

## **The Loss of Elementary World Language - A Symptom of Serious Problems**

I am deeply disappointed and distressed that our school district leadership has eliminated World Language instruction for K through 5th grades. The process that led to this decision was problematic: it was lacking in transparency, misused data, and disregarded community input. The decision is symptomatic of a misalignment between what our community wants and where the district is going.

Those of us who follow school issues closely know World Language was not cut because of a sudden decision or event. Rather, the program has been starved and mismanaged over time, such that it could no longer be delivered with excellence district-wide. World Language teachers have been begging the School Committee and School Department to allow them to operate the program properly - in the way it was designed and funded (by an override approved by voters) - for several years. It has been painful to watch these educators screaming into the wind, trying to save a hallmark academic program in Brookline (while other initiatives have been started and even expanded in the meantime).

During the budget development process, the current School Committee did not engage in robust public discussion about options to save World Language. There was some hand-wringing, but the public saw no substantive pushback, no deep questioning about spending choices and trends, and no proposal to *prioritize* this program. The School Committee acquiesced and allowed a distinctive feature of the Brookline education - one valued by community members and residents for myriad reasons - to be pushed aside. This brought back memories of how the Enrichment and Challenge Support (ECS) program (formerly "Gifted and Talented") was also shifted out of existence in Brookline, never to be heard from again.

If I'm elected to School Committee I intend to keep the conversation about World Language going; too many people are too distressed for us to let this go. This might mean an ad hoc subcommittee or task force that explores how World Language can be revived and creates an action plan. It might mean a deep analysis of the budget to identify potential ways to fund the program. And it will certainly mean elevating the voices of parents, students and teachers; no one should feel ignored and disregarded on a matter of such importance in our school district, and too many people are too upset with this decision for us to accept it without further discussion and work.