

**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY**

**K-5 World Language Program Evaluation**

Fall 2004-Summer 2005

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## **History of the Program**

The first elementary world language curriculum was written in the summer of 1998. Initially, the proposed program design included a half-year of French and a half-year of Spanish instruction. The recommended time allotments for the 1998-1999 school year as per the curriculum guide included students in kindergarten, first, and second grades receiving twenty minutes of instruction twice a week. The students were to be instructed in one of the two world languages for the first half of the year and the second world language for the second half of the year. The proposal included a time line that kept the half-year cycle in the kindergarten and first grade in the following year, but changed the second grade to a full year in the target language and added the target language in grade three. The timeline suggested adding an additional grade level in the target language in each subsequent year.

The actual program was implemented in 1999 and was a modification of the original design. The first year of the program included instruction in first and second grades. It was a half-year of Spanish instruction and a half-year French instruction. There were two teachers at that time spending half of the school year at two of the elementary schools and the other half at the other two elementary schools. Students were instructed for twenty-five minutes, two times a week.

In 2001, the Supervisor of World Cultures conducted a study of the elementary program and surveyed parents regarding the program at that time. The survey results indicated that 85% of parents felt that world language study should begin in kindergarten or first grade. Parents also responded that if there was to be only one language taught, Spanish should be the language of instruction, with 41% choosing Spanish while 10% chose French. Interestingly, the survey results did indicate that the district should continue with a half-year of Spanish and a half-year of French with 53% of those surveyed responding affirmatively to that question. However, the Supervisor of World Cultures recommended that students must have a coherent sequence of instruction in one language to enable them to achieve standard 7.1 of the initial NJCCCS for World Languages, which is to be able to “communicate at a basic literacy in at least one language other than English.”

Research in second language acquisition supports the instruction of one language to minimize interference between language one and language two. Therefore, the recommendation at that time was to modify the original program design to a sequence of one language, Spanish, from grades one through five, once a week for fifty minutes.

The current program in place continues on this same time frame. Currently there are four world language teachers, one at each school at the elementary level, with two extra sections at Mount Prospect School taught by a middle school Spanish teacher. The Spanish program is one of the “specials” and is used as the classroom teacher’s preparation period. The program is a push in program and each of the elementary teachers works off a cart. Classes are scheduled every fifty-five minutes. Teachers have scheduled monthly meetings as an elementary world language department with the curriculum supervisor.

The following chart outlines the actual timeline of program design and implementation:

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Contact Time</b>	<b>Target Languages</b>
1999 - 2000	First & Second	25 minutes, twice per week	Spanish & French
2000 - 2001	First, Second & Third	25 minutes, twice per week	Spanish & French
2001 - 2002	First, Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth	25 minutes, twice per week	Spanish & French
2002 - 2003	First, Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth	50 minutes, once per week	Spanish & French
2003 - 2004	First, Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth	50 minutes, once per week	Spanish
2004 - 2005	First, Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth	50 minutes, once per week	Spanish

## **Curriculum Design**

As recommended by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, the program curriculum is designed around thematic units that correlate with the content area instruction. The curriculum document is intended to be a work in progress to allow for the Spanish program to evolve as the regular curriculum is revised.

The curriculum includes: a program philosophy, overview, National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages, themes studied in the content areas, objectives for the first year, second through fifth year learning objectives, a suggested unit for each grade level, objectives as related to the content standards, assessment tools, and resources. The curriculum covers the entire elementary program, first through fifth grade.

Each grade level has a sample unit plan designed according to Grant Wiggins's Backwards by Design. The units are based on a central theme that connects to each discipline. Each theme is outlined in a unit plan that includes language functions taught through the theme, instructional activities and assessments, culture, content connections, vocabulary structures, and teacher resource materials.

The remainder of the document focuses on specific world language standards and the sequence of instruction for each year of the elementary program including specific phrases, grammatical content, and cultural connections that will be included. As language is a skill that needs to be reinforced, the grammatical objectives are described as introduced or reinforced for each grade level.

As the philosophy of the program is to teach Spanish in an integrated approach, the curriculum document is intended to give the teachers the flexibility to adapt the Spanish curriculum to be relevant to the regular classroom instruction. The result is one sample thematic unit designed for each grade level. Although the document specifies which themes are taught in each grade in the regular class, it does not specify which of those

themes would lend themselves to Spanish instruction nor does it recommend which topics to be stressed.

The curriculum was written keeping in mind the NJCCCS standards as proposed in 1996 and the draft of the revised standards. Revised standards were adopted in 2004. The NJCCCS section further explains specific modifications to the 1996 standards, but the curriculum as written in 2003 does not take into account the most recent revisions and adoptions.

