Dear students coming from immersion programs & native speakers,

We love having native speakers and students from immersion backgrounds in our language classes, and we welcome you to Jesuit! You (or your parents) likely have questions about your options for continuing your language studies at Jesuit so we have created this document to help you understand our programs.

It is very important to understand that, at any non-immersion high school, taking a second language class will be different from the immersion/bilingual home environment that you are used to. Although we conduct our upper level language classes nearly entirely in the target language at Jesuit, that still only represents about 3.5 hours per week in the target language.

Most freshmen must take a language class; however, those that are enrolled in Freshman Seminar do not take a language. You may choose the language you prefer to study. We offer French, Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin). Many native speakers or students from immersion schools choose to continue studying the same language in high school, beginning their freshman year. Others choose to start high school language classes in one of our other languages, which they may also have studied in middle school, perhaps adding back their immersion/native language later.

From sophomore year on, students have room in their schedule to take an elective, which may include a 2nd World Language class, among other options.

At Jesuit, Level 3 Honors is the highest level into which the World Language Department places freshmen, including immersion/native speakers. Based on our years of experience with immersion students, we have found that placement into Level 3/3H presents students with the maximum benefit for several reasons, including:

- **Transitioning to College**
  Jesuit requires two years of language, with many colleges preferring to see evidence of three years of language study at the high school level. If students take Level 3/ 3H as freshmen, they have 3+ additional levels of language at JHS available to them (Levels 3, 4, and 5 (AP)).

- **Grammar expectations**
  We find that native speakers and students from immersion backgrounds usually require explicit instruction and review in common grammatical concepts (ex: specific grammatical terminology, syntax, homophone verb endings, gender of nouns, and some other details of the written language) which they are expected to know in Level 4. Level 3/3H allows them the opportunity to review the written grammatical topics with which they are experiencing inaccuracies.

- **Appropriate developmental placement and expectations**
  In terms of cognitive development, the type of work required in Level 3/3H is generally appropriate for 14 and 15 year old brains. Higher levels require more abstract, nuanced thought and independent direction, for which freshmen are usually not developmentally prepared.

- **Appropriate social placement and positive student interactions**
  Socially, we find that freshmen have a more positive experience in Levels no higher than 3/3H with sophomores and juniors, rather than in a Level 4 class with juniors and seniors. The interaction between freshmen and seniors in the same class can make students feel

awkward; the topics of interest are different. Overall, we have found that age is a significant consideration when it comes to placing students at the appropriate level language class.

- **Other considerations…**
  The transition to high school is significant. Even academically gifted students find this to be a socially and emotionally challenging time. Students coming from immersion schools have the additional task of adapting to the structure of a second language instruction class. In our experience, freshmen immersion students experience the most benefits from being placed in the third year of language. They often report enjoying the respect and confidence which comes from being a younger "expert" among older students in their language class.

Students who wish to place into a language class **other than Level 1** are invited to take a challenge exam in late April. This exam will last no more than an hour and will include written and oral assessments. In our classes, we do our best to meet every student's needs and to support them as individuals. If you have further questions, please contact the World Languages Department Chair.

Sincerely,

World Languages Department