

French Committee Program Study Report

Goal: To study other school programs (in NH or districts that receive our students for HS) to understand more about their early language introduction programs (methods, staffing, funding, immersions, inclusivity) in order to improve our foreign language program and begin to gather relevant data for year 4 after grant.

Method: We obtained some names of schools that offer early language programs from Carolyn Horn, the NH Foreign Language Coordinator and then networked to other schools (asked the teachers interviewed what other schools they knew of). So this is likely not a complete list of all schools in NH that offer early introduction language but a % subset. Carolyn Horn is conducting an online survey of all schools in NH this summer/fall in order to better gauge how many schools offer early language. As we made phone calls it became apparent that almost all middle schools offer a foreign language so we did not take time to interview these schools (5 or 6-8 stand alones) but rather focused our energies on the schools that introduced foreign language in grades 5 or below (as is practice in Cornish). A team of interviewers on our committee conducted a phone survey lasting approximately 10 minutes with each of the schools listed. Most often we spoke to the language teachers, sometimes to principals, occasionally with the secretary to get at least bare bones data. We also decided to call state language coordinators to learn more about trends in the Northeast.

Findings:

- The number of schools that offer early language programs appears to be growing in NH not shrinking. We interviewed 32 such programs - large percentage started within the last 5 years.
- States around us report rapid growth in early programs; in NJ 95% of all students start intensive in Kindergarten (State mandate). In CT, intensive below 4th grade instruction has grown over 300% in last several years. In MA, 1/3 of all districts offer K-5 foreign language. In NY 8th graders are required to take Foreign language assessment and are required to earn 1 credit. They are then placed into Level II.
- Almost every teacher said that teaching the younger kids is easier: they learn faster, pick up better pronunciation and are less shy about speaking aloud.
- Most teachers would like more time for instruction. State Coordinators, with whom we spoke, described sufficiently intensive instruction as several times per week (2-3 +), with sufficient time per session (at least 90 minutes total/week). Only 13 of 32 schools offering early foreign language meet that criteria for grades K-5. Almost all were intensive by 6-8.
- The most frequently taught language in NH is Spanish, second French, distant third Italian.
- Curriculum - Teachers of younger children are very active and play lots of games, songs. Many teachers try to reinforce general curriculum ("content meshing") by teaching the same lessons offered in the general classroom (unit on weather, the anatomy of the eye, the rainforest, NH citizenship etc.) but in another language. This appears to be national trend - with this approach foreign language doesn't take away from the regular curriculum but strengthens it. Plus according to one State coordinator - this leads to increased relevancy for kids so they learn better.
- Community - Many try to involve the community in some way (dramatic performances, presentations, language instruction for parents in evenings).
- Trips - A few (in addition to Cornish) had trips at the elementary level to reinforce language learning, some to international festivals in US, some to foreign countries (Quebec City, Joigny, France and Cancun, Mexico). Some others say they are beginning to plan a trip.

French Program Comments- What works well for us

****** - Intensive early program. At least 3x per week for >20 minutes per time or 2x per week for 45 minutes. Note - most schools listed below have intensive programs beginning by 6th so only intensive 5th and below are noted.**

Chichester - Try to do things to involve the community. We do a fashion show for the parents in the Fall
- they describe their clothing in Spanish. We have lots of games drama. Fridays are reward days
- earn Peso points and turn in for prizes. School board offered full-time beginning this past year.
Small school so teachers support Spanish - Spanish songs in music and in art class.

****** Northampton** (program approved for 2002-2003) - In 2002-2003 we add another full-time teacher and start an intensive language program beginning in Kindergarten and continuing to 8th grade - 3x a week for 25-30 minutes a time. We are excited about our new initiative. The school board has approved school council and parents are all behind it.

****** Plainfield** - I think we do a good job of active learning here. The younger kids do games and songs I have a certified teacher from Spain coming to spend 20 hours a week in the classroom with me this coming academic year through the Amity program. This is something I hope to repeat because it allows for more student-teacher interaction. There is also lot of support in the school and community for foreign language learning: parents know that a second language stimulates the brain and encourages critical thinking skill development. We also do some content-meshing: a primary teacher offers a Mexico unit every year year, a 7th grade teacher has a Latin American studies course.

