



**World Languages  
Directional Report  
February 2007**

## **Foreign Language Curriculum Committee**

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## **I. Introduction to Our Renewal Process**

The curriculum renewal process began in 2004 for the Foreign Language Department. Many meetings of the department and with administrators have occurred to:

- examine our current curriculum
- verify our philosophy of Foreign Language instruction
- identify successful theories and practices
- refine the curriculum to meet the proposed state standards.

As advocates of world languages in our district, we see the need for our students to study a second or third language for as much time as possible during their school career so that they may increase their understanding of this modern multi-cultural world in which we live. Knowledge of other languages and cultural values provides life enrichment and deeper understanding of how to interact and contribute as an American citizen in our global world.

As a team we participated in the following renewal activities to reaffirm our beliefs and realign ourselves to meet students' needs as our state adopts Foreign Language Standards:

- Studied the current curriculum for grades 6-12 and compared it to the proposed state standards.
- Mapped the current curriculum (see Appendix D)
- Created study questions which we needed to address during the renewal process
- Wrote a new mission statement
- Developed short and long term objectives
- Conducted a parent survey (see Appendix B)
- Collaborated and consulted with departments in neighboring schools and universities through visitation
- Visited schools in order to become familiar with their view of foreign languages and its instruction and to compare our program with theirs (see Appendix C)
- Presented professional articles and research concerning teaching foreign languages, benefits to students, and best classroom practices (see Appendix A)
- Consulted with known professional resource consultants in the field
- Attended several World Language conferences such as ACTFL and PSMLA
- Attended instructional training for AP Courses
- Volunteered our time to teach children ages 2-17 in local world language camps and preschools (The World Language Camp, LaRoche College Language Camp and Stepping Stones Childrens' Center) during the last several years in order to reaffirm our vocations as people who promote languages for understanding among students in the community.

## **II. Mission Statement**

The mission of the Pine-Richland Foreign Language Department is to provide all students with a program that engages them in the study of a world language in order to become active global citizens. Through language acquisition training and cultural awareness education we lead students down a path where they can attain fluency and appreciation of other cultures including our own. Students are offered the opportunity to broaden their intellectual horizons, to strengthen communication skills in the target language, to make connections between foreign language and other subject areas and to earn respect of world societies.

## **III. Vision**

The students of Pine-Richland develop proficiency in Foreign Languages and are taught by certified instructors who are fluent speakers and advocates of world languages. Instructors are role models for students by continuously maintaining their proficiency in language and by advancing technologically in a field where for centuries the mouth and body were the only means to pass on the skill of fluency to children. Through their studies, students refine creative and logical thinking skills become culturally aware and make connections between the language they are learning and their other subjects. Most importantly, students make global connections with students in the world who have more similarities than differences. The students will contribute to a global society and successfully compete in a global economy.

## **IV. Program Objectives**

- Prepare students to speak the language in a variety of real life situations
- Prepare students to write effectively in the target language
- Engage students in critical and active listening activities in the target language
- Prepare students to comprehend written language by providing them with authentic reading material and appropriate reading instruction
- Provide the opportunity to study a language to students in K-12
- Prepare students for success on the Advanced Placement Test
- Expose students to a variety of cultures where the target language is spoken in order to learn respect for societies beyond our own
- Improve critical thinking skills, logic and problem solving skills
- Meet and exceed the proposed Pennsylvania State Standards
- Provide for an integration of teaching methodologies and approaches in order to meet the needs of all students (see Appendix E)
- Form partnerships with the community in order to provide students with opportunities to use the language and teach it to others
- Prepare students to continue practicing and refining their language skills beyond high school

- Provide instruction by teachers who strive to maintain and develop their own proficiency and cultural awareness and who continuously develop and improve the curriculum
- Develop an exciting program in sixth grade which examines the origin of languages in order to better understand our own as well as the exploration of the languages offered at Pine-Richland

## **V. Changing With the Times- A Description of Current and Future Programs**

Providing students with the opportunity to become proficient in a second language has been more of a priority in the Pine-Richland School District. This is largely true due to the valued support from the parents, students, administrators, community and school board. We are proud that many of our students go on to utilize a second or third language after high school whether they study law, business, art, medicine or education.

In spite of many changes in our community such as the rapid growth in population and turnover in faculty during such a short period of time, we are very pleased to be able to accommodate students needs from grades six through twelve with French, German, and Spanish with Russian beginning in ninth grade. We were given the opportunity to have an exploratory program beginning in first grade with Spanish, with the intention of adding German and then French with each curriculum renewal. This program was cut in 2003. This was a huge shock to our department. Parents continuously ask why the program was eliminated. They too, were very disappointed. We will regain our elementary program in the future, but must proceed in a more efficient manner.