## **Teaching Strategies**

Teaching strategies in the world language classes at the elementary level stress the importance of providing the students with comprehensible input. Teachers provide an environment full of rich input for the students to acquire the target language. The following strategies are used as part of the program:

- Activities to appeal to multiple intelligences
- Natural Approach – Comprehensible input + 1 (building on the student's prior knowledge and adding just a bit more)
- TPR (Total Physical Response)
- Modification for individual learning styles
- Content based instruction
- Student centered activities
- Cooperative learning groups
- Cultural learning based on authentic literature
- Focus on higher order thinking skills

## **Current Assessment Practices**

Assessment and instructional activities are often one and the same. The following techniques are used to assess the students' proficiency in the target language:

- Rubrics
- Performance assessment – videos and skits
- Parental assessment/feedback
- Teacher observation
- Student response to commands
- Projects
- Quizzes
- Oral questioning and answering
- Peer Evaluation

## **Code Citations Relevant to State Elementary World Language Programs**

N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-1.1 (a) states that “The Core Curriculum Content Standards specify expectations in seven academic content areas: the visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, language arts literacy, mathematics, science, social studies and world languages.” The specific standards and requirements will be discussed in the following section.

N.J.A.C. 64:8 3.1 (a) 3 holds all districts accountable for “assessing and publicly reporting on the progress of all students in developing the knowledge and skills specified by the Core Curriculum Content Standards, including content areas not currently included in the statewide assessment program.”

As world languages is not currently one of the areas tested in statewide assessments, there is not a standardized measure for success in elementary world language programs. Assessments in our program are teacher created and specific to each school. They are not standardized by district. There is some correlation with the NJCCCS but as there is not standardization, the attainment of all objectives is not measured through a standardized process.

During the evaluation of the effectiveness of the half-French, half-Spanish model, a district wide assessment was administered to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction as well as the transfer of language skills from language one (L1) to language two (L2). The results of the district wide assessment indicated that regardless of the language taught there were gains in recognition of vocabulary items. The assessments also indicated that there was some degree of transfer of learning from L1 to L2. After 2001, a district wide assessment was not administered.

## **Core Curriculum Content Standards**

When the program was initially implemented in 1999, curriculum was written which focused on the 1996 NJCCCS. The state revised and adopted the new NJCCCS for World Languages in 2004 that had the same goals yet differed in specificity, standards, and cumulative progress indicators.

In both the initial and revised standards, the requirement for world language programs is for grades K-12. The initial standards in 1996 had benchmark goals at grades four, eight, and twelve. With the advent of the new standards, credence for early language instruction was reinforced in that a benchmark for second grade was added to the document.

The new standards are organized around the three modes of communication. They include interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication. Each benchmark is divided according to the three modes of communication. This division of skills by modes is designated for both communication and culture standards. The 2003 curriculum cites the emphasis on the three modes of communication yet activities are not arranged by which mode of communication is being utilized (see page 7, World Language Curriculum 2003).

In addition to the emphasis on the modes of communication, the new standards place greater importance on the connections to other content areas. For example, the standards for grade two indicate that students should be able to speak about grade level appropriate health, science, and mathematics topics. The document includes curriculum webs that connect each theme to relevant content connections. Suggested activities to reinforce the core content are also included.

The NJCCCS stress that many factors influence the acquisition of languages but state that the most important is time and intensity of instruction. It outlines the ability of elementary students to achieve a level of novice-mid on the ACTFL performance guidelines if given instruction in a coherent sequence for a minimum of three times a

week for a minimum of thirty minutes per class. With less than that amount, it states that students will have difficulty in the attainment of standards.

## Parental Opinion Surveys

During the course of the implementation of the Elementary World Language Program, parental input was gathered on two different occasions. The first was a survey developed in the initial year of implementation to determine the effectiveness of the program. Parents responded to numerous questions regarding their overall impressions of the World Language Program. The resulting data relevant to the current program was the following:

85% of parents surveyed agreed that instruction should begin in kindergarten or first grade

51% of respondents agreed that if the district offers only one language it should be Spanish

90% of parents felt that World Language learning may enhance learning in other academic areas

74% of students are experiencing success in learning a second language

79% of students are benefiting from the FLES program

56% felt that the district should continue with the exploratory program

As discussed, this survey data resulted in the current program in place. An interesting note to the survey was that although the survey data indicate that the parents felt that a two-language program was preferred, current research indicates greater benefits resulted from the continued study of only one language. The goal, as stated by the NJCCCS, that students should be able to “communicate in a language other than English” was further evidence that the study of one language was the more appropriate choice. Due to the majority of responses indicating that Spanish was preferred, Spanish is offered in grades one through five.

