

Dear Dr. Trice and Members of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education,

On behalf of FLANC, Fostering Language Acquisition in North Carolina, and the Chinese Language Teachers Association of North Carolina (CLTA-NC), we write to express our deep commitment to the long-term success, stability, and equity of Chinese language education within your district. As current FLANC President and CLTA-NC President, we are reaching out not only as organizational leaders, but also as educators who have dedicated our careers to building and sustaining high-quality language programs.

We recognize the complexity of the current decision-making process regarding the Glenwood Elementary School's STEAM<sup>2</sup> Mandarin language magnet program. We also appreciate the district's stated commitment to continually supporting Mandarin language education. It is in that spirit of shared purpose that we offer the following considerations and recommendations:

**1. Keep Dual Language (DL) and World Language (WL) together to preserve program integrity**

The success of the STEAM<sup>2</sup> Mandarin language program is built on a unified DL-WL ecosystem that supports teacher collaboration, sustains enrollment, and provides a continuous pathway for students. These two strands are interdependent, not parallel.

Separating them would weaken staffing, disrupt student access - particularly for those currently in the WL program - and erode the critical mass necessary for effective language learning. It would also disrupt the natural pipeline that supports long-term enrollment, family engagement, and program sustainability.

We strongly urge the district to preserve a **coherent, one-site program model** to ensure both instructional quality and equitable access. As part of this commitment, FLANC and CLTA-NC therefore advocate for stable, high-quality programs that protect continuity for students and families. Fragmentation risks disruption, reduced flexibility, and long-term program decline.

**2. If separation is pursued, ensure expert-guided decisions and protect program quality**

If restructuring is unavoidable, it must be conducted in close collaboration with professional organizations, field experts, and current educators to ensure the strongest possible outcome for students, teachers, and the long-term sustainability of the program.

**• Restore instructional quality and protect student opportunity**

From recent conversations with teachers across multiple schools, we have identified a critical system-wide issue that must be addressed. Across the district, elementary World Language programs are currently not meeting the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's recommended minimum of 90 minutes per week for proficiency-based Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs (as outlined in the [2024 SCoS WL Proficiency Outcome Document](#)). Instead, they are functioning primarily as Foreign Language Exploratory (FLEX) programs that provide only brief introductions to languages. While FLEX programs have been widely adopted in many schools and districts - particularly in response to ongoing teacher shortages - and can play a role in sparking early interest in language learning, they are typically delivered in English and do not support sustained proficiency development in the target language.

FLANC and CLTA-NC wish to emphasize the importance of maintaining and strengthening proficiency-based language programs. We urge the district to take intentional steps to restore instructional time and academic rigor in order to enhance the quality, coherence, and credibility of World Language education for all students.

Without a clear and intentional plan to either expand instructional time or meaningfully strengthen the role of World Language within the existing structure, further restructuring, particularly of Mandarin World Language, may deepen existing inequities and weaken the overall coherence and impact of language programs across the district.

We therefore strongly recommend that any decision include:

- A concrete, district-wide plan to move toward meeting the recommended instructional time for proficiency-based World Language learning, where feasible
- Alternatively, a clearly defined and well-supported FLEX model that is intentionally designed, standards-aligned, and meaningfully integrated with other areas of the school experience (e.g., interdisciplinary connections, cultural programming, or content-based learning)
- A sustainable strategy to strengthen program quality, continuity, and equity across all schools, ensuring that all students, regardless of model, have access to meaningful and consistent language learning opportunities

• **Address the teacher recruitment and retention crisis**

Equally important is the urgent need to address the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. Mandarin programs rely on highly specialized educators who are already difficult to recruit and retain. North Carolina continues to face structural challenges in developing and sustaining a strong Mandarin language teaching workforce, particularly due to visa constraints, limited benefits, and a highly competitive national recruitment environment.

Further fragmentation or prolonged uncertainty around the STEAM<sup>2</sup> Mandarin language program structure risks increasing teacher anxiety, accelerating attrition, and making it even more difficult to sustain qualified teaching teams.

We urge the district to act proactively by:

- Strengthening partnerships with organizations such as Participate Learning, as well as international and government-supported initiatives, including the American Institute in Taiwan and teacher exchange programs, such as the Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP)
- Expanding recruitment efforts through national Mandarin language educator networks and professional organizations, including the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA) and the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS)
- Ensuring any restructuring plan is aligned with realistic staffing capacity and long-term workforce sustainability

FLANC and CLTA-NC stand ready to support these efforts and help connect the district with recruitment partners and professional networks.

### **3. Support teachers and invest in long-term sustainability**

Teachers must be recognized, protected, and engaged as essential stakeholders throughout this process. Their expertise, professional knowledge, and lived experiences are critical to ensuring a successful transition and sustaining high-quality DL/WL language programs for students.

We recommend a comprehensive support approach that includes:

- **Investing in ongoing professional growth** through targeted professional development in Dual Language/Immersion pedagogy, Mandarin language instruction, and early childhood education. This includes providing support for teachers to maintain professional association memberships (such as ACTFL, FLANC, CLTA, and CLASS) and participate in professional conferences at least once annually to remain connected with current research, best practices, and professional networks.
- **Providing dedicated support for Chinese teachers** who navigate unique cultural, professional, and credentialing transitions **as immigrants**. These educators bring invaluable linguistic and cultural expertise to our schools and require intentional structures that promote belonging, stability, and long-term retention.
- **Maintaining and strengthening program resources** by committing to preserve, at a minimum, current levels of classroom bilingual signage, cultural materials, instructional resources, and funding that support both the Mandarin DL and WL pathways.

- **Building leadership capacity** by providing training for current and future principals and school leaders in Dual Language/Immersion education to ensure informed decision-making, effective program supervision, and sustainable program growth.

FLANC and CLTA-NC stand ready to partner with the district by connecting educators and administrators with national organizations, such as ACTFL, the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), and the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS), as well as by convening a network of expert practitioners to collaborate with the district's Curriculum Management Team.

We approach this moment not only with concern, but with a sincere desire to partner. FLANC and CLTA-NC would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the district's curriculum and leadership teams on program transition planning, curriculum development, and teacher training.

Together, we can ensure that Chinese language education in CHCCS continues to serve as a model of excellence - one that reflects the district's commitment to global readiness, educational equity, and the needs of its diverse and dynamic community.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to students, families, and educators. We stand ready to support you in this important work.

With respect and partnership,



Bonnie Wang

FLANC President

CLTA-NC Former President (2019-2021)



Dr. Lini Ge Polin

CLTA-NC President

