



Pacific Northwest Council
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Lingo

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More than Learning a Language

By Mandy Lindgren, PNCFL Publications Director



Mandy Lindgren serves as the publications director and executive assistant for PNCFL. She currently works as the office manager at the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon.

"E l volcán arrojó hace sesenta años." "Ba chuyi er dengyu si." "Ja vishi chem moi brat!"

All across the Pacific Northwest, young children are learning to express themselves in languages other than English. First graders at Turnagain Elementary School in Anchorage, Alaska, read stories in Russian. Sixth graders at Hosford Middle School in Portland, Oregon, learn math in Chinese. Wyoming's foreign language articulation project created standards-based, content-based K-6 Spanish programs across the state. Language learning is no longer for the elite; public schools offering elementary programs in Spanish, French, Japanese, and even Arabic, Chinese, and Russian are becoming the norm, not the exception.

Why all of the emphasis on early language learning? "The young brain is uniquely poised to learn many languages," explains Dr. Myriam Met, deputy director for the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland (Met, 2005).



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Evidence supporting the linguistic and cognitive benefits of early language learning abound:

- Learning a foreign language at a young age promotes cognitive developments, which leads to higher academic achievement in other curriculum areas (Wilburn Robinson, 1998).
- Early bilingualism has been linked to increased mental flexibility and problem

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LINGO

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The Pacific Northwest Council for Languages publishes *Lingo* in January, May, and September. PNCFL welcomes short articles, descriptions of innovative courses, reviews of teaching materials, and other items of interest to language teaching professionals.

Members may send submissions to the editorial board by email attachment or postal mail to the addresses above. Submission deadlines are December 1 for the January issue, April 1 for the May issue, and August 1 for the September issue.

To obtain advertising information, please contact Mandy Lindgren at pncfl@uoregon.edu or 541-346-5699.

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Learning a Language

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solving skills, greater verbal ability, and enhanced metalinguistic awareness (Met, 2007).

- Young learners are more likely to attain native-like pronunciation than older language learners (Phillips, 1998).
- The earlier students start to learn another language, the higher level of proficiency they can achieve (Haas, 1998).

Language educators have known these advantages for years. Business and government entities, which increasingly rely on a bilingual workforce to remain globally competitive, are finding the benefits of language learning crucial to their everyday operations. With funding from the National Security Education Program, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas are developing Language Roadmaps, proposals that will help education, business, and government leaders meet the demand for professionally proficient employees.

Early language learning not only benefits the individual student but also the community in which that

student lives. To celebrate and support the importance of early language learning, PNCFL devotes this entire edition of *Lingo* to issues surrounding early childhood language education.

In this issue:

- Learn age-appropriate ways to **incorporate technology** (page 3)
- Find out exactly **what it means to be a “language sponge”** (page 6)
- Discover **successful models of language education** in Boise (page 4) and Alaska (page 5)
- Find ways to **involve your local community** (page 8)
- Share concrete **research on the benefits of early language learning education** with your administrators (page 10)

Although you may not teach at the elementary level, PNCFL hopes you will find this issue useful in supporting the continuity of your district's language program. 🙌

For references cited in article, email pncfl@uoregon.edu.



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Tech Tips for Tots

By Laurie Jackson, *Education World*

This excerpt comes from an article that appeared online for Education World, a teacher's resource guide to find lesson plans and research materials. Read the full article online at <http://www.education-world.com>.

How and when should toddlers use technology? What can parents and educators do to build computer skills while ensuring that young children don't get too much "tech time?"

In what's often called the information age, it's probably not surprising that, according to the National Education Technology Plan:

- 90% of kids ages five to seventeen use computers.
- 97% of kindergartners have computers at home or at school.
- 72% of first graders use a home computer during the summer.

We know that young children are using computers, but should they be? At what age should computer use begin, and what can be done at home and at school to help build computer confidence and competence in children? Below are a few tips for teachers and parents who want to find just the right balance with technology in the home and school.



"Despite the widely propagated myth, most children aren't more tech-savvy than most adults."

