

WORLD LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN OTHER PA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

There are many neighboring and premier Southeastern Pennsylvania school districts that offer students introductory foreign language programs at their elementary level, Exploratory World Language in their middle schools, and a wide variety of choices and levels of World Language offerings in their high schools. They have a broad-reaching World Language curriculum, within their budgets, and are able to maintain very high levels of student achievement.

Because Council Rock (CR) does not offer, as part of its regular curriculum, any world languages until 8th grade, Citizens For Education (CFE) is advocating that the district increase its offerings, starting with Exploratory World Language in 7th grade. Citizens For Education's position on Exploratory World Language can be viewed at www.citizensforeducation.com/curriculum .

To meet CFE's mission "to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues," CFE has compiled a small sample below of what other school districts are citing on their district web sites as their World Language offerings.

ELEMENTARY

Some Bucks County school districts include foreign language as part of their Kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade (depending on their grade configuration) elementary curriculum:

- **New Hope Solebury:** Offers Spanish as a K-5 program.
- **Palisades:** Students in grades K-5 receive FLEX Spanish. The FLEX (Foreign Language Experience) program is usually conducted in English, and consists of classes in foreign culture and language. Students enrolled in these classes typically receive less than 75 minutes of instruction per week. Its goals are to focus on laying new neural networks that encompass the *receptive* part of the brain as it relates to learning a second language. In addition, 6th grade students, who are part of their middle level, take an Exploratory Spanish class.
- **Quakertown:** Students in grades 1-5 use SYMTALK, a program of symbol cards for oral proficiency. It is on one day of a 6-day cycle, and classes are 45 minutes long. This year Quakertown is planning to bring Exploratory Language down from 7th into 6th grade.
- **Neshaminy:** Students use an online version of SYMTALK, taught by Math/Social Studies teachers. Neshaminy is proposing using World Language teachers for the SYMTALK class and not using teachers from other content areas.
- **Lower Merion:** At the district where former CR Superintendent Mark Klein is the Assistant Superintendent/Director of Elementary Education, a FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) World Language Program is offered in French and Spanish starting in 2nd grade. To be considered a FLES program, a minimum of 90 minutes of class time must be offered per week. Its goals move beyond building receptivity to learning the language, and students begin to produce conversational skills.

MIDDLE LEVEL

Some Southeastern PA area school districts offer Exploratory World Language in their middle schools (regardless of grade configuration) before students begin their study of a Level 1 World Language.

- **Palisades:** Grades 6 & 7 - Exploratory Spanish Language; Grade 8 - Level 1 in French, German or Spanish.
- **Quakertown:** Grade 7 - 45 days of Exploratory Spanish - (moving Exploratory to 6th grade is proposed for next year but is awaiting approval by the School Board); Grade 8 -

Level 1 in German, Spanish or Mandarin (will move these down to 7th if the 6th grade Exploratory passes).

- **Pennsbury**: Grade 8 is a 30 day rotation in exploratory courses in French, German and Spanish.
- **New Hope/Solebury**: Grade 6 – Exploratory French or Spanish; Grade 7 - Level 1A in French or Spanish; Grade 8 – Level 1B in French or Spanish.
- **Radnor**: Grade 6 - an Exploratory course where students sample four languages, Spanish, French, German and Latin, so they can make an informed choice about future study choices in 7th grade.
- **Upper Dublin**: Grade 6 – FLEX program, one quarter each for French, German, Latin, Spanish; Grade 7 – four out of a six day rotation in their choice of one the 4 languages above; Grade 8 - daily instruction in their target language.
- **Wissahickon**: Grade 6 - World Language Orientation; Grade 7 – Level 1 in French, German, Japanese or Spanish.
- **Downingtown**: Grade 6 – option of an Exploratory Language Study consisting of 1 quarter of French, German and Spanish for 3 quarters. Grade 7 - Level 1 French, German or Spanish; Grade 8 – option of Level 1B or Level 2 of the same language they took in 7th grade (French, German or Spanish).

