

FLESNEWS

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Fall 1989

What I Learned in Second Grade: A French Teacher's Experience

*Pat Westphal
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Central College, Pella, Iowa*

Actually, I started teaching in third grade in the French immersion program. But after a year I was sent back to second. My principal had a scheduling problem and asked me, three days before classes began, if I'd be willing to switch. That was one of my 3492 exercises in flexibility.

I tell everyone now that teaching in an immersion program was the hardest thing I've ever done, and that is no exaggeration.

I'd been teaching for over twenty years in high school and college when we moved to Maryland, so I knew something about pedagogy in general. And I thought my French was in pretty good shape. But I didn't know much about managing 27 antsy eight-year-olds. We learned a lot together.

What's an Immersion Program?

At Oak View Elementary, a public school in a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C., the ten-year-old French immersion program was being used as a magnet to attract majority children.

Kids usually entered the program in kindergarten and stayed for the six years of classes that the school offered. Their gym, music, art, and library work were in English, and they had an hour per day of instruction in English language arts, beginning in fourth grade. But aside from that, everything was in French.

In kindergarten, since most of the youngsters were anglophone, they started out speaking English in class, but their teacher spoke only French to them, encouraging them to use more and more French as the year progressed.

First-grade teachers aimed for (and usually got) exclusive use of French by the students by December.

When I got them in second grade, using English was anathema. They just didn't do it! They were allowed to whisper in my ear an English word for which they didn't know the French equivalent, but nobody would say anything out loud. Ever!

I'll never forget my first classroom visit. All those adorable little six- and seven-year-olds blathering away in apparently effortless, unaccented French. I was impressed.

Even after three years of teaching there, I never got over being impressed at the speed with which those kids' language-learning machines sopped up a second language.

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Conference Calendar

International, national, and regional conferences and workshops are previewed in this section of the newsletter. Please send information on conferences and workshops to the conferences editor.

1989 CONFERENCES

October 19-21: Southern Conference on Language Teaching. Little Rock, AR. Rosalie M. Cheatham, Department of Foreign Languages, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2801 S. University, Little Rock, AR 72204.

October 20-23: Advocates for Language Learning, Sixth Annual Conference. St. Paul, MN. Lyle Gerad, 11903 Hilloway, Minnetonka, MN 55343.

November 16-17: Second/Foreign Language Acquisition by Children, Fourth International Conference. Boston. Rosemarie A. Benya, East Central University, Ada, OK 74820-6899.

November 18-22: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Boston. ACTFL, 6 Executive Blvd., Upper Level, Yonkers, NY 10701.

December 27-30: Modern Language Association. Washington, DC. MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003-6981.

Conferences Editor: Jane G. Graveen

Notes from the Chair

This fall brings two important conferences for elementary school foreign language teachers. The Sixth Annual Advocates for Language Learning Conference will be held at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, October 20-23, 1989, with a focus on implementing and improving second language programs. The Second/Foreign Language Acquisition by Children Conference will take place November 16-17, 1989, in conjunction with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference in Boston at the Marriott Copley Hotel. Both conferences have exciting programs with sessions for FLES teachers, supervisors, principals, administrators, and parents. NNELL will be sponsoring networking sessions at both conferences for the purpose of sharing ideas, resources, strategies, and future plans. All are encouraged to attend—see the conference programs for exact time and location of meetings. If you are interested in being actively involved in NNELL but will not be able to attend these meetings, please get in touch with me.

The continuation of elementary foreign language programs into middle school and high school is a focus this year for NNELL networking sessions at state, regional, and national conferences. We thought you'd be interested in receiving the enclosed ERIC Digest addressing that topic, "Foreign Language Program Articulation: Building Bridges from Elementary to Secondary School."

And on a final note, please keep in mind that we'd love to hear from you! If you have any comments or suggestions for articles for *FLES NEWS* or other ideas for ways that NNELL could promote early language teaching, please drop us a line. We look forward to hearing from you.

Nancy C. Rhodes

FLES NEWS* is a newsletter for educators interested in providing quality foreign language instruction for children. The newsletter provides information on classroom activities, resources, various teaching methods, recent research, upcoming conferences, and information on how to publicize elementary foreign language programs. *FLES NEWS* provides a means of sharing information, ideas, and concerns among teachers, administrators, researchers, and others who are interested in the teaching of foreign languages to young children.

