Less Commonly Taught Languages

A look at schools and teachers who are breaking the mold
Despite being less common, LCTLs do exist in K-8 schools

Letter from the Editor

With its focus on less commonly taught languages for this issue and on heritage languages in last spring’s issue, the journal has centered on two areas that have traditionally received less attention and has showcased languages not often found in pre-K through 8 programs.

Usually written as Less Commonly Taught and often considered to be languages of critical need, I found that as I searched around the country for these language programs that they are, as labeled, very infrequently taught at the younger levels. Making the decision to expand the search to languages less commonly taught at the pre-K through 8 level opened up the opportunity to include some languages such as ASL and Italian that are unusual at this level though often more common at the high school and post-secondary level.

There are several characteristics that many of the programs described in this issue share:

• Outside funding – FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) grants, STARTALK and FLAGSHIP have enabled schools to initiate and continue many programs around the country. We have included an article that both explains these federal programs and describes how to apply for these grants.

• Advocacy – The authors write of its vital importance to the maintenance of their programs even to those that are well established. You will find many strategies that have met with success in several articles.

• Sustained professional development – This is a common thread critical to building a standards based program. Indeed, many of the authors refer to beloved Languages and Children: Making the Match as foundational in designing their programs and offering support in many areas.

Taking to heart John Webb’s comment in his introduction to our spring issue on heritage language, “I could not help but note the extent to which programs for heritage language learners seem to require an alternative school setting, such as the traditional Saturday or weekend schools, in order to survive,” I made an effort to identify and seek articles from public and private schools that offer less commonly taught languages either as a second language program or in some version of an immersion setting.

While optimally I would have liked representatives from even more languages and more states, I am delighted with the range of thoughtfully presented articles that we have.

Editing this issue of the journal has certainly broadened my knowledge of and appreciation for the programs and schools that are included in these pages and I have relished this opportunity to learn more about them through both written communication and lively phone conversations with the authors.

I hope that you will enjoy this fall issue of Learning Languages.
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Delaware boasts one of the very few Greek-language-focused public schools in the nation.

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This program has grown from a small Chinese program in someone’s basement to a full five-day school.

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Programs are available at the national level to help with strengthening and growing new programs geared toward teaching “critical” foreign languages.

CONTRIBUTORS
Welcome to the fall edition of Learning Languages. This academic school year is well on its way, and I am certain that the children studying foreign language feel confident in their ability to communicate with peers and adults around them. This communicative approach to language learning gives students the necessary language skills to compete in today’s global workforce.

The essence of human interaction is language and communication. The world that our students will encounter as adults will be vastly different from the one we know today. The rapid development of telecommunications will make the ability to communicate in more than one language a necessity for all future employees. Therefore, it is important to prepare our students for this multilingual environment by ensuring that they are able to function using a foreign language.

During the learning process, students derive the benefits of developing insight into their own language and culture as they learn to communicate. With the focus on early language learning, students will be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and proficiency necessary to use the language in job, career and higher education opportunities.

During this time of economic downturn, it is crucial to educate the decision-makers on the urgency of learning a second language. We all know that in order to develop higher levels of proficiency in a second language, it is essential to begin the study of foreign language as early as possible. It is worth noting that merely giving students an early start is not enough. Educators must develop a well-articulated K-12 curriculum in order to provide students with a sequence of language instruction.

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the United States is the only industrialized nation that routinely graduates students speaking only their native language. U.S. companies lose an estimated $2 billion a year because of employee’s inadequate foreign language skills and poor cultural competence, according to the Committee for Economic Development in Washington D.C. With so much at stake, school districts cannot sit back and cut language programs believing they are a “want” and not a “need” when addressing today’s budget woes.

All languages are critical when program reductions are being discussed. Less commonly taught languages are often at the forefront because of smaller enrollments, fewer teachers to advocate for their programs, and inadequate information to the public on why the languages are so important.

This issue of Learning Languages focuses on the less commonly taught languages. These languages are often underrepresented when it comes to resources and networking with colleagues in the field is even more vital. This issue provides an array of articles regarding the teaching these critical languages. Teachers of all languages will be able to use the ideas and suggestions of colleagues around the country and apply them in their classrooms.

When observing great things teachers are doing, I often wonder if they think about inviting people in to witness student progress in language learning. All teachers can advocate for language learning by inviting decision-makers, journalists, and community members into classrooms to observe what marvelous things our students are able to do at such a young age. By posting cultural events in the school’s newspaper, on the school’s website and even in local papers, the public will soon realize language learning today is very different from the days of translation and regurgitation.

I am confident that you will find a wealth of information that will help in the quest to increase language performance and build the rigor that in turn keeps students challenged and engaged in every activity. Capture the student engagement, the excitement, and the language learning that take place in each and every classroom. Share this with your community and educate Americans on the value of learning foreign language early in order to develop proficiency.

We always hear people say: “I studied foreign language in school and I can’t remember a single word.” Wouldn’t it be nice to hear people say that they studied foreign language in school and that they would not have been hired for their job had it not been for their ability to speak a language or two in addition to English? I believe that day will come.

Thanks for all you do!

As coordinator of world languages for Fairfax County Public Schools, the 12th largest school system in the United States, PAULA PATRICK oversees K-12 foreign language programs in 11 languages which include two-way immersion kindergarten programs, an extensive elementary partial-immersion program in four languages at 13 sites, Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs at 32 sites in seven languages, and 50 middle and high school programs that offer over 100 course offerings, including AP and IB courses. Ms. Patrick was instrumental in guiding the FCPS School Board to adopt a strategic goal of having all of its students graduate with proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English in order to ensure that they have an advantage in today’s society.

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PRESIDENT’S NOTES
Dearborn Forms Elementary Arabic Language Program Collaboration

BACKGROUND

The Dearborn Public Schools, with 18,300 students, is located in the Detroit urban area with the largest concentration of Arabic-speaking people in the United States. In order to prepare our students for the 21st century skills and global awareness and in response to parents’ requests, the author in collaboration with the school principal and dedicated teachers established the first English-Arabic dual language program (50:50) at Iris Becker Elementary (K-5) in 1994.

Called Young Americans Learning Languages Actively (YALLA – meaning “Let’s accelerate” in Arabic) and partially supported by a Title VII federal grant, the program lasted for over eight years led by the author and a team of resource teachers, Nada Fouani and Intissar Harajli. However, due to the political climate, budget cuts, and demographic changes, where fewer students came to school speaking Arabic, the dual language program evolved into a foreign language in the elementary schools program (FLES) with the leadership of the school principal, Nada Fouani. Benefiting from the implementation of YALLA and from the Dearborn Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), the students’ academic achievement in both Arabic and English languages as well as in content areas increased significantly and Iris Becker became a high performing school.

Acting on their belief in the brain research regarding early second language learning and the positive effect that continuing sequenced instruction has on students’ motivation to learn foreign languages throughout schooling, the author and principals sought and received a three year Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant in 2006 for two schools. The grant supports and supplements local resources in Arabic language learning at two schools Iris Becker (K-5) and Salina Intermediate (Grades 4-8).

In 2008, due to the success of the Arabic program, and urged by parents and two other principals, the author wrote a FLAP IHE (Institution of Higher Education) grant to support the expansion of the FLES program to include both Miller and William Ford Elementary Schools and further incorporate collaboration with institutions of higher education and local organizations. Our Arabic program provides an early language learning opportunity for over one thousand participating students who have no skills in standard modern Arabic heritage language and whose Arabic language is limited to receptive/aural skills in the Arabic dialect of their heritage culture, mainly Lebanese, Yemeni, and Iraqi.

The FLES program that begins in Kindergarten is aligned with the National Standards for Teaching Foreign Languages and integrates the 5Cs. New older students are placed age appropriately and receive extended day and summer program services to catch up with the expected proficiency guidelines, content and language standards.

PROGRAM GOALS

The elementary program aspires to develop students’ language proficiency in standard modern Arabic in the three modes of communication starting at the novice level, progressing to intermediate high during the middle school years and to advanced proficiency by graduation from high school.

To achieve this goal, the program director and teachers developed an articulated Arabic curriculum for K-8 (Hamka and Tabrizi, 2009) comprising content-based science, language arts and social studies- thematic units (Fayz, Tabrizi and Hamka, 2009) that adhere to the Understanding by Design model. Formative assessments utilizing lap boards, 2 minute quick write, picture cards, Thinking Maps, number wheels etc. occur on an ongoing basis to ensure students are mastering the language and content expectations.

The author and two teachers developed a summative assessment (ALFATI) that is aligned to ACTFL proficiency guidelines, and use it to assess listening, speaking and
reading. Additionally, students write to a prompt formally at least twice a year to monitor progress in the writing process.

The program's administrative and instructional team has established a strong partnership with the Arab American National Museum (AANM) to instill understanding of the Arab heritage and cultures represented in the different Arab countries as well as the contributions the Arabs have made in the fields of science, math, medicine and astronomy. Students visit other local museums, art and cultural exhibits to become acquainted with other heritages and cultures, and develop tolerance, acceptance of others and a global perspective. The AANM staff visits the schools to engage students in arts and crafts from the Arab culture and heritage including the use of calligraphy and incorporating geometric designs in beading and drawings. Arab songs, folktales of Sinbad, John, and others (see resources) are an integral part of teaching narrative story telling and retelling as well as writing. Students undertake research assignments and content-based projects, and use Thinking Maps to compare and contrast cultures.

Their projects highlight their knowledge and understanding of the Arabic language and its constituent cultures (Lebanese, Yemeni, Iraqi, etc.); and their explorations of the Arab world are expressed through literature, videos, software applications, mini-museums and oral presentations.

Teachers integrate technology as they email and broadcast from one building to another. Student-to-student multimedia communications demonstrate knowledge and promote understanding of the different cultures and heritages. To reinforce language and content learning students create podcasts of their role-plays and language projects and then post their work on the schools' websites. These postings enable parents, a vital component of the learning community, to keep abreast of their children's progress.

**PROGRAM DESIGN**

The program incorporates best practices and instructional elements that current research has identified and validated and its instructional goals and objectives align with the K-12 Michigan Curriculum Framework as well as the K-16 National Standards for Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language. Evident throughout all aspects of the program are that there are high expectations of all students and an understanding that instruction must be focused on student needs and documented with evidence that can be shared.

Following the FLES model the instructional design makes close connections with the general elementary school curriculum and provides 40 minutes of direct content-based foreign language instruction three times a week. Over 99.8 percent of students choose to participate in the program although they may opt out and participate in an alternative program. Certified and highly qualified teachers who are proficient in both Arabic and English play primary roles in instruction, while classroom teachers collaborate and support the integration of foreign language across content area instruction. This approach reinforces the goals of the general curriculum, provides additional practice with significant concepts, and gives language learners a second chance at understanding Arabic as well as material from other curricular areas.

The instruction is thematic and the selected topics or contexts are aligned to the content taught in language arts, science and social studies. Teachers, using

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify plant environments and requirements for survival</td>
<td>What are the parts of a plant? What is their function?</td>
<td>I identify the different parts of a plant.</td>
<td>Construct meaning by connecting students' prior knowledge to information in the text.</td>
<td>Assess students' ability to differentiate plants from other living things.</td>
<td>Pictures, charts, real samples of plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that plants are a benefit to people and our planet</td>
<td>What are the basic needs of a plant? What can we do to help in the conservation of plant life?</td>
<td>Identify what plants need to grow Describe the life cycle of a familiar plant Learn about conservation</td>
<td>Generate questions before, during, and after reading to enhance understanding of text. Use retelling to identify and remember important ideas or sequences of events</td>
<td>Label parts of a plant Complete a 2-minute quick write about benefits of plants Use a double bubble Thinking Map to compare and contrast plants and animals</td>
<td>Growing plants in pots Leveled books Songs and poems Website links Thinking Maps Inc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SAMPLE PLANT UNIT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Additional information
- Table explanation and structure

**Fall 2009**
the language experience approach, select learning activities that are based on students' background knowledge and interests and engage students in drama, role-playing, games, songs, children's literature, folk and fairy tales, storytelling, and puppetry. The language environment includes extensive receptive and expressive language opportunities. Teachers motivate students to learn Arabic through modeling, guided instruction, cooperative learning, and formative assessments (Johnson, 1993; Tomlinson, C & McTighe, J, 2006).

The thematic teaching approach, coupled with these meaningful activities, contributes to acquiring Arabic and content naturally. At the lower grades the units include themes such as family, colors, numbers, water, seasons, food, greetings, plants, weather. At the upper grades themes include earth (solid and fluid), cells, ecosystems, physical earth, and energy. Social studies units for history, geography, and economics are being developed for all K-5 grades. The units adhere to the Understanding by Design model (Wiggins, 2002) and Curriculum Mapping (Hayes, 2006). Each unit includes eight parts, most of which are included in the sample 'Plant' unit below with some examples:

The units provide specific action steps teachers need to apply to help students master the identified language and content expectations. They also include formative assessments that assist in monitoring students' progress, leading and guiding instruction. The staff applies the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O'Malley, 98) and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) that effectively address the teaching of both language and content (Echeverria, et al. 2004) and have yielded positive second language learning results. These approaches solidify collaboration and team-building. Students learn in small groups using a balanced literacy approach with specific focus on oral language development as a prerequisite to literacy.

Students read both narrative and informational texts using leveled books to foster buddy reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Struggling students receive extended day and summer school support to narrow and close the achievement gap in language and content acquisition. Additionally, special needs students receive accommodations and benefit from curricular adaptations. Advanced students receive enrichment programming such as opportunities to create podcasts to share with all students.

Program staff develops, adapts, and purchases instructional trade books and materials with appropriate readability level to differentiate instruction and accelerate reading fluency and comprehension. Students are engaged in language learning by using visual/auditory aids, Arabic software, smart boards and books that support the themes across the grades.

Teachers acquire and modify/adapt leveled books to support students who are at different levels of reading fluency and comprehension. Learning is project-based with hands-on, minds-on projects to support students' active learning and application to real life situations.

Each year, the instructional team uses two common Arabic writing prompts that relate students' thematic learning experiences. Students write from knowledge and experience using the writing process including editing, revising and publishing. To help students develop meta-cognition and extend their language and content knowledge into writing, teachers guide them to use Thinking Maps (Hylerle, 2004). They also coach students in a developmentally appropriate manner to self-assess and, eventually as they move through the grades, critique each others' written work providing specific feedback for further development and improvement of their writing.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The program ensures ongoing, job-embedded professional development for teachers as well as collaboration between the Arabic language teachers and the general education teachers to ensure the necessary support for successful implementation. This peer collaboration enables teachers to align content and language instruction. The schedule offers Arabic teachers time to conduct collegial visits to each other and meet weekly for two hours to plan and prepare lessons and instructional materials and to review assessments. A district SIOP coach facilitates demonstration lessons in order to support and sustain teachers' knowledge and application of this approach. Reflection time follows these model lessons enabling the staff to determine areas for improvement and next steps (Knight, 2007).

To further benefit the program and teachers Shereen Tabrizi, the program director, established a collaborative agreement with Wayne State University that enables foreign language teachers to seek an Arabic language endorsement in addition to their certification. Courses are offered in the district allowing for better alignment and application of course content to local teacher needs and program design and characteristics.

**PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

School personnel emphasize parental participation and involvement in their children’s language acquisition process and in other school activities. The schools have, for example, established a lending library for parents which includes Arabic books, audio books, tapes, CDs and software. The libraries are always seeking donations from the community to grow their collections. Principals survey parents to ascertain their experience in instructing Arabic or any other content area, and their availability and interest to volunteer in the classrooms, at the library, and during parent education meetings. As a result, one will often see volunteers helping to assemble instructional materials, reading aloud to students or seeking artifacts depicting the diverse Arab cultures to assist students in completing their projects.
LESSONS LEARNED

Our elementary program has been successful in developing and accelerating students' proficiency in Arabic, and in achieving its goals as evidenced by our annual evaluation of students' assessment results. We attribute our success to many factors starting with the vision, mission and guiding principles of our program along with strong collaboration among all stakeholders, modifications based on continuous feedback and reflection during implementation. Additional contributing factors include that our plan has specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time framed (SMART) goals and the vital necessity support from parents, administrators, and several local community organizations. Teachers are advanced proficient or superior proficient in Arabic and apply best practices on a daily basis, such as teaching nearly 100% of the time in Arabic. To accomplish this, the instructional team engages in peer-collaboration and monthly collegial planning of curriculum instruction, to reflect upon and adjust practices as knowledge of theory increases (DeFour, 2004). The lesson design is content-based and reinforces what students are learning across content areas with their classroom teachers while learning Arabic. We are infusing technology that utilizes multi-media, which is a motivating factor for student learning, allowing for differentiation and reinforcement of new skills, and for further practice at home. Additionally, students have extended day learning opportunities that focus on specific skills to provide added practice and mastery. Our students will move on to a well established program at both the middle and high school levels which will be gradually aligned with the elementary curriculum as students progress throughout the grades. The Project Director and the principals have the necessary experience and leadership in the field to monitor the program and move it to full and successful implementation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Research supports early language learning and delineates its cognitive as well as social/emotional benefits; however, despite strong evidence, not all school systems embrace teaching a foreign language, especially at the elementary level. As educators, we have an important role as advocates to enlighten the parents and the community at large about the benefits of learning a second language at an early age and to provide them with avenues and suggestions for seeking and implementing such learning experiences for their children. Here in Dearborn we have pursued innovative means to design, establish and nurture an elementary and middle school component of an articulated program in Arabic that offers a rich cultural and linguistic experience for our children.

REFERENCES


Are you planning to **START** or **EXPAND** a K-8 critical language program? Looking for **SUPPORT** in doing so? There **may** be help at the **FEDERAL LEVEL** for great ideas and **STRONG PROGRAMS**.

While there have been various pools of federal dollars available to support world language programs for a number of years, the federal government's interest in assuring strong K-16 language programs in the United States has strengthened in recent years. Many government agencies have begun to realize that having Americans who speak languages other than English is critical to the economic competitiveness and security of the nation.

In 2006, President Bush announced the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), an inter-agency effort coordinated by the White House involving the Departments of Defense, State, and Education “to dramatically increase the number of Americans learning, speaking, and teaching critical need foreign languages.” Critical languages supported by NSLI are currently defined as Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Persian, Turkish, Swahili, and Urdu. (Japanese is included in the state department and education lists, but not those of the Department of Defense, so Japanese is eligible for funding as a critical language for FLAP but not for STARTALK.)

Increased and in some cases newly focused federal money to support early programs in critical languages generally comes from two sources: STARTALK (from Start Talking) and the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP). In addition, collaborations with Flagship institutions offer opportunities for developing K-16 pathways to high levels of proficiency. The site given below offers further information on the National Security Language Initiative. Programs under the NSLI umbrella include STARTALK, the Title VI/Fulbright Hays programs of the US Department of Education, the National Security Education program of the National Defense University, and study abroad and exchange programs of the US Department of State.

STARTALK 2009 students ordering lunch.

**STARTALK**: NSLI initiatives include the establishment of the STARTALK program, which was designed and is operated by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland. STARTALK funds summer programs for K-16 students and teachers in critical languages. Grants go to schools, districts, and universities who offer high quality summer programs in critical languages. Every effort is made to fund programs throughout the country.

STARTALK funds student programs for beginners, for heritage speakers, for more advanced students wishing to accelerate their language learning between academic years, and for students who are interested in simply exploring a critical language and learning about the people who speak that language. It looks for programs to support that offer “creative and engaging summer experiences that strive to exemplify best practices in language education.”

