

Proposal to Start French in Grade 1 at the Ray School

January 3, 2005

Summary

The Ray School French Club has asked the Hanover School Board to start French in Grade 1 for the 2005/2006 school year. The report that follows shows the importance of early language education, examines other programs in the state and at peer schools, and estimates some costs.

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1. History

1.1. Task Force on Early Foreign Language Education

In 2001, a Dresden Task Force completed a report on Early Foreign Language Education. The primary purpose was to examine adding Spanish at the middle or elementary schools. The report included survey results from 830 Norwich and Hanover households, and shows strong support for second language education. In particular:

- **69%** agree that foreign language instruction should be considered as important as the teaching of math and reading
- **88%** agree that the earlier foreign language instruction begins, the better
- **55%** would support starting foreign language before 4th grade, even if it required a budgetary increase and/or cutting of other activities

The full report is available at <http://www.rayschoolfrenchclub.org/reports/TaskForce.PDF>.

1.2. French Club creation

The Ray School French Club was created in July 2003. While the main mandate has been to provide a fun environment for learning French, there has also been a goal to provide more programs in French. In particular, an advocacy committee was formed in the fall of 2004, with the goal of expanding the French programs.

1.3. October 2004 School Board meeting

Principal Bruce Williams reported on the French Club at the October 13 meeting of the Hanover School Board. Bill Mlacak then did a brief presentation about the club. The Board invited Bill back to the November meeting to continue the discussion.

The minutes for the meeting can be seen at http://members.valley.net/~SAU70/boards/minutes/hanover/October_13_04.htm (see item 3b Principals report).

1.4. Committee meeting

The Advocacy Committee met on November 9, 2004 to prepare for the November School Board meeting. It was decided to make a formal request for 100 minutes per week French program for Grades 1, 2 and 3. This amount of time per week is the same as the current Grade 4 and 5 program. Kindergarten was excluded, as it was felt that their day was just too short. Based on the current enrollment, it would require about 1.5 teachers for this proposed program.

1.5. November 2004 School Board meeting

Committee members Helene Miles, Melina Walker and Bill Mlacak attended the Hanover School Board meeting on November 10, 2004. Bill made a request to the Board to expand the French program to Grade 1 with 100 minutes per week, which would require adding 1.5 full-time

teaching positions. The Board asked Principal Williams to prepare a report on the impact of such a program.

The minutes from this meeting can be seen at http://members.valley.net/~SAU70/boards/minutes/hanover/Nov_10_04.htm (see item 4b).

2. 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 and the High School. Spanish is introduced in Grade 7, and at high school, German and Latin are available.

At the Ray School, there are five Grade 4 classes, and five Grade 5 classes. There is one full-time French teacher for these 10 classes. Each class typically has French 3 times per week for 35 minutes.

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.

3. Why?

3.1. Why start before Grade 4?

- better fluency with an earlier start (Strozer, JR, 1994, Language acquisition after puberty, Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press)
- more time (and years) spent learning language will improve ability in the language
- younger kids learn languages faster and more easily
- younger kids are less shy about speaking aloud
- Educating Language Learners (Dec 2004/Jan 2005, Vol 62, No 4, pp. 20-23):

Foreign language learning is not something that happens overnight; it takes a commitment of time and money. US schools compound the problem by waiting too long to start foreign language instruction. According to American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Professional Programs Director Elvira Swender, US students often start learning foreign languages at puberty, "an age at which their brains are least receptive to language learning." Swender also notes the relative unimportance that schools assign to languages. "It doesn't occur to anyone that we should wait to teach students math," she points out, "so why do we wait with foreign languages?"

ACTFL recommends that elementary school language programs include classes three to five days a week for 30 to 40 minutes; middle schools should hold classes daily for 40 to 50 minutes. Few public schools do this even in Spanish and French, the most commonly taught languages (Strauss, 2002).

