

Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School

Questions as derived from Panel Review

Mission and Vision

1. What are the benefits of language immersion and immersion methodology for the target student population?

- National and international research studies have proven that students who learn two languages tend to do better in school, not only in language, but in content areas.
- I've started language immersion programs and conducted research, and there are lots of benefits to immersion. In particular, ELL's do well in immersion programs. They reach levels of proficiency and fluency in the second language.
- Immersion methodology also helps students in their English language arts acquisition. Pioneer Valley Charter School (Chinese language immersion school) for example has the highest score in math and English language arts in third grade in the state.
- We're looking for a diverse student body. Students will receive support to assist language learning at home. Mandarin has had a long and strong history in the U.S. of being an immersion program. Examples include programs in San Francisco and Portland, where there is an urban program dealing with our target age group.

2. What is your rationale for proposing to only hire teachers with native Chinese language skills?

- Mandarin has a lot of tonal variations. It's difficult to speak it with native-like fluency. To speak with native precision, you would have needed to hear the tones at 10 months old. The only way we can assure this precision in fluency is to hire native speakers as teachers.
- Because we're not two-way immersion where we can rely on part of the student body to speak fluently, we have to hire teachers with native language skills.

Description of the Community (ies) to be Served

1. How have they determined the level of interest in this type of program for Boston families? What evidence do you have?

- We have a group of founders and trustees with relationships in Boston. We have done outreach, posted flyers, went on Facebook, hosted nine information sessions, contacted 30+ preschools, and attended meet-the-school nights. In addition, our website has lots of information in six different languages. Through these efforts, we have identified many interested families. We have close to 200 enrollment interest forms, a reasonable proportion of them come from English language learner families.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

1. Please describe education philosophy (pedagogy and instructional methods).

- Our philosophy is to accept no failure. We will test students three times every year in English and Mandarin in subject areas. We'll know immediately if students are not up to par. We want to make absolutely certain there's no slippage in either language or any subject area.
- We're offering a longer school day and afterschool programs, and summer programs. We are committed to subject matter success in both languages regardless of students' background.
- We want our kids to achieve success in the global community. There is a need for students to be bilingual and multicultural. That is our long-term goal, to provide those tools.
- In addition to the educational mission, we also have a commitment to support the parents and families of kids and their communities. To connect holistically the realities of the students and their families to the school. Chinese speaking immigrant families will have that native language support at home. For other families, it will be very unusual, so the commitment of the teachers and the supports in place will be important. Element of family engagement is critical.
- I've seen Jamaican families picking up their kids from a bilingual Vietnamese preschool and the kids speaking Vietnamese. There are implications for race relations, multicultural learning and community building that go beyond just academic achievement.

2. How will immersion address the diverse needs of students in Boston? How will they work with students who come in below grade level?

- It is difficult for children to be below grade level in kindergarten, so the onus will be on us, since we don't accept new students past 3rd grade. The assessments will be a critical piece, so that we will know within the first few months of kindergarten if students are on track.
- Every teacher will teach language acquisition. Our teachers are trained at high level of language acquisition required for literacy and comprehension. We will encourage all our teachers to become certified in English language teaching.
- The program assumes that a number of students will be learning a new language. The methodology you would use is one applicable for different levels of language fluency. The methodology will be about presenting materials in different ways to kids using different strategies. Will not isolate kids.
- Will operate a small, targeted support program in afterschool. Targeted support to come from certified teachers. Will stagger teachers throughout the day since we have extended learning day.

3. Who is your resource for developing the Chinese immersion student outcomes, strategies, and the whole educational program? How did your immersion strategy influence your selection of curriculum and instruction?

- Danielle is the primary architect. She has done lots of design work and charter writing. This has been the most supportive and inclusive process I've been a part

of. There's expertise from every level: academic language immersion, curriculum, family engagement, legal, and financial.

- We've also consulted with Roger Harris, who has expertise in charter school and turning around schools, and Mary Russo, who is a Massachusetts principal of the year.

a. How did you make curricular decisions?