STARTALK summer programs for teachers are often designed to help native speakers learn how to teach their language and teach about their culture in an American classroom. These programs identify, explore, and develop curriculum and supporting materials that enrich the classroom experience. Instructors discuss and emphasize the importance of speaking the target language and teachers learn about classroom management in American schools. The program aims to establish networks among teachers of critical languages for continued interaction and support once the STARTALK Institute is completed. STARTALK proposes to form “an extensive community of practice that seeks continuous improvement in such criteria as outcomes-driven program design, standards-based...”

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1. http://www.ed.gov/about/education NSLI/index.html. This site offers further information on the National Security Language Initiative. Programs under the NSLI umbrella include STARTALK, the Title VI/Fulbright Hays programs of the US Department of Education, the National Security Education program of the National Defense University, and study abroad and exchange programs of the US Department of State.

2. http://www.startalk.umd.edu Information about applying for funding for summer programs in critical languages is available on this site.
STARTALK

How many programs were funded in 2009?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Student Programs</th>
<th>Teacher Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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Early language learning programs funded:

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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persian</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swahili</td>
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How many students and teachers participated in summer 2009?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3,559</td>
<td>967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FLAP

Who was funded in 2009?

- Local Education Agencies: 36
- State Education Agencies: 3
- LEA-Higher Education Consortia: 12

What were the languages of the programs funded?

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Hindi
- Japanese
- Korean
- Russian
- Spanish
- Turkish
- Urdu

How many K-8 programs are funded by FLAP?

By statute at least seventy-five percent of FLAP monies must be expended for programs that include K-8.

How much money does a FLAP grant provide?

FLAP grants range from $50,000 to $400,000 per year, depending on the whether the applicant is an LEA, SEA or LEA/Institution of higher education consortium. The grantee must match each dollar, i.e., for every federal dollar the grantee must promise a dollar to the project. (Note: Waivers of this requirement are sometimes given for high-poverty applicants.)

There are two kinds of matching funds: in-kind and in-cash. An in-kind match is a match does not require the grantee to provide actual cash. For example, the grantee can count time the teachers contribute outside the school day, time that an advisory group contributes to the project, the percentage of teachers’ and administrators’ salary and fringe benefits that are dedicated to the project.

How can I find out about applying for the 2010 competition?

Each year an announcement is made in the spring about which competitions will be offered that year. Watch the FLAP website for information. Other excellent sources of up-to-date information on the FLAP competitions are organizations such as NNELL, ACTFL, NCSSTL, NADSFL or JNCL-NCLIS (see below). Nevertheless, planning for a FLAP grant proposal should begin months in advance since the time between the announcement and the due date for submission is rarely more than six weeks.

- NNELL: http://nnell.org
- ACTFL: http://actfl.org
- NCSSTL: http://www.ncsstl.org
- NADSFL: http://www.nadsfl.org
- JNCL-NCLIS: http://www.languagepolicy.org

Curriculum planning, learner-centered approaches, excellence in selection and development of materials, and meaningful assessment of outcomes.

FLAP: Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) was established in 1991 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title VII) to leverage local and state funding for the establishment, improvement, and expansion of K-12 foreign language programs. The Department has awarded FLAP grants for the past 19 years in competitions open to local education agencies (LEA's), state education agencies (SEA's), and consortia of K-12 and higher education institutions. In some years, competitions have been limited to one type of agency, e.g., state agencies; however, in 2009, there were competitions open for all three types of proposals. Funding available for competitive grants has ranged from $4.1 million at the beginning of the program to the current $26.3 million awarded in 2009. FLAP grants fund a wide variety of language programs and initiatives that range from the development of standards and curriculum to the planning for and implementation of new programs. More information is available on the FLAP website http://www.ed.gov/programs/flapea/index.html.

Reflecting the NSLI goal of targeting languages designated critical to US economic and military competitiveness, recent competitions have either been limited to proposals from critical language programs or have given extra points to those proposals over those for more commonly taught languages. The FLAP definition of critical languages, however, has been expanded from the languages funded by STARTALK to include Japanese and Russian. From year to year the competitive funding priorities for FLAP money may and do change.
In this year's FLAP competitions, a record number of grant proposals were submitted. Fifty-one were funded. There were three categories of competitions in 2009:

In the competition for five-year funding of a partnership between one or more LEA's and one or more institutions of higher education, 12 applications were selected for funding from the 55 applications submitted. This program had an absolute priority for critical languages so all grantees will serve one or more critical languages. Most of the funded programs are for Chinese, but proposals for Arabic, Japanese, Korean and Russian were also funded.

In the competition for 3-year grants for LEA's there were a record 185 proposals submitted, of which 36 were selected for funding. This program had a 10-point competitive preference for critical languages. Of the 36 programs funded, only five are not serving critical languages. All five of those are for Spanish programs. Of the 31 grants serving critical languages, most are for Chinese. Other languages funded included Arabic, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Turkish.

In the competition for state education agencies (SEA's), 3 of the 9 applications were selected for funding. All are for critical languages and include Arabic, Chinese and Japanese.

**LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP PROGRAM**

The Language Flagship Program is an innovative collaboration among government, education and the business world. Although the Flagship program does not provide funding directly to K-12 programs, the entire focus of the Flagship program is to produce global professionals with a Superior level of proficiency before leaving the K-16 system. The best means of achieving this goal is to promote extended sequences of language study that begin in the elementary grades and continue through post-secondary.

The Flagship website states that the program seeks to “graduate students who will take their place among the next generation of global professionals, commanding a superior level of fluency in one of the many languages critical to U.S. competitiveness and security.” Flagship programs are located at universities around the country. There are currently 9 Chinese, 5 Arabic, 5 Russian, 1 Korean, 1 Hindi/Urdu, 1 Persian, and 2 African-language Flagship universities. Three of those universities are part of a pilot program in which the university Flagship is linked directly with one or more K-12 partners. The University of Oregon Chinese Flagship has a partnership with the Portland Public Schools; the Michigan State University Arabic Flagship has a partnership with the Dearborn Public Schools, and the Ohio State University Chinese Flagship works with a variety of Ohio schools. The K-12 partner districts work with the Flagships to provide a seamless K-12 sequence of language study to prepare students to enter the universities already at high levels of proficiency. Their graduates are then able to progress in their post-secondary studies to the Superior level of proficiency and attain professional competency in the targeted language.

Because all of the Flagships are tasked with collaborating with K-12 programs in their particular languages, you can contact the one nearest you to find out what support they are able to provide. It may be sharing curriculum or offering professional development for teachers of that language or it may be helping your students enter their university programs.

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1 An Absolute Priority means that all proposals must meet certain criteria, e.g. for critical languages. A Competitive Priority means that the proposal will receive extra points for meeting certain criteria but may propose others as well or instead, i.e. a proposal may be for a Spanish program but it will not receive the extra points it would receive were it for a "critical language."
“Ni Hao, Jiang Lao Shi!” | (Hello, Teacher Jiang!)

As you walk around my school, that phrase is what you will hear as my students call out a greeting in Chinese. My name is Janna Chiang and this is both my third year teaching Mandarin Chinese at Stopher Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky and the third year of Stopher’s Chinese FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools) program.

I am a heritage learner/speaker of Mandarin Chinese and my family immigrated to the United States from Taiwan (Republic of China) when I was 12 years old. Thanks to my parents and the large Chinese community in California where I spent my teenage years not only did I not lose my mother tongue, I came to love and appreciate Mandarin Chinese.

Determined to keep the language alive in the next generation, with the birth of our children we became a family of “one person, one language (OPOL),” immersing our girls in both Chinese from me and English from my husband with the result that it has become natural for them to speak both languages with ease.

Watching our daughters gaining fluency in both languages sparked an interest in studying early childhood language acquisition and when a position to teach Chinese at a local elementary school opened, I took this opportunity to teach many children. Through growing and learning with my students, I have become a firm believer in the importance of early childhood language acquisition and a passionate advocate for world language education.

GETTING STARTED IN KENTUCKY

It seems like both a long time ago and just yesterday that Mandarin Chinese in the elementary schools and I first arrived in the Jefferson County School District and in Kentucky. What began in 2006 at one school and, with the support of a federal FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) grant expanded in August of 2007 to six elementary schools that offer either a FLES or FLEX program in Chinese is an exciting story. Under the direction of supervisor Thomas Sauer the district has provided us with the sustained, high-quality professional learning experiences necessary to set up and nurture a standards-based program. We were fortunate that Helena Curtain, co-author of Languages and Children; Making the Match, came to guide the teachers as we learned to plan thematically. Additionally, all FLES teachers gather monthly for training and we carry out peer observations. We are always encouraged to continue learning and we always seek to improve instruction.

FIRST-YEAR TEACHING

Envisioning the ideal classroom while preparing to meet my first students, I created a few non-negotiable guidelines that would be the foundation for my program. One, I vowed to stay in the target language 100 percent of the time whenever possible; two, students must respond to me in Chinese if they possessed adequate vocabulary; three, I severely limited the usage of textbooks to the class, textbooks stifle creativity for both teachers and students – and followed the thematic units we had planned.

Quickly, however, these non-negotiables placed me in a survival mode for the first few months of my teaching career. I had had no previous experience in teaching a foreign language, not to mention a Less Commonly Taught Language that had limited resources. In the classroom, students constantly challenged me about why I didn’t speak English (I had told them early on that I am very forgetful and had left my English in California). There were moments when I just wanted to translate things and break into English, but I reminded myself that children learn a foreign language much differently than we adults do. For them, it is a natural progression, just like learning their mother tongue and so, I relied extensively on visual graphics and body movements to help engage my students. At the time I taught around 300 students from K - 3rd grade, and at the end of the day, I was exhausted and often felt defeated.

After a few months of teaching, my university mentor came to visit and gave me a piece of advice that changed my teaching forever. “You are working much harder than your students. They should be learning just as hard as you teach!” she said. It had never occurred to me that the reason why I was constantly tired was because I was doing all of the work, while all my students had to do was to watch me teach. Realizing that I had to make the paradigm shift to develop my students into autonomous learners from the beginning and that my job was to facilitate the learning process, not to simply feed students with information, I took Christmas break to adjust my attitude and began to put my new teaching philosophy in practice.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

My first year also brought the revelation that an important component in successful teaching is to build personal relationships...
with the students. To me, this concept is almost like the buy-in policy in business: when students believe in you, they are more likely to go to the extra mile to learn from you. And so, I took off my “teacher hat” and put on a “learner hat” and, listening carefully to what they said interested them, taught accordingly.

I now teach over 725 students, and although that number seems daunting, I still make every possible effort to foster a safe, positive, trusting classroom that allows students to share and learn. These days I have my own classroom, decorating it in bright colors, such as red and gold, and displaying many contextually and culturally relevant items to stimulate students’ interest in learning the language. On one side of the classroom the children find many culture symbols such as the gold dragon, Chinese boy and girl outfits, calligraphy painting and writing, and other realia from China. The fifty Chinese characters that we expect students to learn during their first year of Chinese cover another wall.

While I have some set rules in the classroom, I also allow students to build their own classroom behavior rules. Combining both sets is a collaborative effort and we post them in the classroom for all to see. I always make small notes on class rosters as students share their interests with the class during self-introduction, and I find ways to use these notes later on in class. For example, if a student likes Chinese food then when I introduce the food unit in class, I will make it a point to mention this, letting the children know that I notice their likes and dislikes. At the elementary school level, students’ cognitive development can vary greatly, even within the same grade level. Having personal connections in the classroom and taking special notice of each child not only help students to learn but also help me as a teacher to reach every student.

**OUR PROGRAM**

Many Mandarin Chinese teachers have asked if we include pinyin in the district curriculum, and the answer is that it depends on the students’ age. Since Kindergarten - 2nd grade students are still mastering the English alphabet we wait to introduce pinyin to students in third grade but they do not use it extensively until fifth grade. The original intent of pinyin was to help learners to pronounce the words, since the spoken portion of the Chinese language has no correlation to the written portion, unlike alphabet-based languages such as English. Our delayed introduction of pinyin in the classroom is not for fear of confusing students, because young children have an amazing ability to pick up any sound. Rather, we want our students to acquire the written Chinese language the same way as they would the spoken language and by not using pinyin it helps young students to simply use the image cues of Chinese characters to make associations with their meanings.

Once students reach the third grade, they will have developed adequate proficiency in English writing and reading and can use pinyin as a helpful learning strategy to speaking Chinese. To help them sound out Chinese characters we use first-letter cues in English. For example, in teaching “I,” instead of using its complete pinyin form “wo3,” we introduce it by using the letter “W” next to the Chinese character, and gradually remove it when students no longer need the assistance. When introducing vocabulary for 4th graders, we leave the entire pinyin next to the Chinese character and then remove it after a few lessons. Students can write out the pinyin on their own if they need it in their personal dictionaries but often, students don’t need the support of pinyin if they already can pronounce the word, preferring to write the actual Chinese character rather than using pinyin. In 5th grade, after we pronounce the word, students try to write the pinyin on their own, and then they compare their words to correct pinyin so that they have a chance to correct. Pinyin is not a focal point in our lessons since we believe that the alphabet is not Chinese, and experience has shown that students can learn pinyin easily on their own.

**FOUR TONES**

Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language with four main tones. As elementary school children develop their speech, they are usually able to mimic the sounds much like native speakers. Indeed, the best part of teaching Mandarin Chinese to students at such early age is their seemingly natural ability to reproduce the sounds. The rise and fall of the tones are actually fun for my young students to mimic and they really enjoy playing with the different sounds. For example, in Chinese, “ma1” means mother, but “ma3” means horse. Showing first a picture of mother while emphasizing the first tone sound, I transition into the third tone and show a picture of a mother horse. Students slowly come to understand that even with just a slight change in tone, the meaning of the word changes. Body gestures help students to notice the rise and the fall of the tones, and accent marks are placed in writing when necessary. The fourth tone, which is the “drop,” seems to be the most difficult tone for students. A successful method that I have found with the fourth tone is to tap the board. The loudness of the tap helps students make the “drop” in the tone and to memorize it better.

Additionally, I often asked students to make their own mental connections for each Chinese character. For example, the color red in Chinese is “hong2 se4” (Footnote: 2) and one of the kindergarten students came up with a mental image of “red house” to help her remember the sound, because the pronunciation of “hong se” reminded her of “house.” And for the color blue, which is “lan2 se4,” students would imagine a long blue line because “lan” reminded them of “line.” Through taking an active role in making mental connections that were easy to remember, students found an expedient method in learning their Chinese vocabulary.

**HOW ABOUT READING AND WRITING?**

Perhaps the greatest challenge in teaching Chinese at the elementary level is that the spoken Chinese does not have any direct correlation with the writing. Teachers have to understand that students will need to learn two sets of new languages at the same time, one for verbal communication and the other for written communication.

When I first began teaching, I was reluctant to introduce any reading or writing and wanted to focus on the spoken language. Within the limits of class time, I felt that the emphasis should be on verbal communication rather than the written language. Gradually realizing that while that method worked well with my young students, older students needed an adjustment. For young learners, the natural progression of acquiring a new language means first giving them repeated input in the target language and patiently waiting for output. The lack of written text support was not a particularly difficult challenge for them. Young students learn to read Chinese characters naturally in my classroom environment, but they are not yet ready to produce their own writing. Besides using visual aids, I have used American Sign Language (ASL) body movements as one of the kinesthetic intelligence teaching strategies...
to help students to remember the words. With older students in third grade and above, being able to read and write Chinese seems to enable them to speak the target language more easily since training in their first language encourages them to read and write in order to learn a language. I adjusted my curriculum to incorporate much more reading and writing for this age group, with fifth grade focusing heavily in writing and third grade learning primarily to read.

**DIFFERENTIATED TEACHING**

If I learned anything about education through parenting and teaching, it's that understanding that each child is a unique individual is critical, therefore it's essential to develop differentiated teaching strategies in the classroom to best reach every child in the class. It has been said that we teach the way we were taught, and upon revisiting our own education, we find that some of our teachers' methods were successful, while some others were probably great lessons on what not to do in a classroom. Through teaching all of my students, I believe that everyone has strength in their varying learning styles, and no child is the same learner. It is my job as a teacher to help my students to learn at their highest potential. Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory is always on my mind both when teaching all of my students, I believe that everyone has strength in their varying learning styles, and no child is the same learner. It is my job as a teacher to help my students to learn at their highest potential. Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory is always on my mind both when

I teach my students and as I construct my daily lessons and I am careful to structure class in a way that incorporates multiple intelligences. Most successfully, has been tapping into students' musical and kinesthetic intelligences. The body movements, chants, and music have a special impact on students and really help them to retain the most information from each language lesson.

**WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS?**

We are still working on setting up an assessment system for our program. Based on European's LinguaFolio concept, our cohort of FLES teachers has developed a set of student friendly can-do cards that align with our world language frameworks, enabling students to self-assess their language learning process. It is an ambitious self-assessment project that took over two years to develop and currently only French and Spanish are in its pilot phase. The goal is for students to actually take pre-made can-do cards home, and have a guardian check what the child "can-do" by asking the questions on the cards and then sign off on the card and return it to the teacher. This really helps to increase parent/guardian involvement and to develop in students a strong and positive can-do attitude. Although the Chinese assessment is still in works, I often list Can-do statements on the board and reinforce with my students that the ONLY attitude in my class is the CAN DO attitude.

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IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!

Delaware boasts one of the very few Greek-language-focused public schools in the nation: Odyssey Charter School, located in Wilmington, the state's largest city. The school began in 2006 as a Greek immersion program that concentrated on the acquisition of strong mathematical and scientific knowledge, both gifts from the Greek culture. Odyssey Charter believes that learning another language is an essential component to a child's elementary school experience and provides the ideal context for developing skills necessary to being a global citizen of the 21st century.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Today, with its more than 380 students (fewer than 5 percent are of Greek heritage), Odyssey Charter School has defined itself and its programs to be in sync with its mission and vision: "Odyssey Charter School is established to prepare Kindergartenthrough5th grade students for a lifelong enthusiasm for learning, to develop in students a keen awareness of world citizenship and culture, and establish them as effective critical thinkers and problem solvers through participation in a FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) program. Odyssey students will excel in the areas of language arts and mathematics while achieving high levels of proficiency in the Greek language." Anthony Skoutelas, the school's Headmaster, states, "Our community has embraced the Greek culture and the learning of Greek as a second language. While our students have flourished academically, they have also developed an appreciation and understanding of learning from a multicultural perspective."

ODYSSEY'S FLES MODEL

The Odyssey Charter School follows a FLES model for the learning of Greek language and culture with language proficiency outcomes that involve the production and comprehension of meaningful messages in a communicative setting. The program goal is for students to attain high levels of functional language proficiency by the end of the fifth grade. The Greek FLES curriculum reflects the school's emphasis on the importance of young children learning the Greek language in the context of supporting and enhancing the content of other subject areas (specifically social studies, science, mathematics and English language arts). The Content-Related FLES approach will review, enhance and extend concepts that the classroom teacher has previously taught. This is done in two ways: all students from Kindergarten to fifth grade have 30 minutes of content-related Greek language instruction per day and 30 minutes of mathematics instruction conducted solely in Greek. The Greek math is in addition to the normal 45-60 minutes that students receive in mathematics instruction in English.

Thanks to an established partnership with the Greek Ministry of Education, Odyssey receives up to nine visiting teachers from Greece each year. These teachers provide the content-based FLES instruction, Greek math instruction and, on occasion, instruction in the visual and performing arts and physical education. In essence, a student at Odyssey Charter School receives up to 300 minutes per week of contact with the Greek language.

Research in other states has shown that students who participate in a well-designed content-related FLES program like Odyssey's outscore their non-FLES peers in state assessments of mathematics and readings (Taylor-Ward 2003). Odyssey Charter School's students have consistently performed at the highest levels of the Delaware Student Testing Program in both mathematics and reading and the Delaware Department of Education has recognized it as a Superior School for the past three years.