FLES NEWS is published three times a year (fall, winter, and spring) by the National Network for Early Language Learning: Marcia Rosenbusch, editor; Nancy Rhodes, network chair. Executive committee members are: Carolyn Andrade (Ohio), Diane Ging (Ohio), Mari Haas, corresponding secretary (New York), Nancy Hess (New York), Melanie Klutts, recording secretary (Texas), Gladys Lipton, treasurer (Maryland), and Kathleen Riordan (Massachusetts).

Contributing editors for the newsletter by topic are: *Classroom activities* Donna Grundstad, Iowa City Community School District, 509 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, IA 52240; *Conferences* Jane G. Graveen, Glastonbury Public Schools, Glastonbury, CT 06033; *Funding information and new legislation* Jamie B. Draper, Joint National Committee for Languages, 300 Eye Street NE, Suite 211, Washington, DC 20001; *Publicizing FLES* Carolyn Andrade, Cincinnati Public Schools, 230 E. 9th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202; *Research* E. Statzner,

Second Grade from Page 1

It wasn't perfect. The kids made all those errors you've heard a million times, like *Je suis faim* and *J'ai allé* plus a few that are probably new to you: *Qu'est-ce que ça c'est pour?* or *C'est mon!*, for example.

But their accents were very nice and they would chatter endlessly to one another and to me. Any misunderstandings were more likely due to the thought processes of that age group than to any language deficiency.

It was easiest to see their rapid progress when there was a *debutant*. Fall of second grade was the latest point for entering the program, and there would usually be one or two in each class. By the end of that school year there was no apparent difference between the beginners and those who had been in the program for three years. (Of course, I'm sure there were differences, probably mostly of vocabulary, but they weren't obvious.) In a matter of months they went from not speaking a word of French to being able to argue about whose turn it was to take out the soccer ball at recess. It was mind-boggling.

First Steps

My most immediate problems were those that face every elementary schoolteacher: record keeping, shuffling papers, keeping groups fruitfully occupied, dealing with a Hydra-like curriculum.

I felt I was being pulled in a thousand directions. Twenty-seven kids, each needing support, attention, shoes tied, band-aids, a pencil, etc. Meetings. Administrative tasks were overwhelming: lunch money, book club money, field trip money, attendance, permission slips, forms of all kinds to collect and fill out. And all that was before the day really began.

Fortunately there were new-teacher workshops (geared for those who taught in English, but helpful all the same). But what was most fruitful was observing and talking to veteran teachers.

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Longfellow Humanities Magnet School, 318 Moore St., St. Paul, MN 55104; *Resources* Myriam Chapman, Bank Street School for Children, 610 W. 112th St., New York, NY 10025 and Betsy Grob, 196 Bleeker St., c/o Little Red Schoolhouse, New York, NY 10012; *Teaching Methods* Carol Ann Pesola, College of Education, 125 Peik Hall, 159 Pillsbury Drive S.E., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Subscription rate is \$8/year. Please send your check to: Gladys Lipton, Treasurer, National Network for Early Language Learning, P. O. Box 4982, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

FLES NEWS wants to hear from its readers. Send letters to: Nancy Rhodes, *FLES NEWS*, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St. NW, Washington, DC 20037. Send contributions to be considered for publication to the appropriate contributing editors at the addresses listed above. Deadlines for information are: fall issue—May 1; winter issue—Nov. 1; spring issue—Feb. 1.

Readers are encouraged to make copies of this newsletter and share them with colleagues. Articles may be reprinted citing *FLES NEWS*, National Network for Early Language Learning, as the source.

*Foreign Language in the Elementary School

Notes from Washington

House Approves 1990 Spending for Foreign Language Education

By a vote of 365 to 58, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the 1990 appropriations for the Department of Education, including several programs related to language instruction.

Foreign language instruction received a \$9 million increase in Title VI of the Higher Education Act. Title VI has several provisions for teacher training and research that have yet to be funded, so the increase could provide funding for these much-needed programs.

In providing the additional money, the House Appropriations Committee noted, "the long-term economic and strategic needs of the United States require a major expansion in our national capacity to communicate in the critical languages of the world."

The committee, however, once again failed to fund the Foreign Language Assistance Act, which would provide matching funds for model elementary and secondary foreign language programs. The committee also eliminated funds for the Star Schools Program, which would have used telecommunications to teach math, science, and foreign languages.

