

6-8th Grade Language Choice Form: April 20th

Nueva students entering sixth, seventh, and eighth grades have an exciting choice to make about world language. [Please do so here](#) by April 20th. We offer three options: Spanish, Japanese, and Mandarin. At the end of the eighth-grade year, the program culminates in a trip to Spain, China, or Japan. All languages also have a group of exchange students who come to Nueva in early winter or spring. We hope you will consider hosting as this is truly the best way to prepare your child to travel abroad (health and safety permitting).

If your child needs help to determine the best choice, we encourage you to [watch this video](#) together. Then, take a walk or have a meal to discuss the options. You might consider these points:

- Language choice is connected to the desire to learn more about a place, people, culture. Look at pictures of art, architecture, or cultural festivals. What your child is drawn to?
- What are your child's learning preferences, styles, and needs? Spanish words have English cognates and finding common Latin roots is exciting and useful but Spanish also requires learning new spelling rules. Japanese is phonetic and once the letters/alphabets are learned, there is essentially no spelling to learn. It also includes characters. Chinese requires learning characters and using tones for pronunciation which are both a challenge and a joy.
- Does your family history factor in this choice?
- What is the 'music' of the language? This can sway a student—if a language sounds interesting, pretty, or challenging, that can be a rationale.
- At the end of the eighth-grade year, the program culminates in a trip abroad to Spain, Japan, or China. Is there a particular trip that would be motivating?
- The choice your child wants to make may surprise you! We would encourage students not to choose a language strictly for the reason that a large number of people speak it, or that it would be useful for business only; that can be a part of the choice, but not the sole reason as it will not sustain a student and their interest in a language over three years.

Know that our approach is parallel across the three world language classes. All three languages emphasize communication above all and all learn about culture in addition to traditional grammar, vocabulary, and conversational skills. All make use of online language learning programs (particularly right now!) in conjunction with in-class exercises and project-based learning approaches. Know that whichever language your child chooses, the program teaches the necessary study skills for language acquisition. While each language presents unique learning challenges and exciting experiential opportunities here in the Bay Area, we are intentional about creating equal projects and opportunities for all world language learners so there is parity. For example, all 6th graders might take a language scavenger hunt fieldtrip on the same day, but to three different markets. All sustainable living projects are set in a country that speaks the language the child is studying and everyone in sixth grade learns the vocabulary of home and family simultaneously. All 8th graders might go to a museum, for example, but some to the Asian Art and others to the Legion of Honor. All languages have a group of exchange students who come to Nueva in early winter or spring.

Because we are building towards a trip, a child's language choice is a commitment from sixth to eighth grade; students do not change languages part way through middle school. While it is not necessary to

think of this language as a “permanent” choice, most students do choose to continue with the same language in high school.

Due to the size of the middle school, we are only able to offer one level of language at each grade level for Spanish and Japanese. If there continue to be enough students entering Mandarin in sixth grade with significant language skills (heritage speakers or those who attended immersion schools, for example) we will continue to have two levels of Mandarin at sixth grade, one for beginning and one for more advanced students. Should that be of interest to your child, please note it on the survey above and we will follow up about placement assessment details once we ascertain interest.

If you have specific questions about any of the programs, please feel free to reach out to the language teachers with further questions.

- Weixia Han (whan@nuevaschool.org) and Ting Zhang (tzhang@nuevaschool.org) can answer questions about all levels of Mandarin.
- Silvia Salcedo (ssalcedo@nuevaschool.org) and Mimi Sabo (msabo@nuevaschool.org) can answer questions about the Spanish program.
- Megumi Shibamiya (mshibamiya@nuevaschool.org) and Yoko Sase (ysase@nuevaschool.org) can answer questions about the Japanese program.

Choosing a language and traveling abroad is a hallmark of the Nueva middle school experience. We are excited for the opening of minds and hearts that comes through this process.

Gracias, Arigato, and Xie Xie,
Liza Raynal and the World Language Team