A THEMATIC, SPIRALING CURRICULUM BASED ON STUDENT “I CAN” STATEMENTS

The Odyssey Charter School Greek FLES curriculum is divided into six levels (grades K through 5) and then subdivided into four curricular themes with smaller units of instruction. Each unit uses a backward-design approach to organize the content and understandings of the unit ensuring at least one Enduring Understanding (or what the teacher wants the students to remember about the unit for the rest of their lives once the unit is complete) per unit. Each Enduring Understanding also has a comparative cultural focus. Essential Questions follow the Enduring Understandings. These essential questions (questions that are open-ended and lead the students to think about and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to internalize the unit's enduring understandings) are the driving force of the unit. The unit then identifies knowledge and skills in terms of I CAN statements. These statements put the learner in charge of his/her own learning leading to more student self-assessment and goal setting. Teachers are also using I CAN cards for students to share their learning with their families. Finally, each unit includes suggested performance assessments in each of the three modes of communication: interpretive (assessing the skills of reading and/or listening), interpersonal (speaking/listening; reading/writing) and presentational (speaking or writing). These assessments gauge student understanding of the essential questions and enduring understandings outlined for the unit.

The FLES curriculum expands the four themes begun in Kindergarten in each of the subsequent years to allow for recycling and spiraling of previously learned vocabulary, functional grammatical structures and cultural information.
Literacy Development—Reading and Writing in the Greek Language

As is true with many languages that use a non-Roman writing system, Odyssey curriculum developers have asked the question, “When is it appropriate for students to begin reading and writing in Greek?” The school’s second language literacy philosophy is based on the beliefs that the language classroom should offer print-rich environments that support and promote early literacy development and that the literacy skills of reading and writing are dependent upon high-levels of listening and speaking skills. Odyssey Greek FLES teachers use a variety of strategies such as Total Physical Response, shared story telling, songs, dialogues, role plays, simulations and language experience exercises to help students develop the oracy and literacy skills needed to move from the novice to the intermediate level of proficiency.

Technical Assistance from the Delaware Department of Ed

As the Education Associate for World Languages and International Education at the Delaware Department of Education, I have provided technical assistance to the school as they developed their K-5 Greek-language curriculum map and has provided instructional design support as the FLES teachers transfer the content from the curriculum map into daily lesson plans. Odyssey’s teachers love their students and really are passionate about helping them learn Greek. They are open to exploring new instructional techniques and are willing to try anything that will motivate their students. Meeting monthly with the Greek FLES teachers in a Professional Learning Community, the teachers and I reflect on how they are implementing the standards-based curriculum and proficiency-oriented instructional practices.

A FIELDTRIP TO CHINA—CAPE HENLOPEN’S ELEMENTARY CHINESE PROGRAM

In the southern part of Delaware, one expects to find the beach resort towns of Lewes, Rehoboth and Bethany, but it is a surprise to also find the state’s most progressive Chinese language program in the Cape Henlopen School District.

Through a Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant from the US Department of Education, Cape launched its Lighthouse Chinese Program in September 2007. It is the first such public school program in Delaware and one of a small but growing number in the United States. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade learn about the most enduring civilization in the world as they learn the most widely spoken language in the world!

The district hired four new Chinese teachers to develop the Chinese FLES curriculum using the Flying with Chinese textbook series as a guide. Cape’s curriculum is based on the philosophy that children are natural language learners and that creating meaningful contexts for language learning will make the most of their natural curiosity. Essential components of the program are:

• Thematic planning and instruction
• Standards-based approach based on national standards and the Delaware Recommended Curriculum for World Languages
• Principles of Understanding by Design and
• Principles and structure of the story form (Languages and Children: Making the Match).

Cape Henlopen’s Chinese FLES Curriculum Goals

Students in Cape Henlopen’s Chinese FLES program are expected to:

• Develop an interest in Chinese for future language study in middle and high school
• Acquire novice-high proficiency in listening and speaking
• Recognize and produce high-frequency Chinese characters

The following chart is an example from Kindergarten and 1st grade:

![Image of children with text]

**Odyssey Charter School Greek FLES Curriculum Overview: Version 1.0**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Unit 1: Making Friends</th>
<th>Unit 2: My School</th>
<th>Unit 3: Pets</th>
<th>Unit 4: My Pets</th>
<th>Unit 5: Clothes</th>
<th>Unit 6: Colors</th>
<th>Unit 7: My Classroom</th>
<th>Unit 8: My Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Making Friends</td>
<td>My School</td>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>My Pets</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>Colors</td>
<td>My Classroom</td>
<td>My Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcome to Our School</td>
<td>Welcome to Our School</td>
<td>Our Family</td>
<td>Our Animals</td>
<td>Our Homes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proficiency is Our Focus

Realizing that the number of minutes of instruction in the Greek language does not necessarily equate to learning how to use a language, the school has focused its outcomes on anticipated proficiency-level outcomes for each grade based on the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) K 12 Performance Guidelines and the Center for Applied Linguistics’ ELLOPA Speaking and Writing Rubrics.

The following chart outlines Odyssey’s end-of-the-K-5- sequence performance expectations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Meets Expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations</th>
<th>Meets Expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-Mid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate-Mid+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Novice High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate-Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attaining or reaching Intermediate-Mid level means that students should be able to create with vocabulary using simple sentences and some strings of sentences as well as ask and respond to simple questions. They also are able to use vocabulary that is sufficient to communicate in some social and academic contexts while using a variety of language structures that may not always be correct in more complex forms. For writing, students can write learned phrases and simple sentences to convey meaning. They will be able to use high-frequency words and vocabulary related classroom content. The students generally spell Greek works correctly and begin to experiment with a variety of language structures using the present and some past constructions. A school-based team of FLES teachers will begin to design a formative and summative assessment system based on the intended proficiency outcomes during the school year. These assessments will address all three modes of communication.
Innovative Use of Time

The Cape Henlopen Chinese FLES program provides 90 minutes of contact time with the Chinese language per week. Students receive a 45-min class with their Chinese teacher and then follow-up with the lesson's content during a 45-min session with interactive software from Better Chinese during their normally scheduled computer lab time.

STARTALK Grant and the Sea Dragon King Summer Camp

To provide additional language learning opportunities for the district's students, Cape partnered with the Delaware Department of Education, the University of Delaware and the Chinese School of Delaware to apply for STARTALK funds to provide a two-week language camp experience and a three-week intensive methods and practicum teaching experience for the state's Chinese teachers.

Building on the Rutgers/Princeton West-Windsor STARTALK model, the Delaware Lighthouse Chinese Partnership provided an innovative summer learning experience for 24 elementary school students (kindergarten through 5th grade) who had participated in the district's FLAP-funded Lighthouse Chinese Program during the regular school year. This two-week immersion language camp offered participants the opportunity to develop higher levels of Chinese language proficiency and gain deeper insights into perspectives of Chinese culture. The program’s theme—environmental stewardship of coastal natural resources—capitalized on the local surroundings and facilitated participants' connections to their language learning. The curriculum was based on the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners, and the Delaware Recommended Curriculum for World Languages. The story of the Monkey King's visit to the Sea Dragon King provided the frame for the camp's environmental theme. The Monkey King's quest for the ultimate weapon, the gin gu bang, symbolized for students the power and responsibility they had to protect the oceans and the creatures that live in it.

Dr. Helena Curtain, co-author of Languages and Children: Making the Match, directed the one-week intensive methods course for teaching languages to young children that directly proceeded to the student camp. Teachers in elementary school Chinese programs learned the most effective methods of getting students to develop high levels of communicative skills while maintaining the class in the Chinese language. One of the participating teachers from the Cape Henlopen School District, Angela Xu, said, “The most tremendous thing that I learned from this experience, and there were many, is that I saw first-hand how I can get students to understand me when I speak nothing but Chinese. Before, I only saw them get frustrated. Now I'm sure they can understand me. This year there will be a language teaching revolution in my classroom.”

THE WORLD IS OUR CAMPUS—APPOQUINIMINK SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Appoquinimink School District prides itself on its focus on International Education and 21st Century Preparedness. The District has developed its own International Education Plan based on six literacies:

- Scientific Literacy
- Economic Literacy
- Technology Literacy
- Visual Literacy
- Information Literacy
- Multicultural and Multilingual Literacy
- Global Literacy

The district's journey to 21st century preparedness begins in Kindergarten with a focus on world cultures that permeates the entire curriculum, spiraling upward to grade 12. The students in Appoquinimink School District begin their formal language instruction in grade 4 with 9 weeks of instruction 1 day per week for 50 minutes in each of the following languages, French, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese. Included in this instruction is not only the basic use of the language but exposure to the culture through food tastings, musical presentations and in some cases opportunities to communicate in writing and through web-based conferencing with students in the targeted languages country. Currently, Appoquinimink elementary students communicate with partners in Germany, France, Japan, Switzerland and China via technologies such as videoconferencing with Skype.

The learning from 4th grade continues in 5th and 6th grades with a series of 9 week classes in the same languages that build on speaking, listening and cultural experiences. Although this exploratory model does not lead to higher levels of language development, it does focus on building an understanding of and appreciation of other cultures. It also aims to develop an interest in new languages and lay a basic foundation of listening skills and linguistic awareness that are crucial in learning another language.

As students move into the 7th and 8th grade they select one of the languages they were exposed to during the 4-6 grade years and receive 50 minutes daily of targeted instruction in that language. It is the district's intent that by providing students the opportunity to explore languages early on (especially those less commonly taught ones like Chinese and Japanese) and then to select one language in the 7th and 8th grade, students will become more proficient in a world language and even have the opportunity to study multiple languages in depth prior to exiting high school.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


The impetus to begin Bilingual Buds came about six years ago when I, pregnant with twins and commuting into New York City, was reading about the numerous cognitive benefits for children of acquiring a second language early in their lives. I was surprised to learn that even by the age of six months, children begin to lose the ability to hear sounds that are outside their native language. I was born in Queens, NY to immigrant parents from Taiwan who did not make learning Chinese a priority for me. As an adult I gradually began to see the missed opportunity of not learning Mandarin or any other languages. The determination that my sons should have this opportunity fueled the energy and drive I needed to create a Mandarin dual language immersion school for young children, Bilingual Buds.

Like many new ventures started by cash-strapped entrepreneurs, Bilingual Buds began in the basement of my Maplewood, New Jersey home in February 2005. For close to a year prior to opening the school I had researched early childhood immersion programs across the country and had created a mission statement and developed a set of beliefs that would guide our school. To this day most of our core philosophies remain the same while our ability to deliver on our mission has improved over our five-year history. We began with five students and one teacher in a two- day per week preschool setting for 2 ½ hours each day. After a little over one year, we were able to move into a larger space in a church in Livingston, New Jersey where we began our first five-day per week full day dual language immersion program. I had long believed that children such as mine who are not from Chinese language heritage families would need the full five – day school week exposure to develop the foundation for language fluency. Two major tasks for the next few years would be to find enough parents who also felt the need for this, and to prove that some form of immersion program, especially for a language as difficult as Mandarin, was necessary and would work.

We have found that most of the parents interested in our program are those who do not have the language skills themselves to provide this early language foundation for their children. Along with other Chinese American parents such as myself (that is, born in the U.S. but not fluent in Mandarin), we attracted parents who had adopted children from China and wanted to incorporate Chinese culture and language into their children’s lives. We also saw enrollment growth among those families with no Asian connection as well as from Chinese heritage parents who, through word of mouth, heard about the impressive proficiency gains of our students.

Starting off small, we offered a one- day per week language program but were soon unsatisfied with the results from this limited exposure. We began to shift our program from being a once per week enrichment program, to a full day, five - day per week bilingual school starting with pre-K with a goal of teaching through grade 3. This past September we opened our first 1st grade class and will add a grade each year through grade 3. The shift from an enrichment program to a full five - day school has been critical to our ability to achieve improved language outcomes. We currently have both two - day per week “supplemental” classes meaning that our program is taught entirely in Mandarin and “supplements” a traditional English preschool program, and a five days per week “primary” program in which we provide both English and Mandarin instruction. In our primary program we vary the percentage of instruction time in the target language with age starting from 80% of the day in Mandarin at age 2 ½ to 50% of the day in Mandarin by the time the student reaches our 2nd grade. Having just completed our second kindergarten year, we are very satisfied with our ability to achieve both Mandarin Chinese and English objectives within this time allocation. Since most of our students come from families who do not speak Mandarin at home we need to maximize effectiveness of exposure to Mandarin in school. In our kindergarten class in addition to teaching both language arts and math in both languages, we teach high interest subjects such as science, social studies, and physical education in Mandarin. It is a challenge for us to achieve our English objectives in 40% of the time that traditional programs have to achieve the same objectives. However, factors helping us achieve this goal are our low student teacher ratio at 7:1, the synergistic learning effect of hearing the same theme taught in both languages, and adherence to best practices.

We have allocated the time necessary to document the children’s progress and show parents quantitatively that we are able to achieve our goals. For the second year in a row we completed a school - wide SOPA test for all our students age four and above. This test included 64 students in 2008 and 81 students in 2009 and we administered it to pairs of children with two teachers per interview. The assessment took approximately 15-20 minutes per pair of students. Following the SOPA protocol students interact with teachers via a warm

SHARON HUANG is the Founder and Director of Bilingual Buds. Self taught in the field of early language acquisition, she has a background in consumer marketing, and an MBA from the Wharton School at University of Pennsylvania. She is also the mother of twin boys, Ethan and Warren, 1st grade students at Bilingual Buds.

Warren talks to a shopkeeper in Beijing.
up exercise, have a dialogue on general topics such as family and school, point to pictures in a storybook and describe vocabulary or in some cases tell the story in their own words, and finally wind down with a simpler activity. The process took nearly one month to complete for the entire student body. We videotaped each interview and took careful notes to include every word spoken and the gestures students used to indicate comprehension. We

scored our students on the SOPA scale based on our interpretation of the listening and oral profiles provided. Our scores showed that we were able to achieve high levels of proficiency in our five - day program, that the five - day program significantly outscored the two - day program, and that the dual language immersion setting enabled students who had entered the class late and started with a lower oral proficiency to make significant progress in catching up to their peers. We scored our kindergarten class of eight students as all either Junior Advanced Low or Junior Advanced Mid because they were able to describe the storybook by speaking in a number of sentences connected by a general idea like in a paragraph manner. They were also able to use connectors such as "because, then, and but". However, since this time we have come to learn that it is quite unusual for students with such limited language exposure to score this high, and later this year we will pursue a project to calibrate and verify our interpretation of these proficiencies with the Center for Applied Linguistics. The SOPA results for our supplemental and after school students who attend only two days per week or for shorter periods of time range as one might expect from Junior Novice Low to Junior Intermediate Low.

Overall as a school we are seeing more students shift from our two - day to our five - day programs and we note additional factors that have also improved language outcomes. These include:

• Students starting at a younger age. As more parents see the success of our preschool they are increasingly interested in starting their children in the program earlier. Some of our youngest students come directly from our Mommy & Me program which is designed for children ages 1-3.

• More experienced and high quality teachers. As the school becomes more established it attracts better qualified teachers and teachers who have had experience teaching young children. Additionally, they have backgrounds in education, linguistics or TESOL and are seeking to work in an environment where early language learning is fully supported.

• Better adherence to early language best practices. Having attended many conferences over the past five years and read and reread Languages and Children, Making the Match by Carol Ann Dahlberg and Helena Curtian, our teachers are doing a much better job staying in the target language, managing the classroom, and developing integrated thematic units.

• Higher second language goals. We are continually surprised by our students' abilities and thus adjust upward our expectations year by year.

• Incorporation of homework. Last year we began a partnership with parents seeking their support for mandatory weekly homework. This has helped parents become more involved and improved teaching effectiveness in the classroom.

Our commitment to continue through grade 3 has positioned Bilingual Buds as a real alternative to traditional public or private schools. With the encouraging results of our kindergarten students the past two years, we are looking forward to building upon this success with three additional years, grades 1, 2, and 3, in this dual language environment. With this goal comes the challenge of broadening our subject offerings. This year we will add art and music in Mandarin taught by native speakers who are content specialists. It will be very exciting to see how we will broaden vocabulary and language abilities through very visual and auditory subjects. In art we will provide the foundation for learning Eastern as well as Western art and Chinese brush painting and calligraphy. In music, we will explore Asian and Western music and instruments and integrate this with our understanding of geography and culture.

FUTURE STEPS: EXPANSION AND SUMMER IN BEIJING

One of our many challenges is whether we will be able to continue to expand the full day dual language immersion program beyond the third grade since doing so in grades 3-12 would require significantly more resources both in facilities and in personnel. Currently we do have both a two and five - day after school program for students age 5 and older, but are seeing that with the increasingly busy schedules of our school age children many find it difficult to continue their commitment to language learning outside of school hours. Nevertheless, we remain optimistic and committed to our vision that we can continue to provide the foundation for children to become bilingual.

From the day I began this school it has been my personal dream that my sons, who are now five and have attended Bilingual Buds since they were two years old, would have the language foundation necessary to travel to China and seamlessly integrate with local Chinese children. As a start to realizing this goal, a staff member and I, over a year ago, visited more than 20 schools in Shanghai and Beijing searching for a partner school that would receive our students. We finally selected a private kindergarten with which to develop our "Summer in Beijing" program and this past summer of 2009, my husband and I took our sons as the first students in a pilot program from which we hope to build our 2 ½ week immersion program in Beijing beginning in the summer of 2010. To our happy surprise, both boys accepted the challenge and transitioned very easily into the local Chinese classroom. Open and flexible in their orientation towards school in a foreign country with new foods and new types of bathrooms, they were able to make friends quickly and, equally important, they were able to practice their language skills all the time as they ordered food from MacDonald's, asked the cost of a bottle of water, or sought directions to a toy store from a local shopkeeper. Seeing Chinese everywhere on buildings, in taxi cabs, and in restaurants made an impression on the boys but did not dampen their enthusiasm for exploring and chatting up anyone they met. Chinese locals were amazed at their language ability given that they are from the United States and this gave the boys a pride that translated into greater resolve to continue to learn the language. For me, this experience was enormously satisfying, and more than any SOPA result, was the real proof that what we have created is worthwhile. Indeed, this was a true performance assessment! Sitting in a dark movie theatre in Beijing this summer watching my twin boys laugh at all the right places to the Mandarin dialogue in "Ice Age 3," I alternated between laughter and tears of joy that as a result of their years at Bilingual Buds, my sons were understanding enough to be laughing and enjoying this movie in Mandarin, in China, alongside local boys and girls.
BRINGING CHINESE IMMERSION TO WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School is a regional public charter school in western Massachusetts. Opened in 2007, it is the only Chinese immersion school in New England. The school draws students from over twenty-five towns and cities in a predominantly rural area of Massachusetts that includes the largest and poorest city in western Massachusetts, and the poorest county in Massachusetts. In 2008, it received a five-year FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) grant in partnership with the University of Massachusetts.

The school currently serves grades K-3 and 6. The 6th grade is the inaugural class of its middle school program. Each year two grades, one at the elementary and one at the middle school, will be added. When the school first opened, it had 42 students in K and 1st grades. Each year the school has doubled in size and its current enrollment is 150 students. As a public charter school, it is tuition free. There are no entrance criteria and admission is by lottery. Each year, it has had a waiting list for enrollment. Students may enter the school in K, 1st or 6th grades.

PVCICS's program is a one-way immersion program. Over 95% of students do not have Chinese language support outside of school and most are not ethnically Chinese or Asian. This student body is somewhat representative of the region of service though more ethnically diverse. The few students who do have Chinese language support outside of school typically enter the school with oral proficiency in social language but little or no ability to read or write Chinese characters. This is expected as most are entering K or 1st grades when literacy skills are emerging and because most were born in the United States.

