

# **West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District**

## **World Language Program Review 2007**

**This document highlights the 2007 World Languages Program Review.**

**To read World Languages curriculum information,  
please go to Rubicon Atlas on the  
West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District web site:**

**<http://www.west-windsor-plainsboro.k12.nj.us/curriculum.html>**

# WW-P WORLD LANGUAGES PROGRAM REVIEW

## **Comments from the Facilitator/External Consultant**

Since February, it has been my pleasure to serve as the facilitator/outside consultant to the review of the district's world language program. The district has ensured the effectiveness of this review process by making it one that is led by its own staff with the support of an outside specialist who assists but does not direct the process. Rather than having an outsider come into the district and "do" an evaluation, the West Windsor-Plainsboro plan has called for the process to be led by its own—by those who have the greatest buy-in and the greatest stakes in the results of the work. In my capacities as a state supervisor for world languages and as a consultant-at-large, I can honestly say that this process has been the most thorough, gratifying and potentially most useful one in which I have had the opportunity to participate.

A few words about the process . . . I met with the review committee in February to frame the scope of the information that we would gather in order to make this process an informed one. That meeting focused on the kinds of data the committee and I would gather, the timelines for gathering the data and how we would gather it. A great deal of that day's time was spent in initially designing the online surveys that would be taken by students, teachers, administrators, counselors and parents. Subsequent work by the committee focused on refinement of those surveys and on review of curriculum documents, course descriptions, and assessment suites following pre-determined rubrics measuring their adherence to national and state standards and best common thought about language teaching and learning.

I returned to the district for seven days in early May to visit all classrooms and to conduct focus groups. Every elementary, middle and high school world language teacher was visited in a classroom setting for approximately 30 minutes so that trends across classrooms and buildings could be determined. Additionally, focus groups were facilitated for the following groups:

- Middle school students
- 9th grade students
- 10th, 11th and 12th Grade students
- World language teachers
- Elementary School Administrators
- High School Administrators
- Middle School Counselors
- High School Counselors
- Parents
- Board of Education members

Following the classroom visits and focus groups, I prepared summaries which were submitted to the review committee.

The review committee and I met again for two days (May 23-24) to review and analyze all of the data gathered. Strengths of the program as well as challenges it faces were identified and have been compiled by the committee chair.

The Board of Education for the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District has every reason to be proud of its world language program. It is well-conceived, well-implemented by a very professional and highly competent staff of teachers and supervisors and is well known throughout the State of New Jersey and beyond for its quality and its vision. There is much to celebrate, yet there is room to improve. I am confident that the full report of the review committee will illuminate the strengths of this fine program as well as the challenges that it might confront in order to reach the full measure of its greatness.

I appreciate the opportunity to have played a small role in the success of this endeavor.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Duncan  
President

Former Coordinator of Foreign Languages and International Education  
Georgia Department of Education

May 24, 2007

## **World Language Program Review Committee Members**

Ellen Blejwas	Teacher – HSN
Antonella Facchini	Teacher – CMS
Amalia Gnanadesikan	Parent
Jenna Simanovsky	Student – CMS
Kaitlin Woo	Student – HSS
Jaime Micallef	Teacher – GMS
Jennifer Orlikoff	Parent/Teacher – CMS/HSN
Jose Rodrigo	Teacher - HSS
Dan Siegel	Teacher – DN
Guyler Tulp	Teacher – CMS
Carol Meulener	World Language Supervisor
Roseanne Zeppieri	World Language Supervisor
Greg Duncan	InterPrep Inc. – Consultant
Mike Zapicchi	Principal – HSN
Hemant Marathe	Board of Education Liaison

### Methodology for World Language Program Review:

Visit Number	Days Met	Activities
1	2/23/07	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial meeting with evaluation team to envision a plan to gather information for program evaluation</li> <li>2. Design faculty, student and parent surveys</li> <li>3. Determine whom to invite to focus groups and when these will be scheduled</li> <li>4. Create a timeline for entire program evaluation process</li> </ol>
2	5/3,4 5/7-11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultant visited all WL classrooms (68 teachers, 30-minute visit per teacher; approximately 5 full days)</li> <li>2. Conducted focus groups for teachers,* administrators, counselors, students, parents, board members (2 days)</li> </ol> <p>* Two after-school focus group opportunities for teachers were scheduled and that these groups had representation of elementary, middle and high school teachers.</p>
X	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultant writes reports of teacher visits and focus group meetings; distributed to evaluation team</li> </ol>
X	X	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. WW-P staff administer surveys; compile results; distributed to evaluation team</li> </ol>
3	5/23,24	<p>Consultant met with evaluation team to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. review/discussed information from classroom visits, focus group meetings and surveys</li> <li>2. outlined strengths and areas of growth for the WW-P WL program</li> <li>3. determined how needed areas of growth will be addressed</li> <li>4. identify resources needed to address needed areas of growth</li> </ol>

