

# World Languages in the Elementary Grades:

## A Proposal for the Monona Grove School District



Presented to the Monona Grove School Board Curriculum Committee  
December 19, 2007

**The Monona Grove World Languages Committee**  
Bill Breisch, Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Ann Schroeder, Principal, Nichols School  
Co-Chairs, World Languages Committee

## **Introduction**

In June 2006, the Monona Grove School Board approved a board goal to study the possibility of implementing world language instruction in the district's elementary grades.

Specifically, the board goal called for researching whether a world languages program should be implemented at the elementary level, and to include site visitations of effective programs. The goal also called for a report on the matter to be prepared for the board's Curriculum Committee. (Currently, world languages are taught in grades 6-12 at Winnequah Middle School and Monona Grove High School.)

Following approval of the board goal, the district established a World Languages Committee. The committee is comprised of district administrators and teachers, two school board members, and district citizens (see attachment) with a background in the issue of world languages. The committee is co-chaired by Ann Schroeder, principal of Nichols School, and Bill Breisch, district director of curriculum and instruction. The committee has met monthly for the past year, and has reviewed research on the issue, sought guidance from the Department of Public Instruction, and visited several school districts where world language instruction is provided in the elementary grades.

After considerable discussion and work, the committee developed a proposal in support of world language instruction beginning in kindergarten for the 2008-09 school year.

## **The Proposal**

The committee reviewed its work, then developed the following proposal:

*If the Monona Grove School District implemented a world language program for its elementary students, what should it look like?*

### **1) Recommended implementation process (how to implement over time an elementary world language program for the MGSD):**

The first year of implementation should start with kindergarten and add on an additional grade each year.

### **2) Language(s), elementary grades taught, frequency and length of instruction:**

The committee recommends that the language taught in elementary grades be Spanish. A survey of nearly 200 district parents, whose children are not yet enrolled in the district, indicated strong support for Spanish being taught. In addition, research and discussions with districts offering elementary world language programs suggest the candidate pool for teachers may be strongest in the field of Spanish instruction.

Frequency: Minimum of 3 times a week – 30-minute sessions. The Department of Public Instruction, in working with the committee on the recommendations, suggested 90

minutes of instruction a week is the minimal amount of time necessary for effective world language instruction at the elementary grades.

### **3) Content and methods of instruction:**

The consensus of the committee is that the program should be included within a content area, similar to the model implemented in Waunakee.

Social studies, math, science or language arts could all be possibilities. Perhaps social studies should be the content area for one unit and science for another, alternating between the two subject areas. The content area might look differently at each grade level depending on difficulty level of concepts being translated into the language. The content area needs to be determined ahead of time and sequenced out to allow for the language teachers to plan accordingly and set up curriculum. Content choice needs to align with concepts from social studies, science, and other areas in order to make the time issue work. The committee favored this model over one in which world language instruction would be a stand-alone program, possibly taking time away from other, important instructional areas such as reading and mathematics.

Curriculum for world language should include an overlap of content concepts, Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Foreign Languages (which focus on communication, connections, culture, comparisons and community), and Wisconsin proficiency guidelines. There should be an emphasis on communication. Grammar instruction should be taught when content lends itself.

Skills and topics should be recycled, meaning that there is a spiral of ideas being introduced and then built off of at a higher level in later grades.

Methods would include lots of movement, music/singing, and teacher-created materials like flashcards, puppets, repetition, manipulatives, and timelines.

### **4. Instructional materials that would be used:**

Materials will need to be created to fit with the chosen content area(s); hence there will be no textbook that fits all the integrated concepts. They would include: materials available in the homeroom; visual aids, flashcards, and posters; videos, picture books, realia (authentic materials), music, and TE (Teacher's Edition) for content areas; technology including computer video/audio; and adaptations of English worksheets for language use.

### **5. Where instruction would take place:**

Instruction should take place in the homeroom. The reasons cited by the committee included: saving time, saving space, tie into existing classroom visuals. A separate room would possibly be used in the upper elementary grades, depending on space availability.

**6) Recommended total number of instructional minutes per week per full-time elementary world language teacher:**

1,280 instructional minutes per week is the current guideline for elementary assignments in subject areas such as art, music, physical education, and English as a Second Language.

**7) Role of homeroom teacher:**

Homeroom teacher should be encouraged, but not required, to participate in lessons. It is encouraged for teachers to remain in the classroom so that they can carry over phrases, terms or vocabulary in other areas to reinforce skills. Grade-level teachers and world language teachers will have curriculum workshop time to jointly develop content and create the curriculum map and timeline for the year. They would communicate on a regular basis to share feedback on how things are going. World language teachers would give homeroom teachers suggestions on how they can be involved and support the program, for example praise words, songs, signs, announcements, and greetings.

**8) Certification/qualifications of world language teachers:**

K-12 world language certification within the language of instruction.  
Proficiency and fluency in the language.  
Elementary teaching experience (regular elementary and/or world language) or elementary certification would be highly desirable.  
Enthusiasm and a desire for teaching elementary students a world language.