CURRICULUM

All students receive instruction in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Chinese Language Arts, Art, Music and PE. A native English speaking team teaches English Language Arts and a separate native Chinese speaking team teaches the subjects taught in Chinese. These two teaching teams work in separate classrooms that students go to during the day. By using this approach, students can fully experience an immersion environment. When they are in the Chinese classroom, all they see and hear is Chinese. The two teams work together to create consistent classroom management rules and coordinate to ensure English vocabulary is taught for subjects principally taught in Chinese. We expect students become bilingual and biliterate in English and Chinese.

PVCICS is required to fulfill state requirements, (Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks). To ensure compliance with those mandates PVCICS adapts standards-based and research-based English language curriculum in subjects like math and science for use in the Chinese immersion classrooms. In addition, the Chinese Language Arts course already includes cultural enrichment activities such as Chinese calligraphy, and is developing experiential learning opportunities for students to interact with native Chinese speakers outside the classroom.

In order to allow time to adequately cover this expanded curriculum, PVCICS has an extended day schedule of seven hours for Kindergarten and first grade, and seven hours 45 minutes for second grade and up.

In Kindergarten and 1st grades, 75% of the day is taught in Chinese. This allows roughly 945 contact hours with the language per year for the youngest students. In 2nd through 5th grades, 50 percent of the day is in Chinese and 50 percent in English. After 6th grade, 25 percent of the day is in Chinese, including Chinese Language Arts and other content and experiential learning opportunities. After completing grades K-8, students will have had an estimated 5,700 contact hours with Chinese.

PARTNERSHIPS

PVCICS has established partnerships with area organizations to provide students with opportunities that will help enhance the curriculum and their understanding of Chinese culture. The University of Massachusetts Asian Arts and Culture Department offers performances by professional artists that show the beauty of Chinese performing arts. PVCICS has worked with UMass to offer artist-in-residencies at school so that students can learn directly from professional artists and see authentic cultural experiences up close. In 2008, the Nai Ni Chen Dance group from New York City was in residence and taught students Chinese dances. Teachers then integrated these dances into the physical education classes and the students performed them for parents at a community event.

This year, the Chinese Theatre Works group from New York was in residence and taught students about Chinese puppets and folk stories. The goal of these residencies is to teach culture in a meaningful hands-on manner so that students develop more than a superficial understanding of it. Depending on the artist’s language ability, PVCICS requests that the artists who are in residency use Chinese as the language of instruction during their classes. This gives students exposure to the abstract, expressive quality of artistic vocabulary. The faculty then integrates lessons learned with the artists into the regular curriculum so that they are not one-time events.

In addition to Chinese cultural partnerships, PVCICS has an ongoing partnership with The Springfield Museums, the largest museum in western Massachusetts, to provide students with opportunities to see Chinese art works from a range of dynasties. PVCICS and the museum have worked together to have Chinese characters integrated into the exhibits so that visitors and other school groups can see the relationship between the language and the art works. This partnership exposes students to history, social studies and language arts. In addition, through grant funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council Creative Schools program, PVCICS has done a handmade bookmaking project with
A professional bookmaker in residence. This project is done in the English and Chinese classrooms as the students must write, illustrate, and make their own bilingual Chinese/English books. This project spans all grades and the growth in the level of sophistication in each student’s artwork and language is clearly seen from year to year. The main goal of bookmaking is to enable students to realize they can create their own books and be authors in two languages. This type of work builds their confidence and literacy skills.

**ASSESSMENT**

PVCICS has a strong focus on gathering student performance data to provide usable feedback to teachers, administrators, students, and parents. The assessment data is used in four ways: 1) to improve articulation by providing access to student performance data according to common terms of reference; 2) to evaluate program, curriculum, and instructional effectiveness; 3) to inform adjustments to the program where necessary; and 4) to help individualize and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students.

The assessment plan has the following pieces 1) formative performance assessments developed by classroom teachers to provide continuous information that is close to the classrooms and the content being studied; 2) nationally validated, summative performance assessments for every student at the end of every year to provide reliable data on student learning and program effectiveness; and 3) a portfolio system that will enable students to take ownership of their own learning as they compile their portfolio.

The teachers have developed the formative performance assessments and these are curriculum embedded. The teaching teams administer these assessments throughout the year to provide constant information on student growth in the language.

The summative performance assessments will be two online proficiency assessments: the National Online Early Language Learning Assessment (NOELLA) for grades 3-5 and the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) for grades 6-8.

These proficiency assessments are administered in the spring of a students’ first year to gather baseline data for listening, speaking, and reading. In subsequent years, we will measure student growth against those baseline assessments and will administer them in the fall and spring to track student progress.

Since opening in 2007, PVCICS has gathered information specific to student proficiency in Interpersonal Communication beyond that generated by the formative assessments by assessing a statistically significant number of students using the Early Language Learning Oral Proficiency Assessment (ELLOPA) for K-2 students and the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA) for students in grades 3-6. ELLOPA/SOPA are administered in the spring of a students’ first year and in the fall and spring in subsequent years. Teachers administering these assessments work in pairs and are not allowed to assess their own students, helping to ensure objectivity in the assessment.

ELLOPA and SOPA tests are videotaped for scoring and documentation. The teachers who administer the assessments were trained using the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) online professional development courses.

This year, PVCICS has set up a computer lab to implement the third prong of the assessment plan. Students will begin to use LinguaFolio Online, a portfolio system developed and piloted by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL). Modeled after the highly successful European Language Portfolio of the Council of Europe, LinguaFolio Online is a system in which second language learners record and reflect on their language learning. At the heart of LinguaFolio Online are “CanDo’s”, concise statements of specific abilities in the language organized into various proficiency levels. The student will then be able to attach evidence, such as an audio file of a conversation, to “CanDo” statements to prove that his or her self-assessment is indeed accurate.

The school gathers, analyzes, and reports two other sets of data: the students’ gains in basic skills as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System’s tests starting in 3rd grade for English reading and writing, as well as mathematics and the Stanford 10 tests for English and mathematics starting in Kindergarten. While English and math skills do not necessarily relate directly to growth in the Chinese language, tracking them is essential. Ensuring that students in language immersion schools have strong performance in these areas is an important argument for increasing the number of immersion schools nationwide.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

PVCICS enlists the expertise of outside immersion consultants such as Dr. Myriam Met to help define its program. In addition, teachers have benefited from regular professional development from immersion experts such as Dr. Helena Curtain. Dr. Curtain has provided teacher training and workshops focused on building a thematic-based curriculum. In addition, PVCICS teachers have attended the CARLA summer “Immersion 101” course for character-based languages and the UMass/Boston Confucius Institute Summer Chinese teachers institutes. Mr. Greg Duncan has been on-site as a FLAP grant evaluator and has provided valuable training to the school’s staff. Most recently, PVCICS and CLASS co-sponsored a teacher training workshop on assessment with Mr. Paul Sandrock. In addition to training explicitly related to immersion and foreign language assessment, PVCICS’s teachers receive training in classroom management. This topic is applicable for all teachers but especially important for teachers who may be new to teaching in American classrooms. English speaking teachers also receive training in how to teach English literacy skills. PVCICS has a certified English reading specialist to provide support to students who may be
Asia Society remains committed to promoting the teaching and learning of Chinese in American schools as an integral part of the broader agenda of building students’ global competency, the key goal of our Partnership for Global Learning. Under the leadership of Asia Society’s new Vice President for Education Tony Jackson and with continuing guidance from Vivien Stewart, Senior Advisor for Education, Asia Society has strengthened its Chinese Language Initiatives with a new team dedicated to expanding its efforts in the field.

As we build the infrastructure for the growth of the Chinese language field, we endeavor to promote the learning of Chinese in the early years, and to encourage Chinese language learning as a K-16 process. We feel strongly that the lessons learned by successful Chinese language programs can serve as models for the development of other critical language programs and for the ways in which students can transfer the skills they learn in the world languages classroom across disciplines. For us, studying Chinese is much more than just learning vocabulary, grammar, and characters—it is part of a deeper effort to develop students’ capacity to see the world from multiple perspectives, to work with challenging and unfamiliar scripts and language structures, and to build confidence in students’ own academic abilities. It is particularly important to teach students these skills as early as possible.

Our newest effort to support the growth of Chinese language programs at the K-12 level is our Confucius Classrooms Network. The Network will grow to include 100 exemplary Chinese language programs over the next three years, starting with 20 pioneer schools in the first year. Through the establishment of an online community, targeted professional development for Chinese language teachers in the network, and annual Confucius Classrooms Network conferences, we are creating the infrastructure for the development of effective and sustainable Chinese language programs for American students. This project has been established with the support of an International Experts Committee and an Honorary Advisory Committee, and in partnership with Hanban, the Chinese government-funded nonprofit spearheading the establishment of Chinese language programs overseas.

Schools in the Network will not only have effective Chinese language instruction, but also strong local leadership and support, a demonstrated commitment to international exchange and collaboration, and will be ready to act as resource centers for other schools in their region. Each Confucius Classroom will be linked with a partner school in China to enhance opportunities for language learning and to provide students, teachers, and administrators with opportunities to conduct exchanges and joint projects. Such exchange programs are more established and common for high school students, but we think there is great potential for developing programs for elementary and early language students. Despite the challenges that come with coordinating projects for younger learners, there are key advantages in doing so. One is the benefit of letting students make contacts and experience collaboration early; another is that Chinese students at lower grades are often less pressured by exams and graduation compared to their peers in secondary schools.

Asia Society will design the selection process for the 100 U.S. schools, assist them in creating linkages with schools in China, convene an annual meeting in conjunction with the National Chinese Language Conference, provide support through e-newsletters and professional development seminars, and collect data to assess progress. This initiative is more than just an attempt to recognize excellence in Chinese language teaching—it is the beginning of an ongoing process of field building with the goal of establishing high quality, sustainable Chinese language programs in all regions of the U.S. The project will be one important step in strengthening Americans’ understanding of China and in building bridges between young Chinese and American students.

In addition to this brand new initiative, we will hold our Third Annual National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC 2010) on the theme of “Learning Chinese, Thinking Globally.” Co-sponsored with the College Board, the conference will be held in Washington, D.C. April 22–24, 2010, and will continue to serve as the principal national forum for supporting the growth of Chinese language programs in the United States. The conference will engage policymakers, offer support to schools seeking to establish and sustain high quality Chinese language programs, and explore critical issues in the field, including building ongoing partnerships with Chinese schools, early language acquisition, and China across the curriculum. The conference also helps schools understand the broader contexts for Chinese language education with a spotlight on contemporary Chinese arts and culture. Strands for 2010 include:

- Learning in a Global Context: Perspectives for US and Chinese Leaders
- Taking the Next Steps: Creating and Sustaining High Quality Chinese Language Programs K-12
- Chinese in Higher Education: Research, Instruction, and Teacher Preparation
- China Across the Curriculum: Language, Humanities, Arts, and Sciences
- Making the Connection: Building Innovative Partnerships

Asia Society is very proud to announce the upcoming release of our “Learning Chinese in American Schools” DVD, which showcases leaders in education, policy, business, international affairs, and the media making a compelling case for the need to provide opportunities for America’s young people to learn Chinese language and culture. City and state leaders, experts, students and parents tell the success stories of a city and a state (Chicago and Minnesota) as they strive to prepare their students for a global future by infusing Chinese into their schools. The DVD also highlights the key steps to starting a Chinese language program, and to ensuring high quality and sustainability. Several classrooms featured in the DVD are early language programs, including immersion and elementary school programs.

We are also expanding our work to include the development of curricula and online learning materials with our “China and Globalization” project. Working with a select team of language, content, and technology advisors, we are developing a unique set of interactive, age-appropriate, online Chinese language learning materials focused on integrating Social Studies content with
Ohio’s K-4 content-enriched Mandarin Chinese curriculum

QUESTION: What do you get when you combine:

• the passion and dedication of the Chinese Language Association of Elementary-Secondary Schools (CLASS);
• the vision and commitment of Dr. Galal Walker, the Ohio State University’s (OSU) Chinese Language Flagship director;
• tireless language teachers in traditional schools and heritage weekend programs across the U.S.;
• eager guest teachers from China; and
• The Ohio Department of Education’s (ODE) experience and expertise in developing tools and products to support PreK-12 language programs?

ANSWER: The beginnings of a dynamite collaboration!

With these partners on board, in 2006 ODE submitted and received a three-year Foreign Language Assistance Program grant from the U.S. Department of Education to write and pilot a K-4 content-enriched Mandarin curriculum and to build online professional development modules to support the curriculum. It has been my pleasure to serve as the project director on this initiative for the past three years (September, 2006-Fall, 2009).

Once funded, ODE formed an advisory committee (see list of participants at the project website) to reach consensus on a curriculum template and to provide guidance on literacy development. Having recently shepherded the writing of detailed kindergarten through grade 12 instructional units across novice to pre-advanced levels of proficiency in a variety of languages, I suggested that we use the same template for this work. You can access these units by going to www.education.ohio.gov and following the link to the Instructional Management System.

Not surprisingly, the principles of backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005); performance-based assessment (Jensen & Sandrock, 2007); standards-based program development (Lipton, 2010; National standards in foreign language education project, 1999; Ohio Department of Education, 2004); and language, culture, and content integration (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004) resonated with the advisory committee and they signed off on the template in FIGURE 1.

For any of you who have been involved in Chinese language teaching and learning, you are aware that literacy can become a bone of contention that focuses solely on the use of simplified or traditional characters. The advisory committee arrived at guidance on how to minimize such struggles; how to use Romanization systems, such as pinyin; and when and how to introduce reading and writing into the curriculum (from the beginning, of course!). The literacy statement in FIGURE 2 has been vetted extensively with experts in the field and should prove useful to districts considering a Mandarin Chinese program. Many thanks to Yu-Lan Lin, Boston Public Schools; Shuhan Wang, National Foreign Language Center; Myriam Met, project evaluator; Ohio teachers who piloted the curriculum during the 2008-2009 school year; and the educators who attended my conference sessions at Central States, 2009 and at the 2007 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Convention for your feedback.

Once the advisory committee had completed its work, ODE formed a writing team (see list of participants at the project website) to flesh out approximately 10 units per grade level, kindergarten through grade four. Because of the varying backgrounds of the writers, we provided each member of the team with a copy of Languages and children: Making the Match (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004) and discussed the figure below (p. 135) from the book.

Additionally, we built capacity around the following best practices in early language learning from our mentors, Curtain and Dahlberg:

• Use the second language 98–100% of the time;
• Teach around a theme;
• Help students understand the language without translating;
• Provide a language-rich environment that presents vocabulary in context;
• Include meaningful culture in every lesson;
• Reinforce concepts from other classes in the foreign language class;
• Use authentic songs, games, stories, and rhymes;
Incorporated reading and writing skills;
- Plan varied lessons that appeal to differing interests and learning styles;
- Provide students with opportunities to talk about topics that are meaningful to them;
- Assess students’ progress on a regular basis, using a variety of methods; and
- Maintain open communication about the program and about learners’ progress with parents, fellow teachers, school and system administrators, and the general public.

We turned our attention to writing the units once everyone had adequate knowledge of the standards, best practices, and performance objectives. Did you know that a five-year elementary program that meets for 90 minutes per week provides only 270 hours of actual instructional time to learners (assuming 36 weeks in a school year)? That was a sobering realization, given that Mandarin Chinese is a category IV language in terms of difficulty according to the Foreign Service Institute. Just what could we hope to accomplish in such a short time period? We focused on the themes in **Figure 3**, with the intention of building beginning proficiency across the modes of communication while reinforcing concepts across the curriculum. In addition, we wanted to expose learners to the rich cultural heritage of the Chinese-speaking world in a child-centered manner.

Let me share two examples with you. First, did you know that the character for “autumn” (秋 qiū tiān) symbolizes setting fire to the rice paddy, an agricultural tradition following the summer growing season? Writer Mei Yu shared this and other stories about how characters developed with us. Even seasoned teachers (no pun intended!) found her explanations enthralling and her tips for teaching literacy around these explanations right on target.

**MY FAMILY (KINDERGARTEN)**

In this unit, students will be able to identify immediate family members in photographs and pictures accompanied by characters. They will be able to answer questions about the number of brothers and sisters they have and describe their families orally to the teacher and peers. They will be introduced to the Chinese way of talking about older and younger siblings. Students will listen to a Big Book about family members and then will label a visual and present their families to the class.

**Performance Outcomes**

Students will be able to:
- Identify immediate family members in visuals;
- Tell about their family members;

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**Ohio’s K-4 Mandarin Curriculum**

**Reading and Writing Guidance**

**Assumptions:**
- All language classrooms should support integrated literacy development through language-rich environments with meaningful print displays.
- Language acquisition in first and second language progresses naturally from oracy skills (listening and speaking) to literacy skills (reading and writing).
- Students bring oracy and literacy skills from home language learning to bear in learning a second language.
- Writing skills should be introduced at developmentally-appropriate points, and in a developmentally-appropriate manner, taking into account small motor skills and muscle development of young children.
- Students will be able to recognize more than they can produce.

**Therefore:**
- Before writing is encouraged, recognition skills (sight words) should be practiced through the use of flashcards and environmental print. (K)
- For very young students, writing practice should begin with large-format activities, such as brush work on large foam characters, air tracing, total physical response (TPR) or writing largely in sand. (K)
- Writing production should proceed from tracing and copying to experience writing characters (K-1)
- High frequency_commonly used words and radicals, and characters containing fewer strokes (under six or seven), will be targeted for writing in K-1. It is best to introduce characters in thematic groups, such as: (to eat), (to be), (to see).
- Move to labeling, matching, sorting, and classifying at the word, then sentence level.
- Surround students with text in the form of key words, word banks, charts, bulletin boards, signs, class rules, menus, etc.
- Use visual discrimination and directionality experiences with early readers.
- Model reading and engage learners through Big Books.

The choice of having students learn to write traditional or simplified characters is left up to the individual teacher or Chinese language department at each elementary school. To become proficient, students must ultimately learn to read both.

Use traditional or simplified characters consistently, or introduce students to both simultaneously.

Roman alphabet phonetic systems, such as Pinyin, may be used as a bridge to literacy, but students ultimately need to read and write characters to be considered literate.
• Label a visual of their families with the correct character for each member and describe their visual to the class; and
• Speak clearly and understandably with peers and the teacher.

MEET MY GRANDPARENTS (GRADE ONE)

Students will be able to recognize and sound out the key characters and use the sentence patterns learned in the lessons to introduce family members to others in Chinese. This unit will reinforce the curriculum of kindergarten (counting) and connect to the curriculum of grade one (arithmetic with one digit numbers). It will enable students to address the family members with appropriate manners and respect based on age.

Performance Outcomes

Students will be able to:
• Use culturally appropriate ways to ask for information about family;
• Ask and tell about their family members;
• Identify maternal and paternal grandparents;
• Speak clearly and understandably with peers and teacher;
• Recite a rhyme about maternal grandmother; and
• Match characters with visuals of family members.

PASTIMES AND HOBBIES (GRADE TWO)

This unit reviews vocabulary for sports and recycles the vocabulary for days of the week, weather and seasons, and family members. This unit also connects to math concepts by having students graph information about likes and dislikes of sports and hobbies. Initially, students will interpret and react to pictures, stories, illustrations, and audio clips. Then, students will interact with their teacher and classmates by identifying hobbies and asking and telling about their own hobbies.

