

November 17, 2015

**To:** Japanese immersion program parents

**From:** Richmond PTA board and Oya No Kai representatives

**RE:** Key Takeaways from parent informational meetings on DBRAC

## **I. Importance of DBRAC**

PPS Japanese immersion parents understand DBRAC's enrollment balancing work is a huge effort for the district, with thousands of families affected. We understand that our program may be asked to change as well.

At the same time, parents and students value this program highly and want to make sure we clearly communicate what it requires to remain a healthy, working part of Portland Public Schools.

## **II. Process Concerns**

### **A. Do not make changes to the immersion programs as an afterthought**

We would like to see a process and timeline that allows for adequate data review and public input before any proposed changes to PPS immersion schools is brought before the Board. Given the current DBRAC proposal schedule, we are concerned that decisions will be made without proper review even if implementation timelines are long.

If proposed changes for the immersion programs are not described until *after* the Town Halls are concluded, this leaves no opportunity for these communities to have a voice.

Japanese immersion parents believe it is fair for all immersion program families to be given at least three opportunities to provide in-person feedback to DBRAC before any recommendation is made to the PPS Board moving on changing these programs.

### **B. Please keep in mind all policy objectives when considering program location**

With the creation of an FRL preference, the biggest single barrier to increased socio-economic diversity in the Japanese immersion program is the lack of diversity in the applicant pool. Richmond PTA has already begun outreach programs with great partners like Head Start and APANO. Please ensure the proper implementation of last year's policy changes before making additional policy changes that may impact their long-term efficacy. We need continuity and help from the district in this.

### **III. Critical Program Elements**

#### **A. Preserve this successful model**

The Japanese program is one of many thriving immersion programs in Portland Public Schools. Working dual-language programs should be kept intact and, if anything, better understood and replicated. Many Portland parents want this kind of globally focused, inter-cultural, and early language education for their children. Please intentionally support and accommodate dual-language immersion.

#### **B. Keep the program together**

Splitting the Japanese immersion elementary program into different locations puts the program at risk. It would make it virtually impossible to leverage the economies of scale that a four-strand program affords. Especially as the only language program receiving no language curriculum support from the district, we rely heavily on unified staff and administration as well as parent community. The four-strand Japanese immersion program meets one of DBRAC's primary objectives—it is a right-sized program in a right-sized building to ensure academic success.

#### **C. Retain a central location**

The future of the program depends on an accessible and geographically central location. The program does not need to be located in any certain building, but it should be located with the district-wide catchment and population it serves in mind.

#### **D. Mutual benefit with the hosting school.**

Ideally, any immersion program co-located with a neighborhood school will be sited where both tracks are enriched in each other's presence. Immersion program should be sited in a school where there is neighborhood student demand for the language instruction added to the program. Co-located immersion programs need strong leadership at the building administration level—with a good understanding of how immersion programs work, what they need to thrive, and a commitment to creating a holistic community within the school.

The Japanese immersion upper-grades programs specifically have just such a mutually beneficial arrangement at their current host locations. Grant High School has hosted a Japanese language program for over 30 years and has been the host of the Japanese immersion program since its inception. Mt Tabor Middle School has hosted the program for 20+ years and has thrived through the recent growth of the program.