



From the Principal

John Stanford International School

June 16, 2009

Special Edition: JSIS is Changing and Growing

Dear JSIS Families,

It's not everyday that you get a "Special Edition" of the *From the Principal* newsletter. But, today, I have some important information to share with you all that I felt couldn't wait until Wednesday. Starting this fall, JSIS will be adding a **second Japanese immersion track** to the school. In addition to our current Japanese and Spanish immersion tracks, JSIS will start with an additional Japanese kindergarten this September and then add a grade each year.

The decision to grow our program in this way and at this time was based on three primary factors: 1) Kindergarten enrollment for 2009 – 2010 is much higher in the north-end of the city than what was anticipated, and space was needed, 2) The BOC program is evolving and will be moving over time to schools that are closer to where BOC students live which creates space in our building, and 3) Adding a Japanese immersion track will further strengthen the overall international/immersion program from JSIS to Hamilton International Middle School.

Increased Kindergarten Enrollment in the North End – As you may have heard, kindergarten enrollment in the north part of Seattle was much, much higher than expected this year. Although enrollment is declining in other parts of the city resulting in school closures, this is not the case in the north part of the city. As a result, the district has been looking for schools that could potentially add extra kindergarten classes for this fall. Because our school has such a long waiting list each year, JSIS is one school they considered.

Bilingual Orientation Center (BOC) Program Changes – When JSIS was created, the BOC was included in what Superintendent John Stanford envisioned for a world-class international school. And since the creation of JSIS, the BOC has been one of the central components of our program. This past year, though, an outside audit was done on the district's bilingual programs. As a result of the district's audit, one of the recommendations was to offer bilingual services closer to where bilingual students live and to provide improved continuity from BOC programs to mainstream programs. As you may know, there are very few BOC students who live close to JSIS and it is very difficult to move students from the BOC into our mainstream program because of capacity and the nature of our immersion program. Although no changes are expected in the next year or two, it is very likely that the BOC program will eventually move to schools closer to where students live. This will also allow for BOC students to start and stay in that school as they transition into the mainstream classes. As our BOC program transitions out over the next few years, classroom space will become available for the expansion of the immersion program.

Strengthening the International/Immersion Program – Those of you who already have students in middle school may know that immersion programs at the middle school have challenges that are different than those at elementary school. For one, middle schools need to sustain higher class sizes in order to be financially sound. As the only immersion school that

feeds into Hamilton at this time, we aren't able to move up enough students each year to help them create a sustainable program particularly in Japanese. (Currently, grants are providing the cushion needed to offset this enrollment challenge.) The Spanish program sustains itself because there are enough native and heritage Spanish speakers who join the immersion program at 6th grade from other schools to fill the classes. However, that isn't the case with the Japanese program. Yet, the international business community in Seattle and the U.S. Department of Education still consider Japanese to be one of the most critical yet least taught languages in the U.S. In addition, our current Japanese program, the only one in the city, has demonstrated strong student academic achievement and success. Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of our program as a whole which depends on the global perspective brought in by both the Japanese and Spanish languages and to fill the high demand for an international/immersion education in the north-end, it was decided that the additional track added to our school would be a Japanese track.

So, what does this mean for us this coming fall? When the 2009 – 2010 school year starts, we are going to see 28 additional, bright-eyed kindergarten students joining our school. Phone calls to parents of students on the waitlist are being made today. Logistics including scheduling, recruiting new teaching staff, and the assigning of Japanese immersion kindergarteners into two classes instead of one are not yet set and will be worked on during the summer and shared with kindergarten families at our kindergarten orientation night (date TBD). More information on this change and other changes will be sent out to the school community at the beginning of the 2009 – 2010 school year.

Thank you all for your commitment to our school and program. Your support of the school and of the staff during this time of transition and growth is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kelly Aramaki