The Senate is expected to consider education spending in early September.

Appropriations for Foreign Language Education (in million \$)

Program	1989	(H.R. 2990)	
		1990	
International Education and Foreign Languages	31.0	40.3	
Domestic	25.9	35.1	
Overseas	5.2	5.2	
Foreign Language Assistance	0.0	0.0	
Star Schools	14.4	0.0	

Funding Information and New Legislation Editor:
Jamie B. Draper

Second Grade from Page 2

My super-competent colleagues were unfailingly supportive, even when I whined. Unfortunately, we rarely had time to talk to one another. I waded through the piles of curriculum guides.

Learning What to Teach

At first I tried to use some of the approaches I had always used in high school: language drills, lists of adjectives, grammar exercises. After all I was a French teacher, and that's what French teachers do!

It was disastrous. The kids were bored stiff because I was talking over their heads. My feelings were hurt because I spent so much time preparing and they were so ungrateful.

It took me a while to realize that I wasn't there to teach French. I was there to teach reading and math and social studies and science and spelling and penmanship and citizenship and all that stuff. French was incidental. Instead of teaching the French words for concepts students had already mastered, which is what I had done for the most part in high school and college, it was my responsibility to teach the concepts themselves. Along the way the kids would learn the language. Learning the language was always secondary.

It sounds easy now, but the lesson came hard. And now that I have learned it with regard to an immersion program, I'm wondering if it's not true all the way along the line.

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Resources for Your Classroom

Grands livres (BIG BOOKS). Bibliothèque Arc-en-ciel, 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C3G5, Canada (tel. 1-800-268-3860).

This series of BIG BOOKS (and they really are big: 15" x 18") used in French immersion programs in Canada is among the most exciting materials published for elementary school French classes. Titles include *Ah, ces oiseaux*; *La petite poule rousse*; *Quel beau petit*; *Les trois Barbichu*; *Un, deux, trois*; *Voilà la Mère l'Oie!*; and many more. When you read a BIG BOOK to your class, your children are immersed in an enjoyable story that is written in a rich and meaningful manner. These beautifully illustrated books are just the right size to delight a whole class of children. The colorful, descriptive, and expressive language clearly presents the idea of the story. Further, the rhythmic and repetitious language patterns used in many stories invite the students to orally reproduce phrases and sentences in French. The class kit for each book contains one BIG BOOK, six smaller books for student use, a cassette tape, and a teacher's guide. Kit costs \$55.00. Items may be purchased separately: BIG BOOK: \$22.35, student book: \$4.75, cassette: \$7.97. (All prices are in Canadian dollars.)

Resources Editors: Myriam Chapman and
Betsy Grob

How do Principals View Foreign Languages?

William Baranick
Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools

In 1985, a study was undertaken in the state of Maryland to learn more about the attitudes of elementary school principals toward foreign language programs at the elementary school level. The primary areas of interest were 1) the attitudes of elementary school principals toward adding any of the various foreign language programs to the present curriculum; 2) the principals' attitudes toward foreign language programs depending on such school factors as a) the socioeconomic status of the community, b) the student achievement level, c) locale, and d) ethnic diversity; and 3) the principals' attitudes toward foreign language programs based on their own backgrounds and training in foreign languages.

Approximately three-fourths (76 percent) of the 577 elementary school principals from selected districts in Maryland were randomly chosen to receive a written questionnaire. The sample (N=435) represented 56 percent of the public elementary school principals within the state. The return rate for the questionnaire was 62 percent (N=268).

The findings showed that slightly more than half the elementary school principals had a positive attitude toward foreign language instruction, but implementing a foreign language program was not high on their list of priorities. When asked about implementing "new curricula" in an "ideal" situation, many principals rated a school computer literacy program as a higher priority.

While 54 percent of the respondents felt that the elementary school curriculum should contain a foreign language program, 46 percent responded negatively. The language recommended for study by the majority of principals (91 percent) was Spanish.

Of those principals opposed to having a foreign language program during the school day, 33 percent indicated they were "against" having a foreign language program, while 13 percent were "strongly against." The major reason given for their opposition was the lack of time during the school day. Some of the principals who opposed a foreign language program indicated, however, that they could be supportive under certain conditions. The most frequently offered stipulations were that foreign languages should be offered as an "enrichment" program (32 percent) and that a foreign language program should be for the gifted students (16 percent).

