Dear Parents and Friends of New Fifth Grade Students,

Welcome to Friends Select School! Fifth grade students have three choices for their world language study. Please consider which language, Latin, Mandarin, or Spanish, you would like your child to study.

In fifth grade students will have world language class two out of six days in the cycle. The curriculum focuses on both language acquisition and culture of the target language. In seventh grade students will have language classes every day. While the expectation would be that students in seventh grade continue the language they have been studying in previous years, there will be the opportunity to make a change in language in seventh grade if so desired.

In very general terms, Spanish is taught in the oral/aural method. Students who are auditory learners will do well in this language. Latin is a good choice for students who are comfortable with abstract and analytic thought processes; now speaking and listening, as well as reading and writing, are emphasized. As a tonal language with an alphabet completely distinct from English, Mandarin is an exciting language of growing importance globally; it is also taught using the oral/aural approach, and will introduce students to a new writing system. Due to the complexity of the language, students who select Mandarin should be strong visual as well as auditory learners.

While we consider all language options to be wonderfully viable learning opportunities for all children, we offer the list of points below for consideration so that families may consider which language most closely aligns with their child’s interests, learning style, and potential future goals. If your child is already bilingual in one of the two languages here, you may want to consider signing up for the other.

**MANDARIN CHINESE CONSIDERATIONS **
- One out of every four persons in the world is Chinese.
- Compared to 328 million native speakers of English, 845 million are native speakers of Chinese.
- China has the second largest, but fastest growing, economy in the world.
- New evidence suggests that studying Chinese and learning to write Chinese characters may train a whole array of cognitive abilities not utilized by the study of other languages and writing systems.
- Studying Chinese stimulates different parts of the brain, because Chinese is very different from English in sound, tone, and script.
- Evidence indicates there is a correlation between the learning of Chinese and math skills. During the natural acquisition process of Chinese, the student is learning and reinforcing basic mathematical concepts.
- There is no doubt that written Chinese is challenging to learn. The spoken language is easier to learn than some European languages; but embarking upon the study of Chinese is an additional challenge from the study of a language with the same characters and structure as English. That said, in comparison to European Languages Mandarin Chinese does have some features that are advantageous to the learning process: no plurals; no conjugations; no tenses; simple numbering system that is applied to date and time expressions; simple conditional sentences; simple prepositions

**SPANISH CONSIDERATIONS **
- Spanish is spoken by almost 400 million people worldwide.
- Spanish is the official language in 21 countries.
- Spanish is officially spoken on four continents: Europe, North America (Mexico and Central America), South America and Africa (Equatorial Guinea and the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla).
- About half the population in the Western Hemisphere speaks Spanish, making it the primary language in this region of the world for as many people as is English. Most people in South America speak Spanish, as does Mexico and nearly all of Central America (aside from Belize).
- Within the United States, Spanish is the second most widely spoken language after English, by a wide margin. There are increasing opportunities in the U.S. for those who are fluent in both Spanish and English, due to the explosion of the Spanish-speaking population.
Globalization has been the big push behind the increasing importance of being able to communicate with those from other countries. Because of globalization, and NAFTA in particular, the second language U.S. citizens are choosing to learn is Spanish. Americans are now studying Spanish in record numbers.

Spanish is also gaining importance in Europe, where it is quickly becoming the world language of choice after English.

Phonetically, Spanish is nearly perfect, which makes it easy to learn, to read, and spell.

As a romance language, Spanish can open the door to communication with millions of people who speak one of the other romance languages. After learning Spanish, one can become proficient in other romance languages in much less time than it takes to learn one's first romance language. This is due to the similarities in grammatical structure and vocabulary.

LATIN CONSIDERATIONS**

Students who study Latin see benefits to their spoken and written English. More than 65% of English words come from Latin (and more than 90% of those over two syllables).

The Romans left a rich body of literature, well worth reading for its own sake and widely influential on European and American literature. Our own culture, including our system of government, architecture, art and religion, shows the heavy influence of Rome. The Latin Program at UIUC prepares you to read the great masterpieces of Roman literature: Virgil, Cicero, Horace, Ovid and more.

Latin students gain an expanded vocabulary and an understanding of word formation that can help even with unfamiliar words. These skills are particularly useful for students planning to enter fields with large technical vocabularies.

The study of an inflected language with a very different sentence structure than English is an excellent introduction to how languages work. Latin students have a huge advantage in learning other inflected languages, such as Russian or German. Conversely, speakers of Romance languages (Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Rumanian) have an edge in studying Latin: Latin is the source of 75-80% of all words in these languages.

The study of Latin also provides training in logical thinking, boosting cognitive processes essential for math, science, and engineering.

* Courtesy of Avenues, The World School
** Courtesy of the University of Illinois Classics Department

Attached is the form to make your language selection. Please return it to Anne Wentling, World Languages Department Chair by April 15, 2019. You may send your response via email to annej@friends-select.org.

Please call Peter Cline, Middle School Director, at 215.561.5900 x 3123 if you have further questions related to this important choice.

Thank you and welcome again to Friends Select School.

In Friendship,

Peter Cline Anne Wentling
Director of Middle School World Languages Department Chair