Background
In 2000, Seattle’s first international school, John Stanford International School, was founded. Since then 5 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 2 high schools have become international schools. “Our vision is to prepare students, in partnership with family and community, for global citizenship in an increasingly interdependent world.” (SPS International Schools pamphlet 2014). Learning an immersion language has always been a part of this experience. International schools offer students an opportunity to learn Spanish, Japanese or Mandarin through the core content of mathematics, literacy, social studies and science.

However, as the program has expanded, providing students with a quality immersion experience presents a number of challenges:

- Recruitment of qualified staff K-12 who fluently speak immersion languages
  - Certificated teachers
  - Immersion IAs
  - Substitutes
- Clear K-12 pathways for immersion students
  - Identifying resources needed to create accessible pathways
  - A clear plan for what immersion looks like in elementary, middle and high school
- Enrollment outreach
  - Recruitment of heritage speakers of immersion languages at time of enrollment
  - Systematically informing families of their option to enroll in immersion schools
  - Enrollment personnel who are familiar with immersion school options and can help families navigate the process of enrolling in an immersion school
- Partnerships with institutions that can provide resources
  - Consulates who can provide qualified personnel
  - Government programs which can provide personnel and grant opportunities
  - Private organizations such as Confucius Institute, Martinez Foundation and Japan Foundation which can provide grants and assist with providing personnel
  - OSPI which can help with visas and exchange program logistics
- Curriculum
  - Clear plan for procurement of curricular materials in immersion languages
  - Alignment of immersion materials to CCSS
Current State
In the last year alone, these challenges have impacted Seattle Public School’s ability to provide a quality immersion program in the following ways:

**Shortages of qualified personnel**
Several classes of students did not have access to a certificated teacher for their core instruction for all or a large part of the 2014-15 academic year due to shortages of qualified immersion personnel. For example, one immersion position has been unfilled for an entire semester at McDonald International. Another .5 immersion position at McDonald International has remained unfilled for the 2014-15 year. This resulted in non-credentialed staff (instructional assistants and substitutes) teaching these classes.

Similarly, because there are no qualified immersion subs in the sub pool means that if there is a long term need for an immersion sub there is no one to fill the position. Again, schools rely on non-certificated staff such as instructional assistants or the class will be taught in English because the sub does not speak the immersion language.

**Attracting highly qualified candidates**
There is a shortage of certificated teachers who are endorsed to teach core instruction in an immersion setting. Qualified candidates have a wide range of employment opportunities to choose from in both the private and public sector—including other districts with new immersion programs. In many of SPS international schools .5 FTE immersion teacher positions offered. These positions are simply not ideal for attracting candidates who can easily get full time employment elsewhere.

**Unclear Immersion Pathways**
K-12 Pathways are unclear to parents causing frustration and possible increase in dropping out of the program. Middle schools are not able to offer an immersion experience similar to elementary schools—where core instruction is delivered in the immersion language. Therefore, students are placed in traditional language classes that are not designed to meet the needs of students who come from immersion elementary schools. Furthermore, students who test into APP are not able to continue participating in both immersion and APP because these classes are mutually exclusive.

**Enrollment**
No clear message to families from SPS enrollment about how to choose an immersion program at the time of enrollment. There is no enrollment technician that can help to provide consistent support for and recruitment of families that may be interested in learning more about the immersion schools. Additionally, immersion schools by design suffer from attrition in grades 2-5 because only children who speak the immersion languages fluently are allowed to enter the program at these grade levels. When students leave at these grades, their seats become harder to fill. A concerted effort on the part of
enrollment services to identify and recruit students who speak immersion languages would help to fill seats in the immersion program in grades 2-5.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships with entities that are interested in promoting the teaching of specific languages and cultures are key to Seattle’s immersion programs. These partnerships can provide much needed supplemental funding and also provide a pipeline for qualified staff who speak immersion languages fluently. Currently, the partnerships Seattle Public Schools has with these entities are hit or miss. For example, the Japanese government and Japan Foundation provides no support and there are no partnerships with universities or colleges who may have qualified candidates. Additionally, a partnership with OSPI can help international schools with hiring and visas. The visa process is hard to navigate. Schools often will not hire candidates outside the US because we have no one to help us with this process.

**Curriculum**

Curriculum for Japanese immersion program is not adequately considered when the district adopts new materials. In order to ensure the viability of the programs, it is imperative that teachers and students have access to curriculum in the immersion languages that is aligned with Common Core State Standards. Currently, curriculum adoptions do not consider the need for Japanese and Chinese translations. Therefore, schools/teachers are left to find supplemental materials or apply for waivers. Resources for compensation for the extra work immersion teachers do to create materials in immersion language is non-existent and not considered as part of the cost of a new adoption even though it is a real cost associated with immersion programs that teach languages other than Spanish.

**Goal/ Theory of Action**

If Seattle Public Schools forms a task force for immersion programs that is charged with creating a clear action plan addressing the design challenges outlined above, then the results will be that every student in a Seattle Public Schools immersion program is afforded a clear immersion pathway K-12 that provides:

- Access to highly-qualified certificated immersion teacher every year
- Access to core curriculum in the immersion language aligned to the CCSS

**Need to add:**

- Challenge of staffing with new lower class sizes for WSS