In 2003, parents were surveyed with regard to school climate. In that survey, 65.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school is doing a good

job in Foreign Languages.” In the teacher response section, the 82.1% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement.

### **Comparison Districts**

The committee looked at the seven comparison districts of similar socioeconomic status to compare their offerings in elementary world languages to Bernards Township’s program offerings. In addition to the seven comparison districts, members of the program evaluation committee also visited two additional districts, Westfield and Edison. The committee looked at time of instruction, location of instruction, languages offered and curriculum design. The numbers referenced in the chart below refer to the number of minutes per class and in parenthesis, the average number of minutes of instruction per week. The comparison districts are identified as follows:

B- Bernards Township

M-Millburn

P-Princeton

L-Livingston

H- Holmdel

C-Chatham

Hi- Hillsborough

Mo- Montgomery

W- Westfield

E- Edison



	B	M	P	L	H	C	Hi	Mo	W	E
K			15(60)							
1	50(50)		15(60)	60		40(17)		40(80)		25(75)
2	50(50)	20(40)	15(60)	60		40(33)		40(80)		25(75)
3	50(50)	20(40)	30(120)	40(80)	60(60)	40(33)	20(16.5)	40(80)	30(60)	25(75)
4	50(50)	30(60)	30(120)	40(80)	60(60)	40(66)	20(16.5)	40(80)	30(60)	25(75)
5	50(50)	30(60)	30(120)	40(80)	60(60)	40(100)	40	40(80)	30(60)	25(75)
Languages offered	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish, Italian	Spanish, French, German	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish

Of the nine districts researched, eight out of nine have more minutes of instruction in grades four and five. Seven out of nine see the world language class with greater frequency. Five out of the nine offer world language from grades one to five. Only one of the nine districts offers world language in kindergarten.

## Research

With the development of the New Jersey State Core Curriculum Content standards in the 1996, the importance of early foreign language education programs has come to the forefront. However, due to the vast differences in program design and implementation, it is difficult, if not impossible to evaluate the success of such programs with respect to language acquisition. This research explores FLES, or Foreign Language in Elementary Schools, models with respect to success of such programs, obstacles to the effective implementation, and how to learn from past mistakes regarding the failure of many FLES models.

The increase in awareness of the need for effective foreign language programs at the elementary level is not something new in the field of education. Experts caution that this renewed interest has occurred before with less than inspiring results. Pointing to the fifties and sixties, one saw a flourish of support in the fifties and the almost complete disappearance by the sixties. Heining-Boyton (1990) highlights research that explains the phenomenon of the FLES models' rapid rise and fall. She cites the lack of qualified teachers, unrealistic goals, incompatible pedagogy, lack of articulation, lack of parental support, and lack of evaluation as factors in the failure of programs at that time. Language professionals must look to the issues of the past to find future solutions.

The first, and perhaps most significant factor in the success of world language programs at the elementary level is the time of instruction. Curtain and Pesola (2000) note that many school administrators suggest that some exposure is better than nothing. They state, "Some programs operate on the assumption that a little bit of language instruction is better than no language instruction at all." Language experts have consistently stressed that contact time must be a minimum of 3 times per week with sessions of thirty minutes or more. Marcos (2001) also points to the relationship of time spent in instruction to the resulting language proficiency.

Met (1998) gives the two most important factors resulting in foreign language proficiency as time and intensity of instruction. However, she stresses that to address such issues,

cooperation between world language professionals and curriculum planners is essential. Restructuring the course schedule is required to fit the appropriate amount of time for effective world language programs. The State of Wisconsin also stresses the regular and frequent instruction of world language (Sandrock 2003).

Closely related to the time factor and prioritizing the scheduling of classes, effective FLES models are implemented in schools where the world language program has the same status as other subjects studied. Traditionally, world language programs have been regarded as enrichment programs. They have been electives in the curriculum and only the select few were able to take them. Curtain and Pesola (2000) point to the European model of language instruction, which results in student emerging from schools proficient in second and third languages. In these situations, languages are afforded the same status and time as other school subjects.

To increase the status of world language study, Gilzow and Branaman (2000), in their study of model programs, stressed advocacy as a key element to success. They looked at seven model elementary world language programs. In all cases there was a high degree of community support and positive attitudes towards world language study. Positive community support results in student development of attitudes compatible with world language study. Student attitudes have a great impact on the ability of student to learn a second language.