- Spoke with other Chinese immersion programs around the nation.
- Have worked with Center for Applied Linguistics, the Center for the Advancement of Research and Language Acquisition, and the Confucius Institute.
- Also have WestEd on our board.

b. What is the reader and writers workshop?

- Getting students to talk is critical in language acquisition. This workshop is a structure for enabling students to talk before they read, read, and then talk about what they read. Same thing for writing.

c. Why traditional characters? Counting characters - is this an authentic assessment for proficiency?

- Chinese has 20,000 characters. No one learns all 20,000, but you need a minimum of 8,000 to read at a 5th grade level.
- Traditional characters are pictorial, so it helps you to understand quickly. Simplified characters take away the pictorial aspect and are generally used in China. Pin ying is the Romanized form.
- Students start learning with traditional characters. Easier to go from traditional to simplified form. From there, they can learn pin ying. Four year olds can look at pictorial representations and learn more easily that way.
- In kindergarten, students would learn traditional Chinese characters. In first grade, we would introduce simplified characters and pin ying.

d. KidLab

- Model comes from Neighborhood House. Kids will be in the lab to do activities. Will be a blending of art and science and we can build on both.
- Will be a springboard for discussion. Will be fun, to help students talk and write about what they do in KidLab.

4. How do you propose to adapt all of your curriculum materials to Mandarin with the staffing that you propose?

- We have already prepared a lot of materials. Will hire people to help with translation and with curriculum development once we get chartered. We also have support from the center that does mandarin immersion.
- Teaching staff will need to be hired. Will absolutely be collaborative. Singapore Math is available in Mandarin. This looks at essential components of math instruction. We feel comfortable that teachers will be trained in this. Where

we're looking at is the balanced literacy approach – will be developed with teachers. Getting in the experiential component (KidLab) is important.

5. What non-academic goals for students do you plan to monitor and assess?

- Our students' families are actively engaged in schools.
- Cultural competence – that a child can understand etiquette as expressed in English vs. in Mandarin. It's the ability to understanding differences in different settings and how to apply the language accordingly.

Assessment, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

1. What guidelines are you using to determine fluency and Mandarin grade level performance?

- NOELLA

2. What are quarterly benchmark goals based on? How are they developed?

- Goals are based on the framework. Goals will also help us to determine grade level as well as Mandarin level.

a. Why do you require that students must meet all the Quarterly Benchmark Goals in order to be promoted?

- This goes back to original idea that we won't accept failure and won't let anyone fall behind.

b. What is your philosophy about setting goals – why never downward?

- If children are not meeting expectations, we are not doing our job. We are founded on excellence and we will bring the kids along. It's an obligation to meet the Common Core Standards, but we will go beyond that.
- If there are students that need extra support, we will give it to them, whether it's before school, afterschool, or summer school. We will set our bar high.
- We'll have pledge form for families to commit support to the students.

3. Please explain the eighth grade graduation standards.

a. Why are you doing the common application in eighth grade? What is the purpose of this requirement?

- A big goal of primary and secondary education is to go to college. Going through the act of doing a common application will let them know what they are aiming for.
- It will have an impact on what they do in high school if they fill out the common application then.
- Will be a good way to start thinking about setting goals for high school so you can have a good college application.

School Characteristics

- 1. Please distinguish between your after-school program and extended day. Who will staff?**
 - 8 – 4pm is the core school day. It's extended compared to regular school. Extended day for us is 4-6pm.

- 2. How will you support learning for all students? What types of support will students receive?**
 - Assessing kids on a regular basis, and communicating with parents about how kids are progressing.
 - During the day, we have assistants and pre-service teachers in the classroom. Students will have pull out services if needed during the school day. In an extended school day, there's an opportunity to go beyond state compliance.
 - The board can mobilize resources from UMass Boston and elsewhere. Lots of native speaker students from MIT and Harvard have indicated interest in volunteering. There are work study opportunities for these undergraduate students to be involved.
 - Our team has enormous contact with the language community here in Boston. There will be specific teachers to deal with specific students. But outside of that, we can draw on community resources that our board members have access to.
 - As a board, we bring different expertise. What I give to this board is my judgment (background in venture investing and real estate). We might not know every piece individually, but we have the drive and the standard of excellence. We know we can get it done.

