

Memorandum

To: Superintendent Wayne Gersen

From: Rob Edson (Principal of the Marion Cross School)
Bruce Williams (Principal of the Bernice A. Ray School)

Date: May 2, 2006

Subject: Early Foreign Language Instruction

Following the SAU meeting in December, Superintendent Gersen asked us to report to him on two questions:

- (1) How the districts could introduce foreign language at an earlier age?
- (2) What would the consequences be for staffing, curriculum, and budgets?

Based on a review of relevant research literature, previous visitations to model programs, surveys and discussion with the professional teaching staff of both the Marion Cross School and the Ray School, and a review of the recommendations of both the Report of the Task Force on Early Foreign Language Education (October 25, 2001) and The Ray School French Club Proposal to start French in Grade 1, we have concluded that additional time would need to be added to the school day for any additional language to be added to the curriculum of our two schools, which would result in additional costs to each district. Even with additional time added to the day and the necessary funding, implementation challenges would be complicated.

Additional Time: Given the consensus in the literature that any quality program requires at least 90-100 minutes of instructional time per week, we would need to add at least 20 minutes per day to our regular schedule.

Additional Costs: Based on the average salary for foreign language teachers, the overall cost of staff and materials for a program of 90 -100 minutes per week for grades 1-3 would be about \$128,000. One other cost that is less specific, but important to consider is the cost of leadership. Milton, Massachusetts has an exceptional Foreign Language Coordinator who has no teaching responsibilities. She is, and has been, the implementation teacher, and the day-to-day administrator for the program. Even with additional time, there would be significant scheduling and integration issues. Expert leadership would be critically important to any such enterprise.

Implementation Challenges: There is room available at the Marion Cross School so there would be the option of bringing the children to a French classroom or a second option of bringing the instruction to the children in their regular classroom. At the Ray School, because of space concerns, only the second option would be available.

What follows is a brief analysis of the information available to us at this time that led us to this finding. We recommend that members of the SAU Board take advantage of the Ray School French Club's web site. There is an available link off the Ray School's web site. The Report of the Task Force on Early Foreign Language Education (October 25, 2001) and The Ray School French Club Proposal to start French in Grade 1 are both available as

well as a number of excellent research links. These links provide excellent background information and save paper.

The Current Language Program

French starts in Grade 4 at both the Ray School in Hanover and the Marion Cross School in Norwich. Each class receives 100 minutes per week of instruction. French continues at the Richmond Middle School for "X" minutes per week where students can either continue with the beginning of High School to Level French or change to High School level Spanish. At the high school German and Latin are also available. In any given year there are 9 or 10 fourth and fifth grade classrooms at the Ray School. There is one full-time French teacher for these classes. Each class typically has French 3 times per week for 35 minutes. Formatted at the Marion Cross School, there are three Grade 4 and three Grade 5 classes, and they meet for 5 times per week for 20 minutes. This program meets the standard of quality recommended by the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Our finding is based on the assumption that foreign language instruction in grades 1-3 would need a similar time frame of teacher contact minutes.

The key assumptions behind The Report of the Task Force on Early Foreign Language Education. The following is verbatim from the Task Force Report.

Beginning Assumptions: At an early meeting we defined seven assumptions that we already shared. These points of consensus, in no particular order, are:

1. Whatever we finally propose, it will be based on our conviction that any language program must above all be strong and rigorous and appropriately challenging to all learners.
2. In a perfect world, schooling would from the very beginning feature total immersion in several languages across the curriculum, but this model is not practical for Dresden.
3. The earlier one starts learning another language, the better, although many claims about young children's ability to learn languages in a school setting are exaggerated. We would welcome a program that began before 4th grade, but we do not give that desideratum a high priority.
4. Whatever we propose will assume long-term community support.
5. The most crucial element in language learning is motivation. Students must be convinced that the goal is worthy, and that they have the means to achieve it. Such motivation has many sources: the school administration's genuine commitment to a program, high standards, effective teaching, encouragement from family and community, and meaningful contact with cultures associated with the target language.
6. Our primary task is to consider the introduction of Spanish into earlier grades. We are expected and intend to make a specific recommendation. At the same time, however, we will also try to characterize a variety of alternative scenarios. In any case, it is incumbent on us to consider the wider implications of any proposal.
7. Studies about other cultures are valuable, but they do not replace language learning as an educational goal.