In development of world language programs, the planners must take into account the need for clear and articulated goals. Not only does this give the teachers direction in the planning of instruction but also will be useful in evaluating the success of the world language program. As programs develop their distinct goals, certain factors must be taken into account. Obviously, the need to comply with state and national standards for language learning is critical in the development of programs that increase students' language proficiency. One must also keep in mind the potential areas of concern that have been barriers to programs in the past. By setting attainable goals that address the

concerns of articulation, time spent, curriculum design and program evaluation, programs will have a better chance of success (Marcus 1997).

Program design has a large impact on the success of any program. As promoted by the New Jersey State Department of Education, content-enriched programs are preferred. These programs use content subjects as a vehicle for language acquisition. All of Gilzow and Branaman's model programs are based on content-enriched or content-based models. Content-based are world language programs that instruct subject material only in the target language, whereas, the content-enriched model reinforces content already taught in the regular classroom. The content is developed through themes taught in context thus increasing the relevance for the learner (Curtain and Pesola 2000). Additionally, the thematic curriculum increases the opportunities for higher order thinking skills and less rote memorization of language structures (Huang 2003).

In addition to content-based themes, one must not overlook the need for teaching of culture in the world language classroom at the elementary level. Cellini (1998) suggests that the teaching of culture must be as carefully planned for as the planning of the language structures and content to be taught. Implicit in the plan is the incorporation of developmentally appropriate cultural practices and authentic situations.

The cultural element of the curriculum must also be full of rich input and activities for students to use the target language. Included activities must not only teach the language structures needed for proficiency but also enrich the students' cultural and content knowledge. Therefore, teachers and curriculum designers must develop "carefully contrived activities, which bring into the classroom authentic language in its full functional range"(Swain 1988). Huang (2003) further suggests that good starting point would be a content topic that is socially and culturally relevant. For example, one might use the concept of describing, categorizing, and exploring the cultural aspects of different people. In the implementation of such curriculum, students are using language functions of description and generalizing while engaging in higher order thinking skills such as classification.

A further issue with regard to curriculum design is that planners must take into account the articulation of the program as students continue with language study. Often there is a disconnect between programs at the elementary and middle school levels. Many elementary programs focus on speaking and listening activities with little emphasis on writing or error correction. As a result, many students have a difficulty adjusting to the more rigorous expectations at higher levels (Gilzow and Branaman 2001). Conversely, other schools have failed to recognize that students entering from elementary programs are not at the pure novice level thus resulting in students who are unmotivated and discouraged (Curtain and Pesola 2000).

Another issue that elementary curriculum designers must take into account is the learner characteristics that influence learning process. Cellini (1998) discusses the teaching of cultural topics that are developmentally appropriate. For example, in an elementary program, students at age 5 or 6 may not be able to perform the task of role-play as they are at the “ego-centric undifferentiated stage of development.” As students progress in their knowledge, awareness and acceptance of other cultures, the tasks must change to reflect this. Teachers and curriculum designers must be cognizant of the developmental process to choose appropriate topics.

While the selection of developmentally appropriate topics is important, the tasks chosen must reflect the elementary language learner. A novice world language course should look very different depending on the age of the students involved. The young learner needs play and has a short attention span. Due to these constraints, activities in the FLES classroom must require that students actively use language in natural ways (Hasselgren 2000).

Successful programs also result from teacher support, which can lead to higher retention rates. Professional development is essential in the maintenance of world language programs. The design of elementary world language programs often has one world language teacher in a school, which does not allow for many opportunities in the day for collaboration. Many programs have lost their initial unity due to lack of teacher contact.

Many of the model schools have effective professional development programs that can include demonstration lessons, in-service workshops, and conferences (Gilzow and Branaman 2000).

Support also comes from the school environment. World language teachers must have schedules that do not create teacher burnout. Administrators must take care to plan schedules that allow teachers time to plan and effectively implement curriculum (Curtain and Pesola 2000). Support can also come from the classroom teacher through their presence during the world language lesson. This support can be in the form of learner, mentor, and support person during the Spanish lessons (Sandrock 2003).

As indicated, many factors can lead to the success or failure of FLES programs; however, administrators must implement evaluation practices to measure the effectiveness of these programs. These evaluative measures must look at the factors leading to the success of world language programs and evaluate how well the program implemented is meeting such criteria.

As effective programs must have well articulated goals, the evaluation tool must look at the degree to which the program has met its goals. An example of one such tool is the FPEI, a FLES program Evaluation Inventory. The questions refer to how well FLES programs have met the goals of program philosophy, training, time consumption, materials, and classroom atmosphere (Heining-Boyton 1990). New Jersey also publishes criteria for exemplary programs and suggests that all programs complete the self-evaluation to see how well they meet the Core Content Standards.

