

Summary Report & Recommendations

*World Language Study Committee
Syosset Schools
February 9, 2015*

Charge and Membership

The World Language Study Committee was formed subsequent to a December 2013 Board of Education resolution “to form a sub-committee of the Board of Education to work with staff and community members to examine the current K-5 cultural language program relative to its efficacy, and other options in the elementary language realm that might pose additional value for students.”

The committee essentially explored the following questions:

1. How well is the current world language program meeting its goals?
2. What goals and programs exist in other districts?
3. Should Syosset’s goals change or should other goals be added?

Its members have included:

Mr. David Balsamo, Administrative Assistant, Syosset High School
Ms. Michelle L. Burget, Principal, South Woods Middle School
Dr. Michael Cohen, Board President
Ms. Lynda D’Anna, Spanish and Italian Teacher, Syosset High School
Ms. Tracy Frankel, Board Trustee
Dr. Ronald Friedman, Interim Superintendent
Ms. V. Dolly Kranz, Coordinator of Testing, Planning and Administration
Mr. Joshua A. Lafazan, Board Trustee
Ms. Jacqueline Lucci, French Teacher, H.B.T. Middle School
Ms. Josephine Maietta, Elementary Italian Teacher and Elementary World Language Coordinator
Ms. April M. Neuendorf, Board Trustee
Ms. Susan Parker, Board Trustee
Dr. Thomas Rogers, Superintendent
Ms. Laura Schlesinger, Board Trustee
Mr. Chad Snyder, Principal, Walt Whitman Elementary School
Dr. Jeffrey B. Streitman, Deputy Superintendent

Beginning in January 2014, the World Language Study Committee has engaged in a year-long examination of the depth and breadth of the district’s K-5 World Language Program, and even expanded its exploration to our secondary program of study. Subcommittees have examined our own programs, explored and visited several programs in other Long Island districts, gathered data about program participation, and brainstormed recommendations for program enhancements that would maximize our students’ proficiency.

Background

At its inception, the World Language Study Committee defined our own K-5 program and developed a working understanding of the various program types available to students locally on Long Island:

Program Type	Definition	Sample District(s)
FLEX	Foreign Language Experience: Students are exposed to different languages. Goals are mostly cultural and partly linguistic. Goals do not include developing proficiency in any one language.	Syosset
FLES	Foreign Language in Elementary School: Students study one language in an articulated program that builds proficiency from one year to the next. Cultural understanding centers on the target culture(s).	Local districts such as Garden City, Hauppauge, Jericho, Oceanside and Scarsdale have FLES programs in Spanish. Plainview-Old Bethpage has a program in Chinese.
DUAL LANGUAGE	50% native speakers of the target language/50% native speakers of English. Instruction is in both languages, typically with one half of the day conducted in each language	Spanish dual language programs are currently offered in districts with Hispanic populations, including Bay Shore, Freeport, Huntington and Long Beach.
IMMERSION	Students of any native language are immersed in the target language for a portion or all of the school day. Instruction in each language may be targeted to a curriculum area. For example, students may study math and science in Spanish and ELA and social studies in English	Herricks

Syosset World Language Program:

Elementary (Grades K-5)

Syosset's elementary FLEX program is scheduled in 30 minute blocks of instruction as follows:

Grade	Language	Instructional Block	Total Time
Kindergarten	Russian	30 minutes	Once a week
First	Chinese	30 minutes	Twice a week
Second	French Or Italian Or Spanish	30 minutes	Twice a week
Third	French Or Italian Or Spanish	30 minutes	Twice a week
Fourth	French Or Italian Or Spanish	30 minutes	Twice a week
Fifth	Latin	30 minutes	Twice a week

Students are exposed to different languages. Goals are mostly cultural and partly linguistic. Goals do not include developing proficiency in any one language.

Secondary (Grades 6-12)

Students select their language of study upon entry into middle school and remain enrolled in French, Italian, or Spanish. Successful completion of this course of study results in proficiency comparable to "Checkpoint A" of the New York State Standards for Languages and provides students with one unit of high school credit:

Grade	Language	Instructional Block	Total Time
6	French/Italian/Spanish	40 minutes	Alternating days
7	French/Italian/Spanish	40 minutes	Every day
8	French/Italian/Spanish	40 minutes	Every day

World Language study at Syosset High School continues in grade 9, with most students continuing their coursework through Level 3 (Grade 10), taking a Checkpoint B exam, and earning a second high school credit.

Language:	Courses:	Enrollment:
French	Levels 2-5 and Honors 2-AP	239
Italian	Levels 2-5 and Honors 2-AP	346
Spanish	Levels 2-5 and Honors 2-AP	1144
American Sign Language	ASL 1&2	66
Russian	Russian 1, 2, & 3	29
Chinese	Introduction to Mandarin Chinese	17
Latin	Latin 1, 2, 3 & Exploring Latin	117
Japanese	Japanese 1, 2, 3, & 4	51

Assessment of Goals

The committee wished to assess the level of proficiency students attain in any given language, whether students persist in language study, and what choices they make at various decision points in the program.

- **Proficiency**
 - Checkpoint A (formerly the Proficiency exam): Annually, 98%-99% of Syosset students achieve this goal.
 - Checkpoint B (formerly the Regents exam): Annually 98-100% of Syosset students achieve this goal.
- **Persistence**
 - As shown on the previous chart, over 2000 students at the High School (nearly 90% of the student population) pursue some form of World Language beyond Checkpoint A.
 - 87% of the class of 2016 (juniors) are enrolled in at least one World Language course.
 - 76% of the class of 2015 (seniors) remain enrolled in at least one World Language course.
- **Student Choices**
 - About 12% of students at Syosset High School study two languages, including American Sign Language (ASL), Chinese, Japanese, Latin, and Russian. Advanced Placement and college-level Syracuse University Project Advanced courses are available.