So Hampton - The kids love it and have been teaching their parents. The younger kids are more open than older kids are to learning new vocabulary and pronunciation.

Plymouth - The school board initiated this program- Starting in the younger grades works best. We do a lot with visual aids and singing.

Epsom - I try to do things the other teachers are doing. In 4th grade we talk about the community which they are studying, then world geography. In the older grades we do a spelling bee.

Marlboro - The younger kids learn quickly. I am able to offer our 1st graders 3x per week for 30 minutes and that works wonderfully. I have some middle school helpers come into that class who have been learning for longer and the little kids wind up helping the older kids with their vocabulary sometimes!

KA Brett - The early introduction works tremendously well for us. There aren't many pre-packaged programs out there for kids in the youngest grades so that has forced me to be more creative. We do games and songs and talk, talk, talk. The younger kids learn much faster than the older kids.

Gilmanton - I try to do a lot of cross-content teaching. I teach units on the rainforest and the mechanics of the eye. I like to integrate a lot of music and art into my classes. I am starting a parent class in the evening so they will learn some Spanish in order to better support their kids. The younger kids pick it up quick when it is fun.

Westmoreland - Our first grade teacher is bilingual and teaches the 1st grade in Spanish and English. That helps the kids get off to a great start.

Strafford - We received a FLAP grant that has helped us do more. Kids love to learn a foreign language - especially when they're young.

Nottingham - We are happy to offer to all kids in our school.

Hartland - Offer both French and Spanish. We offer a study group for those who move into the district.

**** **Lyme** - Begins with 5th grade.

Deerfield - We have funded a full-time language position this year and are actively recruiting a teacher. We have a candidate from Germany who speaks 10 languages we have offered the position to, she is currently reviewing her visa application. We are looking forward to the program - we have not decided which combination of languages to offer.

Greenland - PLAN- we will be adding a grade of instruction every year (with accompanying increase in staffing). This year we are adding 3rd, next year 4th, 5th and so on. The second graders learned much more quickly than the older kids.

Candia - I really believe in early introduction — I am using my planning period to teach the 1st graders until we get more staff because they learn so quickly. I take the kids to an international festival in Boston every year. We also go to the Mexican restaurant nearby and order in Spanish.

**** **Pittsburg** - We do a lot of cross-discipline work: geography, middle ages, grammar, articles of speech, music and writing skills. I teach NH citizenship in French. I take the kids to the international expo in Boston. In the summer we run a taco stand to raise money for our trip. The community appreciates seeing the kids participating in this. (intensive 4th-up)

**** **Harrisville** - (intensive begins in Kindergarten) Proficiency. Ready to learn a third language, some of them. I try to speak mostly Spanish in class. We have a very active class, many activities: singing, games, drawing, speaking. We give community performances to give the children a chance to show off and produce good PR. We go on a 10 day trip to Mexico every other year. I take the 5th and 6th graders. Immersion trip is funded through fundraising, individual donors and self-pay (20/20/60). Some community members didn't see benefit of program in beginning — now they are some of our strongest supporters.

**** **Nelson** - (Starts intensive in 5th 45 minutes 2x a week). I speak French only in class (except for youngest kids- kindergarteners). We play lots of games, songs, drama. Very active. The community is very supportive although some occasionally say they want Spanish. Most say they don't care what language as long as their kids are learning something other than English and we have a lot of folks of Quebecois descent in town.

**** **Hollis** - (Intensive in 4th) Received a FLAP grant. Set it up in the wrong way. We did a FLEX model where we introduce a variety of languages for a short period of time. It has gotten the kids and community interested in learning a foreign language but not great for language acquisition. We are looking at program that will be 3x a week for at least 30 minutes one language this year.

Brookline - New program for us. We feel fortunate - we were going to teach the 5th and 6th grades only but the school board doubled the teacher time and told us to start in 1st grade. We are still working out the details!

**** **Newcastle** - (Intensive starting in 3rd*. Kids start program in kindergarten. We are a little unusual in that we start Spanish in kindergarten - 2nd grade, then we switch to French. I play lots of games and songs. We send our kids to Portsmouth which has a good language program.

******Marlow** - (Intensive in 3rd). We have a more intensive program for 3-4 and 5-6 . I teach them 45 minutes 2x per week. The 1-2 teachers helps integrate the lessons by speaking to them in Spanish. I enjoy being part of a group of language teachers who work in this area - we share ideas and work to develop our curriculums.