Kennedy, Nelson, Odell, and Autin (2000) outline another method for testing the effectiveness of FLES programs. In their study, they investigated attitudinal changes of elementary students studying a second language. The results indicated that the number of positive responses increased across all categories. Students in FLES programs had positive attitudes toward the study and future study of world languages. A further topic

that could result from this study is a longitudinal study about the long-term effects of FLES programs on student attitudes towards foreign language study.

Attitude surveys can give a picture of the participants' feelings about world language study, but feelings are only part of the whole program evaluation piece. Heining-Boyton (1990) points to the focus of many programs on student evaluation but lack of focus on program evaluation. The program evaluation model she proposes gives the curriculum planner the following information:

1. A better understanding of the program's positive and negative impact
2. Information to base decisions about growth and development while identifying areas of need
3. Input from all evaluating parties
4. The degree to which accountability has been maintained for program resources and expenditures
5. Data on how the expectations of the system have been met

Obviously, the evaluation will serve to provide feedback on areas of strength and weakness but an important factor is the need for accountability. Going back to the historical belief that world language programs are electives or extra to the curriculum, world language programs have continuously had to prove their worth and justify their existence. In the post No Child Left Behind world, very few programs will survive if they cannot justify their worth and success.

Donato, Antonek, and Tucker (1996) stresses an evaluation process coupled with a strong research base. Research and evaluation must include analysis of the situational factors implicit in any FLES program, attitudes, and perceptions of those involved, and the linguistic development of students in FLES programs. Historically, however, there have been impediments to the measurement of the language ability at the novice level in young learners as there are few valid and reliable instruments to measure the proficiency of students at this age and language level. In addition, it is also difficult to accurately measure the attitudes of young learners.

Donato, Antonek, and Tucker (1996) propose a comprehensive program evaluation that touches upon the aforementioned areas. They propose the use of questionnaires to gauge the ambiance and attitudes surrounding FLES programs. In their evaluation they supplied questionnaires to students, parents, other teachers, and the Japanese teacher. They also documented the students' achievement in the program through vocabulary tests, oral interviews, social use of the target language, and the teacher's assessment of language ability.

The assessment yielded interesting results for the development of future FLES programs. Specifically, the parent attitudinal surveys yielded that parents not only saw language study as important, but it was not marginalized in the survey as they had hypothesized. They also felt that they could not expect proficiency as a result, but did see cultural awareness as the most important goals. (Interestingly, going back to the program goals, this shows a lack of congruence between the program goals of students learning to use the language and parental expectations of cultural awareness.) Teacher surveys did follow the survey hypothesis in that they cited the problems of lack of time in an already overcrowded schedule, lack of curricular mandate, and the linguistic insularity of the United States.

An interesting aside to the discussion about the effective implementation of FLES programs in elementary schools is the issue of the best age to begin a FLES program. Donato, Antonek, and Tucker's study (1996) revealed student attitudes about language study were more positive at the lower elementary grades thus it might be a more effective time to begin language study. Earlier study results in more proficient students.

The implementation of effective world language programs at the elementary level has been the source of controversy and frustration. Compounded with the need for American students to be able to compete in the international economy, educators are faced with a difficult challenge of fixing the errors of the past to make the programs successful. With such little research and materials available for the scientific study and evaluation of programs, often the programs have not taken into account past errors and are destined to

repeat the cycle of failed elementary programs. Much of the recent research has given solutions to the cycle of failure evident in the work language programs of the past.

FLES programs must start with careful and articulated planning. The program goals must be attainable and practical. Curriculum planners must take care to prevent some of the pitfalls such as lack of articulation, overloading teachers, and inadequate time of time instruction. There also must be continual evaluation and reflection on the program plan and adjustments should be made as deemed necessary. Through this evaluation the program will be justified and/or changed.

The need for FLES programs is evident if only to raise awareness of other languages and cultures. Programs need strong leadership and commitment for their continued success. One must keep in mind the cycle of education. By promoting success in the early grades, life-long language learners are being created. Mandates and accountability have been a double-edged sword in the process. On the one hand, they have created a need and awareness of the FLES programs but have also held them to a standard where there has been little research and materials to show that they are accountable for the learning of students. Only through language professionals developing effective programs and reliable tools to evaluate their effectiveness will we see a permanent place for FLES programs in the education of our youth.

## Student Survey

The students who entered sixth grade in the fall of 2004 were the first students to have had world language instruction throughout their elementary school years. This first group of students was surveyed on their impressions of the world language program as a result of their world language study. This survey was conducted at the end of their sixth grade year after they had completed a year of study in the language of their choosing.