Time is Precious

Toddlers and preschoolers learn by doing – playing in the mud, dressing up, playing house, and participating in other hands-on activities. The National Association for the Education of Young Children advises, therefore, that "computers supplement and do not replace highly valued early childhood activities and materials, such as art, blocks, sand, water, books, exploration with writing materials, and dramatic play."

A report sponsored by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory recommends no more than two hours of "screen time" (computer, TV, and video game time combined) a day

for preschoolers. The advice for teachers and parents is clear: spend a little time at the computer with toddlers and preschoolers. Then, turn it off, go outside, and have fun in the fresh air.

Navigation is Key

Navigation refers to how easily a young child can move around within a Web site, play games, and follow links. Although teachers and parents should always supervise computer time carefully, children will feel most successful if they can open, close, and replay their own games with very little adult help.

Good Web sites for preschoolers and toddlers rely on images and sounds rather than on printed text. A green button, red stop sign, or audio prompt will help most younger users, while a game that has a text message might frustrate them.

Debunking the Tech-savvy Myth

Despite the widely propagated myth, most children aren't more tech-savvy than most adults. Children often use more technology but that doesn't mean they understand more of what they're doing. In a study entitled "The Usability of Web Sites for Children," the Nielsen Norman Group recently found that, on the Internet, children ages five to seventeen give up easily, rarely scroll down, love mouse-overs (text or graphics that change the cursor), enjoy animation, click ads, and read more instructions than adults.

Parents and teachers can help by guiding children to try several times to accomplish a task, to scroll "beyond the fold" (beyond what is initially displayed on the computer monitor), and to recognize and avoid ads and other distractions online.

Education, Not Just Entertainment

Hundreds of computer games are available for kids from nine months to five years old, so why not select games with educational – and not just entertainment – value? Even two year olds can begin recognizing shapes and colors and listen to stories read online.

Consider the following sites for time-tested and teacher-recommended activities for toddlers and preschoolers:

- Julia's Rainbow Corner: <http://www.juliasrainbowcorner.com>
- Starfall: <http://www.starfall.com>
- StoryPlace: <http://www.storyplace.org>

View the full article online at <http://www.education-world.com>.



International Curriculum Coming to Boise

By Dan Hollar and Cassie Fulleton, Boise School District

Dan Hollar is the administrator of public information and communications for the Boise School District. Cassie Fulleton is an intern from Boise State University working in the Boise School District's Public Information and Communications Office.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding other cultures and languages becomes essential in education. To that end, beginning in the 2008-09 school year, students at Longfellow and Pierce Park elementary schools will have the opportunity to learn a curriculum with a deeper strand of global studies. This new curriculum will be the first in the district to teach students a foreign language (Spanish) starting in kindergarten.

District Educational Services Supervisor Russ Heller, District Executive Director of Curriculum Dr. Don Coberly, District Executive Director of Operations Dr. Pete Bailey, World Languages Consulting Teacher Sharon Larracoechea, and a development team of experienced teachers, parents, and administrators have developed the international curriculum.

By drawing on their own experiences and researching other successful programs around the country, the team of curriculum developers proposed a mission statement to "...prepare students to succeed in a global community." In order to achieve this goal, historic, geographic and cultural extensions will enrich the curriculum.

The foreign language learning will lead students to purposeful, communicative proficiency in Spanish. Foreign language instruction will integrate with established district curriculum, laying a foundation for further language study in the years ahead. "This would be an opportunity to experiment with going deeper and with

mingling those explorations with foreign language instruction," said Heller.

International studies can also transfer easily into school subjects such as art, science, and math. For instance, students could create a mural about the country they are studying or discuss the geography, climates, and ecosystems of other countries. For math, students might create multicultural recipes using metric measurements or learn about money exchange rates as they simulate international purchases of ingredients.

The district had been contemplating the addition of more global emphasis and foreign language instruction. Increased interest by parents and educators recently stimulated action toward piloting international schools. Administrators hope the program will ease students' transitions to junior high and high school while continuing their world language studies with courses that are already established in those schools.

Both Longfellow and Pierce Park elementary schools have expressed interest in the new program. These schools were selected because of their supportive communities and the space available for growth. Principals Deborah Watts (Longfellow) and Kathy Hutchison (Pierce Park) and their staff members express excitement about this new direction. The principals at both schools found the parents in their communities to be supportive of the international focus and the foreign language instruction.

