

**Elementary World Language Meeting**  
**October 21/22 2008**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why Elementary World Language Instruction?**

- Based on the discussions that have occurred to date, it is feasible to offer a quality program at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels
- Upper elementary is an excellent time to begin second language study – optimum age for openness to difference *“Languages and Children, Making the Match: Foreign Language Instruction for an Early Start K-8”*  
Curtain/Pesola
- Provides background and motivation for continued language study Curtain/Pesola
- Need to prepare students in languages in order to maintain position as a leading District in Minnesota

**Why Spanish?**

- Spanish is widely spoken in MN and across US
- Ample opportunity for learners to practice the language locally
- Spanish is taught at our high schools
- Appropriately licensed teachers are available

**Why in Unit Studies?**

It is possible to build a unit studies model that provides the frequency of instruction needed to work toward language proficiency.

In addition, world language study...

- Can strengthen the habits of mind conducive to learning across the curriculum– i.e. critical thinking, flexibility, creative inquiry, problem solving through communication, diverse perspectives
- Can reinforce Social Studies and Science learning
  - knowledge of geography, people and cultures, global issues, current events
  - observation and description skills
  - vocabulary development
  - English literacy and communication skills
- Can stimulate awareness and appreciation of cultural differences which is a key learning in Social Studies
- Potential to build in needed frequency for language instruction

**Specifically regarding language proficiency, how will the elementary Unit Studies model plus the equivalent of a year of middle school Spanish benefit students?**

- A realistic expectation of students in the program from 4<sup>th</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup> grade is the ability to speak and understand Spanish at a novice low proficiency level at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
*American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)*
- Students will be well prepared to develop a higher proficiency level in Spanish or to continue language study in another language *Center for Applied Research* <http://www.cal.org/about/index.html>

## **Why now?**

- Benefits to students
- Strong community interest has led to School Board expectation
- Timing is ideal as Social Studies curriculum is currently being reviewed and is ripe for revisions
- Alignment of Science Specialist and Science classroom programs is currently being reviewed
- Remain competitive with other districts

## **What Has Been Done to Date?**

- Review of community inquiries about world language
- Discussions with MDE World Language consultant
- Program development parameters drafted and approved by school board; board directed administration to explore feasibility of WL program for Sept. 09 implementation
- Principals draft scenarios to test feasibility of WL inclusion in elementary model
- HS WL teacher focus group
- Parent focus group
- Program Development Charge Statement
- Leadership Institute Update
- BILT reps met—identified concerns, questions, and factors that must be considered—including... Instructional time; staffing—possibility of grade level changes; need involvement of elementary teachers; the importance of continuing an inclusive program in middle school; time for thoughtful planning
- Curriculum Advisory Committee meeting
- Paired school planning meeting October 21 and 22 to determine Unit Studies structure