3.2. Why French and not Spanish?

- there is already an existing program in French
- because there's a group of Hanover families who have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to providing French language instruction for their children. There's been no such groundswell of support for Spanish instruction
- proximity to Canada and Quebec, and in Canada, there are 320,000 children in French immersion, and 2 million in "core French" (regular French class)
- Joigny, France is sister city to Hanover

3.3. Why offer it in school if there is a club?

- if part of core curriculum, indicates importance of language education, on par with other subjects
- the goal of French Club is to provide a fun environment to encourage the learning of French; it is not a formal language program
- tougher to teach after school - kids are tired and want to move around
- many other afterschool choices
- during school, it can be more formal and more frequent
- school would use certified language teachers, club uses parent volunteers, with no formal educational training

4. Other Schools

4.1. Schools in NH

There are 319 public elementary schools in New Hampshire. Of these, there are 49 that are comparable in enrollment and per pupil spending: 200 students or more, and \$8000 per pupil or more. Of these 49 schools, 17 of them offer French or Spanish to various grades ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 5. The 17 schools are in 11 school districts as shown below:

<i>School District</i>	<i>Language(s)</i>	<i>Grades</i>	<i>Program</i>
Amherst	Spanish	K-2	was 2 x 30 minutes/wk; cancelled due to end of grant
Chesterfield	Spanish	K-5	2 x 20 minutes/wk
Hanover	French	4-5	3 x 35 minutes/wk
Keene	French & Spanish	5	5 x 40 minutes every 2 weeks; 1/2 year in French, 1/2 year in Spanish
Marlborough	Spanish	K-5	
Moultonborough	French & Spanish	K-5	2 or 3 x 45 minutes/wk
Plainfield	Spanish	5	
Plymouth	Spanish	K-5	
Portsmouth	Spanish	K-5	
Rye	French	K-5	
Tamworth	Spanish	K-5	

Oyster River School District in Durham doesn't offer any second language program during the school day, but parents run a World Language Club with 2 x 45 minutes per week before school. They offer German, French, Spanish and Chinese. In Jaffrey, parents run an afterschool Spanish club.

4.2. Peer schools - Menchik report

The Dresden District commissioned a study to obtain a list peer schools across USA. Such schools would provide better comparisons for the schools in the Dresden district. The study used such measures as household income, level of education, and housing values.

The full study can be downloaded from the SAU website at http://members.valley.net/~SAU70/spotlight/menchik_study.pdf (PDF format - 2 Mb).

The Valley News had an article about this report in the December 9, 2004 newspaper.

Some of these schools were contacted recently to find out what they offered for second language programs. About half of the schools have a foreign language program to envy, and the other half have either nothing or something after school. The results are shown below:

<i>Town</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>2nd Language Grades</i>	<i>Languages Taught</i>	<i>Minutes per Wk</i>	<i>Times per Week</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i># of Lang. Teachers</i>	<i>School Day (hrs)</i>
Chapel Hill, NC	college town	919-807-3300	K-5	French	90	3 x 30	500	2	7.0
Princeton, NJ	college town	609-806-4200	K-5	Spanish	75	5 x 15	350	0.5	6.6
Urbana, IL	college town	217-384-3636	K-5	French, Spanish	225	5 x 45	325	2	7.0
Athens, OH	college town	740-797-4516	K-6	French & Spanish	60	1 x 60	260	Ohio U. students	6.0
Cambridge, MA	college town	617-349-6718	K-8 (incl K-2)	Mandarin	60	2 x 30	varies	varies	
Deep River, CT	rural, wealthy	860-526-5319	K-2	Spanish	40	2 x 20	385	1	6.0
Maranacook, ME	rural, wealthy	207-622-2949	yes (details later)						
Williamstown, MA	rural, college	413-458-5707	before school	Spanish program					
South Deerfield, MA	rural, college	413-665-1155	afterschool	program					
Middlebury, VT	rural, college	802-388-4421	none						
Westhampton, MA	not sure	413-527-0561	none						
Northampton, MA	college town	413-587-1328	none						
Stonybrook, NY	college town	631-730-4000	none						
Potsdam, NY	rural, college	315-265-2000	none						
Ithaca, NY	college town	607-274-2101	none						

In North Carolina, all schools have K-2 foreign language with mandatory levels of competence. The typical program is 3 x 25 minutes per week. In a Chapel Hill K-5 school of 500 children, they have two full time language teachers. Details of the curriculum can be seen at http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/second_languages/gradesk2.htm.

Based on the report and census data, the following schools are similar to the Ray School and would be useful to contact for more detailed information:

- Chapel Hill, NH - Carboro School District
- Deep River, CT
- Maranacook, ME
- Urbana, IL

4.3. Schools in NH and East Coast - Cornish report

The town of Cornish, NH introduced a French program two years ago. A group of parents who had organized a French club there also looked at what other schools in NH and East Coast were doing. The PDF version of their report is available at <http://www.rayschoolfrenchclub.org/reports/CornishReport.PDF>.