Performance Outcomes

Students will be able to:
• Identify hobbies based on pictures;
• Ask and tell about their own hobbies;
• Write one sentence about a hobby starting with “I like to play...” (e.g., I like to play ping-pong "我喜欢打乒乓球" Wǒ xǐ huān dǎ píngpāng qíú.);
• Recite rhymes with body movements;
• Graph information about likes and dislikes of sports and hobbies;
• Identify famous Chinese people, such as Yao Min and Jet Lee; and
• Play Chinese sing-along game: “Dropping Handkerchief” (Duì Shǒu Juàn 跪手绢).

MOTHER’S DAY-FILIAL PIETY (GRADE THREE)

In this multiple-day unit, students will not only learn to say, read, and write simple messages for Mother’s Day, but also know about the famous story 孟母三迁Mèng Mǔ Sān Qiān (it’s the story of a mother who moved three times to give her son a better opportunity to learn and succeed in life), and learn to sing “My Dear Mom” (我的好妈妈Wǒ de Hǎo Māma).

Performance Outcomes

Students will be able to:
• Say mǔ qīn母亲 mother, jiē 节 festival correctly;
• Recall and pronounce ài 爱 love, wǒ 我 I, nǐ 你 you, and kuài 乐 happy correctly;
• Read and write “I love you我爱 you”Wǒ ài nǐ in simplified or traditional form;
• Tell about the famous story dedicated to the mother: Mèng Mǔ Sān Qiān 孟母三迁;
• Sing “My Dear Mom”(Wǒ de Hǎo Māma) 我的好妈妈; and
• Make Guāngróng huā 光荣花, one kind of Chinese paper-folding flowers.

AN ORIGINAL PLAY (GRADE FOUR)

This unit focuses on a Mandarin drama presentation. Students review previously learned sentences about getting acquainted with others by asking and answering questions; dramatizing children’s rhymes; and emphasizing the traditional family values of caring, responsible parents and respectful, obedient children.

Performance Outcomes

Students will be able to:
• Ask and respond to questions in order to identify strangers;
• Be aware of the dangerous result if one becomes greedy toward food from unknown parties through understanding of the skit; and
• Carry on dialogues in front of audiences that use new rhymes, expressions, and sentences and that review previously studied Mandarin.

The writing team met four times (total of 11 days) and worked electronically between meetings to complete their detailed units. Its work was put to the test during year three of the grant, when 15 teachers in 10 Ohio districts piloted the curriculum. To enable a strong start to the program and to begin forming a professional learning community, we brought the piloting teachers together prior to the opening of school to participate in a one day professional development workshop. We introduced the teachers to a set of five modules we designed to help them to scaffold discussion of the program’s content and to initiate a reflection process that we hoped would flourish during the year. Within the constraints of a one-day workshop we were able to work through five modules comfortably, even though each module can also stand alone as a focus for shorter professional development sessions. Additionally, the presentations and ancillary materials on the project website may be used for self-paced instruction or downloaded for group processing.

Ohio students in Rita Yeh’s combined grade three-four class in Gahanna-Jefferson Schools use the “Dropping Handkerchief” activity to review what they learned throughout the year (e.g., name; age; family; favorite fruit, beverage, or animal; where you want to go; what your Chinese animal is).
The five modules include:
1. General considerations
   • Time available and intensity necessary for a Mandarin Chinese elementary program
   • Include all children
   • Explicit grammar instruction (no!)
   • Heritage vs. non-heritage learners
2. Content-enriched instruction
   • What it is
   • Benefits
   • Age-appropriate connections
3. Backward design
   • What is backward design?
   • How to plan with the end in mind
4. Developing oracy and literacy skills
5. Using technology to enhance your program

To conclude our capacity-building day, each teacher received a map of Ohio with the piloting districts labeled. They were encouraged to network in person or electronically with other teachers throughout the year of the pilot. In the spirit of collaboration and reduction of isolation, the teachers used the units with their learners and then shared ideas and reacted to each other’s suggestions. We are hopeful that dialog will continue beyond the grant period and will expand to include Mandarin Chinese teachers from around the country.

In addition, we reviewed how to give feedback on the units in the online survey created for this purpose (see FIGURE 2). The survey asked piloting teachers to not only rate their agreement with the statements in the survey, but also to suggest modifications, offer alternatives, provide links to additional resources, and relay other pertinent information to improve the units.

Two examples from the feedback follow:

Kindergarten Unit: Greetings
Guest Teacher Wang Qin, Winton Woods, OH

Suggestion: At the beginning of each class, teacher and students should greet each other using “Tóngxué men hǎo!” (Hello, class!) “Lǎoshī hǎo!” (Hello, teacher!). And at the end of each class, say good-bye to each other in Chinese. Don’t wait until the end of this unit to teach this. This way they [students] can really know how to use the language.

Fourth Grade Unit: Autumn Festival Folktales
Daphne Chang, Laurel School, Shaker Heights, OH
I suggest the following modifications for the fourth-grade unit on the Autumn Festival Folktales:
• Revise the script. Choose simpler words and phrases so students can actually learn and perform the story meaningfully;
• Give a lot of time for students to practice and rehearse before putting the play together for performance;
• Revise the vocabulary words and phrases. Choose the ones that students can easily relate to;
• Provide more culturally rich materials for students to help them appreciate the Festival and its related subjects;
• Teach one poem only, and present it to students with some basic information about the poem and the poet;
• Provide a simple tune for the students to sing with Li Bai’s “Jing Ye Si”. More interestingly, sometimes students are eager to provide their own tunes to sing with the poem;
• Teach some characters from the poem for the students to practice writing;
• There is a children’s song called “Moon Lady” which I think is suitable for this unit;
• Let the students draw a picture based on the story they know; and
• Play games using pictures/objects/items related to the Festival or the folklore.

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Future users of the units will see the original work of the writing team and our piloting teachers’ suggestions so that they can decide what modifications make sense in their own teaching context. Some districts used the units in established elementary programs; others offered Mandarin Chinese for the first time during
the pilot year. In either case, teachers were encouraged to use the units at grade level to test the spiraling efforts of the writing team and to use age-appropriate curriculum with their learners.

Results indicate that the writing team’s work was right on the mark.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Prompt</th>
<th>Percent of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The unit daily plans were easy to understand and follow</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to adapt the daily plans to meet the needs of students</td>
<td>99.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to adapt the unit to the time allocations of my program</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unit prepared learners to be successful on unit assessments</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content, activities, and assessments were age appropriate</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students enjoyed the unit</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from piloting teachers’ feedback on units. N=203 units or approximately 13 per teacher.

Teachers agreed that the units were easy to understand and follow. They were able to adapt the daily plans to meet the needs of their students and to fit into the time allocations of their programs. It should be noted that several piloting districts did not allocate the suggested amount of time for instruction (90 minutes per week), choosing instead to offer more students exposure to the language for lesser amounts of time. When time fell below 60 minutes per week, teachers understandably experienced frustration as they had to re-teach more before moving forward. We hope that these districts learn from the pilot experience and reconsider time allocations.

Piloting teachers also agreed that the units prepared their learners to be successful on unit assessments and that the content, activities, and assessments were age appropriate. Beyond end-of-unit assessments and subjective opinion, curriculum directors helped piloting teachers choose a random sample of five to six learners from each class to participate in a final language assessment at the end of the school year. Teachers made charts of the performance outcomes from the last two units taught and assessed this sample of learners on the outcomes. Here are the results from one teacher’s first-grade class related to the unit “Meet My Grandparents.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Outcomes</th>
<th>Can Do Easily</th>
<th>Can Do With Help</th>
<th>Cannot Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use culturally appropriate ways to ask for information about family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask and tell their family members</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak clearly and understandably with peers and the teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, teachers affirmed students’ enjoyment of learning Mandarin Chinese through the units. This is perhaps the most significant indicator of success given that 4576 students participated in the pilot. What better compliment could the writers receive?

I mentioned the collaboration of the OSU’s Chinese Language Flagship. Writing team member Zhao Huanzhen is an integral part of the Flagship team, under the direction of Professor Galal Walker. She not only prepares advanced language speakers at the college level, but also is developing resources for elementary language programs based on our units. OSU is producing flash videos, audio files, and flashcards that align with our work. You can keep tabs on their progress by consulting the Flagship’s website at: www.k12chineseflagship.osu.edu/curriculum.html.

On a personal note, I highly recommend that project directors take Chinese or whatever new language is being added to the curriculum. There are many heritage weekend schools across the country, continuing education courses at universities, or online language learning opportunities from which to choose. I studied Chinese every Sunday for six months through one of the seven heritage schools here in Ohio. Knowing how the language works and having enough background to be dangerous was a tremendous advantage in working with this initiative. It enabled me to insist that “Yes, it can be done in Chinese” and to suggest strategies to help learners understand syntax (the order of elements in a sentence) and phonology (sounds, intonation).

As one of the piloting teachers stated upon receiving her compact disk of units, “Wow! I wish I had had this work years ago. It would have made my planning so much easier!” I sincerely hope that our detailed units fill this gap for you as well. Feel free to download the units and professional development modules from the project website. I wish you much success with your program!

REFERENCES


COLLABORATING WITH SUMMER CAMPS TO PREPARE CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS: LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE

With the RUSH to offer Chinese language instruction to PREPARE U.S. students for their role as future LEADERS in our GLOBAL society, we find ourselves in URGENT need of certified Chinese language teachers who UNDERSTAND and can implement standards-based INSTRUCTION.

We write this article with the goal of describing our model and explaining its benefits in more detail so that other teacher educators and school districts may choose to replicate or adapt this model as they work to offer critical needs languages and prepare teachers.

OUR COLLABORATIVE PRACTICUM MODEL

More than one hundred children from Pre-K through 6th grade spend their summer days at Discovery Camp, located at the Highland Park Middle School. As part of their camp experience, the children receive daily Chinese instruction. Camp counselors bring the students in age-level groups into our classroom for 45-minute Chinese lessons. The rest of the campers’ day is spent doing typical summer camp activities like arts and crafts, sports, and cooking.

Each year we design our curriculum around a theme that is age appropriate and meaningful in real-life contexts, designing our units and lessons so that they can be taught completely in Chinese. In 2008, our focus was the coming Beijing Olympics, and the campers learned Chinese while discussing sports, hearing stories about sports, and playing sports. As a special activity, campers met a local, former Olympian, table tennis player Lily Yip, who performed for them and got them playing table tennis (all in Chinese, of course).

At the end of the camp, we held an Olympic Sports Day, in which the practicum teachers organized soccer, table tennis, baseball and basketball events for the campers. The practicum teachers carefully planned these activities so that the children could use the language they had learned up to that point to greet each other, choose team names, keep score while they shot goals and baskets, count how long they could balance a ping pong ball on a paddle, cheer each other on while they played a ball toss game, and more, all in Chinese.

In 2009, we chose the theme of friendship and turned our classroom into a pet shop. The goal was to create an attractive, age-appropriate learning environment that would stimulate the children to learn how to make friends in Chinese as they learned to, for example, introduce themselves, talk about likes and dislikes, share what pets they have or would like to have, ask a friend to play with them. We made sure our curriculum included authentic Chinese cultural material, like the popular folktale, “Little Cat Goes Fishing” (小猫钓鱼), and information about the lifecycle of a uniquely Chinese animal, the panda. Everyday our classroom rang out with greetings of “Nǐ hǎo” as the children said hello to our classroom pets, xiǎoyú (little fish) and xiǎoní (little bird). Both years, our hopes were that the themes would prepare the children to be able to greet, welcome, and make friends with new immigrant children.

Teacher Educator Lucy Lee and the practicum teachers delight the children with a dragon dance.

Because interest in Chinese instruction, as well as in languages such as Arabic, Korean, Yoruba, Urdu, and Hindi, is new in the K-12 context, teacher educators do not have many established settings where teacher candidates can observe and engage in best practice. At Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, with the support of grant funds from the Freeman Foundation and STARTALK, we have developed an innovative model to prepare Chinese language teachers. Through collaborations with local school districts, we work with directors of summer camps to provide the much-needed, real-world practicum settings where teacher candidates can make the all important link from theory to practice.

For the past two summers, we have collaborated with the Highland Park School District, located in a small, diverse community in central New Jersey minutes away from Rutgers campus. With the support of District Superintendent Dr. Frances Wood, Assistant Superintendent Karen Lewis, Former Project Manager of Community Programs, Leslie Hodes, and Camp Director, David Luxenburg, we have provided Chinese instruction to more than 200 elementary-aged children and professional development for twenty-three future Chinese teachers. The program has proven to be successful for all. Our teacher candidates benefit from this carefully scaffolded practicum experience, and the district and students benefit through their exposure to the Chinese language and culture.
from Chinese-speaking countries who enter their school and neighborhoods, while getting them interested in learning Chinese and more about China.

Certified Chinese language teachers work as our lead teachers. Under our supervision, these teachers design the curriculum, implement instruction, and reflect upon the day’s activities together with the practicum teachers. When camp begins, our practicum teachers observe the lead teachers’ interactions with the students and, after a few days, the practicum teachers begin to create their own mini-lessons. To be able to work with small groups of students at a time they set up learning stations around the classroom. The children cycle through each of the stations, allowing the practicum teachers to repeat their lessons three or four times with new students. At the same time, we carefully observe the practicum teachers in order to give them feedback on topics such as how to stay in the target language, include all students, or adapt their lessons as needed. At the end of the day, we meet as a large group to reflect upon the days’ events and plan for the next day’s instruction. Each camp day, the teachers are asked to focus in their observations and reflective journals on a certain topic (classroom management techniques, strategies to maintain target language use, etc.), and other topics for discussion always arise as well.

To be eligible to participate in our program, perspective teacher candidates must have already taken a world language teaching methods course at Rutgers in which they are exposed to the theory and practice of standards-based teaching. They become familiar with the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century and learn about such topics as creating Chinese language and culture thematic units and lessons, teaching in the target language, using a variety of pedagogical techniques, differentiating instruction, and designing assessments. Finally, several weeks after the practicum ends, all participants meet for a follow-up meeting in which we reflect upon the practicum experience and suggest next steps in the teacher candidates’ professional development process.

Teacher candidates enroll in the practicum course for three graduate credit hours. Course requirements include active participation in practicum activities, class observations, lesson plan writing, mini-lesson teaching, keeping a daily reflective journal in response to guiding questions, and a final paper in which they discuss three theoretical second language acquisition concepts and how they played out in their practicum experience. Participants who successfully complete the practicum requirements (at both this setting and at our middle and high school camp) receive a tuition scholarship funded through our STARTALK grant. In addition, some of our summer participants are enrolled in master’s degree and certification programs at Rutgers and have taken other teacher education courses, some participants are planning to take an alternate route to certification while others are taking classes part-time as they decide if teaching Chinese is the career for them.

### BENEFITS FOR TEACHER CANDIDATES

Participating in our program provides a valuable and, at least here in New Jersey, unique experience for the teacher candidates. First, they have the opportunity to observe best practices and unlike typical practicum settings in which teacher educators do not have much control over what the pre-service teachers observe, we are always present and actively involved in the design of the lessons, and we can work with the lead teachers to make adaptations to their lessons if needed. Second, we can make sure we highlight some of the most difficult pedagogical skills for new teachers. For example, many of our teacher candidates come with a belief that target language instruction is not possible, especially for a language like Chinese. Not only do we provide an example of one-hundred percent Chinese instruction, we point out the strategies that enable teachers to maintain sole use of the target language: using many visual aids and realia; modeling target language use from minute-one of instruction; providing clear expectations and examples for students; emphasizing careful, advanced lesson-planning. In the practicum, the teacher candidates also learn how to react to real school situations, such as the everyday classroom management challenges of dealing with a disruptive child, the need to send a child to the nurse, or the appropriate response to a fire drill.

Teacher candidates also have the chance to observe, practice and reflect upon how lessons need to be adjusted for their diverse group of students. For example, lead teachers adjust lessons for the developmentally appropriate needs and abilities of the Pre-K through 6th grade students. They see, for instance, how to differentiate lessons to support students with special needs or heritage language students in the classroom. Third, we expose the teacher candidates to many pedagogical techniques appropriate with elementary-aged learners, such as using music for rhythm.
jazz chants and telling stories through Total Physical Response (Asher, 1969). The teacher candidates observe how we implement these techniques and adapt instruction, sometimes even from one class period to the next. They participate in our discussions and reflections about what works and what doesn’t, and in this way they gain an insight into an experienced teacher’s decision-making process.

We saw this in action in our storytelling lesson. By the second week of instruction, the children had become familiar with greetings, asking names, numbers, identifying their friends, and animal vocabulary through communicative activities. At this point, we wanted to teach them how to ask a friend, “Would you like to play with me?” We considered how to do this through the use of culturally authentic materials. One of our lead teachers suggested using and adapting a popular Chinese folktale in which a mama cat takes her baby fishing. In our version of the story, the two begin to fish at the side of a river, but animal friends arrive and call out “Nǐ hào,” (hello) to the little cat and invite him to play “Wǒ men yǐ qǐ wǎn, hǎo ma?” (Would you like to play with me?). The little cat goes off to play with his friends—a dog and a panda, and each time when he returns, his mother has caught fish (our students join the teacher to count out “yì, èr, sān...”), and the little fish sadly has caught none (méiyǒu yú). This goes on until the last friendly visitor, a butterfly, arrives, and the little cat finally says that playing together won’t be a good idea, “bù hǎo.” He stays with his mother to catch fish, and this time when the children count the fish in the little buckets, both the mama cat and the little cat have fish!

After the storytelling lesson, we suggested to the camp counselors that they ask their campers to retell the story later in the day. One counselor reported back to us that during their snack time the children were able to retell the story in English to them, demonstrating that they had understood the story, which had been told to them completely in Chinese. She added that one student even told her that the story was about how important it was to focus on what you are doing and not to get distracted! In this way, we were able to model to the teacher candidates how they can get the grade level teachers they will be working with to help them check understanding and make formative assessments as well. They see how the use of culturally authentic materials highlights cultural perspectives such as staying focused and concentrating on doing a job well through language use.

Our practicum teachers observed how this lesson needed to be adapted in its complexity for the Pre-K students and 6th graders. All grade levels were seated on the floor as the teachers went into storytelling mode; however, the Pre-K students, on the first presentation of the story, were simply told the story. They actively listened and responded, but they were not ready on the first presentation, unlike the 5th and 6th graders, to begin acting out the story. In one class, a child with special needs stood and made regular interruptions to the story, and the practicum teachers saw how the teacher, still in the target language and with clear gestures, patiently helped the student sit and listen. They also observed how the lead teachers made an adaptation to this lesson, by creating new visual aids after telling the story the first time in order to have a clearer presentation of each stage in the story. One of the teachers made a storyboard in power point slides, while the other used a flannel board and stuffed animals to tell the story and, in one telling of the story, the lead teacher hid the little cat’s fish in her hand and slipped it into his bucket when the children weren’t looking. The fish appeared to come out of nowhere, like magic, and the kids were thrilled. Of course that adaptation was kept for all the lessons!

In this way, the continual learning and adaptation process of even a seasoned teacher is modeled for them. Sometimes our lead teachers show the practicum teachers that individual lessons may not work as planned and may need tweaking. The teacher candidates listen as the certified teachers reflect upon their lessons, and as they discuss how their own participation in the program helps improve their teaching as they teach in front of an audience, receive feedback and adapt their lessons. One of the best parts of participating in the practicum is that it enters the teacher candidates into a professional network of experienced and new teachers. For those who adhere to a sociocultural approach to learning which draws upon Vygotsky’s (1978) theory that learning occurs through our interactions with more expert others, becoming part of a social network of Chinese teachers is an essential part of the professional development process.