Of those principals favoring the study of foreign languages in the elementary school, nearly one-half felt that the study should begin very early in the students' school career—either in kindergarten (39 percent) or first grade (10 percent).

Ninety-three percent of the respondents indicated that foreign languages should be *required* at some level during the students' school career. More than one-third (36 percent) of the respondents felt that the requirement should start at the elementary school level. Over one-half of the respondents indicated that the students should complete a minimum of two years of foreign language study and that the program should be for all students (63 percent), not just for the more academically able.

More than half of the respondents were not aware of the interest of the superintendent (57 percent) or of the board of education (53 percent) in their districts toward foreign language programs in the elementary school. In addition, they indicated a high need for instructional materials as well as for new teachers in order to get a program started.

When asked to comment on their own background in foreign languages, 38 percent of the respondents indicated they had not traveled to non-English-speaking countries. However, 88 percent of the principals indicated they had received some foreign language instruction. When rating their ability to communicate in a foreign language, 81 percent indicated they had poor (56 percent) or no (25 percent) ability to speak a foreign language; 76 percent indicated they had poor (53 percent) or no (23 percent) ability to read a foreign language; and 91 percent indicated poor (51 percent) or no (40 percent) ability to write a foreign language.

When looking at the attitudes of principals as they related to "significant others," (i.e., parents, superintendent, teachers, board of education, and students) the data suggest that an increased interest by parents, students, and teachers generally parallels a more positive attitude by principals. The data relating the attitude of principals toward "specific needs" suggest that there was no significant relationship between the attitude of principals and the need for 1) textbooks, 2) principal training, 3) instructional materials, and 4) new teachers.

The data on other independent variables investigated seem to indicate that one variable with a significant relationship to principal attitude was the locale of the school (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural). None of the other variables investigated indicates a similar strength of relationship, although a few factors were nearly significant: the ability to read a foreign language, the achievement level of the students, whether or not the principal supervised a foreign language program, and the educational level of the family in which the principal was raised. The other variables for which there were no significant relationships were: the principal's estimate of the average family income in the school district, the amount of travel by the principal to other countries, the years of foreign language training of the principal, and the ability of the principal to write or speak a foreign language.

Conclusions

Based on these findings, it appears that a substantial number of elementary school principals have a relatively positive attitude toward foreign language education. It is equally clear, however, that supporting foreign language programs is not their foremost interest.

Regarding the group of principals who are against or even strongly against foreign language programs at the elementary level, it is evident that their major concern is the perceived lack of time for course offerings in foreign languages. This finding may imply that many elementary principals (46 percent in this study) regard foreign language instruction as a peripheral, relatively unimportant entity. Perhaps foreign language

ERIC Digest

Foreign Language Program Articulation: Building Bridges from Elementary to Secondary School

Prepared by Jo Anne Wilson

November 1988

Foreign languages are currently enjoying attention unparalleled since the heyday of the early 1960s. There is a renewed interest in and emphasis on elementary school programs that are generally referred to under the broad heading of Foreign Languages in the Elementary School, or FLES. The emphasis on FLES in the 60s did not lead to the anticipated proliferation of second language programs because of a lack of realistic program goals and adequate planning, inattention to sound curricula and appropriate instructional materials, and failure to place qualified teachers in FLES classrooms. It is crucial, therefore, that current attention focus on these elements which are so vital to successful FLES programs. Even with these elements carefully in place, articulation remains a critical factor in the development of a successful K-12 language program.

What Is Foreign Language Program Articulation?

For the educational practitioner, articulation is the process of providing a smooth and logical transition from an elementary to a secondary program and ensuring continuity from one FLES classroom to another. This kind of academic sequencing provides opportunities for those students with both the interest and ability to continue their elementary school language study at the secondary level. Articulation can be viewed from two perspectives: horizontal and vertical.

Horizontal articulation focuses on outcomes, teaching strategies, materials, and evaluation within a course level. If language instruction is offered in more than one elementary school in a district, such instruction should be based on a common curriculum. Teachers from different schools or classrooms must address the same objectives at each course level, while utilizing similar strategies and instructional materials.