We are elated to be included in the course offerings for the new upper elementary building with an exciting program in sixth grade, which will be called *Introduction to World Languages*. Instead of the already exciting Foreign Language Exploratory Program, students begin their study of languages with the history of the origin of language. It is in this course that they will be able to trace vocabulary from their own language to its origin, thus forming stronger connections in memory and logic when learning words and expressions in English and Reading as well as other core subjects. In addition to this, students will begin their communication in French, German, Russian and Spanish. Community meetings with teachers and administrators present will determine precisely which languages will be introduced.

We are presently exploring offering one or two online courses possibly through Blended Schools. Since our parent survey (see Appendix B) reflects the desire to have Latin, we are considering this option especially because Latin instructors are very hard to find and retain. The holds true for Chinese, Japanese and Italian. As one of the top districts, we feel that we should offer as much to students as we can so they do not have to search elsewhere to get the enrichment and benefits of a second language.

At present, the Foreign Language Curriculum is aligned with and exceeds the current proposed Academic Standards for World Languages. Curriculum Mapping is found in Appendix D of this report.

### **Course Offerings at the Elementary Level**

No elementary courses exist at this time. Some efforts have been made at each elementary school by parent groups to initiate after school programs. These programs were difficult to staff and were not consistent across the district. They were designed as “interest only” and not structured to address state standards in foreign language instruction. Some district teachers, Tom Joyce for example, developed partnerships with elementary school teachers and initiated annual or bi-annual instruction by high school students. This program was very well received by the students and parents.

### **Course Offerings at the Middle School Level**

Students begin their study of Foreign Languages at the sixth grade level with the Foreign Language Exploratory Program. It is here that they take a nine-week course of introduction to French, German and Spanish that emphasizes speaking and listening. Students study each language for three weeks.

During the annual scheduling process, students select their favorite language with the advice of their parents and take a full nine-week offering in seventh grade of French, German or Spanish. In the seventh grade, students begin to write more complete sentences and paragraphs and also gain fluency in the target language.

In eighth grade, Foreign Language becomes a full year academic program with midterms and finals. French, German and Spanish I classes are taught in the target language as much as possible. There is still a major emphasis on speaking, writing and listening however reading and cultural standards are addressed in proportion to each lesson as well. Accommodations are made for any student who is beyond Level I. After completing a placement test, they may be eligible to walk to the High School to take Level II or even higher.

### **Course Offerings at the High School Level**

Students at Pine-Richland High School can enroll in Levels One, Two or Honors Two, Three or Honors Three, Honors Four and AP Five for French German or Spanish. The French Department at the High School has a College in High School Program with LaRoche where Level V students earn college credits at the High School level while following the program approved by the college. Students can enroll in Levels One, Two and Three for Russian. All classes are instructed in the target language. Emphasis is

still placed on speaking, listening, reading, writing and culture on a much more complex level. Honors is mainly for students who attain higher proficiency early on in the language and wish to study plays, poems, art and film in the language. Trips abroad are made to the target countries on a regular basis as well as national trips to areas where there are immersion activities taking place such as plays and art exhibits. Students must take a placement test to enroll in the Honors Foreign Language Program.

### **Course Offerings at the New Upper Elementary Building**

The Foreign Language Department is recommending a new course for grade six - *Introduction to World Languages*. Students in this course would meet three out of the six-day rotation for the entire school year. A permanent classroom with two computers, areas to display student work, and locations for immersion activities and performances in the language would be designed into the room. The course materials would be created by department members and would include a variety of research materials, books and software.

Staffing would include one full-time and one part-time instructor who are certified in at least one or more of the target languages. Students will meet between 90-120 minutes per week for the entire school year.

## **VI. Findings and Recommendations**

### **Elementary and Upper Elementary School Levels**

#### **Finding #1:**

The following research summary verifies the importance of learning a Foreign Language. Jerald Weatherford wrote a significant research report entitled *Personal Benefits of Foreign Language Study*:

- A second language has become a vital part of the basic preparation for an increasing number of careers.
- Foreign Language study improves academic success in other content areas such as Math, Reading, English and Science to name a few.
- Long-term research shows students studying a foreign language earn a higher grade point average than students who do not.
- Studies show that foreign language study can accelerate the cognitive development of the brain especially when begun BEFORE the age of FIVE.
- In these times of growing interdependence of the global economy and the growing international nature of our national industries, it is highly likely that our children will be future employees of a multinational company.
- English speakers with no foreign language or cultural skills are at a definite disadvantage to many employers.

