

**Report to the School Board**  
**October 28, 2008**  
**World Languages Program Development**

**Background Regarding World Language Program Development**

In response to strong community interest expressed over a number of years, and as part of the District's commitment to preparing all students to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global marketplace, the staff has examined the feasibility of implementing language instruction for students in the elementary and middle school grades.

The staff is also continuing to weigh the feasibility of implementing an additional language at the high school level along with the current offerings of Spanish, French, German and American Sign Language.

Based on the discussions that have occurred to date, we believe it is feasible to offer a quality program at the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels.

**What Has Been Done to Date?**

1. Review of community inquiries about world language
  2. Review of WL research / best practices literature; Discussions with MDE World Language consultant; Discussions with staff members in school districts where a world language is taught in the elementary and middle school programs
- The following questions have been addressed based on the information gathered from those sources:

What is required to build a quality world language program at the elementary and middle school levels?

- Curriculum framework articulated across levels of the program
- Systematic instruction designed to build language skills over time
- Adequate instructional time and frequency

What can we learn from the experiences of other school districts are implementing elementary and middle school WL programs

- Important to identify and to clearly communicate program purpose—build program to match purpose
- Hiring and retention of staff is more challenging for less commonly taught languages
- WL is like other curriculum areas in that establishing and maintaining strong programs is worthwhile and challenging

On what basis should we determine the elementary grade level that should be our starting place for WL instruction?

- Feasible starting place for a continuous program that offers the progression of building block skills
- Developmentally pre-adolescence is optimal time to begin study of a second language

On what basis should we determine the language to be taught?

- Program parameters—Spanish is taught at our high schools
- Availability of appropriately licensed teachers
- Opportunity for learners to practice the language locally—Spanish is widely spoken in MN and across the US

What will be the specific program purpose in terms of outcomes for students?

- To allow students to build on language skills to a level of at least “novice low” as identified by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) guidelines as they engage in the program from 4<sup>th</sup> through 8 grade.
- To prepare and motivate all students to study whatever language they choose in high school

3. Program development parameters drafted by staff (attached); school board reviewed and directed staff to use the parameters to explore the feasibility of WL program for Sept. 09 implementation
4. Principals draft scenarios to test feasibility of WL inclusion in elementary model
5. HS WL teacher focus group
6. Middle School Parent Focus Group; Elementary School Parent Focus Group
7. Overview of information about WL program development at the Leadership Institute for site team leaders
8. Program Development Charge Statement written (attached)
9. Meeting to provide update for high school WL teachers—discussed charge statement and scenarios
10. Middle School site team reps meet to review the program development charge and implementation scenarios; discussed expected impacts
11. Elementary School site team reps meet to review the program development charge and implementation scenarios; discussed expected impacts
12. Curriculum Advisory Committee meeting updates in September and October (minutes available on District website)
13. Elementary School site team reps hold second meeting to design unit studies structure and to identify the particular challenges and opportunities associated with each site's proposed model

### **What are the next steps?**

#### Increase Communication with Staff

- Web site—Information about program development
- Planning meetings for elementary and middle school staff

#### Refinement of Unit Studies Models

Curriculum Development—World Language, Science, Social Studies (Learner outcomes, Assessment, Curriculum Structure and Instructional Strategies, Materials)  
 Science and Social Studies Curriculum Development

#### Increase Communication with Parents

- Each school will provide opportunities for parent input and involvement
- Communication with teachers
- Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of a WL Sub-Committee of the Curriculum Advisory Committee will be held
- Dec 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the full Curriculum Advisory Committee—Unit Studies, including WL will be on the agenda
- Proposed elementary unit studies models will be refined; identified challenges will be addressed

Resolve questions regarding the feasibility of adding a language to the high school offerings.