Vertical articulation refers to the direction of the curriculum between levels of schools (Lange, 1982). Successful articulation from elementary to secondary programs requires continuous and open communication with teachers at all levels. Thus, secondary programs must provide courses that are appropriate to those students who began language study in elementary school. These students should not be placed with beginners in a middle or junior high school. Most current secondary foreign language programs are designed as entry level courses for students with no previous language study. Secondary schools may need to develop several program tracks to serve the needs of the elementary school language learner. Some districts have found it practical to offer the continuation of the elementary language in a specific secondary school within the district.

Secondary school administrators need to be informed about the types of elementary language programs in their district and to work with the language teachers to accommodate those experienced learners who want to continue language learning at the secondary level. Secondary school administrators also need to work closely with the elementary administrators and teachers to develop a program that will recognize the previous learning of the student and enable that learning to become a foundation for continued language development. The major responsibility for readjustment rests with the secondary schools, where curriculum, methods, and instructional materials must be revised. Such revision must accommodate language students who are drastically different from those who have historically begun language study at the secondary level. Those secondary teachers who have embraced a view of language learning as linear and grammatically based must begin to recognize the value of the communicative skills acquired by the elementary learner where emphasis has been primarily in the skills of listening and speaking. The growing emphasis on teaching language for communication at all levels, and the recognition of language learning as a cyclical process during which the learner acquires needed skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing simultaneously, acknowledge the value of what learners can *do with* the language as contrasted with what they *know about* the language.

Are There Specific Models For Foreign Language Articulation?

The Ferndale, Michigan FLES program had been in place for nine years when, in 1987, the district faced the question of what to do with the growing number of FLES students entering secondary school. The existing middle school language program was dropped, and the next entry point for beginning language instruction was designated as grade 9. Students from all eight elementary schools are now offered the option of continuing their second language study in either one of the district's two middle schools.

Grades K-6:	Sequential FLES
Grade 7:	Secondary Level 2
Grade 8:	Secondary Level 2 (continued)
Grades 9-12:	Levels 3-6

For further information, contact: Lynne Haire, Ferndale High School, 881 Pinecrest, Ferndale, MI 48220, Tel: 313-548-8600.

Flint, Michigan's French FLES is offered in three of the district's thirty elementary schools. These schools are designated magnet schools. Students who want to continue their study of French at the middle school level can attend a designated magnet middle school. Sixth grade students apply for admission with the prerequisite of at least three years of instruction in one of the three elementary programs and/or the recommendation of their teacher. Students who complete the two-year middle school sequence are then offered the option of entering a second year French class in any one of the district's comprehensive high schools.

Grades K-6:	Sequential FLES instruction
Grade 7:	Secondary Level 1
Grade 8:	Secondary Level 1 (continued)
Grades 9-12:	Levels 2-5

For further information, contact: Barbara Young, Cody Elementary Academy, 3201 Fenton Rd., Flint, MI 48507, Tel: 313-767-1565.

A number of programs are reviewed in the National Commission Report prepared by the American Association of Teachers of French (Lipton, Rhodes, and Curtain, 1985). Each model reviewed indicates specific articulation sequencing. The most successful examples of elementary to secondary articulation come from those districts where the language programs are based in magnet schools. In Cincinnati, Ohio, students enrolled in the partial immersion program attend a middle school bilingual academy in grades 6-8. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, students from the immersion elementary schools attend an immersion middle school.

How Can Foreign Language Articulation Be Planned?

Successful articulation between elementary and secondary schools occurs with ongoing communication and cooperation on the part of foreign language teachers at all levels (Pesola, 1988). The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines have considerable value as a starting point for the dialogue necessary to open and maintain communication. The proficiency levels defined in the guidelines do not refer to the number of years of study or instructional time. The categories describe levels of performance that the learner has attained regardless of time spent studying the language.

Well-articulated programs will become a reality when teachers and administrators at all levels realistically face the issues involved. No FLES program should be started without consideration of the options open to those students who want to continue at the secondary level. At the outset, both elementary and secondary staff need to be involved in any planning committee. Such planning should set realistic program goals and develop a sound curriculum. Administrators, teachers, and parents need to be informed of all stages in planning. Such information must be provided in a timely fashion by holding open discussion meetings to clarify the desired goals of the program and to seek input from all concerned. With program goals and curriculum in place, and with qualified teachers in the classroom, a well-articulated sequential program has the potential to produce language learners able to communicate effectively in a second language.