5. Program Design

5.1. Why 100 minutes in Grade 4/5

5.2. Better to do 5 x 20, 4 x 25?

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages recommends that elementary school language programs include classes three to five days a week for 30 to 40 minutes.

6. Costs

Option A: Add to Curriculum

Option A assumes 100 minutes teaching time required per week required for each grade adding French to the curriculum. Given the current workload of one FTE for two grades, we assume 0.5 FTEs per grade adding French to the curriculum.

Pros – Could leverage a process and curriculum already used at the Ray School

Cons – Most expensive option

Assuming \$60,000/year (salary + benefits), the costs of Option A are:

Grades 1-3: \$90,000

Grades 2-3: \$60,000

Grade 3 only: \$30,000

Option B: French Immersion via Attrition

Option B assumes that as traditional classroom teachers retire, French grade school teachers can be hired to replace them. The French teacher would have his/her own classroom, teaching the traditional curriculum in French. Parents would request to enroll their children in this French Immersion classroom.

Pros – Would offer highest language learning for the families who would like it most; lower cost option

Cons – If demand high, process for admitting students to this special class could become challenging; will create disparity of skill level that will carry into upper grades; limits ability to shuffle placement for children from grade to grade

There would be no incremental cost for Option B.

Option C: French Immersion / French curriculum hybrid

Option C combines Options A and B. The French grade school teachers from Option B would still have their homeroom, but with creative time management, could offer French curriculum to the other four classes. For example, for a certain period each day, the French classroom could switch teachers so that the French teacher could teach French to the traditional class and the traditional teacher could teach a traditional subject to the French class.

Pros – Same as B but skill level disparity less than Option B; demand / admissions issue less than Option B

Cons – Same as B, but time management will be much more challenging

There would be no incremental cost for Option C.

Option D: Collaborate with Dartmouth College to utilize hourly staff

Option D would involve working with the Rassias program at Dartmouth College to utilize their college staff (the French Club collaborates with Rassias already). These trained “drill masters” would work for the Ray school on an hourly basis and would spend part of their time each week building the curriculum.

Pros – Less overhead and expense for staff; taps into experience and knowledge of Rassias programs

Cons – Lack of continuity; not trained as grade school teachers; would require guidance from Ray School French teacher

Assuming \$20/hour @ 500 minutes class time and 100 minutes prep time per grade @ 36 weeks, the costs of Option D are approximately:

Grades 1-3: \$22,500

Grades 2-3: \$15,000

Grade 3 only: \$7,500

Option E: Some subset of A or D

Option E would involve paring down Options A or D to either 2 days/week or 3 days/week.

Pros – Same as corresponding option above; less expensive

Cons – Same as corresponding option above; not as valuable

Assuming a direct subset of costs outline in corresponding options above, the cost of Option E would be approximately:

Option Subset	Grades 1-3	Grades 2-3	Grade 3 only
Option A – 2 days/wk	\$60K	\$40K	\$20K
Option A – 1 day/wk	\$30K	\$20K	\$10K
Option D – 2 days/wk	\$15K	\$10K	\$5K
Option D – 1 day/wk	\$7.5K	\$5K	\$2.5K

Option F: Fee-for-service program

Option F would involve providing a French program that would be funded via tuition paid by parents. This tuition would be set at a rate that would allow for scholarships. This class would be offered during school hours and may require placement standards (e.g., a student not meeting requirements of normal grade expectations may not be placed in this class). This class could be in lieu of classwork that participating students have "placed" out of. Or it could be conducted during recess (like violin lessons) or at lunchtime.

Pros – Offers meaningful options for advanced students not challenged at their grade level

Cons – Creates disparity of skill levels; may be considered unfair to students who don't place into it; may be issue in charging tuition for class during regular school hours

There would be no incremental cost for Option F.

7. Logistics

7.1. Where does 100 minutes come from in the day?

- integration with other curriculum (science, math in French)
- French could be considered part of "Language Arts", and so time for Language Arts in English would be reduced
- reducing snack or recess time
- increasing length of the school day

7.2. Where can we find the classroom space?

It seems there are two options:

- 1) Rotate classes to a French teacher
- 2) Rotate the French teacher to classrooms.

The second option solves our limited space issue -- but is that an acceptable option for the homeroom teachers -- having someone come into their room to teach? And this "homeless" teacher would need at least a desk, somewhere.

If the number of teachers is reduced, there may be an available classroom for 2005/06.