## **Synopsis of 2-12 World Languages Program**

### **Grades 2 - 5**

- FLEX Program Model
- Proficiency-oriented approach to second language acquisition
- Highly qualified world languages specialists
- 5 Spanish teachers at the K-3 level and 5.6 Spanish & Chinese teachers in grades 4 & 5
- 80 minutes of weekly instruction (two 40-minute sessions)
- Thematic units with integration of storybooks and other texts that provide context and authenticity
- Curriculum units created using the Wiggins & McTighe model of backward design
- A variety of methods and techniques that include Total Physical Response, Total Physical Response Storytelling, and the Natural Method
- Daily assessment through observation, oral and physical responses, and questioning.
- Assessment data used to inform curriculum and instruction
- Yearly assessment of a sampling of students in grades 2, 3, 4, 5 following a Student Oral Proficiency Assessment model

### **Grades 6 - 8**

- Proficiency-oriented approach to second language acquisition
- Highly qualified world languages specialists
- 24 Spanish, Chinese, French, German middle level teachers
- 200 minutes of weekly instruction (daily 40-minute classes)
- Heterogeneously grouped classes
- Thematically organized units of study anchored by performance assessment units in the three modes of communication
- Curriculum revisions using the Wiggins & McTighe backward design model
- Variety of assessment tools that include performance tasks, projects, tests, quizzes, oral interviews, and writing samples
- Differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Teacher-generated materials
- Textbook and ancillary materials as well as a variety of authentic texts, storybooks, magazines for teenagers, and documents from the Internet used as resources
- Increased emphasis on formal reading and writing with a focus on literacy strategies adopted in all content areas

- Annual writing assessment for all eighth grade students to evaluate the efficacy of the program
- STAMP online assessment of eighth grade students in the areas of reading and speaking
- District supports and encourages professional development, allotting an annual stipend of \$250 for out-of-district workshops and conventions
- A variety of co-curricular experiences available to students:
  - Yearly trips to Montreal and Quebec for middle and high school students
  - Soirées Françaises, Maifest, Tertulia and Chinese Festivals that showcase students' language skills and cultural understandings
  - Yearly "World Cup" tournaments at the middle schools as culminating performance for units on healthy living
  - High school trip to France

## **Grades 9-12**

- Proficiency-oriented approach to second language acquisition
- Highly qualified world languages specialists
- 28 Spanish, Chinese, French, German and Latin high school teachers
- Approximately 240 minutes of weekly instruction (depending upon the rotating, one-hour schedule)
- Teachers work as teams that meet regularly throughout the year
- Consistency maintained across the two high schools
- Curriculum and major assessments developed jointly
- Ongoing communication and articulation meetings with the middle school program
- Course selection determined by the student, parent and guidance counselor after a recommendation from the teacher
- Opportunities for students to advance within each program, culminating with an Advanced Placement course in Spanish, Chinese, French and German
- Opportunities for students to continue world language study throughout their four years of high school, even if they do not want to take an Advanced Placement course
- Opportunities for advancement by transferring credit from a summer program
- Curriculum revisions in process with thematically organized units of study anchored by performance assessment units in the three modes of communication
- Curriculum revisions using the Wiggins & McTighe backward design model
- Variety of assessment tools that include performance tasks, projects, tests, quizzes, oral interviews, and writing samples
- Differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Teacher-generated materials
- Textbook and ancillary materials as well as a variety of authentic texts, magazines for teenagers, and documents from the Internet used as resources
- Increased emphasis on formal reading and writing skills

- District supports and encourages professional development, allotting an annual stipend of \$250 for out-of-district workshops and conventions
- A variety of co-curricular experiences available to students:
  - Opportunities for trips to France, Spain and Quebec, if there is sufficient interest to maintain a reasonable cost
  - French, Spanish and German Honor Society
  - World Language Clubs available, depending upon the building budget



## **Curriculum Recommendations**

- Proficiency Targets
  - Set for benchmarks (Gr5/8/12)
  - Communicated to the various audiences
  - Focus of instruction for teachers.
- Reconcile the concepts of proficiency levels/grades/years of study/college entrance with current reporting practices.
- Strengthen emphasis on vertical/horizontal articulation.
  - Articulated curriculum readily available
  - Curriculum Mapping
  - Increased emphasis on transitions
  - Shared philosophy
  - Clear proficiency targets at benchmarks
  - Continue team/department meetings across buildings/levels
  - Common assessments to measure proficiency at the benchmarks
  - Similar special education support at each level
- Explore possibilities for adding language choices
  - Availability of resources
  - Community interest
  - Potential for articulation
  - Languages most frequently spoken in world community
  - Option II procedure
- Curriculum development
  - Five year curriculum revision plan with yearly targets
    - Curriculum made accessible to all constituents
  - Intentional focus on cultural/interdisciplinary connections
- Continue the development of assessments and rubrics which reflect the emphasis on communication and authentic use of the language on all levels.
- There is a need to develop a Spanish course for students in our present 10th grade class for their senior year. Presently the only option for these students is to take AP Spanish. This new course would allow these students to study Spanish all four years of high school.