**Personnel/Fiscal Impact**

The following projections assume 10 sections per grade level (7 for Cottage Grove and 3 for Monona). A full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) elementary specialist teacher is currently based on 1,280 minutes of instruction/week (which can have a 5% variance: up to 1,344 minutes/week). Travel time (20 minutes for travel between buildings within a community and 30 minutes for travel between buildings between each community) currently is included in the 1,280 minutes/week. The following FTEs are based on direction instruction time (30 minutes/section, 3 times/week), not including travel that can vary year-to-year given other world language staffing needs (K-12).

|                                  |                       |             |  |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--|
| <b><u>Year 1 – 2008-2009</u></b> | Kindergarten          | 10 sections | $10 \times 90 = 900 = .70 \text{ FTE}$   |
| <b><u>Year 2 – 2009-2010</u></b> | Kindergarten          | 10          |  |
|                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade | 10          | $20 \times 90 = 1,800 = 1.4 \text{ FTE}$ |
| <b><u>Year 3 – 2010-2011</u></b> | Kindergarten          | 10          |  |
|                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade | 10          |  |
|                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade | 10          | $30 \times 90 = 2,700 = 2.1 \text{ FTE}$ |

|                                  |                       |    |                            |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----|----------------------------|
| <b><u>Year 4 – 2011-2012</u></b> | Kindergarten          | 10 |                            |
|                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade | 10 |                            |
|                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade | 10 |                            |
|                                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade | 10 | 40 X 90 = 3, 600 = 2.8 FTE |

|                                  |                       |    |                           |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----|---------------------------|
| <b><u>Year 5 – 2012-2013</u></b> | Kindergarten          | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade | 10 | 50 X 90 = 4,500 = 3.5 FTE |

|                                  |                       |    |                           |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----|---------------------------|
| <b><u>Year 6 – 2013-2014</u></b> | Kindergarten          | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade | 10 |                           |
|                                  | 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade | 10 | 60 X 90 = 5,400 = 4.2 FTE |

## **Background**

Why study a world language at the elementary level? This developmental period for children is the best time to start since this is the developing brain’s most receptive period for language learning. As a result, students have a better chance at becoming proficient in another language by the end of high school. In addition, research shows that teaching a second language at the elementary levels:

- Allows students to reach higher levels of world language proficiency
- Boosts academic performance and cognitive flexibility
- Strengthens proficiency and literacy in English
- Enhances students’ ability and motivation to learn other languages
- Prepares students for higher education
- Improves career outlooks and opens up travel opportunities.

In addition, the committee believes teaching a world language at the elementary level increases cultural awareness and sensitivity and creates connections to the global community.

The committee began its deliberations by seeking advice from the Department of Public Instruction's Paul Sandrock, who oversees world language instruction programs for the department. Mr. Sandrock pointed out the latest research to the committee, discussed instructional time for world language programs at the elementary level, and reviewed the

experiences of other Wisconsin districts offering elementary world language instruction. He noted that elementary-level world language instruction is growing, with 60 school districts throughout the state offering it currently (see attachment).

Committee members next visited school districts to see world language instruction at the elementary grades first-hand, and seek out advice and information from teachers and administrators at schools offering the program. Committee members visited schools in the Waunakee, Shorewood, Menasha, and Milwaukee school districts. Committee members have also held several discussions with district officials in Oregon, which is considering adopting an elementary world language program.

Committee members then reviewed current research in the field, debated the advantages and disadvantages of a world language program in the elementary grades, and discussed the various models in use in other school districts for teaching world languages in the elementary grades.

The committee concluded that part of its investigation should include a survey of parents of students who potentially would be part of an elementary world languages program. A survey was conducted this past summer, asking parents if they favored such a program, and what language(s) they thought should be taught (see attachment). The survey indicated widespread support for the notion of teaching world language in the elementary grades, and for Spanish to be the language taught. In addition, the committee co-chairs and school board representative Phil McDade met this fall with a group of parents to explain the proposal and discuss how it could be implemented. Parents in attendance at the meeting received the proposal favorably.

## **Conclusion**

The World Languages Committee believes all students should be taught a second, world language beginning in kindergarten. The committee believes that all students will benefit from a lifelong learning and love of languages. The committee believes the implementation of such a program will heighten student interest in our current middle-school and high-school based world language programs, and lead to more advanced world language achievement by our students.



MONONA GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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### **The World Languages Task Force**

*Monona Grove School Board Members:* John Kitslaar; Phil McDade

*Administrators:* Bill Breisch, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; Ann Schroeder, Principal, Nichols School

*Teachers (Elementary, Middle School & High School):* Janet Aeschlimann, Sonja Boehm, Kiley Bohlen, Jeanell Dailey, Matt Fiedler, Elizabeth Hartung, Sarah Hinton, Jennifer Reinwand, Naomi Skye, Krisi Wollerman, Sasha Woodard

*Community Members & Parents:* Nathan Black, Carolina Perez-Verero, Michelle Sheffler, Paul Toth, Luisa Herrera