HIGH SCHOOL

Below is a list of premier Southeastern PA school districts and their World Language offerings.

- **Tredyffrin/Easttown**: With 6,000 total students, the district is half the size of Council Rock. In the 2016-17 school year, their World Language curriculum at its one high school, Conestoga, is robust. With a high school student body of 2,066 students (about the size of CR South) and very impressive test scores, it has “As a high school requirement for graduation, students must demonstrate a proficiency in a second language. Students entering high school having completed two years of a language must complete a third year of that same language or complete two years of another language.” All offerings are yearlong courses taken as part of a 6 period schedule and include: 6 levels of French plus an AP French 4-5 that students can take for one or two years; 4 levels of German including AP German; 4 levels of Italian including AP Italian; 2 Levels of Chinese Language and Culture and a combined Chinese Language and Culture level 3 and level 4 course; 5 Latin courses, and an AP Latin; 7 separate Spanish courses plus an AP Spanish 4-5 that students can take for one or two years.
- **Radnor**: The high school has approximately 1,200 students. All language courses meet daily for the entire school year. The only prerequisite for any of their World Language Level 1 courses is that a student reads on grade level. The offerings include: French 1, French 2, 3, 4 and 5 - regular and honors levels, AP French Language and Culture; German 1, German 2, 3 and 4 - regular and honors, AP German Language and Culture/German 5; Latin 1, Latin 2 and 3 - regular and honors, Latin IV/V, AP Latin; Spanish 1, Spanish 2,3 and 4 - regular and honors, Spanish 5, AP Spanish Language; Chinese Mandarin will be offered for the first time in 2016-17.
- **Lower Merion**: Offers Spanish, French, Latin and Japanese. The Spanish, French, and Latin programs offer three tracks - College Preparatory, Honors and AP. The College Preparatory track offers courses through Level 5 (except for Latin which goes through Level 4), and provides preparation for students who wish to continue studying the language in college. They also offer 2 years of Honors Japanese classes.
- **Unionville Chadds Ford**: In this always highly rated smaller school district of just over 4,000 students, its HS, Unionville, with 1,305 students, offers a full array of full year

World Language courses: French I - Academic, French 2, 3 and 4 - Academic & Honors, French 5, and AP French; German 1, German 2, 3, and 4 – Academic & Honors, German 5, and AP German; Spanish 1, Spanish 1 & 2 Fundamentals, Spanish 2, 3, and 4 – Academic & Honors, Spanish 5, and AP Spanish.

- **New Hope Solebury**: Ranked 2nd of PA high schools, there are 497 students in the high school, and it offers 4 levels of both French and Spanish.
- **West Chester**: With about 12,000 students, this district is similar in size to CR and is the former workplace of CR Superintendent Dr. Fraser. West Chester offers 5 languages - French, German, Italian, Latin and Spanish, starting in the middle schools. In their high schools, West Chester offers: 5 levels of French plus AP French; 4 levels of German plus AP German; 4 levels of Italian plus AP Italian; 4 levels of Latin plus AP Latin; 5 levels of Spanish plus AP Spanish.

CONCLUSIONS

Council Rock, like many other PA school districts, is facing tough budgetary choices. CFE suggests that in 2018, when CR downsizes from 3 middle schools to 2 schools with equalized enrollments, there is an opportunity to benefit from economies of scale. **CFE proposes that CR offer a four-language Exploratory World Languages program in 7th grade and a complete range of multi-level offerings from beginner to AP courses for the four languages in the high schools.**

CFE supports making World Language curriculum a priority that will benefit students and help Council Rock be known as a premier school district with a robust World Language component. For more information on the status of World Languages in Council Rock, please see CFE Articles – “World Language Education in CR” and “Offering Exploratory World Language in CR” at www.citizensforeducation.com/curriculum .

CFE is interested in your opinion and feedback. Please feel free to contact us at: citizensforeducationcr@gmail.com