The combined results of responses from students studying all languages were:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Overall, did you feel prepared for 6 <sup>th</sup> grade world language study?			
a. In speaking	45.6%	39.3%	15.1%
b. In writing	27.7%	57.2%	15.1%
2. Did you enjoy Spanish class at the elementary school?	18.8%	70.8%	10.5%
3. Are you able to respond to oral instructions in Spanish?	35.4%	42.1%	22.5%
4. Is learning a new language easy for you?	53.9%	25.2%	20.9%
5. Can you use what you learned in elementary school Spanish or French in your current language class?	49.7%	40.0%	10.3%
6. Are you able to remember and use the vocabulary you learned?	42.5%	44.7%	12.9%
7. At the beginning of the year, could you use Spanish to talk about:			
a. yourself?	34.6%	55.7%	9.8%
b. family members?	29.3%	63.9%	6.9%
c. weather/seasons?	32.3%	58.1%	9.6%
d. clothing?	39.6%	53.4%	7.0%
7. If you could have chosen what language to study in the elementary school, would you have chosen Spanish?	32.0%	56.6%	11.4%
8. Would you have preferred to have had more Spanish classes during the week at the elementary school?	14.8%	77.6%	7.6%
9. Did you know enough about your options for world language study at William Annin before making your choice?	58.3%	32.1%	9.6%
10. Has learning another language helped you in any of your other classes?	38.4%	51.1%	10.5%
11. Did you feel successful in learning a second language			
a. in elementary?	22.7%	65.3%	12.1%
b. now?	76.9%	13.8%	9.3%
12. Was it beneficial to learn a second language in elementary school?	27.8%	56.0%	16.2%
13. Was the information in Spanish presented in an easy,	34.2%	39.9%	25.9%

	understandable way?			
14.	Were the topics you studied interesting and relevant?	22.4%	63.0%	14.5%

### **Analysis of Student Survey Results**

The overall impression of the program was that the students felt prepared for world language study in speaking with Spanish, Japanese and French students having percentages of 55.3%, 58.3%, and 69.7% respectively. Students of both Latin and Italian had higher percentages of negative response citing 47.4% and 55.9% responding “no” to the same question. For preparation in writing, 57.2 of all respondents felt ill prepared for writing in the world language classroom. Japanese students responded more strongly about their preparation in writing with 50% stating that they felt prepared for study in writing. Part of this discrepancy may be due to the focus on oral production in Japanese being necessary prior to the introduction of the writing system. This is similar to the focus of the elementary classes.

Students felt that learning a new language was easy for them with a 53.9% majority responding positively to that question. Yet only 22.7% of students felt successful in learning a language at the elementary school, which contrasted with 76.9% who felt successful at the middle school level. Other areas that would indicate a level of frustration with study at the elementary program would be the level of negativity towards whether or not it was beneficial to study a language in the elementary school and that students felt that it was not beneficial to have studied a world language in elementary school. A majority of 63% also responded that the topics studied were not considered interesting or relevant.

An additional concern is the student’s ability to transfer their learning. In all languages, the students felt that they could not use Spanish to talk about the areas mentioned such as themselves, family members, weather/season, and/or clothing. 44.7% of students responded that they were not able to remember and use the vocabulary learned. However, almost half of the students felt that they were able to “use what they learned in

elementary school Spanish or French in their current language classes.” This could be due to recall of other information and skills useful in the world language classroom.

## Middle School World Language Teacher Survey

The committee also reviewed regular and world language teachers in order to gauge their impressions of the world language program. Eight sixth grade world language teachers and the 24 grade level leaders at each elementary school were given surveys. Although the sample size was small, the committee was able to garner input from these stakeholders.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Overall, are the students prepared for 6 <sup>th</sup> grade world language study?			
a. In oral skills	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%
b. In written skills	14.3%	85.7%	0.0%
2. Are students able to respond to oral instructions?	87.5%	0.0%	12.5%
3. Do the students have a greater facility at acquiring language?	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%
4. Are the students able to generalize language rules?	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%
5. Are students able to recall learned concepts?	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%
6. At the beginning of the year, were students able to respond (in Spanish) to questions about:			
a. Personal identification or information	33.3%	16.7%	50.0%
b. Family members	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%
c. Weather/seasons	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%
d. Clothing	50.0%	16.7%	33.3%
7. Do you communicate with the teachers of the elementary program?	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%
8. Are you aware of the topics taught in the elementary world language program?	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%
9. As a result of the world language program, are the students more aware that the world is multilingual and multicultural?	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%
10. Does the language program present material in a sequential, relevant way?	37.5%	12.5%	50.0%
11. Are the students more prepared as a result of the FLES program compared to the students who participated in the cycle course?	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%
12. Is Spanish as the selected language of instruction at elementary level the appropriate choice?	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%
13. Is there sufficient time for Spanish instruction at the elementary level?	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%
14. Do the students have enough exposure to the options for	12.5%	75.0%	12.5%

world language study at William Annin?			
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**Analysis of Middle School WL Teacher Survey Results**