Assumption #3 is particularly relevant to the question posed by Superintendent Gersen. when considering extending foreign language instruction into the early grades, we must consider the additional assumption that the benefits derived outweigh any negative impact.

Testing the Assumptions

When a group of administrators, and Board members visited the Milton, Massachusetts school system, a system with both a long standing French immersion program and the early

introduction of Spanish to all other students, we saw many benefits. There were, however, a number of questions that could not immediately be answered. For example "Integrated" instruction in Spanish had been limited to social studies and English as concern about Math and Science test scores were rising. If such a concern exists about "integrated instruction" in science and math, what is the effect in English and social studies, especially since such instruction is twice as concentrated? It was also not clear that Special Education students were being served by the Spanish or French program for the most part.

We surveyed our two professional staffs (see appendix A) about various consequences of adjusting our schedule to accommodate foreign language instruction in grades 1-3. We also asked their opinions about the general efficacy of such an instructional model. Not surprisingly we got mixed results. Most staff members value the idea of more foreign language instruction at an earlier age. Many are open to looking for ways to accomplish this change. However only about 1/5 of our teachers think we could find 90 minutes of instructional time for grades 1-3 without cutting any existing programs. 72% view with extreme skepticism, the idea that there are effective ways to integrate this instruction into the current school day. About 80% of the staff are opposed to de-emphasizing other parts of the curriculum to accommodate more foreign language instruction. These concerns are significant, especially when combined with increased concerns with new district and state mandates in science and social studies. Finding additional time is an overriding implementation issue. Finally, more than 80% of our teachers were concerned about the impact of more foreign language on students with special needs. In our discussions, these concerns revolved around access and equity issues.

Conclusion

If foreign language instruction is to be seriously considered for grades 1-3, both schools should work together. The concerns of the foreign language departments at Hanover High School and the Richmond Middle School should be taken into account and their leadership should be sought. Adding time to the school day is necessary to avoid substantial negative impact. Additional resources of about \$128,000 per year would be needed, though this impact might be mitigated by gradual implementation.

Finally, we have focused here on how early foreign language instruction could be accomplished and what the consequences might be, positive and negative. The Task Force on Early Foreign Language Education documents many positive outcomes of foreign language instruction. Our teaching staff and administrators are cognizant of these positive outcomes, but they realize that without additional time and resources, our system could experience some serious negative consequences.

In responding to these two questions, we are making no statement on the broader question of whether such additional time and resources are best spent on this particular curriculum initiative as opposed to providing more time for reading, mathematics, science or other topics. Moreover, we have not explored the idea of partnerships with other community groups and organizations who might support a community wide effort to increase additional language instruction beyond the regular school day. Such considerations are beyond the scope of this memo but may be worthy of consideration as the SAU Board explores its long range plans in the coming months.

Appendix A
SAU 70 Early Foreign Language Study
Cost Analysis

The cost analysis below uses the following assumptions:

1. Instructional Time: 90 minutes of instructional time per week at each grade level. This is broken down into three 30 minute sessions during the week.
2. Scheduling: The level of FTE needed is based on a hypothetical schedule that did not take into account how these classes would integrate with all of the other scheduling needs within the school.
3. FTE Determination: A staffing formula that equated 1.0 FTE to 17-19 hours of contact time was used. This is the formula currently used at MCS, and assumes an associated amount of planning,
4. Materials: One class set (25 copies) of a text plus one workbook per student (Ray = 80, MCS = 40) per grade level. Even if a specific text is not purchased, it is assumed that some type of comparable materials would be needed in the initial year.
5. Materials: Cost of materials would decrease over the first three years.

	Number of Sections			Total Sections	Class Sessions			Cost
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3					
Ray	4 *	4	4	12	36	18	1	\$81,908
Materials	\$1200	\$1200	\$1200					\$3,600
						Estimated Total Cost =		\$85,508
Materials	2	2	2	6	18	9	0.5	\$39,852
	\$800	\$800	\$800					\$2,400
						Estimated Total Cost =		\$42,252
*Ray has 7 sections of K/1. These would be combined into 4 afternoon sessions of grade 1 for foreign language instruction.								