The goal of language learning should be communicative competence. Language proponents must also be honest about the length of time needed to acquire that competence. Real language acquisition occurs only after years of study and effort. A well-articulated K-12 program can have a lasting effect and can produce individuals who are culturally and linguistically prepared to live in the 21st century.

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For Further Reading

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Resources

Advocates for Language Learning
P.O. Box 4964
Culver City, CA 90231

FLES News
National Network for Early Language Learning
P.O. Box 4982
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Activities for Your Classroom

Teachers: Please submit a favorite classroom activity for publication in FLES NEWS by sending a description in the following format: title, objective, materials, and procedure. You may include any pictures or drawings as illustrations. Send with your name, address, and telephone number to Donna Grundstad, Classroom Activities Editor, Iowa City Community School District, 509 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, IA 52240.

Title: Flannel Board/Magnetic Board

Objective: To provide a flexible means of displaying visuals for storytelling, counting, and presenting foods, clothing, seasons, etc.

Materials: Cork bulletin board with wooden frame, sheet metal to fit one side of the board, spray paint for metal, small nails, magnetic strip, glue, materials for cutouts (tagboard, felt, etc.), colored tacks, and large plastic garbage bag.

Procedure: Cut the metal to the specified size (a plumbing and heating establishment will do this for you). Be sure to leave a bit of extra metal at the two opposite ends so that the metal may be slipped under the wooden frame. On the two long sides the metal should cover the cork board and be even with the wooden frame of the bulletin board. Spray paint one side of the metal sheet before attaching it to the board. Allow plenty of time for the paint to dry and add a second or third coat if necessary. Fasten the metal sheet to one side of the bulletin board by driving very small nails into the wooden frame. A magnetic strip may be purchased at an appliance store for use on the metal side of the board. Glue small pieces of the strip to the pictures or cutouts that are to be used on the metal board. Up to four layers of cutouts will stick to the board in one spot, thus giving a layered effect. Fold back the edges of the flannel to fit the other side of the cork board. Secure the flannel to the board. Colored tacks placed neatly around the perimeter are attractive. When transporting your board, protect it with a very large plastic garbage bag.

Contributor: Patricia Longwell-Wera
Mankato State University, Box 53
Mankato, MN 56001

Classroom Activities Editor: Donna Grundstad

Title: Concept Attainment Poster

Objective: The learners will demonstrate attainment of a cultural concept by generating related words and pictures.

Materials: The teacher will need a poster-size piece of oak tag (24" x 36"), colored markers, and glue. Each student will need a small piece of plain, white paper (4" x 5" or smaller), crayons or markers, and scissors.

Procedure: This activity should follow a lesson on a specific cultural concept, such as a particular geographic area (a country, region, or city) or a holiday. First, the teacher hangs a blank poster where all can see and writes the name of the concept in the middle of the poster. Students are asked to close their eyes and imagine they are in the geographic area or at the holiday celebration. They should imagine what they see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and do. Students are asked to explain in the foreign language what they imagined. The teacher writes their words or phrases on the poster using a variety of colors. The result will be a collage of words. This step should stop before their ideas are exhausted and before the poster is too full for the next step. Distribute the small pieces of paper, one per student. Each student will draw a simple picture to illustrate some aspect of the concept—something that has already been mentioned or anything else. The pictures should then be cut out and glued onto the collage. The completed poster can be left up in the classroom for reinforcement and for review during a subsequent lesson.

Contributor: Priscilla Jacobsen
Hoover Elementary School
2200 East Court Street
Iowa City, IA 52240

Classroom Activities Editor: Donna Grundstad

Principals from Page 4

educators should endeavor to launch a campaign directed at elementary school administrators in order to increase awareness regarding the value of foreign language instruction at the elementary level.

The awareness campaign should include some information addressing the number of years required to reach a reasonable level of proficiency in a foreign language. With 63 percent of the respondents favoring a one- or two-year language requirement, it is obvious that most elementary principals are either not aware of the length of time required to achieve a solid functional ability in a foreign language or simply not interested in providing students with the opportunity to become proficient in a foreign language. If, indeed, educators are serious about increasing the level of global awareness and foreign language proficiency of our students, changing the attitudes of our elementary school principals will become an important area of concern. (See *FLES NEWS*, 2 (2), p. 1, for a related article.)

