Elementary World Languages

June 12, 2023

Building WL proficiency: What the research says

For elementary students to move from Novice-Low to Novice-Mid Proficiency for category 1 languages (those closest to English, like Spanish and French), you need a program meeting minimum 3x per week and 90 mins of instruction per week. This is based upon recommendations from ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

The NJ mandate only requires 30 minutes per week, indicating that there is not an expectation for students to build fluency in a world language at the elementary level.

With the teachers we have and the schedule we can build, even if we only taught Spanish over all six years (K-5), the students will still not have enough hours to attain Novice-Mid Proficiency level status.

Process

We posted “World Language Teachers-Elementary” on 4/17/23 and included certifications for all six languages that are currently offered at the high school.

Given our recent hiring experiences, this was the most sound strategy.

Outcome: Three world language teachers with different certifications

We were able to find three strong candidates for these positions.

- Chinese, German, French

We developed a rotating schedule that has certain advantages.

Students do not choose a language until grade 7. Offering languages at the elementary level that we do not offer as part of the exploratory program in grade 6 (Chinese and German) provides students with exposure to those languages so they can make more informed choices in the future.

Similar to the grade 6 exploratory, this structure provides students with experiences with multiple languages.