## Scheduling Recommendations

### Elementary Recommendations

- **Return to FLES status from our current FLEX status.** By definitions used by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 learners* and by the Center for Applied Linguistics, elementary programs should meet a minimum of 75 minutes per week, at least every other day with an increase of time as the student advances in the language sequence.
- Research states that to achieve fluency, students should study a second language for as many consecutive years as possible. **To this end, it is our recommendation that students who begin the study of a world language should not change their language of study until Grade 6.**
- Students may elect to study a second world language, or change languages once some measurable competency has been achieved in their first world language.
- Students may study the language begun at the elementary level while adding ('layering') a second or third language in middle and/or high school.
- Begin the in-depth study of the languages taught in the elementary school (Spanish and Chinese) in grade 2.

### Middle School Recommendations

- **Time should be allotted in the middle school schedule for world language equal to the core courses.** Fluency could be greatly increased by the increase in instructional time. There are also a multitude of affective issues resulting from the differential amount of time the world languages are scheduled.
- Develop discipline specific support network for the learning disabled students in world language classes.

### Secondary Recommendations

- Extend the support for learning disabled students to Spanish Communication and Culture/Language and Culture and French 1 and French 2.
- Accept American Sign Language as meeting the high school graduation requirement.
- **Introduce Option II pathway for meeting high school world language requirement:**

Students would have the option to take the Oral Proficiency Inventory (OPI) and the ACTFL writing inventories after study of a language and receive credit according to their level of proficiency:

Novice Mid – 5 credits toward their world language requirement

Novice High – 10 credits toward their world language requirement

Intermediate Low – 15 credits toward their world language requirement

Intermediate Mid – 20 credits toward their world language requirement

**This option would be made available for any language not currently offered in our Program of Studies.**

The number of students completing this pathway for their world language requirement would be useful data for the addition of world languages to our curriculum.

## Instructional Practice Recommendations

These recommendations are based on data from the classroom observations and discussions in the focus groups.

- **Create proficiency targets for 5th, 8th and 12 grades.** World language instructions could proceed in a more efficient manner if clear proficiency targets were established. Middle school students often repeat many of the same tasks they experienced in elementary school; high school students do the same for tasks completed in middle school. This is the result of a lack of identified proficiency targets at the above-mentioned benchmarks. Each proficiency level possesses certain characteristics that lay out the tasks and language functions that the language user needs to evidence to be able to be classified as a speaker (or listener or reader or writer) at that level. Targeting such proficiency levels would enable the district to consciously plan for, assess and actually get students to those levels.
- **Tie lessons to outcomes of interest to students.** Students want relevance; they learn best when the learning is centered on a topic or concepts they see as valuable. World language has a real “leg up” in this regard because so much of our curriculum focus is teaching how to communicate in another language—an inherently appealing concept to most students.

The value of formulating a lesson objective that is tied to student interest and relevance should be obvious—to garner the attention and buy-in of the student. When a teacher solicits that attention and buy-in at the start of each period, they increase the energy and output of their students. Many teachers already develop student-friendly lesson objectives. If we could (1) add the element of focusing on the objective at the beginning of the period and talking briefly about it; (2) teach to deliver that outcome, and (3) close the class checking to see if we got there, we could make our students far more interested in the class and its outcomes and garner even more energy from them to achieve those outcomes.

- **Actively involve the students as much as possible.** Maximize active construction of knowledge; maximize amount and depth of learning.
- **Use the construct of prompts to move student talk from the word level to the sentence and paragraph level.** This phenomenon is a partial result of the lack of proficiency targets for the various benchmark levels. Encourage student progress from word to phrase to sentence to paragraph level and the student will achieve greater fluency.

- **Encourage a more logical flow of activities and a more efficient planning of time.** While lessons often contain a number of activities, they sometimes do not flow logically one to another. Additionally, the purpose of the activity—and how it fits into the lesson or learning how to use a language, in general—should always be clear to students. Teachers need to plan logically (1) how one activity flows into the next; (2) how activities build upward, and (3) be ever conscious of what their clients might be thinking during this movement of activities. We must really be aware that our students are our customers and need to be an organic part—in understanding as well as participation—of the lesson.

Be mindful of time allocation. Short time limits keep students on-task and focused; lenient time limits encourage increased use of English.

- **Utilize pair work efficiently.** Research studies have shown that students get 8 times more speaking practice in pair activities than in teacher-dominated classrooms. The best paired activities are those that contain an information gap where one student has certain information that the other doesn't and together they must solve some problem by combining both bits of information. The "mystery" pieces of the puzzle give students an incentive to work together. Further, an activity that is tied to a real-world function also guarantees more student buy-in and commitment of energy.
- **Connection between Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment** – Tests/Homework should reflect the way the classes are taught. Targets for proficiency should be clear to the students for each level of a language.
- **Are teachers fully prepared to meet the needs of their special education students? Do students' IEP's accurately reflect the necessary modifications for the world language classroom?**
- **Systemic Professional Development to support these recommendations**