**BENEFITS FOR THE DISTRICT AND THEIR STUDENTS**

The Highland Park School District knows the campers receive high-quality instruction and is pleased with our collaboration because, without it, they would not be able to offer Chinese to their campers. While the program is brief, it sparks language awareness and intercultural sensitivity, and for some of the young learners heritage pride. We work with experienced teachers, and with the three lead teachers, two teacher educators, and ten practicum teachers, we have about a one-to-two ratio of teachers to students. Through our project, we also support the district financially with our grant funds, purchasing camp materials and t-shirts which read “Discovery Camp, 华语夏令营 (Zhōngwén xiàlìmíng is cool)”, and funding camp events such as the visit from Olympic table tennis player Lily Yip, a dragon-dance celebration, and a Chinese yo-yo presentation by local high school and college-age champions. We even have anecdotal evidence that the campers were enjoying and learning Chinese too. One of our lead teachers laughed while she reported to us that while in the bathroom, she heard a little voice call out from the other side of the bathroom stall, “Nǐ jiào shénme mìng neqí? (What’s your name?).” She answered her name, and asked the student her name in Chinese, only to hear the student’s little voice quietly call out, “Natalie!” Chinese had become a part of the camp experience both inside and outside of the halls of our classroom and when our teachers met the campers in the school halls, they were greeted with calls of “Nǐ hǎo!” We see the campers’ curiosity, willingness to use Chinese, and enthusiasm as evidence that their interest in Chinese and China was sparked.

We are anticipating more benefits for the district too. Currently we only offer short-term exposure to Chinese for the campers. However, we are planning on finding more long-term permanent curricular options for the district through helping them find funding to hire a teacher and offer Chinese in their afterschool program.

**LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE**

Our practicum teachers take what they have learned in their world language teaching methodology class and first, see it in action with dedicated teachers and real students and then put their own new learning into action. The teacher candidates have the chance to practice within a sheltered environment in which we provide the tools and scaffolding to help them be successful. Additionally, by our having control over the curriculum and input into the instruction we can ensure that teacher candidates observe and plan for standards-based, best practice. They also see how we work together with the local community-the school district and our invited guests-so that we can provide a carefully designed and implemented Chinese learning experience for students.

We know that this summer practicum is not a complete solution for preparing teachers. They would still benefit greatly from participating in a traditional teacher education program, and they will need on going professional development as they enter the teaching profession. We meet individually with each practicum teacher to discuss his or her long-term professional development plans and give feedback on his or her particular needs. We have
noticed that many of the new Chinese immigrants who enter the profession need additional support to raise their English language proficiency and increase their knowledge of the United States public school system. As such, we have created an additional class especially for this purpose. We also follow up this elementary-level practicum experience with a middle and high school STARTALK Chinese language immersion camp offered through the Princeton and West Windsor/Plainsboro Regional School Districts directed by World Language Supervisors, Priscilla Russel and Rosanne Zeppieri. In this way, teachers are exposed to a range of high-quality instruction at the Pre-K through 12th grade levels, and they observe many excellent teachers in the process. We are also presently working with STARTALK to create on-line teacher education workshops in which we can provide professional development opportunities based on our summer camp teacher preparation programs for a broader audience.

ASIA SOCIETY FROM PAGE 20

language learning experiences for students in elementary, middle, and high school Chinese language programs. Taking a historical perspective on the development of contemporary Chinese society, we highlight the diversity of Chinese society and focus on China’s role in the exchange of culture, ideas, and products throughout history. These materials are designed to be used by Chinese language teachers, Social Studies teachers, and others interested in building interdisciplinary content into their Chinese language program. The first lessons will be available online early in 2010.

The best source of updates about our Chinese Language Initiatives is our monthly e-newsletter and developing web presence. We offer continuing guidance to administrators starting Chinese language programs, help teachers learn about best practices in curriculum and instruction, and offer thought leaders in the field perspectives on language acquisition, partnerships and exchanges, and the integration of Chinese language and other academic content in American schools. We also continue to distribute publications that offer support for schools interested in establishing new programs or enhancing the scope or quality of existing ones, such as our New York Task Force Report on Chinese Language and Culture Initiatives and Creating a Chinese Language Program in Your School.

Another of our resources that may interest elementary educators is the Asia Society Kids website (www.kids.asiasociety.org) where you will find illustrated stories, games, and other interactive content. Our Education and Learning website also features elementary school lesson plans and other materials for educators.

As we know, it takes a village to educate our children, and through collaborative efforts we can best prepare tomorrow’s teachers so they can reap the benefits of pedagogical theory and real-world experience. When teacher educators and local school districts work together to provide opportunities to observe and participate in best practices, the chance that we are fostering teachers who will implement best practices in their own teaching grows. In this way, we can prepare students in U.S. schools for the global world in which they will study, work, and live. In the words of modern reform leader and scholar Līăng Qī chāo (our country is wise, rich, and strong as long as its youngste are).

RESOURCES

For more information about opportunities for Chinese and other world language teachers at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and elsewhere, check out the following web sites:

Rutgers, Asian Languages and Cultures website:
http://www.rutgers.edu/-eosian/

Rutgers, Chinese Language Initiatives website
http://k12chinese.rutgers.edu/Site/The_Initiative.html

Rutgers, Graduate School of Education website:
http://www.gse.rutgers.edu/

Rutgers, World Language Institute website
http://wli.rutgers.edu/wli.php?page=home

STARTALK website:
http://www.startalk.umd.edu/

REFERENCES


Please visit www.asiasociety.org/education to learn more.

For more information specifically about our Chinese language initiatives, please visit www.asiasociety.org/chinese

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JEFF WANG is Assistant Director for Chinese Language Initiatives at Asia Society. Jeff worked for the Connecticut Shandong Sister School Partnership Project. Holding a degree in German he is a native of Shanghai.
This is how we begin every day at Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School in Waterbury, Connecticut. In the past 15 years, more than 1500 students have participated in our Japanese Language and Culture (JLC) Program in grades Prekindergarten through 5th. Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School (MIMS) is the only elementary school in Waterbury that has a world language program and is one of only two elementary Japanese programs in Connecticut. How has this program managed to survive and thrive all of these years?

**JAPANESE AND MIMS: A PERFECT FIT**

The JLC Program acts as an important “magnet” in attracting students from other districts to the school entrance lottery. In addition, the program is a perfect fit with the school’s mission:

- Nourish a multicultural education community
- Promote inter-group understanding and interaction
- Guarantee education for the whole child with an emphasis on emotional development
- Diminish the isolation of minority urban and white suburban students
- Promote the cultural and linguistic diversity of children
- Help maintain and develop language facility other than English
- Support harmonious inter-group relations in communities which are and are not linguistically or racially diverse.

MIMS implements this mission via a “multicultural curriculum” throughout the school, various school programs and events, and the Japanese Language and Culture Program.

Japanese language instruction arrived at MIMS thanks to block grants that the State of Connecticut had received under the federal Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP). These funds targeted “Critical” languages such as Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Korean, and Russian. The school committee tasked with choosing which language to introduce was impressed with a visit to the East Hartford-Glastonbury Magnet School Japanese Program. They also decided that Japanese would be the most feasible in terms of finding a teacher and materials. The school received the grant for Japanese with matching funds from the City of Waterbury and hired its first teacher in January 1994 to begin a program in grades K-2. MIMS received FLAP funding once again in 1996 to expand to the upper grades. By 1998, the Interdistrict Magnet School Operating Grant funds fully supported the program and in 2002, the document “Building Upon Success: The Impact of FLAP Grants” cited the MIMS as an outstanding example of a successful program that had begun and continued with FLAP funding.

The Japanese department consists of Jessica Haxhi, currently teaching pre-kindergarten and grades 3-5, and Kazumi Yamashita-Iversen, a native of Japan and former assistant teacher in the program, teaching grades K-2. All students in grades K-5 receive 75 minutes of Japanese instruction per week (in 2 times or 3 times per week schedules) and Prekindergarten classes receive 25 minutes of Japanese per week.

There has been much discussion over the years about continuing the program past fifth grade. Because MIMS is a magnet school, the students come from many different towns and attend many different middle schools after fifth grade. For one year, MIMS received funding from the City of Waterbury to offer classes in two of the public middle schools; however, scheduling and staffing difficulties soon ended the program. The school has also received interdistrict grant funds to offer summer programs for alumni for a few summers. Consistently, however, we have found that the best plan for giving all of our students the opportunity to continue studying is to offer an “Alumni Class” after school once-per week for a small fee but only a small percentage of the alumni are able to attend these programs due to various other commitments. Therefore, during the PreK-5 years,
we focus a lot of our advocacy efforts on teaching parents about the general benefits of languages for children, such as the development of language learning skills, cultural knowledge, and attitudes toward others. We encourage parents to keep their children in any world language class as they move to the middle school - reassuring them that we have given their children the skills to be successful language learners.

**CURRICULUM: STANDARDS-BASED AND USER-FRIENDLY**

As teachers, we are fully supported in our efforts to write curriculum, attend professional development, implement new technologies, and develop materials. Even with that support, it has taken us many years to arrive at a curriculum that is teacher-friendly, parent-friendly, and standards-based. Our curriculum is grounded in the national Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1998) and incorporates specific objectives from the Connecticut World Languages Framework (2005) and the Waterbury "Curriculum on Wall" (COW). We have carefully chosen objectives in each of the "5Cs" that match our schools' needs and time frame. To facilitate understanding by parents, students and future teachers, we then divided the curriculum into four major Task Areas: Socializing, Talking About Myself and Others, Getting Things Done, and Experiencing Japan.

While all task areas incorporate Japanese cultural topics, we felt that "Experiencing Japan" best summarized the communication practiced as students describe events in Japan, such as festivals, daily life, or even what they would do on a flight to Japan. For each Task Area, we chose communication objectives on which to focus, as well as Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities objectives. These task areas scaffold teachers' work in planning units, recycling vocabulary and concepts, and building student communication skills over time.

The Task Area pages include a specific list of vocabulary and functions as well, classified into those that introduced in grades K-2 and reviewed in grades 3-5 and those added as new concepts in grades 3-5. This greatly helps with articulation, especially in the transition between the two teachers from grade two to three.

Teachers use the Task Areas to plan smaller thematic units about once every two months. We use Multiple Intelligences Theory to plan activities within each unit. We incorporate technology daily through the use of PowerPoint presentations, student laptops, and most recently, iPads and SmartBoard activities. Other considerations when developing units are the use of meaningful, real-world tasks and regular connections to the grade-level content. For example, first graders use math skills to plan a shopping trip using a price list and a limited amount of yen. They practice sequencing skills from the Language Arts curriculum as they retell Japanese folktales using concepts of beginning, middle, and end. Fourth graders locate world countries, identify flags, and make comparisons of schools around the world as they talk about their own school, heritage and native languages. Fifth graders map Japanese folktales using character, setting, problem and solution sheets.

Each unit includes a performance-based and rubric-scored assessment in at least two modes of communication. For example, we have students shopping from each other, conversing with a partner, making a commercial, completing a listening comprehension exercise on the iPods, or presenting a project to the class. The assessment and unit plan are designed well before teaching of that unit begins. At the end of each unit, students receive rubric scores and, in the upper grades, students often fill out checklists of "Can Do" statements as well. In January and June, parents receive a detailed progress report generated by a database program the teachers have created. Currently, we are designing oral and listening comprehension assessments for use at the end of second and fifth grade to measure individual student performance over time and to evaluate the overall program against our curricular goals.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT: A TWO-WAY STREET**

From the inception of the program, administrators have been strong supporters of the Japanese program and its teachers. At the same time, we have worked establish our role within the school community. The Japanese department organizes a yearly International Education Conference (described below), we maintain a school survey website, and we serve on various school committees when needed. We honor our administrator's busy schedules by communicating with them primarily via email and making appointments whenever we need to meet with them in person.

We make teachers and administrators aware of the content-related lessons in our curriculum and often remind them of the benefits of learning Japanese. Every year, we give a "Frequently Asked Questions" paper to all teachers and administrators. We created a packet describing the benefits of learning languages for all teachers new to the building. In our conversations with homeroom teachers and in our lesson plans to our principal we highlight content-related activities. Over the years, the school as a whole has done very well on state standardized tests. The scores are usually among the highest in the city and we are currently achieving AYP goals.

While we have not done a comparative study to claim that Japanese language learning has assisted with these successes, we are confident that we are making a contribution. We consider ourselves to be part of the team of all of the teachers and administrators in the school working toward student achievement.

**ADVOCACY: ALWAYS ON OUR MIND**

Although we enjoy a wonderful relationship with our administrators, colleagues, community members, parents and students, we are constantly aware that elementary world languages
I always continue lessons. We began this tradition five years ago. Grandparents, aunts, family friends, and our alumni students often accompany current

Lunch with the Senseis

A few times per year, the Japanese teachers meet students and their families at a local Japanese restaurant for Sunday lunch. Ahead of time we arrange the reservation with the restaurant and send home an announcement to families. We usually have two seating times per Sunday, with 60 seats available for each. Families who want to join us send in their R.S.V.P. and meet us at the restaurant. We explain the menu, admire the decorations and chat with participants. Families order whatever they want to eat on the menu and pay for their own food, just like any trip to a restaurant. This event is so popular that we usually have a waiting list even though we do meet about 240 people at the restaurant every year since we began this tradition five years ago. Grandparents, aunts, family friends, and our alumni students often accompany current

students and many families participate repeatedly. Because we can have casual conversation with parents and guardians, we become close and they become program supporters.

Parent Visitation Week

In Japan, there are days that parents come to see their children's class called "Jugyo Sankan" (class visiting). Incorporating this tradition into our program, we started "Parent Visitation Week." Parents and family members can come into class to watch their child learning Japanese during a regularly scheduled Japanese class. We send the Japanese schedule along with an invitation to parents about three weeks in advance.

For the visitation days, we do not prepare special lessons. We continue to teach our regular units. The visitors are always
impressed by their child’s ability to understand and participate in the classes, especially because we speak Japanese more than 95% of our class time. Many children are shy about speaking Japanese at home so this is a great opportunity for parents to see them learning and to hear them speaking Japanese. This event is one of our favorites because it involves little special preparation, but it is very effective for advocacy. Some parents visit all three classes in the week!

Summer Festival
This festival is the only large-scale event that we organize each year and it has far-reaching school and community advocacy benefits. We collaborate with library and art teachers at Maloney and teachers at a high school in our district for this yearly “Natsumatsuri” (Summer Festival) for all of our first grade students. We invite their families as well as Board of Education members and local media to the festival.

During the school year before the festival, local high school students take Family and Consumer Science classes learn how to sew “yukata” (cotton kimonos) and make them for all of our first graders (usually 80-90). Other high school students learn how to make sushi in their cooking classes. On the day of the Natsumatsuri in June, the students who made the yukata help the first graders to put on and tie their yukatas while the high school students from the cooking classes make and serve sushi for the parents and children in attendance.

During the festival, the library teacher leads first grade classes with performances such as “The way we are: Life in Japan and the U.S.” and “Haiku” presentation. The Japanese teacher leads classes in Japanese holiday songs (New Year’s Day, Girl’s Day, and Children’s Day) and in telling the much loved Japanese folktale “Momotaro” (The Peach Boy).

After the stage performances, we all go outside and do a Japanese traditional dance on the playground. The students make a big circle and dance while their families watch and learn the dance. Then, we invite everyone to join in. After dancing, we go back to the cafeteria to eat sushi and enjoy the first graders’ art work that the art teacher has displayed.

At the end of the day, students can purchase the yukata for ten dollars, if they wish. About half of the students purchase them every year. The money covers all expenses for the fabric for the yukata and for sushi for the following year. Most students fondly remember the festival even when they are in fifth grade. Parents who have younger siblings inquire as to when the festival will be for their next child.

High school teachers love the event because it gives their students real-world experience. A few Board Members, the Assistant Superintendent, and the high school Principal have attended and they are always impressed by the first graders’ Japanese, the high school students’ skills, and the level of collaboration between the schools. It is a wonderful chance to collaborate with other teachers in our school and the high school to showcase the students’ Japanese language and cultural skills.

Promotion Performance
Fifth graders sing Japanese songs at the Fifth Grade Promotion Ceremony every year. This means a lot to us because it shows that the Japanese Language and Culture Program is a significant part of students’ experience at Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School. We take this opportunity to thank parents and students for their support and remind them that there will be future opportunities to meet through the Alumni Class and Japan Trips. They leave Maloney on this day with great final memories of our program.

Japan Trip
One of the most powerful advocacy activities we have done was to organize a trip to Japan for our students, alumni, families, and teachers in the summer of 2008. A total of 46 people joined the trip and visited Tokyo, Hiroshima, Kyoto, and Osaka. The highlights of the trip were a visit to a middle school in Tokyo and our pen pal elementary school in Osaka. Students attended classes with Japanese children and ate lunch in the classrooms with their hosts. These families have become our strongest advocates as they have experienced the benefits of knowing the language and culture first hand. They also spread the word to other families about the trip. We have many requests for another trip within the next two years.

International Education Conference
In addition to Japanese program advocacy efforts, we feel it is important to contribute to the overall success and operations of the school. In 2002, when our principal first approached us about possible activities for the nationwide “International Education Week,” we created an “International Education Conference” that we now run every year. We invite parents and community members who have lived or traveled in other countries to do a 25-minute presentation during multiple conference “sessions”. Fourth and fifth graders choose the sessions they are interested in from a business-like brochure, receive a conference schedule, and attend four different sessions during the morning. The payoff is significant: students love learning about other countries first-hand, we are able to interact with more community members, and we provide a unique service to our school.

CLOSING
It takes diligence and persistence in many areas to keep a FLES program standing strong over time. We must establish a strong match with our school curriculum, maintain great relationships with colleagues and administrators, be an indispensable part of our school, make sure that all students are challenged and successful, help parents to feel involved and excited, and be ever visible to our administration and community. Most importantly, we must do these things consistently, without relaxing our efforts, every day and every year. These are the keys to standing strong.

Many of the documents mentioned in this article, such as our invitation to Parent Visitation Week, Lunch with the Sensei’s and our Frequently Asked Questions page are available for download at http://maloneyjapanese.wikispaces.com/
The JLC Program website is http://teacherweb.com/ct/maloneymagnetschool/japanese
"I love and work and sing
I listen to the Spirit.
In all things I speak my mind.
I walk without fear.
I am Cherokee."
Marilou Awiakta (Cherokee), Song of the Grandmothers (Awiakta, M., 1997)

THE ATSE KITUWAH ACADEMY AN IMMERSION MODEL THAT HOLDS THE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF THE CHEROKEE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

THE ATSE KITUWAH ACADEMY – CHEROKEE IMMERSION PROGRAM

Facing the magnificent new home of the Atse Kituwah Academy (New Kituwah Academy), more than one hundred visitors sat in a half circle enjoying the warm October sun. They were waiting for the Grand Opening Celebration to begin. Cherokee words began to gently float through the fall air when elders of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the United Keetowah Band of Cherokee, and the Cherokee Nation opened the celebration with prayers. Cherokee words soared skywards when renowned Cherokee vocalist Paula Nelson sang the Cherokee anthem. Cherokee words strung into sentences, songs, prayers, stories, and oral teachings form the invisible bond between past generations, the audience honoring the mission of the academy, and the lively young children dressed in traditional Cherokee attire who carried the ribbon to be cut to officially open the Atse Kituwah Academy on this warm October afternoon (Kituwah Celebration Program, October 7, 2009).

