

## CLEVELAND HILL

# Latin might become a dead language in district

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The Cleveland Hill School District may eliminate Latin classes due to lack of student interest and the difficulty of finding a certified Latin teacher.

That would leave Spanish as the only foreign language taught in the 1,600-plus student district, making Cleveland Hill a "one language school," Superintendent Laura Sherwood told a School Board work session last week.

"I think we're at a crossroads in the district," said Ms. Sherwood. "We might want to look at doing one thing and doing it better."

Latin, always the smaller in enrollment of the two language offerings, has dwindled over the years, Curriculum Director Paul Ruda said. In the three-year high school credit program there are 27 Latin students while 143 are taking Spanish. The third-year Latin class has just seven students.

At one time, Ruda said there were enough students to keep the district's one Latin instructor busy with at least one full class. Now, middle school pupils moving up are choosing Spanish by a near 5-1 ratio over Latin to satisfy either the one-year local or three-year Re-

gents high school diploma requirement.

However, the biggest problem for officials struggling to keep a Latin program, is finding a certified teacher. Officials have resorted to non-certified substitutes, called in frequently over the last three years, to fill in for ailing regular teacher Luke Rutter.

Now, with Rutter out indefinitely, an exhaustive search for a certified replacement is coming up empty.

"This is more of a staffing decision," said Ruda. "Other districts are attempting to add Latin in their schools, and they can't find certified teachers either."

Faced with a shortage of teachers and tougher all around academic challenges, Ms. Sherwood said many progressive high school are opting for a single foreign language curriculum. She added that experts recommend that schools continue multilingual education. Suggested alternative include French, German and especially Pacific Rim languages, such as Chinese or Japanese. "It's a global economy — the kids need to know many languages," said Chris Sobczynski, a parent. "This kind of thinking does not meet with what I believe a multilingual experience is."

Ms. Sobczynski said that perhaps children would choose Latin more often if they were

encouraged. Emphasizing how important Latin is to understanding the structure of English, as well as its relevance to science and medical professions, could spur interest, she added.

The district's dual language program has undergone changes over the years, including course and credit restructuring, trying to find a balance between requirements and interests. Currently, only high school courses are credit-bearing. In middle school, eighth-graders are required to take a one-year language exploratory course, 20 weeks each of Spanish and Latin.

For high school seniors a fourth unit of language credits is offered in both Spanish and Latin. The courses highlight cultural aspects rather than language structure, said Ruda. Additionally, fourth-year Latin combines classical studies, with pupils reading translated classical literature. This course also would be eliminated if the board later decides to take Latin out of the schools.

"To me it's been a good program to support," said Ruda.

"But we're a relatively small district and can't do everything for everybody."