If successful at Longfellow and Pierce Park, an international curriculum will likely be expanded to other schools. This global focus presents many new options and opportunities for teachers and students alike and will better prepare our students for the world in which they live.



"Increased interest by parents and educators recently stimulated action toward piloting international schools."

Pioneering German Charter School in Alaska



By Antje Carlson, *Rilke Schule*

Alaska: visions of an undaunted, pioneering spirit of adventurous days long past accompany the mere thought of this rugged yet majestic state. A daring proposition in March 2006 to create a German semi-immersion charter school in Anchorage rekindled that same pioneering spirit. Led by veteran teacher Jo Sanders, a group of approximately fifty like-minded people convened in the back room of an Anchorage coffee shop. Eighteen months later, *Rilke Schule German School of Arts and Sciences* opened on August 22, 2007. *Rilke Schule*, a K-8 semi-immersion German school, allows prospective middle school graduates to transition seamlessly into high school German programs.

Attempts to model the German semi-immersion school after four existing foreign language programs integrated in elementary schools were abandoned as a result of the lack of available classroom space in the Anchorage School District (ASD). Neither discouraged nor disturbed by the prospect of having to look for alternative accommodations, the founding members agreed on a charter school model, the first of its kind for foreign languages in Alaska.

The unknown territory of chartering a German semi-immersion school required a pioneering spirit from the Academic Policy Committee, which governs *Rilke Schule*. Founders researched the Anchorage student market and wrote a business and charter school proposal, which went before the State of Alaska Department of Early Education and Development. The department demands a minimum of 150 students for charter schools. Could a relatively small community like Anchorage, with its roughly 260,000 residents, support a German school in addition to the already existing public schools and four foreign language programs?

A place rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, one of every six Alaskans claim to be of German ancestry according to the 2000 U.S. Census; about 45,000 live in the metropolitan area of Anchorage, and 1,100 were born in Germany. Although the school's strongest student population would clearly be heritage learners, *Rilke Schule's* founders intended to attract pupils of other ethnic heritage.

In the early stages of planning, committee members networked closely with other schools and connected with families by staging *Familienfeste* (family events) throughout the summer. Anyone with interest in a German semi-immersion school could participate. Children had the opportunity to make friends before they left their old schools, and founders could discuss the school's policies with community members. These events created a strong bond. As a result of the school's efforts to establish a rapport with parents in the planning stages, *Rilke Schule* now enjoys a remarkable parent involvement.



© *Rilke Schule*

Rilke Schule follows the ASD's prescribed curriculum and the Alaska State Standards in all subjects except German. The standards for German are based on the National Foreign Language Standards, which include the Alaska and ASD world language standards. Kindergartners and first graders learn in German for half a day and in English the other half. Second through eighth graders receive

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Jo Sanders leads *Rilke Schule* students in song at the Anchorage Oktoberfest.

Are Children “Language Sponges”?

*Published by the National Network for
Early Language Learning*



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“To be a ‘language sponge’ does not mean that young children will be able to speak Italian after four months.”

After hearing repeatedly from language educators and experts in language acquisition that children are “language sponges,” one may assume that children can gain second language fluency in a snap, but is it truly possible for children to learn a new language in a short period of time?

Well, not really. To be a “language sponge” does not mean that young children will be able to speak in Italian after four months. Unfortunately, language educators may have misled people into taking the expression literally. In reality, the term was coined to describe the unique characteristics of young children that make them especially capable of acquiring some aspects of a new language with more ease than older students.

Let’s examine what being a “language sponge” *really* means.

Young Children Have an Auditory Advantage

Studies have shown that babies can hear all the sounds in the world. However, from birth on, brain paths start to be developed only for the language or languages that children hear on a regular basis in early childhood. All others are trimmed out. The ability to detect sounds that have not yet been “registered” in the brain diminishes with age. After puberty, this ability is extremely difficult to develop but can be learned through intensive phonological study.

Young Children Let the Language Sink In

Children are not linguistic analysts in their approach to learning new languages. They don’t feel the need to “dissect” the new language and know what each word

means before starting to use it. Instead, they focus on the message. Young children’s global/intuitive approach to communication is a great advantage in helping them to build oral skills.