Appendix B

Marion Cross and Ray School Faculty's Foreign Language Instruction Survey

The SAU Board has asked Superintendent Gersen to report in May on the following questions:

- (1) How the districts (Norwich and Hanover) could introduce foreign language at an earlier age?
- (2) What would the consequences be for staffing, curriculum, and budgets?

Rob Edson and I will file a report with Dr. Gersen giving our best input on these questions. We have reviewed the research, read existing studies, and visited other school systems. At this point we are studying the idea of adding approximately 90 minutes of foreign language instruction in grades 1-3 and/or starting Spanish at an earlier grade level to more closely mirror the French language program. We are both well aware of the many implementation issues and we would like to emphasize that no decision has been taken to move ahead. We do think it is important to have initial faculty input on some of the key implementation issues to help us frame ideas in response to question #2 especially. We will also outline the additional costs and logistical issues inherent in question #1 in our report to Dr. Gersen. Additional information and a number of relevant reports are available at: <http://www.rayschoolfrenchclud.org/> . While this group is an advocacy group, their site has a number of important links with important background information. There were 46 total surveys returned. There was little statistical difference in the responses of the two faculties. The 46 total returns represents about 80% of the combined faculties of the two schools.

1. I think additional foreign language instruction beyond the current introduction of French at fourth grade and the option of Spanish at seventh grade is important to our children's future.

Strongly agree 17.4%	Agree 32.6%	Disagree 26%	Strongly Disagree 8.7%	N/A 15.3%
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2. I believe our current offerings in foreign language instruction serve our children sufficiently.

Strongly agree 10.8%	Agree 43.4%	Disagree 26%	Strongly Disagree 6.6%	N/A 13.2%
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3. I think we could find 90 minutes of instructional time for grades 103 without cutting any existing programs.

Strongly agree 6.5%	Agree 13%	Disagree 10.9%	Strongly Disagree 54.3%	N/A 15.2%
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4. I would embrace working with foreign language teacher(s) to find ways to integrate instruction in additional language(s) into my regular classroom routine and curriculum. (i.e., teach some social studies, science, or math in the chosen foreign language in grades 1-3.)

Strongly agree 19.5%	Agree 24%	Disagree 11%	Strongly Disagree 17.4%	N/A 28%
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Appendix B

5. If we were to add additional foreign language instruction, it should be in a progression down from 7th grade in Spanish to mirror the French program.

Strongly agree 13%	Agree 32.6%	Disagree 21.7%	Strongly Disagree 2%	N/A 30.7%
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6. If we were to add additional foreign language instruction, it should be in a progression up from first grade.

Strongly agree 17.4%	Agree 30.4%	Disagree 23.9%	Strongly Disagree 15.2%	N/A 13.1%
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7. I can imagine effective ways in which approximately 90 minutes per week of foreign language instruction could be integrated into our current school day.

Strongly agree 8.7%	Agree 19.5%	Disagree 30.4%	Strongly Disagree 23.9%	N/A 17.5%
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8. I would be willing to see other aspects of the curriculum de-emphasized to accommodate more foreign language instruction in necessary.

Strongly agree 6.5%	Agree 8.7%	Disagree 28%	Strongly Disagree 50%	N/A 6.8%
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9. The trend toward more foreign language instruction at an earlier age in many schools in NH and nationwide is a positive one which we should emulate.

Strongly agree 7.1%	Agree 50%	Disagree 28%	Strongly Disagree 4.3%	N/A 10.6%
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10. I think additional foreign language instruction is important, but should be an "after or before school" program for interested students.

Strongly agree 13%	Agree 34.7%	Disagree 34.8%	Strongly Disagree 8.7%	N/A 8.8%
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11. Any additional foreign language should be in either Spanish or French.

Strongly agree 15.5%	Agree 42.2%	Disagree 15.5%	Strongly Disagree 6.6%	N/A 20.2%
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12. The addition of foreign language in grades 103 would not significantly impact students with special needs.

Strongly agree 2%	Agree 17.7%	Disagree 35.5%	Strongly Disagree 33%	N/A 11.8%
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