- 3. What is your expectation of parents' monthly commitment and how will this be monitored and supported?**
 - We have funding for a PT family engagement coordinator to start. Families are expected to contribute 10 hours a month to the school. Examples include reading to your children, taking your children to a street fair that's relevant to learning, or doing homework with your kids.
 - We define families fairly loosely. The idea is to get families engaged, and this is one way to document their commitment.
 - Also about providing resources to families, a lending library for example.

- 4. Please describe how this school will serve as a community center for families? How will families be offered courses – ESL, technology, etc.?**
 - Will offer evening or weekend classes for families. Will offer adult Chinese classes. ESL will be major priority for adults. For computer training, we have recordings that we can put online.
 - We won't have to do all of this ourselves; we have partners who provide these resources too. If you offer something to adults, they are more likely to come to the school.
 - We will do the operations piece. As far as funding, we have a couple of members very experienced in development.

- As an initial budget, we have put in \$20,000 to fundraise. This will be fairly easy for us, as we will look into our families and other funders.
- Will start a 501(c) foundation to help with fundraising for the school. We are confident we can raise extra dollars to support activities.

Special Student Populations and Services

1. Please describe the process and procedures for working with students in need of special education service.

- Immersion model doesn't make special learning needs go away. It doesn't hurt students to be in immersion, but it doesn't necessary make them better either. What it does is offer them a second language.
- We will have certified teachers in special needs. We will meet children's education plans as they come. We have one mind who is a certified Mandarin and special education teacher. We value certification. We value learning from the teachers as well. We will push towards special education certified teachers. Push- in when you can, but we will need pull-out on occasion.

2. Please describe the process and procedures for working with students who are identified as limited English proficient.

- Parents will be asked to fill out a language survey and that will trigger further assessment, the language assessment scales the oral reading and writing and the Woodcock survey. We will get a sense of what the child's needs are. This would help us to identify the types of ESL services that we would provide.

3. How can you address the programmatic requirements for special needs and ELL within the schedule proposed for the school?

- For special education students, if their IEP says they need pull out, we will identify some on-call teachers (retired teachers) to target those areas the students need. Will happen during subject hour instruction.
- For ELL, it will depend on the language level. Beginner gets 4 hours a day of ESL instructions. For all ELL, language arts time will be time with the ESL teacher. They may get pulled out, but the ESL teacher will provide subject matter instruction as well.
- We can't have them pulled out and miss subject matter instruction.
- Everybody is learning the language - math and Chinese at the same time.
- Proposed head of school is ESL certified.

4. Do you have any formal agreement with South Cove Community Health Center?

- We have a letter specifying they will take all our students for health needs. Part of our enrollment will be from their WIC center.

Enrollment and Recruitment

1. Please explain your enrollment plan.

- Because we're an immersion program, we're not planning on taking students past second grade. We're not expecting to recruit third grade and up. We don't see a lot of demand from parents for third grade and up.
[Ruth explained they are legally obligated to backfill grades in third grade too.]
- We expect attrition especially around the time kids can enter exam schools. Also, we expect normal attrition due to job moves and such.

Capacity

1. What are the qualifications you are looking for in the Head of School? What process did you follow to select Dr. Danielle Carrigo?

- We wanted somebody with experience with charter schools and with ELL. It is important that the person we choose embody the values of the school. We looked not only for formal resume qualifications, but also for the passion the person exudes for the vision of the school.
- Our board of trustees is very connected with the education community. We did write our application to emphasize the qualities that Danielle has, but she has all the qualities we were looking for in a head of school. We wanted somebody with management experience in addition to classroom experience. We will be supported by proven providers.
- Wanted someone who understands the dynamics of Boston as an urban community. We can find experienced heads of school from China who are here in the U.S., but they wouldn't understand what it means to create an innovative school that is reflective of Boston's multi-culturalism.
- Danielle originally refused the position because she herself was not a Mandarin speaker, an important quality for the school leadership. But we will find an assistant head of school who has that quality.