The teachers’ surveys agreed with the students’ opinions that they were prepared in speaking a second language but were not as well prepare in writing of the language. The students and teachers differed in their opinions regarding students’ readiness. 62.5% of the middle school world language teachers found that the students had a greater facility at acquiring language and 87.5% felt that students were able to follow oral instructions in the target language. 75% percent of teachers also found that students were able to recall learned concepts and generalize language rules. There was a less than favorable response regarding to the students ability to use Spanish regarding the vocabulary topics mentioned.

As far as articulation with the elementary program, 62.5% of middle school teachers responded that they did not communicate with the elementary teachers and only 50% of middle school teachers were aware of the topics taught in the elementary classes.

**Elementary Teacher Survey**

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Some
1. Are you aware of the topics presented during Spanish lessons?	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%
2. If yes, do those areas coincide with the grade level curriculum?	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%
3. Are there opportunities to collaborate with the Spanish teacher in grade level planning meetings?	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%
4. Are all students included in Spanish instruction?	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5. If yes, are appropriate modifications included in Spanish lessons for special needs students?	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%	0.0%
6. Do you feel the amount of time for Spanish instruction is sufficient?	41.7%	25.0%	33.3%	0.0%
7. Research in second language acquisition indicates that more frequent exposure to the language results in higher degrees of proficiency. Is the frequency of Spanish instruction sufficient?	25.0%	33.3%	41.7%	0.0%

8. Would you support Spanish instruction that pushes-in (while the teacher is present) for more frequent instruction for shorter periods of time?	41.7%	33.3%	25.0%	0.0%
9. Do you prefer the “special” model where Spanish is a teacher’s preparation time?	72.7%	9.1%	18.2%	0.0%
10. Do your students have positive attitudes towards the study of Spanish?	46.2%	38.5%	15.4%	0.0%
11. Do you feel that the current offering of Spanish grades 1-5 is sufficient?	50.0%	16.7%	33.3%	0.0%
12. Would you like to see the program extended to Kindergarten?	41.7%	0.0%	58.3%	0.0%
13. Is the Spanish program visible in the school outside of the weekly Spanish lessons?	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%

### **Analysis of Elementary Teacher Survey Results**

66.7 % of regular education teachers responded that they are aware of some of the topics taught in the world language class and 50% responded that some of the topics did correspond with the grade level curriculum. 66.7% stated that there is not an opportunity to collaborate with the world language specialist in their building.

All students are included in world language instruction, but the level of modifications the teachers are aware of is unknown by 66.7% of the regular education teachers.

Teachers in the regular classroom did prefer the special model while 41.7% would support a modified push in program for shorter but more frequent amounts of time. 41.7% of teachers would like to see the program extended to kindergarten. The survey was also sent to kindergarten teachers despite the absence of a world language program at that grade level.

## Commendations

The data collected agreed that the following areas were areas of strength for the Elementary World Language Program:

- Program offered in grades one through 5
- Strong parental involvement and feedback
- Worldwide connections at Mount Prospect with Kuna pen pals
- Methodology is consistent with NJCCCS and ACTFL recommendations
- A clear, concise, content-based world language curriculum is in place
- Teaching across the content areas
  - In first grade- food, animals
  - In second and third grade- using the fairytales theme (Examples: Three Little Pigs, Cinderella)
  - In fourth grade- native American cultures
  - In fifth grade-At Mount Prospect- art projects that reflect different Hispanic cultures
- All students are included in the world language program
- Middle school teachers indicated that the students had a high level of readiness for language study as a result of the elementary program.

