

American Sign Language (ASL)

Stephanie Hartman is a Julian and OPRF parent. This is her fourth year teaching American Sign Language at Irving and her third at Whittier. She completed a degree in sign language interpreting in St Louis and was a licensed and certified educational interpreter working in Missouri and Illinois. She has experience teaching ASL enrichment classes at schools and teaching private lessons (both small group and individual). Her classes will focus on learning about Deaf Culture and ASL through hands-on activities, games and short videos.

Melissa de Jesus-Vasquez is an Irving mom of two fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). She was first introduced to ASL at a young age. She has an older sister, who is deaf, and her parents learned ASL to communicate with her and taught their younger children. Did you know there are more than a million deaf people in the United States? Knowing just the most basics of ASL, such as the alphabet, can make a difference when you are in the company of a deaf person in the USA, Canada and parts of Mexico. She will be teaching our youngest grades ASL and promises it will be a great experience and a lot of fun!

French

Madame Kimberly Plaxton coordinated Longfellow's world language program and continues to teach its French classes. She also taught French for Mann's world language program. Madame began learning Spanish in seventh grade and added French in high school. She continued with both languages at Kalamazoo College and studied abroad in Caen, France. After graduation, she taught English to students in Granville, France, through the Fulbright program. Madame still corresponds with many of the families and friends she met while living abroad. Madame has an MA in translation from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies-Monterey and has been a freelance translator for many years.

German

Lauren VanderBerg is an Irving mom of three. She has studied German for 30+ years and has a BA in German from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She has lived in Germany for over 2 years combined. She worked for the US Commercial Service in Germany as well as the German American Chamber of Commerce in Chicago for 5 years. This will be her 6th year teaching at Irving. Her students return to her year after year. She teaches fundamental German through videos, songs and games. Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

Greek

Maria Tsagaris learned the Greek language by studying it through Greek classes for 13 years. In addition to this, speaking primarily Greek in the home growing up and visiting Greece often made her fluent in the language.

Mandarin Chinese

A native Mandarin speaker, Paul Chen received formal education in Taiwan, has lived/worked in Beijing and traveled extensively in China for work. He speaks Mandarin with a neutral accent, has a practical vocabulary for different audiences or social settings, and is proficient in both traditional and simplified Chinese characters. Paul is enthusiastic about creative writing and translation, and is passionate about sharing his love of languages and cultures. He regularly gets compliments from native speakers on his accent when he tries other languages, and he loves to advance his French!

Spanish

Samantha Esparza comes to Oak Park by way of Aguascalientes, Mexico, where she spent the first 17 years of her life. She is currently employed at Wintrust Mortgage as a bilingual Team-Lead Sales Assistant. Ms. Esparza has two daughters, Ashley and Katie, and four sisters, whom she speaks to regularly in her native Spanish. Ms. Esparza is very excited to work with Irving students and help them to gain an understanding of, and interest in, the Spanish language.