The Academy houses the new Cherokee immersion school in Cherokee, North Carolina. Cherokee is located on the Qualla Boundary in the mountains of the western part of the state, the contemporary homeland of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). In 2005, a comprehensive study of the health of the Cherokee language revealed that of a population of over 10,000 EBCI members, only about 420 members were fluent speakers. Of these, 72% were older than 51 years. Only 2% of all households used the Cherokee language at home. The study estimated that the last fluent speaker will pass away in about 25 years (Kituwah Celebration Program, October 7, 2009). The EBCI has reacted forcefully to these dire statistics. Two years after the publication of the study, the Kituwah Language Revitalization Initiative was in place to guide a comprehensive multi-pronged tribal effort to save and revitalize the Cherokee language. Supported by the tribal government and supplemented by programs to re-establish public usage of Cherokee in local media and the community at large, the immersion school has become a key component of the Kituwah Initiative (see below). In addition to supporting the

Atse Kituwah Academy, the EBCI has forged a partnership with Western Carolina University (NC) to create teaching licensure programs for language teachers through university courses and internships and to conduct language revitalization research and scholarship. In October of 2007, the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, Northeastern State University, and the United Keetowah Band of Cherokee Indians formed the Cherokee Language Consortium to unite linguistic resources and organize joint programs to revitalize and strengthen Cherokee language. Such unity of purpose and action is firmly grounded in the knowledge that “the values, culture, and spirituality of Cherokee peoples are embodied in our language and culture” (Kituwah Celebration Program, October 7, 2009).

CHEROKEE HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

The traditional homeland of the Cherokee encompassed over forty thousand square miles and extended across eight states, including North and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. The near destruction of the Cherokee nation culminated in the forced removal of fifteen thousand Cherokee men, women, and children during the infamous Trail of Tears, 1838-1839. In the twenty-first century, the Cherokee constitute the largest American Indian tribe in the United States with over 300,000 members. Cherokee, a member of the Iroquoian language family, is now spoken mainly in two dialects, the Middle dialect among the EBCI, and the Overhill dialect among members of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma. Despite its gravely endangered status, Cherokee speakers constitute the seventh largest group of indigenous language speakers in the United States and Canada (King, D., 1988).

Today’s perilous state of the Cherokee language is not simply an accident of history, nor is it an isolated incident when compared to the status of other North American indigenous languages. It is estimated that at the beginning of the European invasion of
“Turtle Island”, the indigenous name of the Americas, a minimum of sixty-two language families existed, all of whom sub-divided into almost countless local languages. Numerous language isolates were spoken in addition to the more than sixty-two language families. It is a widely shared characteristic of North American indigenous languages, including Cherokee, that a sentence can be expressed in just one word composed of multiple syllables (polysynthetic language structure). Languages became extinct or threatened by extinction through two devastating European imports: contagious diseases and colonialism (Bender, M., 2007).

Native Americans had no immunity against the European transmission of measles, smallpox, influenza, diphtheria, cholera, bubonic plague, and tuberculosis. It is estimated that over 90% of indigenous populations in Mesoamerica died of epidemics between 1519 and 1619. From Mesoamerica, epidemics swept north through Spanish Florida. The English brought diseases to the Atlantic coast with equally devastating results. Colonialism worked toward the destruction of indigenous peoples, their languages and cultures through forced removals from their homelands, through enslavement, through destruction of traditional economies, and most significantly, through forced assimilation (Waselkov, G., Wood, P., & Hatley, H., 2006).

Whereas early missionaries such as the Jesuits made an attempt to learn indigenous languages and practice bi-lingualism, the United States government enforced assimilation through the creation of boarding schools, where children were strictly forbidden to speak their native languages, and were taught to be ashamed of their language and heritage as “primitive” and “heathen.” In her remarks at the Grand Opening Celebration of the Atse Kituwah Academy, Renissa Walker, tribal manager of the Kituwah Preservation and Education Program (KPEP) and an immersion parent, powerfully evoked memories of EBCI members who attended Boarding School in Cherokee and were not allowed to speak their native language.

And yet there is also a remarkable story of resistance and pride in the Cherokee language to counterbalance the destructive impact of European invasion. Throughout history, the Cherokee people strove to maintain control over educating their children and young people by adapting oral usage to writing and by creating Cherokee educational institutions. By 1851, young Cherokee men and women were able to attend Cherokee seminaries in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. A brilliant Cherokee linguist, Sequoyah (born ca. 1778) developed a Cherokee syllabary in 1821, which the Cherokee people rapidly adopted. The first Cherokee newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, used the syllabary from its inception in 1828. The Atse Kituwah Academy is the most recent example of Cherokee educational leadership (Conley, R., 2007; King, D., 1988).

BACKGROUND ON THE CHEROKEE IMMERSION PROGRAM

The Cherokee Language Program began its journey to establish an immersion program in 2004 through several collaborative projects with the local community that provided a support network for the program initiators. In the spring of 2004 a partnership with Tribal Child Care made it possible to open the first immersion class for seven children ages two to six months in the infant/toddler wing of the Dora Reed Center, a preschool located in Cherokee. In the six months that followed, the program merged with Cultural Resources to form the Kituwah Preservation and Education Program (KPEP) that focused on immersion education, community language programs, and cultural resources. From 2005-08, the program worked to build stronger ties with the Cherokee Nation and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee in Oklahoma and to increase the number of students in the program. A partnership with Western Carolina University (NC), Northeastern State University (OK), and the Cherokee Nation established support for the language revitalization initiative as well as collaboration to share research and resources. The EBCI began another partnership in 2009 with the Cherokee Central Schools that led to the founding of the Atse Kituwah Academy as a satellite program under their auspices (Kituwah Celebration Program, October 7, 2009).

The Atse Kituwah Academy (New Kituwah Academy) represents the future of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The community’s unification efforts in recent years demonstrate its dedication and commitment to the school’s mission to revitalize and sustain the Cherokee language and culture. A distinguishing feature of the Atse Kituwah Academy’s immersion program is that children begin their language experience at age two. Currently, 27 children are enrolled in the pre-Kindergarten program, age two to five, and six in the Kindergarten program (Kituwah Celebration Program, October 7, 2009). The immediate and long-range plans for the Academy are to provide an immersion program in Cherokee for pre-Kindergarten through grade 12, adding a group of children ages one to two in 2010, and birth to one year in 2011.

ATSE KITUWAH ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

“The Kituwah Academy provides a nurturing learning environment in a language immersion setting where students, staff, families, and the community work in partnership to rekindle our language and to instill pride in being Kituwah First.” We believe that:

- “Kituwah First” is the primary focus of the Kituwah Academy. Cherokee language, culture, traditions, and history are the foundations of the school and its instructional programs.
- The development of a second language enhances all areas of our students’ academic development. Challenging educational experiences are provided in order to maximize brain development, especially in the first five years of a child’s life.
- Instruction is student-centered, provided in a loving, nurturing environment. Learning occurs best when it is hands-on, experiential, and richly contextual.
- The tradition of helping those who need help, Gadiugi, will inspire a sense of community and instill cultural pride in our students.
- Parents and families have the first responsibility in education. Strong parental commitment is essential in reaching our vision of producing fluent speakers.
- The fluent speaking community is the heart and soul of AniKituwagi. Without the language, we cease to exist as Kituwah.” (Kituwah Celebration Program, October 7, 2009).

The criteria for admission to the Atse Kituwah Academy reflect the high level of responsibility of the stakeholders involved...
in the immersion program. According to Gilliam Jackson, Ate Kituwah Academy Administrator, the admissions process begins with an interview that the selection committee conducts with the parents of the prospective student. In order for the child to be considered seriously for admission, parents must demonstrate commitment to the school’s mission to sustaining the language and culture. One criterion for admission is clear evidence of the parents’ interest in the Cherokee language. This can be demonstrated in a variety of ways including classes in Cherokee the parents have taken and family associations with the remaining speakers of Cherokee. The selection committee is also interested in knowing how the parents will support the students’ language development, asking, for example, if there are family members who can and will speak Cherokee with the students and the frequency of involvement with these family members (Personal Interview with Gilliam Jackson, October 18, 2009). Parents are expected, to the best of their ability, to support language use in the home and to provide opportunities for their children to interact on a regular basis with family members and others who speak Cherokee so that they are able to further their proficiency development outside of school. Actively involved as volunteers in the classroom and participants in school events and Kituwah Preservation and Education Program-sponsored activities such as the annual Kituwah Celebration and the Language Revitalization Symposium (Walker, R., 2009), parents of children in the Cherokee immersion program also play an important leadership role. The Cherokee Immersion Parents Board serves as a means of communication between the Board, the parents of students in the program, the Kituwah Preservation and Education Group, administration, and staff. They also coordinate fundraising events, programs, and activities for the school. The Board members’ vision is to immerse themselves in the life, language, and love of their children (Parent Board Bylaws, accessed October 25, 2009 from www.fluent1.com).

The Ate Kituwah Academy employs teachers who are speakers of Cherokee. Teachers of pre-school age children hold a North Carolina license for pre-Kindergarten, and those who teach in the elementary grades hold the license for grades K-5. Currently, there are eight language specialists and three assistants in the pre-Kindergarten program and one Kindergarten teacher. The immersion program follows the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and the Cherokee Language Consortium meets regularly to assist the school with the development of the language used in the curriculum that is adapted from the Cherokee Nation Curriculum. This collaborative plan is another means to document the Cherokee language formally and ensure its survival for many years to come (Walker, R., 2009). The teachers rely heavily on the Sequoyah Syllabary for developing the students' literacy. According to Gilliam Jackson, the school faces challenges in finding appropriate resources to use to teach reading and writing, and they work closely with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma to find authentic materials and books to use in instruction.

Instructor is proficient in Cherokee and is able to write phonetically using the Sequoyah Syllabary and translate from English to Cherokee and Cherokee to English. The Language Specialist Assistant and Instructional Assistant are fluent in Cherokee, complete coursework in child development at the local community college, and work in the Kindergarten through grade 5 classrooms. The Language Specialist is fluent in Cherokee and has completed advanced coursework in child development. This specialist is assigned to work in an elementary grades classroom. The Academy Teacher who is not Cherokee, is a licensed elementary grades teacher and receives specialized in-service training and professional development from the Cherokee Central Schools (Walker, R., 2009). Western Carolina University offers a program in Cherokee Studies to enhance these career paths.

It is essential to the program leaders that they nurture and support the teachers in the Academy because their expertise is critical to the long-term goals of the program. The enrollment in the pre-Kindergarten through Kindergarten classes has been purposefully monitored and kept at a low number so that teachers will feel positive about their work with the youngest children in the immersion program and will want to continue for many years as language specialists. One way that the program is providing additional support to the immersion program is through the Second Language Learners Mentors Program. These are students living in the community who have demonstrated a willingness to learn the language and an interest in teaching. They receive training in the summer beginning at age nine or ten in both language and teaching, and at the age of 14, they become interns, serving as instructional aids in immersion classrooms. One such young Cherokee woman who is a Second Language Learner, Kelly Murphy, dedicated several years to learning Cherokee so that she could work with the very young pre-school children. Interviewed to become an intern at age 15 and selected for fluency in the language and passion for teaching in the immersion program, she is today, at the age of 20, pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education. Kelly’s career choice is evidence of how the new generation of speakers plays an important role in the revitalization (Personal Interview with Gilliam Jackson, October 18, 2009). The immersion program leaders also work closely with specialists in the local community who assist with language and translation needs and finding appropriate cultural resources.

The Kituwah Preservation and Education Program currently offers a language career plan to encourage community members’ involvement in educational experiences affiliated with the immersion program. There are in-service training and professional development available for the four career paths identified as critical to the survival and growth of the Academy: Community Language Instructor, Language Specialist Assistant and Instructional Assistant in grades K-5, Language Specialist in grades K-5, and elementary grades teacher in grades K-5. The present Community Language
efforts (Personal Interview with Gilliam Jackson, October 18, 2009). This unique feature of the immersion program, which aims to provide additional speakers of the Cherokee language in the classroom, has the benefit of offering young people the opportunity to gain proficiency in Cherokee through interactions with the youngest learners in the program, thus increasing the number of speakers of Cherokee (Walker, R. 2009).

THE FUTURE OF THE CHEROKEE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The success to date of the revitalization efforts to sustain the Cherokee language and culture in this small community tucked away in the mountains of western North Carolina has made a positive impact in many ways. According to Gilliam Jackson, there is an enormous amount of pride in the language and culture that has grown significantly over the past five years. Enrollment in adult Cherokee language classes has increased, reflecting a desire to support and promote the revitalization efforts. The movement to ensure that the language and culture survive has energized the community, and there is good reason to believe that the children who have been a part of the Cherokee immersion experience at the Atse Kituwah Academy will carry forward their heritage for generations to come. They are the future of the Cherokee language and culture (Personal Interview with Gilliam Jackson, October 18, 2009).

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Official website of the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma
www.cherokeeheritage.org

Official website of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
www.nc-cherokee.com

Official language website of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
www.fluent1.com

Official website of the United Keetoowah Band, Oklahoma
www.unitedkeetoowahband.org

Official visitors’ website of Cherokee, North Carolina
www.cheroke-nc.com/index.php

History of the Cherokee Indians

Cherokee legends

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www.cheroke-nc.com/index.php?page=73
BRINGING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO THE ELEMENTARY GRADES: PAVING THE WAY WITH ITALIAN

THE BEGINNING

Studies on second language acquisition show that the earlier a child is exposed to instruction the more likely he or she will be successful in attaining high levels of proficiency. I knew that if real change were going to take place in Linden, New Jersey, the ideas and beliefs that embody multiculturalism and multilingualism would have to be implemented much earlier in a student’s academic career than now happened in our district. Language instruction would need to start in elementary school.

With that notion, some encouragement from colleagues, and a gut feeling that my district was ready for change, I did what all first year supervisors are warned against—I knocked on the superintendent’s door with my mission in mind and the latest research on foreign language learners gripped tightly in my clenched fist, ready to rock the proverbial boat. Thankfully, the superintendent listened with a sympathetic ear to my pleas for an elementary program, and offered a promise of support. From that moment our department began moving forward without looking back.

One important step was to locate outside funding. The Italian-American Committee on Education (IAICE), a non-profit organization founded in 1975, and located in New York City provides funding for and promotes the study of the Italian language and culture, and offered our district $250,000. That generous funding combined with the cooperation of the Italian Consulate, enabled the public school district of Linden to create an elementary Italian program, one of few in the country. With these monies and the support of the Consulate the district could offer sustained professional development opportunities, and hire native speaker teachers to introduce la bella lingua (the beautiful language) to hundreds of children as early as first grade.

While the Linden Public school district more than matches this support, the grant has been instrumental in the continual growth of the program and in a culturally diverse urban community such as ours it has created a rare opportunity to expand our students’ language study options. This year, over a hundred students who started their study of Italian in the second or third grade are now beginning their seventh year of instruction.

OUR PROGRAM

Our goal for all of our language programs is to increase communicative proficiency levels and we want to see our students move from the novice levels into the intermediate levels and beyond. The cornerstone of the foreign language curriculum in Linden is that it is authentic, inquisitive, and global. Textbooks are used, but as resources, not as the backbone of our program. The authenticity in the classrooms comes from our native-speaking teachers’ ability to integrate songs, dance, and stories straight from the homeland. These educators believe in and model the idea that “learning a language is living a language.” We aim to provide each student with rich, authentic, and meaningful experiences in the target language that enrich and expand to connections with content across the curriculum. Such experiences will help our children not only to acquire a second language, but also ultimately contribute towards fostering high academic achievement across the curriculum.

At the elementary level, the themes embraced in the Italian class are as closely tied as possible to those that the students are studying in their language arts classes. For example, when classes study fables then we introduce Italian fables, to deepen the students’ overall understanding and appreciation of the genre. In the thematic unit “The Creative Mind,” teacher Anthony Fischetti teaches his students parts of the body and character
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The content of the activities, such as those dealing with animals, will enhance many content enriched elementary thematic units. Can, however, be easily changed to make it accessible to students of all proficiency levels without losing any of the intended objectives and the content of the activities, such as those dealing with animals will enhance many content enriched elementary thematic units.

Elementary students meet with their Italian teachers twice a week for thirty minute classes. The middle school students follow a cycle schedule where they study Italian for 45 minutes a day for one marking period a year and we are working to expand middle school into year long courses. In high school language classes meet daily. What started off as a pilot program for first graders in 2003 has grown into a twelve year program that culminates with a senior IB International Baccalaureate) class in which students can earn college credits.

Harnessing the natural inquisitiveness of children is critical to the success of any school curriculum. Lessons are challenging, activities are social, and assessments are project based. Teachers opt for authentic forms of assessment that challenge students to use their target language for real life purposes as they demonstrate their growing proficiency through creating portfolios, completing projects, and participating in performances. Students benefit from widespread exposure to native speakers and authentic culture and, when they reach the high school level, through our exchanges. These permit students to acquire the target language, attain a continually deepening awareness of cross-cultural perspectives, and ultimately develop a more sophisticated understanding of the world and its workings.

ADVOCACY

Even with the funding and support of the Italian-American Committee on Education and the Italian Consulate, advocacy is a critically important aspect of our program, as it is for most elementary programs, and here we look to parent participation to create staunch allies. Our teachers begin the school year with friendly letters of introduction and continue with frequent communication throughout the year. We create many opportunities for our parents to see the program in action: visits to our classrooms, special assemblies or joining us on field trips. With all of the enthusiasm generated by the program so far, we are optimistic that the program’s growth and success will continue.

BILINGUAL FAMILIES

These days more and more parents—to be want to pass on to their children the gift of a second language be it their own heritage language or a language in which they are highly proficient. Enter Bilingual by Choice the comprehensive book that Virginie Raguenaud has just written to guide parents as they make the decision to raise their children bilingually and then to support them in the long, not always smooth process of creating and maintaining a bilingual home. Hers is a common sense approach as she mixes her personal story with research findings and offers a balanced combination of theory, practice and reality. Citing the research that supports the benefits to children of learning a second language right from the start, the author also offers various protocols for putting resolution into practice, such as One Parent – One Language (OPOL). Among many topics, Raguenaud discusses the role of grandparents and other family members and addresses the issue of how the bilingual/bicultural family can successfully interact with schools and in other situations outside of the home. The book finishes up with a potpourri of at home language activities and resources for parents and kids to enjoy together that range from playing Scrabble to finding target language clips on YouTube.

IMAGINATIVE AND USEFUL JIGSAW AND INFOGAP ACTIVITIES

Español en Pareja Júnior is a collection of mini-lessons that are designed to stimulate oral interaction, provide practice working in pairs, and expand vocabulary. Every activity gives each student information that the other student needs, thereby creating interaction.

The book is divided into three sections. The first gives a general outline of each thematic unit and the grammar and vocabulary it addresses. The second section lists the type of responses that the unit is designed to illicit. The third section is reproducible handouts, one for each student for each thematic unit. The thematic units cover history, art, sports, animals, idiomatic expressions, legends, and others.

The thematic units and drawings are fun and interesting. Undoubtedly, teachers will find units in this book that coincide with a thematic lesson from the classroom. Although this book is called "Júnior", it is not necessarily aimed towards elementary or middle school students. The directions for students on the handouts use advanced vocabulary and verb tenses that may require additional assistance.

With the units in their current form, this book is most appropriate for novice high and levels above. Each unit can, however, be easily changed to make it accessible to students of all proficiency levels without losing any of the intended objectives and the content of the activities, such as those dealing with animals will enhance many content enriched elementary thematic units.
The classroom is not completely quiet since there is a lot of gigglng and, occasionally, a lapse into speaking but this class of seventh graders is communicating with one another using only hands and facial expressions. It's hard to believe that this is possible for a group of pre-teens; however, it is the norm at Seminole Middle School in Plantation, Florida.

On this particular day one group of six students is sitting in a corner of the classroom fingerspelling to each other all the words that can be formed from ‘Seminole Middle’. They have created 25 words. Another group is in the hallway teaching the ‘Pledge of Allegiance’ to new students who have just joined the class this year and a third group sits at a round table in the classroom working with flashcards containing words printed in the sign language alphabet. The students are all using American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with their peers and the instructor, Karen Burnside.