**** **Marion Cross** - We have a very serious program here. We teach our 4th graders 3x a week for 45 minutes. We are sending around a questionnaire to see what the community wants to do re possibly adding Spanish or starting French in the early grades. If they want early introduction we will do it. We do have a million dollar building bond the voters have to fund as well, however.

**** **Bernice Ray** - We try to integrate French into other curriculum topics: art, animals. Kids do research about animals for Open House and one child from each class translates the info into French. Our 4th and 5th graders use the internet to research something about France. 15 of our 5th grade boys went on a soccer exchange to Joigny, our sister city in France. We use French exclusively - NO ENGLISH in class is our rule.

**** **Newfields** - (Intensive in Kindergarten). Offers 2x42 minutes per week (so intensive-almost). Try to do community program every Christmas to do PR and have kids demonstrate proficiency. Speak in Italian in class. Parents very enthusiastic.

Stoddard - Offer just once a week but to 4th and 5th (5th gets 90 minutes).

Rye - Big initiative - Lots of research and community info gathering. We are beginning a kindergarten start program this coming year.

Little Harbour - We send our kids to Portsmouth Middle where there is a strong foreign language program. There they teach Spanish, French and Italian. In 8th grade the French class takes a trip to Quebec.

Mary Dondero - Strong community support that has grown over time as the program has grown-

French Program Comments- What we plan /wish to change

Chichester - PLAN - We will be increasing time for grades 1-3 this year to weekly instruction.

Northampton - PLAN: We are adding another full-time teacher in order to serve K-8 three times a week for 25 minutes each session. It makes sense given the research about when kids learn a foreign language most effectively.

Plainfield - Principal and the community support introducing Spanish to the earlier grades. At present the schedule doesn't allow but we think about it. I also plan on shifting in the next few years to more content based instruction where I mirror what the other teachers are teaching in their classes. I hope to have a trip for the older kids sometime soon - to Spain or Mexico- there is interest in the community for this. This year I have organized a hosting experience for many Plainfield families - 35 Spanish teens coming for three weeks.

So Hampton - I would like to see smaller class sizes and more time for the older kids. Right now we have 25-30 in a class and that is too much for effective learning, dialogue. Should be half that.

Plymouth - I would like more time for K-7 and elective for 8th graders.

Epsom — Could use more time - but maybe eventually.

Mariborough- More time.

KA Brett - I wish I had more time, I would meet more often for longer length of time.

Gilmanton - More time.

Westmoreland - Would like more frequency - has been shown to work better. For my 5th graders I would rather have 2x 30 or 40 minutes rather than 1x1 hour. Also would like something for the younger kids. After a bilingual year in 1st we don't give them after. PLAN: Next fiscal year we plan to start in 4th.

Strafford - We could use more time. Also too many changes in program - PLAN: to decide to begin in 2nd and offer 2x45 minutes per grade, per week.

Nottingham - More time so offered more often.

Hartland - We will be revisiting the idea of earlier introduction on a yearly basis (principal) no changes planned for this coming year.

Deerfield — We're happy we have the opportunity to hire a full-time person. Won't be making changes right away because a new program. Will refine how many languages we decide to teach.

Greenland- PLAN - a grade a year addition. Always could use more time.

Candia - More staffing, more time. Need more to do program justice. Writing a FLAP grant for more staffing this coming year.

Pittsburg - I would like to see more staffing. I would like grades 1-3 have 2x per week, 4-6 3x per week, and 7-8 5x per week.

Harrisville - PLAN; increase time to meet with more kids individually. I'll be working an extra half-day this fall. Would like a more intensive program for the 7th and 8th grade in Keene (receiving school). Am on committee working with Keene to start earlier introduction language in their school system.

Nelson - No changes planned.

Hollis - PLAN - (According to principal) Year one post grant most likely offer one language to all grades with goal of kindergarten start. Eventual goal for staffing increase from 1 1/2 current to 3 FTE (1/2 increase per year) so offer 3-5x a week for 30 minutes minimum (maybe slightly more for 6th).

Brookline - PLAN - increase to full-time teacher next year to add more time.

Newcastle - No changes planned for this time.

