

Subject: Resolution No. 65-23A3

In Support of Expanding and Strengthening Mandarin and Other 2-Way Language Immersion Programs in San Francisco Schools

- Commissioners Eric Mar and Eddie Chin

WHEREAS: San Francisco Unified School District has a proud history of pioneering, promoting and defending bilingual education, including language immersion programs; and

WHEREAS: SF Parent, teacher and education organizations like TACT, LATA, SFABE, ACE, PIE, PPS, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, CAA, CPA, CARECEN, PPS Immersion Task Force, Californians Together and many others have long supported strengthening these programs in San Francisco; and

WHEREAS: The Board of Education in its 1999 Language Immersion Program Resolution [#911-9A7] explicitly called for the development and implementation of a comprehensive, strategic plan to strengthen and expand language immersion programs at all levels (pre-K through 12) throughout the District; and

WHEREAS: The District's Bilingual and Language Acquisition Task Force in 2002 and Bilingual Community Council each year thereafter has recommended that the District "provide and promote opportunit[ies] for all students to develop competence in two or more languages ...and a positive self-image and attitudes toward other cultures" and that the District achieve "racial, linguistic and ethnic integration throughout the District schools and classrooms"; and

WHEREAS: The District's Multilingual Program has identified 2 of its major program goals as "enhancing multicultural sensitivity and understanding" and providing parents and students the "opportunity to choose Bilingual programs in the major languages of the school district;" and

WHEREAS: San Francisco children and families will benefit from an expansion of Mandarin and other language immersion programs because children who learn two (2) languages achieve a higher level of academic achievement in school; and

WHEREAS: Many City Government and education leaders have acknowledged that increasing our City's bilingual population, especially in languages like Mandarin, will help improve the quality of community life, foster better economic opportunities for our families in the global economy, and enrich the multiethnic social fabric of our City; and

WHEREAS: Two-way Immersion programs are innovative early-learning models which are designed for a diverse population of English proficient students as well as for English language learners; they provide children the opportunity to become fully bilingual and biliterate and knowledge of more than one language and culture allows students to more fully participate in a culturally diverse society and an increasingly global economy;

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WHEREAS: The District currently offers immersion programs in 7 elementary [5 Spanish and 1 Cantonese and 1 Mandarin], 2 K-8 [Cantonese/Mandarin and Korean] and 4 middle schools [2 Cantonese and 2 Spanish] and has expanded also to the high school level in Cantonese and Spanish [2006]; and

WHEREAS: The District's Mandarin Curriculum Task Force, working with parent and community members, is continuing its recruitment efforts and curriculum development for the new Mandarin 2-Way Immersion program beginning at Starr King Elementary School in the Potrero Hill neighborhood in the East Side of the City in the Fall of 2006; and

WHEREAS: Spanish Immersion programs are also increasing throughout the District; and

WHEREAS: Spanish was the first European language of California, and Latin Americans continue to represent the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic group in California; and

WHEREAS: There is a growing demand for language instruction in Japanese, Arabic, and many European languages; and

WHEREAS: Mandarin is the most commonly spoken language in the world today; it is the official language of the People's Republic of China and spoken by 1.3 billion people throughout the world; and

WHEREAS: The Mandarin speaking population in San Francisco has grown tremendously and some surveys and reports estimate that the number of native Mandarin speakers is now roughly equal to that of Cantonese speakers and even non-Mandarin speakers in the Chinese and non-Chinese communities in SF are acknowledging the growing international importance of Mandarin and other global languages like Russian and Arabic; and

WHEREAS: A recent demographic review of the Mandarin speaking student population in the District shows that they are spread throughout the City but concentrated not only in the Chinatown/North Beach area, but also in the Western Richmond and Sunset Districts and several Southern neighborhoods as well.

WHEREAS: National organizations like the Asia Society and some urban school districts like Chicago, Portland, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg [NC] are now promoting Mandarin and other language education programs a critical component in preparing their students with a 21st century Education curriculum; and

WHEREAS: Our government from the federal to local levels generally lacks the resources in Mandarin, Russian and other languages to meet its diplomatic, security, economic, and social goals; and

WHEREAS: Mandarin speaking students and other English Learners who speak a language other than English at home - their “heritage language” - often suffer academically because their schools do not provide the adequate support they need to learn academic content through English, their second language; and research shows that these students could benefit from continued development of their native language which would help them develop high levels of proficiency in their native language while also mastering English; and

WHEREAS: A new parent and education group - Advocates for Chinese Education (ACE) - has delivered over 800 signed petitions to the Superintendent and Board and is seeking a demand driven “expandable” approach to improving the District ‘s Mandarin Immersion program and calling for the placement of the next Mandarin Immersion program in a neighborhood with a strong demand for it and strategic and community-oriented process to determine future program placements; and

WHEREAS: A successful Mandarin language program in our District and City will further our position as a national leader in Chinese language education and increase our ability to acquire federal and private sector funding for language development education; and

WHEREAS: San Francisco should continue its leadership role in developing a multilingual student body and workforce for the 21st century.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District is fully committed to expanding and strengthening Mandarin and other language immersion programs and other language programs in our District and supporting the language needs of underserved immigrant communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the District will continue to support the education and welfare of families with children in existing elementary level immersion programs by providing adequate expansion of these programs into the upper grades, specifically for students graduating from K-5 schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the District staff will develop a more thorough analysis of the Mandarin-speaking population and other language groups in our District [including Japanese, Russian and Arabic] devoting resources to exploring existing data as well as collecting more necessary information and involving community and parent groups meaningfully in District decision-making like program development and program placement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the District will continue to partner with organizations like TACT, ACE, PPS Immersion Task Force, CABE, and the Confucius Institute at San Francisco State University to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators and recruit highly qualified staff for our programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the District will investigate outside funding sources for the further development of our language development programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Superintendent and staff will work with the Bilingual Community Council and parent and community groups to develop a comprehensive and strategic plan to strengthen and expand Mandarin and existing language immersion programs in the District and to investigate the possibility of new Russian, Samoan and other language programs, and that this plan be presented to the Board by the last meeting in March 2007; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That any plan should include a financial analysis of cost and available revenue for language programs.