On the other hand, adults have a greater advantage in writing and reading a new language, as they have already acquired the complex skills required for these tasks in their first language.

Young Children Practice by Playing Interactively with Others

The younger the children, the less preoccupied they are with making mistakes, and the more willing they are to try to speak the new language with their friends, teachers, and caregivers. Practice is an essential component in learning another language, and young chil-

dren possess an inner drive to use it in interactions with others.

So What Does It Mean to Be a “Language Sponge”?

For all of the above reasons, children are sponges in the sense that they let the language flow in and out without over analyzing it. They are not sponges in the sense of being able to acquire fluency in a short period of time. As a matter of fact, children pass through a “silent period,” which tends to be longer the younger they are. However, the fact that babies, toddlers, and preschoolers may not use the new language does not mean that they are not learning; they are building foundational listening comprehension skills that will allow them to be able to speak when ready.

Children and Adults Need to Study a Language For Many Years

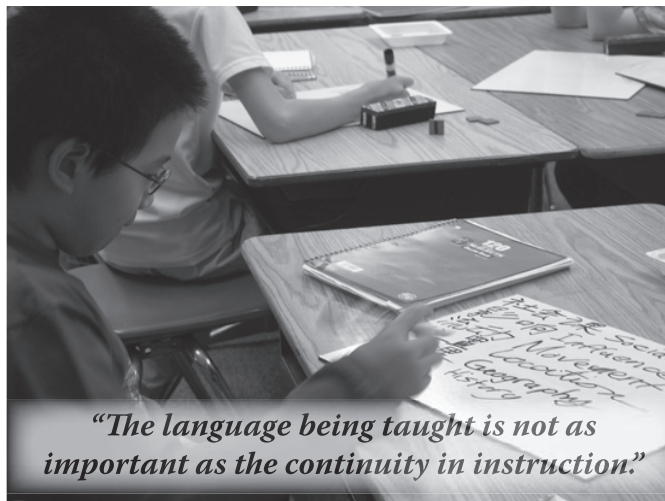
In order to achieve a high command of a language, both children and adults need to study formally in long sequences of instruction.

Obviously, children who start learning a language at a young age will have the necessary time to develop a high command of it. Reading and writing also need to be formally taught in the target language.

NNELL’s Advice to Parents

Make choices for your child based on the program model, not on the language being taught. The language being taught is not as important as the continuity in instruction from preschool or early elementary school through high school or college. Since children who study a second language develop a facility to learn other languages, they can always take a preferred third language later during their school years.

- Get your children excited about learning a new language! Explain to them that people around the world speak different languages and do things differently. By learn-



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“The language being taught is not as important as the continuity in instruction.”

ing another language, children will be able to speak with peers in other countries or even in their own community. The skills that children build today will allow them to form business and personal relationships when they are older.

- Children’s and adults’ language learning skills are different but complementary. Try to learn the language yourself. Use it with your children in playful interactions at home, and learn together about the history, culture, and society of the countries where the language is spoken.

- Prepare children for the fact that learning a new language takes time and work, but it will be well worth the effort!

By following these tips, you will be on your way to creating educated, global citizens for tomorrow. And, as a sponge retains water, so your children will retain what they learn in a meaningful context in their early years of second language learning! 🧽📖

This article appeared in the March 2007 issue of Home/School Connection, published by the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL). NNELL is an educational community providing leadership support of successful early language learning and teaching. Since its founding in 1987, NNELL continues to be an invaluable resource for educators, parents, and policy makers advocating for K-8 programs of excellence in second language education. Visit them online at <http://nnell.org>.



Parents' Impact on Language Education



Bridget Yaden, PNCFL president, currently directs the Language Resource Center at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. She is also an assistant professor of Spanish.

We language educators are familiar with issues around early language learning such as the “critical period” for language acquisition, which describes the window of opportunity when the human brain is uniquely capable of acquiring language. More open to linguistic and cultural differences, young children are ripe for learning languages. We all have a sense that “earlier is better” and have met people from other countries who speak several languages and started their language instruction early, usually in elementary school. So why is the U.S. infamous for waiting until high school to offer regularly scheduled language classes as part of the normal school day?