Based on this data, the committee concluded that the program was meeting the following goals:

- Providing students with broad exposure to a number of different cultures through the lens of world language;
- Creating an interest in language study as evidenced by the numbers of students whose language study persists past Checkpoint A;
- Meeting the needs of students who prefer to study multiple languages as evidenced by the numbers of students who change languages during secondary school; and
- Providing advanced opportunities for any student wishing to develop greater proficiency in any one language.

Other Program Models

Subcommittee members visited several local K-5 programs, including:

- Rockville Center - Spanish FLES program
- Oceanside - Spanish FLES program
- Huntington - Spanish dual language program

Model	Format	Findings
Spanish FLES	Push-in model. Spanish teacher joined the class to teach the lesson. Some of the elementary teachers stayed with the class during the Spanish instructional period, while others left the room. Lessons were taught completely in Spanish. Students appeared to be enthusiastic and engaged.	Students appear to reach a level of proficiency in 5th grade that is similar to what would be expected in grade 6 in Syosset's current program. The committee agreed that this was consistent with what would be expected from a program that provides students with 4 hours of instruction in the target language per month. It was noted that many students discontinued Spanish in Grade 6 in favor of other language choices.
Spanish Dual Language	Content lessons conducted in Spanish exclusively. 50% native speakers of English and 50% native speakers of Spanish. Meets NYS requirement for option for English as a Second Language. Students who are in the dual language program follow an articulated curriculum which allows them to continue studying Spanish at an accelerated level through junior year of high school.	Observations and conversations with district personnel indicated that the dual language students who complete the program are about 3 years ahead of their peers in language studies. District personnel articulated concerns with staffing, teaching certification, and the need to limit the enrollment of English speakers (selection by lottery). They also reported attrition from the program in favor of other languages by the middle school years.

Summary

In keeping with the December 2013 Board resolution, the World Language Study Committee offers the following conclusions:

- The committee took pride in the number of languages offered as part of Syosset's FLEX program and remarked on the program's natural connection to the high level of multicultural understanding fostered in our elementary schools.
- The committee expressed satisfaction with the ability of incoming sixth grade students to make informed choices about their future program of study based on their participation in the FLEX program.
- The committee wondered if the early exposure to multiple languages might in fact be a driving force behind the high numbers of Syosset high school students studying additional languages at higher levels.
- While the committee was impressed with the additional proficiency attained by students in the Dual Language program observed, they clearly noted the logistical challenges faced by the host district (staffing, lotteries, attrition etc.).
- The committee was impressed with the FLES programs observed, recognizing the communicative competency of some of the students in the Grade 5 classes.
- The committee noted the attrition from the observed Spanish FLES programs at the end of grade 5 in favor of other languages.

Recommendations

Although a narrower, more focused Dual Language or FLES program might modestly enhance proficiency in a single language, the World Language Study Committee recommends that the Syosset Board of Education preserve the broad offerings of the current FLEX program:

- The breadth of offerings within Syosset's FLEX program provides remarkable experiences that build cross-cultural understanding and language skills.
- Opportunities to reach high levels of proficiency already exist in the secondary program.
- Many students who remain in language study currently choose to pursue a second language rather than build additional proficiency.

However, the committee also recommends consideration of the following "next logical steps" to enhance world language proficiency at Syosset:

- Explore creating summer school experiences in world languages;
- Adopt additional technological innovations and tools (Skype pals with high school students, EPals, etc.) that assist students with building skills in whatever languages they choose.
- Plan for how new "Part 154" regulations will require the district to develop bilingual or dual language programs for some English Language Learners.

We believe these recommendations will strengthen proficiency while preserving breadth.

Appendix – Partial list of technology tools already in use.

- **SmartBoard** and **Mimio** interactive whiteboards are also used for Internet-based virtual “tours” of cities, museums, and the like, as well as for accessing authentic cultural-linguistic realia (menus, transportation timetables, store advertisements, etc.).
- **YouTube** video clips support language learning through music videos, cultural clips and language cartoons.
- **Classzone.com** provides practice tests, audio flashcards, online textbook and resources.
- **Duolingo** (Apple/Android App) engages students through mini-games that tests reading, writing and speaking skills.
- **Languageguide.org** is a thematic review site that provides audio and transcripts of vocabulary, grammar and readings in the target language and reinforces proper pronunciation and intonation.
- **LearnFrenchbypodcasts.com** provides audio podcasts for beginning students to reinforce vocabulary and grammar.
- **Readinga-z.com/translations/French/leveled-books/** provides leveled classroom books in the target language.
- **Señor Wooley.com** is an educational website with Spanish music, videos and games.
- **Scholastic.com** offers literature in Spanish, French and Italian.
- **Bookbox.com** provides animated stories that help improve reading and language learning skills in the target language. It is a great tool to use for doing a double journal entry.
- **StudySpanish.com** and **StudyFrench.com**
- **Blendspace** and **ShowMe** are applications that teachers may use to create, record, and show digital lessons.
- **Quia.com** and **Quizlet.com** are used for reinforcement of vocabulary and grammar.
- **Rai News 24** is an Italian 24-hour all-news television channel.
- **Loescher** is an Italian website that offers many educational activities to develop reading and listening comprehension, audio video and games.
- **One World Italiano** is an online Italian course that includes dialogues, listening exercises, grammar and vocabulary.
- **Edilingua** is an Italian website that has materials for teachers and students.