Research Editor: E. Statzner

Letter from a Reader

Dear NNELL:

I just read the recent issues of *FLES NEWS*—a number of the articles contained good instructional ideas for teaching a foreign language to elementary-age children.

Here at Hong Kong International School we are in the fourth year of developing our Chinese studies (language and culture) program. We've been writing our own curriculum and developing some of our own materials, which has been a real challenge. Thanks to the efforts of our ten members in the Chinese studies unit, we offer Mandarin and Chinese culture for 20-30 minutes each day to 730 students in grades 1-5. We also have a strong after-school Cantonese program that includes 125 children and parents, some of whom are learning the local dialect and others who are spending additional time with reading and writing characters. I have just sent my membership to Dr. Lipton, the treasurer, but I wanted you to know how much I appreciate discovering the National Network for Early Language Learning.

If you know of any other schools that are developing programs to teach Chinese as a foreign language in the elementary school, please let me know. We'd like to exchange materials and ideas with them.

Sincerely yours,

James A. Handrich
Elementary School Principal
Hong Kong International School
6 & 23 South Bay Close
Repulse Bay, HONG KONG

Please respond directly to Mr. Handrich if you teach Chinese or are interested in exchanging curricula or materials with his school.—
ED.

Second Grade from Page 3

Aren't high school kids there to learn about another culture? Aren't they preoccupied with their social relationships and their complexions? They want to learn to talk, but many of them feel they have nothing to say. Isn't the foreign language basically secondary for them too? Shouldn't it be the vehicle for dealing with some other aspect of life rather than the goal itself?

I used to think it was unwise, if not unfair, to use a word my students hadn't learned. It never occurred to me that they could learn vast quantities of vocabulary by osmosis if I just gave them a chance.

Now, even in my beginning French classes, when I divide the class into teams or groups, I say something like: *Levez-vous si vous portez des chaussettes qui ne sont pas blanches.* (Stand up if you are wearing socks that are not white.) If nobody responds, I point out those who are wearing colored socks and motion for them to stand up. Other possibilities include numbers (phone numbers, birthdates, addresses), personal possessions (those of you who have a dog); food (everyone who ate pizza last week), directions (all who live east of school), etc.

Now, I try to talk all the time, even if it's just ranting and raving as I look for my lost materials. I accompany all my actions (and theirs!) with a monologue, pointing and gesturing to help them understand as much as they can. But I have come to the conclusion that it's better for them to hear language they don't understand completely than it is for them to hear nothing or English.

Learning How to Teach

I soon realized that little kids, even more than big kids, had to be doing something. Each one of them had to be personally involved. They could be manipulating something physically, solving a problem, whatever, but each one had to have something to be responsible for.

The bigger the group I was working with, the harder it was to get everyone involved physically. The following are some of the tricks I relied on.

1. Total Physical Response (TPR) activities. As they listened to a story the second time around, I'd have everyone act out certain words. (Before I started I'd ask them to find a space big enough to move without touching others. Clapping twice was the signal to end each movement.) During cooking activities everyone would go through the imaginary activities of pouring and stirring, etc.

2. Our science program had several multiple-choice quizzes based on pictures, since many of the children don't read very well yet. I made transparencies of these and the kids made a set of three flashcards (A, B, and C). I would ask a question based on the transparency sketches. For example, a series of pictures of a growing puppy, a growing plant, a pupa, a chrysalis, a butterfly—"Which shows stages of metamorphosis?" On my signal each child would hold up the card indicating his or her answer.

3. During class discussions a student who had a response ready put a fist with a raised thumb on a knee or desk. Somehow that was less disruptive and less intimidating to the others than a waving arm. I could wait longer before choosing someone to answer.

4. *Pense/Partenaire/Partage* (Think/Pair/Share). From the thinking skills movement was also useful. I would point to my head and watch the clock after asking a question. After 30 seconds of reflection, kids told a partner what they had been thinking. I would then ask individuals to tell the class what their partners had said.

Choosing What to Teach

There was a huge ring binder full of objectives and techniques and suggestions for materials for each of the content areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking, social studies, math, science. Unfortunately they were based on the wealth of materials available in English, and had to be adapted or redone to conform to the materials we had available in French.