As a Spanish professor and Pacific Lutheran University’s methods instructor, I am often contacted by schools looking for language teachers. Increasingly, parent-teacher associations in the Tacoma School District have taken the initiative to offer languages for students, usually as before- or after-school enrichment programs such as FLEX.

At least three public elementary schools in my district have active language enrichment programs coordinated by parent organizations. These programs offer Chinese, French, German, and Spanish and usually require a fee to ensure that the PTA has enough funds to cover the costs of teachers and supplies. Regular staff offer their classrooms and library spaces for the before- or after-school classes.

I would like to highlight one very successful enrichment program at Browns Point Elementary as a model for other schools considering a language program. The Browns Point PTA program offers Spanish language courses twice a week before school for forty-five minutes. Their program started in fall 2005 with sixty-five students taught by four teachers in five classes. Since then, the re-enrollment and daily attendance have paced steadily at 90% or higher. The program grew during its second year to 120 students in 10 classes. Four of the classes were second level continuing from the previous year, and six were beginner courses. This year, the third year of the program, the number of classes reduced slightly to eight courses with ninety students. This reduction can be contributed to several factors, including the loss of a classroom and the graduation of many students to middle school.

By Bridget Yaden, Pacific Lutheran University

Due to the success of their elementary school program, Browns Point expanded their program to include a middle school component. Parents wanted an opportunity for their now sixth graders to continue in Spanish, but their local middle school offers Spanish beginning in seventh grade only.

So what makes their program so successful? In addition to hiring highly skilled teachers, mobilizing dedicated parents, and garnering support from the principal, other factors keep this program growing. The PTA parents that coordinate this program became an LLC in January 2007 and secured their own liability insurance and state and city licensing, allowing the organization to expand their program to include summer sessions and preschool programs.

Parental involvement is key to a successful language enrichment program. The Browns Point program realizes this important element, understanding that parent buy-in keeps the program afloat and keeps students and parents excited about coming to class early in the morning!



Sample events to increase parents’ involvement include:

- Family night: Host a family night and involve both students and parents in culture and language activities.
- Guest speakers: Invite local leaders to outline the importance of early language learning as well as the goals and expectations of an enrichment program.
- Culture nights: Organize a culture night to expose students and their families to the cultures of different countries. At the celebration, kids can dance and sing. Ask experienced teachers or parents to give presentations on flamenco or ballroom dance.

I applaud Browns Point and all of the other schools who take the initiative to offer languages for our elementary school students. 🍌🍌🍌



¿Qué Comemos?

By Cassandra Celaya, Wyoming Department of Education

Cassandra Celaya serves as the FLES coordinator for the Wyoming Department of Education. She is a member of the state task force for middle school articulation. To preview the Wyoming Spanish curriculum detailed in this article, visit <http://www.curriki.org>.


Enter Señor Montalvo's sixth grade Spanish class, and you will hear students discussing their diet and activity logs. If you travel across town, Señora García's sixth grade class talks about what they consider to be important ingredients for *tortas* (sandwiches) and *tacos*. In Señora Womack's school, students complete their food pyramids so that they can assist their Spanish teacher in making a typical yet healthy Mexican meal. These activities are all part of the new sixth grade Spanish curriculum created by a task force of Wyoming teachers.

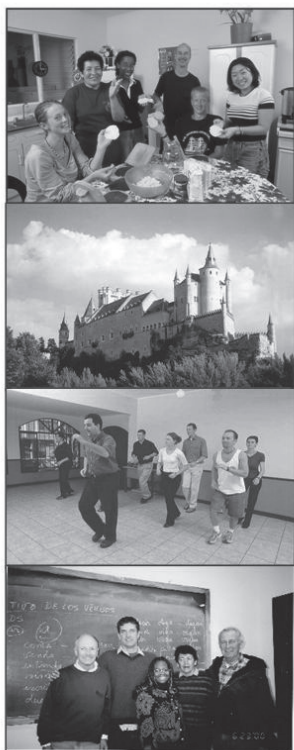
Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, all elementary schools in Wyoming were required to teach a foreign language to all children in kindergarten, first, and second grades. After a three-year Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant proved successful, the state implemented a five-year pilot program for third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

Forty schools in Wyoming currently participate in the pilot, with approximately 9,500 students enrolled in the program. Paraeducators who are native or near-native speakers teach most of the classes. Trained to work along with the regular classroom teacher, these instructors base their classes on school curriculum.

