers receive? Who else should be trained? Do the teachers and staff at all three immersion programs receive the same training? Is the training adequate?

This is a professional development question that would be best answered by the superintendent which I would be happy to ask. We certainly have the ability to set hiring standards to meet goals we feel are important and necessary.

Also, school improvement councils can weigh in on this question. Most schools that hire faculty use hiring committees comprised of interested parents.

16. What will you do to follow best practices and to support the existing bilingual immersion programs in Cambridge? Please be specific.

I think it's important to first determine our goals, and then seek out best practices that are supported by objective research that support those goals. Cambridge has a history of doing things the Cambridge way because of the many constituencies we represent. .

Resources

17. Given that the language immersion programs are growing in popularity and better equip students to succeed in an increasingly global world, can additional dedicated administrative staff at the CPS District level be hired?

School Principals, school improvement councils, citizens all have input into the budget process and impact its outcome and can make requests, provide rationale and advocate for their needs. Our budget allocation is set by the City Manager and certain fixed costs such as salary, benefits, insurance, energy, pension are always on the rise. Your organization should make its case during the upcoming budget process. My preference is to support funding to support what happens in the classroom.

18. Can a dual language coordinator be recruited from one of the existing, more established programs? Can the World Languages Coordinator oversee the immersion programs without muddying the water?

I believe this is administratively possible, and the Superintendent would be in the best position to make such a recommendation. At present, we have a Coordinator of Bilingual Education and a Director of World Languages.

19. In an immersion program, how much support, in foreign language instruction, do you think should be provided to struggling learners or children with special needs?

Special needs students are entitled to the equivalent level of support to raise their achievement to acceptable standards.

20. What additional support, outside the “usual” support, do you believe the immersion programs need? For example, translation of school communications, e.g., meeting minutes, is required, and must be high quality, and therefore costly. This is a basic need for the program, but the District does not cover the cost.

See response to # 17.

21. As a SC member, would you give Cambridge's existing dual immersion schools the same amount of support they currently get, more support, or less support?

I believe immersion programs are proving their worth. If demand is present, and if we can meet our obligations to all our students without harming them, we should cultivate this concept further.

Evaluation

22. What is the matrix the School Committee uses to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of various types of language instruction the City has provided so far?

We will have several tools at our disposal to weigh the effectiveness of these academic programs. They will include using student performance data, parent satisfaction, student enthusiasm and continued enrollment measures. Obviously, linguistic proficiency is a key measure.

23. What is the short list of criteria and relative importance of those criteria that the School Committee uses to make a decision on type of language instruction and related level of resources the City will provide?

Proficiency among students in the program.

Proficiency among faculty.

Demand for enrollment and continued level of interest.

Students going on to improve linguistic skills year after year, after the transitions to middle grades and high school.

Policy Implementation/Policy Making

24. What do you believe was the program structure unanimously approved by the School Committee in December 2010 for the Mandarin Chinese immersion program at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School?

There will be a new school committee in January with possibly a majority of new members who never voted on this issue. Our mutual interests should be how to engage in thoughtful dialogue to make the Mandarin Chinese immersion program work for all children.

25. In the last two years, the District, and the School Committee, dropped the ball twice. World languages for JK-5 have been pulled out and not put back in schools. The SC also had to go back and reconsider a unanimous vote taken on the Chinese Immersion program in 2010, a decision now considered debatable and unclear. How will you ensure the policies that the SC makes are sound, clearly defined, and that direct and support the Administration (as required by most School Committee code of ethics in MA)?

Policy setting is the responsibility of the school committee and in most instances it's the Superintendent that makes written recommendations which then gets debated and amended by the school committee and a rewrite comes back from the Superintendent for final adoption. Citizens deserve to have a high functioning school committee that works well with each other and with the Superintendent. We are doing a far better job than congress.

26. What will you do to make sure that the feedback loop with the District is functional and effective, in order to avoid having important policy changes fall through the cracks, and to ensure that there is sufficient clarity and definition in the policies that you make?

I've been on the school committee for 30 years, and I know how policy is made, implemented and undermined if administrators don't want it in place. My role has often been to identify those situations where the administration fails to follow our direction and deal with them. However, dozens of times, people will complain that our policies are not being followed when, in fact, newer policies or policy-equivalent actions have been taken, such as budget allocation changes. These are effectively policy changes made by the school committee. Policy making is very complicated, and it is not always a simple matter.

27. What suggestions do you have for working with the immersion programs, the district administration and the immersion families to address the disparate goals of increasing SES diversity within the immersion program, improving academic achievements and increasing the rigorousness of the immersion program to reach the stated program goals of listening, speaking, reading and writing proficiency in the foreign language?

It would certainly be helpful to have an academic presentation before the school committee where we can ask a lot of questions, including some of the 28 questions you have asked in this document. We could probe and everyone would have a chance to see all the answers at the same time, which is always the most effective way to have a public discussion.

28. Since the School Committee role is to approve broad curriculum, the curriculum for all immersion programs need to be voted by the School Committee. If the any of the Immersion programs offer less than 50% foreign language instruction, or no foreign language instruction in one or more of the core areas of math, literacy, social studies and science, would you put forth a motion to follow best practice and require at least 50% of instruction be delivered in the foreign language?

It would be irresponsible to answer this with agreement to fixed formulas to determine what our policy would be. This is as much art as it is science, and we need to be flexible in order to make our best professional judgment about how we would proceed.