Finally I isolated the major points in each of the guides and tried to integrate them as much as possible. For example, we made a slide show of the neighborhoods near our school. I took the slides. The kids then wrote captions for each one to describe residential, commercial, and industrial areas. That took care of a social studies objective as well as several language arts areas.

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To meet the science objective concerning metamorphosis we raised and studied mealworms (science), wrote about them in our journals (language arts), imitated the way they walked (P.E.), and drew charts and wrote and solved story problems (math).

This constant battle to get everything into the school day is one of the main arguments for a content-based curriculum for FLES. A large body of research on Canadian immersion programs shows that their students eventually score as well as or better than students who study in native language programs. In effect, the immersion experience is like getting something for nothing. Students lose nothing academically and gain a second language. FLES programs could produce similar results—adding something without taking away anything—if they could be built around the existing curriculum.

Finding Ways to Teach

Instead of teaching colors separately, we can combine them with shapes (circle, square, triangle) and practice the math objective of continuing repeating patterns.

For example: Day 1: *Découpe trois triangles-rouges, un grand, un petit, et un moyen* (Cut three red triangles, a big, a little, and a medium-size one). *Montre-moi/touche/donne-moi/regarde/mange le grand* (Show me/touch/give me/look at/eat the big one, etc.). Day 4: *Découpe trois carrés verts* (Cut three green squares). *Fais un ensemble de petites formes, de formes vertes, de triangles* (Make a group of small shapes, of green forms, of triangles). *Combien en as-tu dans chaque ensemble* (How many do you have in each group)? Day 6: *Découpe trois ronds jaunes* (Cut three yellow circles). *Montre-moi une serie avec un petit triangle, un grand rond, et un carré moyen* (Show me a series with a small triangle, a big circle, and a medium-size square). *De quelle couleur es ton triangle* (What color is your triangle)?

Include a loop or two of yarn and we can work on set theory. *Fais un ensemble de tous les carré, toutes les formes vertes, etc.* (Make a group of all of the squares, of all of the green shapes, etc.). To make a game, write on the board the name of the person who finishes third, or sixth, or whatever, for each round of commands and give it a big star.

Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Pesola did a super presentation at the Central States conference last spring based on social studies. They had large maps of each of the continents posted on the walls and used them to teach the names of the continents, then the names and locations of various countries using TPR reponses. They had found postcards of the flags of various countries at the UN (but kids could also make flags as a homework assignment). They used their cards with the maps to practice colors as well as countries' names and locations.

Kids study *Peter and the Wolf* in music classes. It's available on cassette in French and could be exploited in lots of ways. Kids could make construction paper costumes (wings for the bird, ears for the wolf, a beak for the duck, etc.). After everyone had donned a costume, the class could guess identities. As the tape was played individuals could stand and give a characteristic action when they heard their themes. This could be an occasion for learning the names of animals, the parts of their bodies, names of their homes, verbs to describe the way each moves, or adjectives to describe their personalities.

We Need Help

In the immersion program I often found I had to turn to the French/English dictionary. I had never before had a reason to learn how to say "plunger" or "mealworm." But I found that referring to a French text on a topic, say "bees," was a lot more efficient than using a dictionary to check the gender of "hive" and "wax" or to find the words to describe the roles of all the members of the hive.

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In order for us teachers to learn the vocabulary and authentic language we need to integrate FLES, it would be helpful to build a library of teachers' materials published in foreign languages for each of the content areas. For instance, Canadian publishers produce teachers' editions of their French classroom materials. Scholastic has a French paperback book club that occasionally offers things for teachers. Such a library might be gathered through the local school district or the state consultant's office.

Math and science seem to be especially rich areas for us, since they aren't so dependent on large chunks of language as social studies or reading. But, given our literary backgrounds, they're also the areas in which we're most likely to need support.

Immersion teachers often feel as though they are constantly reinventing the wheel because programs are scattered throughout the U.S. and it is difficult to share what they are producing. One thing that might be helpful would be to isolate concepts and content in the general elementary curriculum that would be particularly fruitful for exploitation in FLES classes.

Elementary school teachers are a special breed, and one to which our society owes a tremendous debt. Few people are as patient, hardworking, and selfless. My three years at Oak View were, indeed, the hardest I've ever been through, but they were also the most rewarding. We learned a lot.

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