As students enrolled in the pilot program begin to enter the secondary level, foreign language teachers find that these students need more of a challenge. As a result, a small task force of teachers from around the state united to create four unique units. The units are tied to the National Foreign Language Standards and to state and national sixth grade content standards. The task force designed the curriculum to develop student proficiency in

all three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity emerges as students explore another language system and experience the practices, products, and perspectives of a different culture. In some schools in Wyoming, sixth grade students compare calories, proteins, and fiber content of typical Latin American foods. In other schools, students discuss the benefits of healthy living and eating. Students work together to solve word problems in Spanish or to land a role in the play "*Sopa de piedra*" (Stone Soup).

As the bell rings and signals the end of another Spanish class, students moan. The teacher promises another day when they can discuss *¿Qué comemos?* 



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Identifying Successful Programs

By Linda Forrest, University of Oregon



Linda Forrest works as the research director for the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon. She has extensive experience conducting research on issues related to language and cognition.

How much time should a school or district allocate to world language study? Although the answer depends on the goals of the program, any amount of instruction can provide a meaningful learning experience for students. New Jersey, however, has set a standard for student performance. Students need to demonstrate proficiency at the ACTFL Novice High level in order to meet the state standard.

In 2005, the New Jersey Department of Education received a Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant to study how student success rates can be improved. This project represents the largest data collection event in second languages at the eighth grade level ever undertaken in the United States. The New Jersey Department of Education worked with the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon to study the results from the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) administered by Avant Assessment.

At the end of the grant's second year, 37,453 students from 108 districts in New Jersey have taken STAMP for reading and speaking. The results show that only a minority of students meet the state standard; most students score in the Novice Low to Novice Mid range. In all languages, speaking scores are consistently higher than reading scores.

How much time do students need to reach Novice High, the New Jersey state standard?

CASLS estimated the total lifetime hours of instruction each student had received and compared this total with the student's reading and speaking scores. Although

individual student performance varies, 50% of nonheritage students require approximately 540 hours to pass the state standard for speaking. If a class meets three hours per week for thirty-six weeks each year, students will need five years to reach this number of hours. These results suggest that instruction should begin as early as possible, ideally prior to sixth grade. This strategy will allow enough time for students to become proficient.

What kind of schedule is most successful?

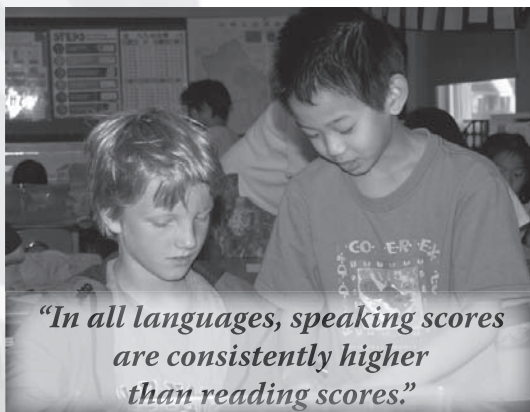
CASLS' research indicates that programs are more successful when duration and intensity are adequate. CASLS looked at the number of language sessions per week and the number of weeks per year that students receive. (Heritage students and immersion programs were ex-

cluded in this study.) The research indicates that language programs that meet several times each week during the whole school year are generally more effective than an equivalent number of hours in a partial-year program. The more effective programs met at least twenty-one weeks per year, met at least three times per week, and had a minimum total of five thousand minutes of instruction time spread

across the school year. Even when the total number of hours per year is held constant, students perform better when instruction time is evenly distributed across the school year. Both the distribution of time and the amount of time significantly impact student performance.

What effect does socioeconomic status have on language proficiency?