Marlow - Could use a bit more time in youngest grades. Would prefer 3x a week but I couldn't support that increase since I work in several schools.

Marion Cross - We are sending around a questionnaire to see what the community wants to do re possibly adding Spanish in 7th grade or starting French in the early grades. We certainly believe as language teachers that the earlier we start the better off the kids will be. If the community says they want early introduction we will certainly support that. They might want to wait however, because we have a big multimillion dollar construction project happening.

Bernice Ray - Possibly including Spanish. We have a study committee looking into this now.

Newfields - We are switching to Spanish now that our grant from the Italian embassy has run out.

Stoddard - No changes at this time. Increased frequency would be desirable. One day a week is better than nothing but more would be much better.

Rye - Early introduction program will be new for us this year. We hope it experiences wild success.

Little Harbour - More time.

Mary Dondero - Would like more time. 30-40 minutes 3-5 times per week would be better than what we offer now. I would also like the classroom teacher to stay in the room while I teach. If they did they would pick up a lot they could reinforce.

Eastern Seaboard State Trends For Foreign Language Learning

New Jersey

Foreign language mandated K-12. 95% compliant with 1996 mandated phase in project: All schools K-12 must have articulated foreign language program with three times a week instruction of at least 75 minutes per week K-5, 45 minutes 3x per week for 6th, 45 minutes 4x a week for 7th and 45 minutes 5x per week for 8th grade. Must have content-related program (reinforcing other subjects). Must be offered opportunity at grade 5 to continue the same language or switch. Have special programs for involving parents in foreign language education of their children and for retraining teachers in new methods. Janice Jensen, World Languages Coordinator for State of New Jersey.

New York

Have state frameworks as well as assessment. Frameworks assume a K-12 articulated program. 95% of schools offer at least 7th and 8th foreign language at least 180 minutes a week, because students must take a state test in foreign language in grade 8 if have completed a two year program. Schools are encouraged to start much earlier than grade 7/8 for articulated program. Most students in state enter second level language in grade 9. Some more advanced if earlier introduction. Statistics re exact number of schools will be sent "but can tell you early introduction has been increasing dramatically in last 5 years".

New York State Language Other than English (LOTE) director Al Martino

Connecticut

No mandate except for HS - must offer two languages. "A legislator asked me if I wanted one for younger grades and I said not until we get enough foreign language teachers trained." But many of our schools offer foreign language and more and more are offering early introduction because of what we know about language acquisition in young children and brain function. In 1999 out of 165 districts 140 (252 schools) offer some significant foreign language instruction before grade 8 (at least 90 minutes a week). 25 districts (47 schools) offer significant programs before grade 4. A lot of others offer some introduction but less than 90 minutes a week - I don't count those because I don't feel they're adequate. And the trend is to offer foreign language earlier and earlier: 6 years earlier in 1993 we gathered data and found at that point that only 75 districts (98 schools) offered language below grade 8 and only 6 districts (14 schools) offered it below grade 4. So you can see - 6 districts to 25 districts - growth rate in <4th of over 300%.

Marianne Hansen - World Languages CT Coordinator.

Massachusetts

We don't have a mandate but we do have State frameworks. We also have state standards where we encourage schools to offer at least 90 minutes a week for grades K-4 (3x30 minutes) 5-6th 4x30 minutes and grade 7-8 5x45 minutes. Out of 183 districts 60 have an early introduction to foreign language in grades K-5. Almost all have programs at the middle school level. Spanish dominates although schools teach a variety of other languages: French, Italian, Japanese and even Portuguese. We stress content related curriculum to reinforce other learning.

Debbie Roberts, Mass. World Languages Coordinator

Rhode Island

No info as yet

Vermont

Have state Frameworks for K-12 foreign language curriculum but no assessment or mandate. But anecdotally I can tell you that early language introduction is increasing. (Exact statistics to follow)

Jessica Noyes, VT Languages Coordinator

New Hampshire

No mandate or age related frameworks although we do have general guidelines for language learning. I believe the state government has never wanted us to develop any clearer guidelines or set any mandates because then they might have to pay for them. I do know that the number of schools offering early language introduction has increased. Our state has been well-represented in FLAP grant awards as well. Carolyn Horn, NH World Languages Coordinator.

Maine

No info yet.