2. What will the proposed school's relationship be to Kwong Kow Chinese School (private school)? What is Helen Chin Schlichte's relationship with both schools?

- I no longer have a relationship with Kwong Kow. Finished my term as chair of board in August. I did take the title of emeritus, but have no responsibility.

Governance and Management

1. How will the teacher evaluations work? How will the school determine the professional development needs of the staff and when will it take place?

- This is why it's critical to have assistant head of school who is Mandarin speaking. Peer evaluations will be conducted for a total of six times a year.
- Success of immersion is dependent on the level of student engagement. You really need 100% of students to be engaged.

- Every evaluation involves a meeting between the teacher and the administration to talk about goal setting. After the first evaluation observation, we will sit down and have another conversation.
- a. How is the professional learning community fostered?**
- Professional learning community is modeled after Critical Friends. We've chosen three focal points for professional development each year. Every year, we will do immersion. Teachers can choose their own professional community.
 - As a board, we will count on the advisory council and the staff advisory group to keep us informed of professional development needs.
 - Professional development is not inexpensive. We plan for two hours every Friday for professional development. We are firm believers in offering it and finding the money to support it.
 - Will encourage teachers to become certified in ELL. We have connection with the applied linguistics department at UMass Boston. Any teacher interested in this would go through the application process and receive a scholarship for the program.
 - Professional development can also take place during classroom time. Can get teachers to be involved in their own professional development by setting a goal of getting every student to speak every day in the classroom.
 - As needs arise, for example, understanding the profile of students and their families, we can offer quick professional development sessions to about this.

2. Please describe how the school's educational program will be implemented for students and faculty at different grade levels.

- 20 students per class, maybe fewer. Have teaching assistants. 1 teaching assistant per class in K, 1st and 2nd grades. In 3rd through 8th grade, we'll have part time teaching assistants. Self contained classrooms until 5th grade, after which students integrate.

3. Tell us about the candidate that you have identified for the Assistant Head of School position. Why was their information not included in the application?

- We haven't confirmed yet, but have two candidates.
- Shon Lynn: Assistant head of school for a language school. Has 10 years of teaching in China. Has been teaching 12 years in the US in immersion program. Has specialties in technology, early childhood and school administration.
- Catherine Wu: Worked in immersion school. From Taiwan. Now running English and Mandarin program in Taiwan. Certified in Massachusetts in early childhood. Certified in Taiwan in special education, and willing to get the certification here.

Facilities and Transportation

1. Why this building? Do you have a contingency plans for the facility if it falls through?

- Potential is Kwong Kow Center in Chinatown. New building with 13 classrooms. Starting out, we would like to rent for a few years. We have two alternative sites in South Boston – Boston Collegiate Academy and St. Augustine school.
- As soon as we hear the decision, we will negotiate with them. We will engage a broker. Many facilities are waiting for charter approval before engaging in serious talks.

2. If school starts on August 16th, how will you address transportation?

- For two weeks, we will have to pay Boston Public School to provide transportation for our students.

Budget

1. What is the basis for the assumption that half of your students will be able to pay tuition for before and afterschool programs? How sustainable are the before and after school programs if you are anticipating a limited program revenue?

- Our assumption is based on Neighborhood House charter school.
- Will work out a sliding scale for the parent programs. Adult classes are a lot cheaper to provide than classes for students. Will work with Kwong Kow to provide ESL classes. Upstairs, there is a big provider of ESL and job training.

2. Where is programming for ESL and technology/computer training for parents?

- For the technology piece, we have people asking to be unpaid interns. Technology is such a critical piece for family engagement.
- Kwong Kow already has a computer lab with 20 computers. We would also buy a laptop cart.

3. Why don't you think you will need to budget for SPED testing and assessments?

- Will come out of our reserve. The reserve is specifically to support student needs.

4. Why is this building at this cost? What does that include?

- Include heat, light, utilities. The cost is the rental average for that area, and we are in a brand new building