New Jersey rates each school's socioeconomic status (SES) on a scale from A (low) to J (high). CASLS found that students who attend all types of schools had similar speaking proficiency after five years of instruction. Although students in lower SES schools start out slower, their speaking skills catch up to their peers in higher SES schools. Given equal amounts of instruction, students in all schools acquired similar levels of speaking proficiency. Unfortunately, eighth grade New Jersey students in lower SES schools receive, on average, only one-third the hours



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Teachers Find a Way With WILL



Anne Graham teaches K-8 Spanish classes at Sussex School in Missoula, Montana. Anne participated in WILL during 2003-05 and currently serves as the treasurer for the Montana Association of Language Teachers (MALT).

As a WILL participant, you attended institutes focused on action research and leadership. How has this professional development training affected your teaching practice?

The action research that I performed during my participation in WILL allowed me to examine the usefulness and popularity of units that I have taught in my second- and third-grade Spanish class. After conducting research, I honed my curriculum so that both the students and I feel more satisfied with the themes we learn.

I also benefited greatly from learning about performance assessment units (PAUs) during the first year of WILL. Although I haven't had the necessary time to develop all of my units using

PAUs, I am more aware of what I would like students to be able to do at the end of a unit.



Students enjoy Anne Graham's interactive Spanish class.

As an elementary educator, what advice would you give to others interested in expanding their school's language program into the elementary levels?

Expose children to some language activities and allow the parents to see how viable language study is for young children. Sing lots of songs and have the children perform them. Their beautiful accents and retention will be sure to impress. Educate parents, teachers, and administrators

about the benefits of learning a second language, not only linguistically but also in other areas of brain development.

How can language teachers in isolated districts be best supported?

Encourage them to become involved in state organizations. Give financial support to attend conferences. Let them know about the opportunities available through WILL!

What new experiences have you had in local or regional leadership as a result of your involvement with WILL?

I have served as the treasurer for the Montana Association of Language Teachers (MALT) for two years, and I have had the pleasure of working with other members in leadership positions.

Learn more about the WILL program by visiting <http://casls.uoregon.edu/will.php>.

Successful Programs

Continued from page 10...

of instruction as students in higher SES schools. Foreign language reading skills, on the other hand, pattern like other academic subjects: lower SES schools tend to lag behind higher SES schools at all levels of instruction.

CASLS' research leads to these suggestions for a proficiency-oriented world language program:

- Teach language every week all year.
- Teach three to five class sessions per week with a minimum of five thousand minutes total during the year.

- Teach each student for at least 540 hours during first through eighth grades.

Although this recipe will not guarantee that each student reaches Novice High, these suggestions will ensure that students receive at least a realistic amount of time to acquire functional language skills.

Learn more about the New Jersey research project by visiting <http://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/wl/g8assess/>.



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Rilke Schule

Continued from page 5...


two hours of German instruction every day. After only six weeks, a big group of students performed some simple German songs and dances at the Anchorage Oktoberfest.

Prior to opening, teachers attended an intensive training week on immersion teaching methods led by immersion teaching specialist Carol Ann Dahlberg. Teachers are now planning trips to German-speaking countries and looking for partner schools.

Rilke Schule and its learning environment address the whole family, not just the child that learns German. Conveniently scheduled and coordinated adult German classes invite parents to learn alongside their children. Class sizes are comfortable, and the content of the class follows the students' curriculum. Parents who take the adult classes happily report that they complete their respective assignments and exercises with their kids, helping and learning with each other.

Rilke Schule also chose to implement a dress code. Despite critics of school

uniforms, parents expressed relief over this decision. Dressing according to the school's guidelines shows respect for the school community, fosters a sense of teamwork, and mitigates the influence of materialism among students. Their attention is thus guided to academic interest and expression, which aligns with the school's belief of "nurturing cultural curiosity and fostering life-long learning."

Rilke Schule is pleased with the school's operation. The number of enrolled students speaks to the school's popularity. The teachers and principal have created a caring environment, and parents are pleased to see that their concerns are heard and needs are met. Once firmly grounded in a permanent location, Rilke Schule plans to obtain a license to establish a German preschool. You can learn more about the school by visiting <http://www.rilkeschule.org>. 



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Rilke Schule anticipates moving to its permanent location by 2009.