American Sign Language began at Seminole Middle School in August 2007 as part of the program, D.E.C.A.L (Division of Communication and Law), the brainchild of principal, Dr. Kris Black. Her goal was to offer a program that would entice advanced middle school students from around Broward County to Seminole and the hook she used to entice them was the opportunity to receive up to seven high school credits by the time they leave eighth grade. Additionally, each student enrolled in the D.E.C.A.L program had the choice of selecting American Sign Language or Spanish as their foreign language.

Seminole Middle serves as the only middle school cluster site for students in Broward County who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) and since a teacher was already in place in the D/HH department when the D.E.C.A.L program was launched it was a natural match to start an ASL program for hearing students. The ASL program at Seminole Middle offers three courses for the students who enroll. Sixth graders take Introduction to ASL for an entire year and then 7th and 8th graders take ASL 1 and 2, high school level courses for which they receive high school credit. The ASL 1 and 2 curricula align with the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA.org) designed standards for high school courses. The students have the identical text used by all high school ASL programs throughout the county and, additionally, all ASL 1 and 2 students at Seminole take the common county high school midterm and final exams. Seminole follows a block schedule for all courses, so ASL classes meet every other day for a period of 85 minutes.

The middle school students of Seminole have many ways to use their growing knowledge of ASL. Enrollment in these high school level courses enable them to participate in the high school county-wide world language competition each February and this past year one of Seminole’s students received the highest rating in the ASL 2 competition. Of course, the most effective way to learn another language is to put the student into immersion situations and while with other foreign languages that often requires an excursion out into the community or a trip to another country at Seminole this is easily accomplished within the school walls. Since ASL students have the opportunity to use their skills with students at Seminole who are Deaf and depend on ASL to communicate. Often the ASL students will sit with the D/HH students in the cafeteria, attend fieldtrips and/or communicate with them in their elective classes such as drama, art or physical education. In addition, many of the ASL students have volunteered to go into the D/HH classroom to provide tutoring. Outside of the classroom ASL students also have opportunities to learn and experience Deaf culture. For example, in April many of the ASL students attended a picnic sponsored by an ASL club at a nearby high school. In addition to the ASL students, all 30 D/HH students from Seminole attended. The ASL students marveled at how “normal” the D/HH students were and everyone was having fun regardless of the communication mode in use.

**Popularitly of American Sign Language is Growing**

“Enrollment in American Sign Language increased by nearly 30% since 2002 making it the fourth most studied language on college campuses, slightly ahead of Italian.” (MLA.com) Anticipating responses from its survey of more than 4,000 institutions of higher education across the nation, the American Sign Language Teacher Association (ASLTA) predicts that results will show that only a minority do not offer ASL (ASLTA.org). Disappointingly, the picture is not as bright at the K – 12 levels. Even though more and more high schools are beginning to offer ASL as a foreign language, there is only a handful of middle and elementary schools that have come on board and Seminole Middle seems to be the only middle school in the country offering ASL for high school credit. Often at the elementary level schools will bring in a volunteer who has taken sign language to teach the students some words and a song but not many offer ASL as a structured course. The future, however, could be brightening since many states now accept ASL as a foreign language and interest seems to be growing at the younger levels.
WHAT IS ASL?

ASL is not simply a gestural form of English. Vigoda points out that ASL is so different from English that when "translated literally (it) can sound like broken English" (Vigoda, p 24) and Wilcox provides a more detailed look at the structure of ASL as he reiterates its uniqueness: "[ASL] is not English; it has its own phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. [...] Unlike English, ASL is a polysynthetic language. Words in ASL are very different from words in English. For example, words in ASL can be verbs that incorporate subjects and objects within themselves, while presenting also complex adverbial, temporal, and other information." (Wilcox p 183 – 4) Using ASL involves the hands, head and body, with constantly changing movements and orientations. Fingerspelling is the process of spelling words by using signs that correspond to the letters of the word. An ASL user would use the American Fingerspelled Alphabet, also called the American Manual Alphabet, comprising 22 handshapes representing 26 letters of the American alphabet when held in certain positions and produced with certain movements.

Research indicates that classes taught in the new language, L2, enable students to become more fluent in the second language. [Yang] At Seminole, teachers introduce vocabulary and concepts via illustrations projected onto the SMART Board, an interactive whiteboard. Using ASL, the instructor presents new topics so, for example for sports, students see illustrations to introduce vocabulary and learn the signs. Sports are also a vehicle for talking about likes and dislikes, favorite activities and Wh-questions all in ASL. On the classroom wall, a Word Wall displays key words that students need in basic ASL conversation and the class practices these frequently.

CHINESE IMMERSION FROM PAGE 19

lagging in English literacy skills and to train other teachers on specific strategies for reading intervention.

RESEARCH

The goals of the assessment and professional development activities are to inform teachers of where improvements can be made to the academic program. Related to this is doing research by collecting and analyzing data from PVCICS’s immersion program. Specifically, Chinese and English teams work together to develop curriculum and review assessment results so that adjustments can be made as needed to reach targets.

For example, the English speaking teachers administer regular English reading assessments to collect data on student performance. They will collect data from these assessments over a period of years to understand and analyze any effect that Chinese immersion may have on English literacy. Research shows that English proficiency in students in French and Spanish two-way immersion programs may lag non-immersion students in the early years, but they do catch up later on.

The research question is whether those research results hold true for PVCICS’s Chinese immersion program.

Continuing Success

Each year when we ask students, "Why did you select ASL?" many sixth graders state that they thought it would be easier than Spanish. However, by the next year many comment that while not necessarily easier they find it more fun and add they can always take Spanish in high school. One parent noted, "ASL has taught my daughter something that learning Spanish could not do...it has taught her to be more understanding and sensitive in dealing with people with disabilities".

Now in its third year, the program at Seminole Middle has grown due to the support of the new principal, Mr. Angel Almanzar. There are two classes of Introduction to ASL, a large class of ASL 1 students and a class of 21 students who are taking ASL 2, their third class of ASL. The school anticipates continued growth in this program as more students enroll in classes and its "graduates" continue their learning at the high school.

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CONTINUING SUCCESS

Related to this is seeing if there is a relationship between lags in English and Chinese literacy and if there are predictors to problems in developing Chinese literacy. The ultimate goal is to improve teaching literacy in both languages in an immersion environment.

SUMMARY

Now in its third year, Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School looks forward to reaching full capacity of at least 300 students and to helping other schools develop immersion programs. Our school has experienced tremendous growth in enrollment in its first three years. PVCICS currently is planning to expand to be a full K-12 grade program in partnership with a local high school for grades 9 through 12. This proposed collaboration should provide educational benefits to both schools.

For more information, the school's website is www.pvcics.org.
In mid-April the snow lingers on the mountaintops surrounding Anchorage, Alaska, but spring transcends winter at Turnagain Elementary because it's time for the long-awaited Проводы Зимы (farewell, winter) celebration! Take a trip on the Trans-Siberian Expressway to Vladivostok, stop at Тула for a cup of Russian tea, then on to Иркутск for fishing. Transfer to Moscow and paint near Собор Василия Блаженного. While there, have a “spring fix” and purchase a sun-catcher or handcrafted flower pot. Inquire directions from a Russian teacher or ask for one of those сушки (mini-donuts), that she wears like a necklace. The farewell winter celebration warms the spirits and teaches Turnagain students how their circumpolar neighbors usher in the longer days and dismiss the dusting of snow on the peaks. There is much to celebrate!

Six years ago Project Starship MIR, the Russian language “shuttle,” launched at Turnagain Elementary, one of the Anchorage School District’s 65 elementary schools. The MIR “peace” mission originated with encouragement from the local business community to prepare students for Alaska’s future economic, social and political ties with neighboring Russia, less than twelve miles away. Young Alaskans learning Russian also renew interest in this less commonly taught language as they discover there are many shared heritages and customs of the Alaskan and Russian peoples following years of isolation during the Cold War.

The MIR lift-off (2003) was fueled by a FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) grant from the U.S. Department of Education and a local funding match. At the time, Turnagain’s was one of the only known Russian elementary immersion programs at a public school in the United States. In this immersion model native Russian speakers teach each half of each day’s content in Russian and English partner teachers teach the other half in English. The program was launched with kindergarten and first grade and each year expands by adding the next grade level, so that the model is built step by step. Today the Russian partial immersion program spans kindergarten through sixth grade with 271 students, seven native Russian teachers and seven English partner teachers. All teachers are highly qualified and certificated. Sixty-one percent of the school’s students are in this program—within-a-school, and the remaining students receive weekly Russian lessons from Елена Фаркас, MIR’s FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) teacher and project coordinator and a native of Магадан, sister city to Anchorage in the Russian Far East. Thus it is that all 441 students at Turnagain are learning Russian.

Russian immersion at Turnagain is a program of choice. Like other optional programs in the district, a lottery determines entry with preference given to neighborhood families and siblings. Weekly classroom tours and monthly orientations offer parents the opportunity to learn more about the program prior to the lottery. Parents of kindergarteners are sometimes nervous about having their children learn all subjects for half of the day in Russian; however, their fears subside as the school year progresses. As one parent wrote to another parent less than two weeks after school had started, “Mitchell is showing great appreciation for the language Ms Olga is teaching him. Every night he’s singing in Russian or reciting words. This morning I asked him a question and his response was her (no). It’s time for me to learn Russian!”

TOTAL SCHOOL EMBRACES SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Students, staff and parents are all learners of Russian at Turnagain! In addition to the FLES and immersion program strands, the school offers weekly evening classes for staff members and parents where they learn beginning Russian vocabulary, useful phrases such as Добро пожаловать! (Welcome!) and Как дела? (How are you?) Much like the little ones in kindergarten, they recite their numbers from one to a hundred. As both adults and children begin writing with the Russian Cyrillic alphabet they gain an understanding of a language much different from their own. After a ten-week session they can perform simple introductions and greet one another in Russian. These skills come in handy at a school that often receives official visitors (e.g. the U.S. Consul General in Vladivostok) and curious native speakers from the local community. The language lessons extend beyond the classroom. Signs in Turnagain’s hallways are printed in English and Russian and school announcements broadcast in two languages, followed by the Russian
“word of the day,” Principal Meg Marman observes, “It is fun to go down the hallways and have the children try out their Russian with me at every opportunity. It is easy to see the progression of the language in our younger students. The kindergarteners can be counted upon to correct the adults in their pronunciation of the words.”

The transformation of Turnagain into a community of enthusiastic Russian language learners gets a boost from the extended learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Enrichment classes in Russian folk art, pop music, dance, sports, and games are popular after school activities. Another favorite is the annual summer camp “Artel,” (named after Prussian pioneer camp) in which students are immersed in experiential learning through cultural themes, such as Лукоморье (Russian Fairy Tale Land) and Олимпийский Спорт (Sport Camp). The Russian native speaker camp staff and junior counselors from the high school Russian classes collaborate to teach the campers. The local Russian community joins Turnagain staff, parents and students during annual cultural celebrations, Носорогий Елька (New Year Tree) and Пришвадьба Зимы (the long awaited “farewell winter” event. Each year a Russian artist-in-residence, in coordination with the school’s art and music teachers, works with Turnagain students to stage a culminating performance, either visual or performing arts. These artists include painters, folk dancers, choral groups, theater professionals, and children’s authors, all from Anchorage’s talented Russian community. There is no doubt that Russian language and culture is alive and celebrated at Turnagain Elementary School!

PARTIAL IMMERSION PROGRAM MODEL

The Russian program uses the Anchorage School District’s longstanding Japanese and Spanish partial immersion programs as its model. When first approved by the district school board in 1989, the immersion model was adopted because it is the model “that has the greatest success in terms of language outcomes” according to the Elementary School Foreign Language Program Goals Chart in Languages and Children: Making the Match, by Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg. In the partial immersion program, students have a ‘team’ of two partner teachers, one an English speaking teacher and the other, a speaker of Russian. For one half of each day, students are immersed in Russian while receiving instruction in the local district curriculum. Students learn content, e.g. math, science, social studies, while becoming bilingual and biliterate in Russian. Partner teachers collaborate and plan for instruction, taking into consideration the need to separate languages and to some extent, support one another for each content area. When the Russian teacher is responsible for science the English teacher will provide support by having students read science books that have more difficult text. Together teachers design thematic units that integrate content areas and maximize time for instruction. Teachers mirror one another’s classroom management rules and strategies and conference with parents as a team. Planning together is one of the key components of program success.

Professional development that combines school year and summer experiences develops and nurtures partner teams. Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg guided the unit plan design process during annual summer institutes and ongoing trainings include credit courses for cooperative learning and technology, workshops for new-to-program teachers, and grade level L2 literacy workshops.

SUSTAINABILITY: DISTRICT COMMITMENT TO A K-12 PROGRAM

Future flight paths to connect the eventual K-12 program were established with the first kindergarten cohort, the “class of 2016.” Nearby Romig Middle and West High Schools are the identified official “feeders” for the elementary program. Communication is the glue that connects the elementary, middle and high schools. Last spring Turnagain parents invited the middle school principal to their monthly meeting to talk about the transition to middle school and together they discussed the possibilities of a future student trip to Russia. Additionally, high school Russian teacher Michele Whaley collaborates with FLES teacher Elena Parkas to promote interaction between the age groups. For example, high school students play lead roles in the annual New Year celebration and work as junior counselors during the summer “Artel” camp. Ms Whaley invited the Turnagain students to perform for the statewide high school Russian Olympiada last May when young language learners’ Russian proficiency amazed the high school students!

Program support at the district level is important; however the commitment of students and parents is vital. We stress that learning a second language takes a long time and we ask parents of the immersion program students to commit for the duration of the K-12 program. Periodically we ask students to reflect upon their own learning of Russian and to consider how this learning will benefit them in the future. One 3rd grader writes, “My mom says that if I take Russian until I’m in high school, I will most likely have more places to go for college, because they need bilingual people.” Students who choose to continue in the Russian program at both the middle and high schools will receive the “ASD immersion program completion cord” at a formal program ceremony and earn recognition at graduation.

The district’s superintendent, Carol Comeau, an advocate for language immersion education, receives the credit for leading us with the vision of a K-12 Russian program. Ms Comeau is “thrilled with the success of our Russian Immersion Program. The program has increased cultural understanding for another culture and the world, and led to strong school and business partnerships. Neighboring West High School will provide a strong support for these students as they increase in language proficiency through the grades.”

Sustaining the orbit! Capacity building is key to the longevity of this early language learning program. We have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the program advances from kindergarten through high school with increasing enrollments over the years. Each year the district supports the hire of an additional Russian teacher to advance the program to the next grade level. “Non-negotiables” are in place to preserve the program model. First is the separation of languages by teacher, by classroom, and by instruction.
Switching homeroom classrooms at each quarter grading period maximizes time in the target language. If students have an English homeroom in the morning for the first quarter they will have an immersion language (Russian) homeroom in the morning for the second quarter. The teachers monitor the number of minutes of the instructional day devoted to the target language. Another "non-negotiable" is the first grade at second semester cut-off for entry of new students into the program; however, heritages and native speakers of Russian who have both speaking and literacy skills are encouraged to enter at all grade levels.

The FLAP grant provides support for materials and curriculum development, training of new and experienced teachers, and an external evaluator to monitor the program development and provide practical, objective feedback. Dr. Mimi Met, a frequent program visitor, observes classrooms, interviews staff and parents, and reviews curriculum materials produced by the teachers.

ACCOUNTABILITY: HOW DO OUR STUDENTS MEASURE UP?

The data show that the Starship MIR has a solid flight plan. Immersion program students who learn core subjects in Russian for approximately half of their school day achieve on par with their classmates who are not in the program and, in many cases, they achieve at a higher level. Turnagain Principal Meg Marman compared standardized test scores for both groups and found that without exception the immersion classes outperformed their peers in the percentage of students proficient on the Alaska Standards-Based Assessment in the areas of reading, writing, and math.

Their teachers routinely assess immersion students for Russian language proficiency, using the Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix for this purpose. At present students receive a traditional report card for grade reporting; however, the immersion teachers are currently involved in the district's SBAR (Standards-Based Assessment Reporting) project with educational consultant and researcher Robert Marzano. The intent is to design new assessment tools and a reporting system based on ACTFL standards.

LEARNING RUSSIAN PREPARES PRODUCTIVE GLOBAL CITIZENS

According to Yong Zhao, author of Catching Up or Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization (2009), the U.S. faces significant challenges in preparing children to live in a global society. Most noteworthy among these challenges are attaining foreign language proficiency and building a sense of global citizenship. Russian immersion parents want their children to be successful global citizens. Turnagain parents Zareena and Allen Clendaniel spent a year in China teaching English to college students, most of whom were fluent in at least three different languages. Impressed, they decided they really wanted their children to learn another language too believing that learning a second language is a lifetime skill that will also make it easier for their children to learn additional languages, opening more opportunities for them in the future.

Today’s Turnagain Elementary students are tomorrow’s global citizens. The program provides the infrastructure to begin early the study of Russian, a less commonly taught language that is important to Alaska and its people. As Russia’s closest eastern neighbor, Alaska is experiencing an influx in the number of Russians moving to the 49th state along with a rise in business and educational exchanges. Alaskan businessmen travel frequently back and forth in the development of shared resources such as oil, coal and gold. Turnagain students are in preparation for the workforce needed in the very near future. They will be linguistically prepared and culturally competent, with the ability to interact effectively with people who speak different languages and hold different values. Having the advantage of an “early start,” students discover as kindergartners that speaking Russian is not so difficult and that they too can sound just like their teacher, Ma Olga!

Immersion students are learning social studies and science in Russian. At third grade students learn about the geography, people and history of Alaska and in fifth grade they study the ecosystem. On the journey, students gain content knowledge, vocabulary, and proficiency skills in preparation for sixth grade discussions about complex issues. Among the themes this year will be climate change in the Beringia Arctic region. West High Russian students will talk with the sixth grade class about their experiences in Anadyr, Russia, where they examined with their Russian counterparts melting permafrost and the changing migration of animals crucial to a subsistence lifestyle. They will also teach the sixth graders some words in Chukchi and Yup'ik as well as traditional dances, turnkeying what they learned of the Russian culture and way of life and their new international friendships.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

The number of students learning Russian in the Anchorage School District has increased from 114 to almost 400 over the last five years. These are the students who began their studies early in their elementary school careers! Each year the numbers will continue to grow as new students enter at kindergarten. The first cohort of Russian immersion students will enter middle school next year and high school in 20012. This is a non-stop journey to proficiency in a less commonly taught language that is important to global security and prosperity. The Starship MIR “peace” mission is on trajectory!

REFERENCES


The San Francisco Unified School District is seeking excellent teachers for our Mandarin Immersion schools.

Be part of a vibrant multi-cultural community that is focused on crafting the very best learning opportunities for its students.

The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) has five elementary schools with Chinese immersion programs, three in Cantonese and two in Mandarin—Starr King Elementary and Jose Ortega Elementary. The Chinese Immersion Schools are part of the SFUSD Vision of “Multilingualism for All” so that every child in the district has the opportunity to become bilingual and biliterate with intercultural competency skills.

As we expand our immersion offerings, we are looking for several talented Mandarin teachers who will help increase multilingualism in San Francisco public schools. Our teachers are strongly supported by a Mandarin immersion coordinator who helps create curriculum and works with teachers and a highly committed parent group, the Mandarin Immersion Parents Council. SFUSD was recently awarded the highly coveted Federal Foreign Language Assistance Program Grant to fund professional development for teachers.

If you’d like more information on eligibility requirements or to apply, please send an email to teach@sfusd.edu.

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