## Recommendations

### Time and intensity

As research shows, the most important factors in learning a second language are time and frequency of instruction. The main concern for our students' success in acquiring a foreign language is their lack of time and frequency of instruction. A calculation of the actual contact time in the world language class yields that students only receive *thirty hours per year* of instruction at best (not accounting for assemblies, holidays, field trips, snow days, etc.). This is equivalent to a day and a quarter immersed in a foreign country. In this allotted time, one would have some exposure to a foreign language; however, the retention would be considerably low because there is insufficient reinforcement of the language. Since the main program goal is that students are able to use a foreign language meaningfully, an increase in the amount of weekly exposure from fifty minutes, once a week, to thirty minutes, three times a week, is recommended. This recommendation is supported by NJCCCS, which give this as a minimum amount of time to develop meaningful communication in the target language. The importance of including foreign language study in the elementary school is supported by research on the amount of instructional time required to develop functional proficiency in a foreign language (Carroll 1967) and by the widely held professional view that language competence can only be achieved by children who follow articulated, sustained sequences of foreign language instruction (Donato and Terry 1995).

The following table depicts the number of hours needed to attain certain levels of proficiency for the given languages. Our elementary level students do not have the opportunity to even meet the mere survival level skills due to a dearth of contact time and frequency of instruction.

Languages	240 Hours	480 Hours	720 Hours	1320 Hours
Danish, Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish	Survival Skills	Limited Working Proficiency	Working Proficiency	Professional Working Proficiency

This recommendation would be achieved over the course of three years. The time would be increased in grade one the first year, two and three the second year, and four and five the third year. The impact of this recommendation would result in the increase of staff from 4 world language teachers to 8 by the end of the third year. As the world language program is intended to be a content-enriched approach, the increase of minutes should come from the content area instruction (5 minutes per subject) and the world language teacher would detail how the Spanish instruction is enriching instruction in the specific content areas. This program change would result in computers returning to a specials period as is currently done in kindergarten.

#### Expand program to include kindergarten instruction

In keeping with teacher survey results, NJCCCS, and theories of early childhood second language acquisition, our recommendation would be to extend the world language program to kindergarten. Consistent with our recommendation for appropriate amount of time and sessions for language acquisition, the recommended program for kindergarten would be 3 classes a week of 20 minutes in duration. This would also be a push-in program with the classroom teacher present during instruction. Curriculum writing would occur in the summer of 2006 with program implementation in the fall of 2006.

#### Revise current curriculum

To address the needs as indicated in the curriculum section, the curriculum revision would focus on three main areas, adding more specific units at each grade level, adding explicit cultural links and linking activities to the modes of communication. Curriculum revision would continue to focus on a program that provides a content enriched approach and the links to specific areas of other content areas would be explicit. The curriculum development committee will include elementary Spanish teachers and elementary classroom teachers.

#### Assessment

We also propose to develop a district-wide oral and written assessment for elementary world language during the school year 2005-2006. We would use this instrument not only to assess individual students, but also to gauge the effectiveness of the Elementary

World Language Program. An oral assessment would have to be administered to a random sampling of students, as the time involved in testing everyone would be prohibitive. A written assessment in the form of journal entries could be used to evaluate students emerging progress. We would propose to have the students keep their journals throughout their elementary careers to have a record of their increasing written proficiency.

#### Increase Collaboration

For the success of an integrated approach between the world language program and regular instruction, increased communication between the world language teachers and the regular classroom teacher must increase. As the survey results indicated, teachers had some knowledge of the topics taught in Spanish class and some of those topics corresponded with the content area instruction. In order to increase this cooperation, world language teachers should attend grade level planning meetings to ensure alignment of content. Having the classroom teachers active in curriculum writing and present during instruction would also increase communication.

#### Articulation With the Middle School

As research shows, the failures of the many elementary programs in the past has been due in part to the lack of articulation between elementary and middle school programs. To address this concern, the world language supervisor should schedule meetings with both elementary and middle school teachers of Spanish at regular intervals during the year. Topics of such meeting should include but not be limited to curriculum concerns, student performance, and methodology.

## Timeline for Implementation of Recommendations

School Year	Objective	Meeting Time	Staff Members
2005-2006	Develop a district-wide formal elementary WL assessment	Monthly Curriculum meetings	Supervisor, elementary, and middle school teachers
	Articulate between elementary and middle school program	Scheduled meetings, 3 per year	Supervisor, elementary and middle school teachers
Summer 2006	Develop world language curriculum for kindergarten	5 days	Elementary Spanish teachers and kindergarten teachers
	Revise Elementary World Language Curriculum	5 days	Elementary Spanish and classroom teacher
2006-2007	Introduce Spanish in kindergarten	20 minutes, three times per week	Elementary Spanish teachers
	Introduce first grade increased contact time	30 minutes, three times per week	Elementary Spanish teachers
2007-2008	Introduce second and third grade increased contact time	30 minutes, three times per week	Elementary Spanish teachers
2008-2009	Introduce fourth and fifth grade increased contact time	30 minutes, three times per week	Elementary Spanish teachers

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