

Middle School Reform Report

World Languages

Comprehensive Secondary School Reform addresses the need for a uniform world language program at the middle school level. The Middle School Ad Hoc Committee researched best practices and proposed three recommendations that would ensure all middle school students receive world language instruction. Research has proven that language learning can benefit all students: there is a direct correlation between language learning and higher achievement on standardized academic assessments. World language study also better prepares students through the acquisition of skills and cultural awareness needed to work and live in the global economy.

The committee sought to align middle school world language instruction with the high school programs, thereby providing students with the opportunity to learn a language in an uninterrupted sequence. These languages include Spanish, French, and German, all of which share the same alphabet as English, thus facilitating their ease in acquisition. Offering the same languages the matriculating high school offers maintains the high school program and allows the schools to share teachers, if necessary.

As proposed, the middle school world language program will consist of two pathways, both occurring in grade 8. An eighth grader would either take a full year of a level one world language class during time allotted for core area instruction, or take nine weeks of a world language exploratory course (FLEX) in lieu of a unified arts class. Guidelines for determining which world language program each eighth grader enters will be developed in the year preceding full implementation of these recommendations.

The committee worked within the confines of HCPS policy; thus it did not deliberate on awarding a high school credit to students completing a level one course in middle school. At this time, HCPS courses taken at the middle school level are not credit-bearing courses.

Recommendation 3

All middle school students in HCPS will participate in a world language program.

Recommendation 4

The languages taught in the middle schools will be limited to commonly taught languages such as Spanish, French, and German because of ease of acquisition.

Recommendation 5

All middle schools will provide a level one articulated and sequential world language program.

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Recommendation 3:

All middle school students in HCPS will participate in a world language program.

Rationale:

- Students who learned a world language in middle school scored higher on the CTBS measure of achievement. (C. Carr, 1994)
- School systems should include increased language programs in the middle schools. (The Council on Chief School Officers, 2006)
- School systems should provide the longest possible sequence of world language instruction beginning as early as possible. (Sandrock, 2003)
- Elementary and middle/junior high school foreign language programs are the foundation for a long, well articulated sequence for carefully developed curricula that extends through grade twelve. Students in these programs can develop increased language proficiency and cultural competence. (Abbott, 2007)
- Foreign language skills demonstrate that a potential employee is prepared to compete in the global economy. (NASSP, 2006)
- Second language learning provides a competitive edge for all students regardless of their chosen career path, and addresses a shortage of workers in virtually every field that uses languages to communicate successfully. (NASBE, 2003)
- In February 2008, 1,543 parents, students, community members, administrators, post secondary faculty, central office staff, and middle school faculty were asked the degree to which they support the following statement: "All Harford County Middle School students should participate in a foreign language program. 72% of the respondents answered "strongly agree and agree." (Middle School Ad Hoc Committee Stakeholder Feedback, 2008)

Recommendation 4:

The languages taught in the middle schools will be limited to commonly taught languages such as Spanish, French, and German because of ease of acquisition.

Rationale:

- Language education programs should support the learning of all languages not the just the ones deemed critical today (Arabic, Chinese) since research supports the notion that after learning a second language, the third and fourth languages come more easily. It is important to support languages that the school community considers important and for which teachers are available. (ACTFL, 2007)
- It is important to offer student choice when possible in course selection. "Students usually have personal reasons for choosing a language. So it is appropriate to offer a choice of languages." (Sandrock, 2003)
- Spanish, French, and German share the same alphabet as the English language thus facilitating their ease of acquisition. (Sandrock, 2003)
- Mastering one foreign language makes it easier and faster to learn a second or even a third. Cross training students- teaching similarities and differences between Arabic and Spanish for instance, so they'll be better prepared to meet the unforeseen acute needs for other languages as they arise. (Black, 2006)
- Many languages require "layering" in order to achieve proficiency. For example, it is easier for a person to learn Arabic if proficiency has already been achieved in one or more foreign languages. (NASBE, 2003)

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Recommendation 5:

All middle schools will provide a level one articulated and sequential world language program.

Rationale:

- Middle school world language program should articulate with programs at the senior high. (Sandrock, 2003)
- Studying the same language throughout the middle school, rather than sampling several, makes it possible for students to develop a greater degree of proficiency in that language. (Sandrock, 2003)
- Students who average four or more years of foreign language study score higher on the verbal section of the SAT than those who had studied four or more years in any other subject area. (Robinson, 1998)
- School systems should provide the longest possible sequence of world language instruction beginning as early as possible. (Sandrock, 2003)
- Graduating high school seniors with two or more years of foreign language study showed significant superiority in performance on achievement tests in English when compared with non-foreign language students. (Bastian, 1980)
- In February 2008, 1,543 parents, students, community members, administrators, post secondary faculty, central office staff and middle school faculty were asked the degree to which they support the following statement: “All Harford County Middle Schools should offer the same classes.” 72% of the respondents answered “strongly agree or agree.” (Middle School Ad Hoc Committee Stakeholder Feedback, 2008)

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Status of the World Language Program in HCPS Middle Schools: 2008-2009

School	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
AMS	NONE	NONE	Spanish I French I Daily all year Students are enrolled based on trends of proficiency in grades 6 & 7 as measured by SRI and MSA assessments, as well as teacher recommendations.
BAMS	NONE	NONE	1 quarter FLEX* (combination of French, German, and Spanish) 50 minutes daily
EMS	1 quarter FLEX* (French, Spanish) if students have passed MSA; 45 minutes daily	1 quarter FLEX* (French, Spanish) if students have passed MSA; 45 minutes daily	1 quarter FLEX* (French, Spanish) if students have passed MSA; 45 minutes daily
FMS	NONE	NONE	1 quarter of Spanish Discovery during core area instruction time OR French I, German I, Spanish I; 50 minutes daily all year during core area instruction time
HGMS	NONE	NONE	NONE
MMS	NONE	NONE	NONE
NHMS	NONE	1 quarter FLEX* (French, German, Spanish); 50 minutes daily; either Grade 7 or Grade 8	
PMMS	NONE	NONE	2 quarters FLEX*(French, German, Spanish); 50 minutes daily
SMS	NONE	NONE	7 weeks FLEX* (French, German, Spanish); 53 minutes daily

Proposed Status for the World Language Program in HCPS Middle Schools: 2009-2010

School	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8-All students will take:
All HCPS Middle Schools	NONE	NONE	Level I of Spanish, French, or German: daily all-year, during core area instruction time OR FLEX*: daily for nine weeks, in lieu of one unified arts class

***FLEX: Foreign Language Exploratory Course**

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Implementation Plan for World Language Recommendations (3, 4, 5)

Project Manager: Supervisor of World Languages						
Timeline	Step/Goal	Persons Responsible	Stakeholders	Strategies	Budget Implications	Indicators of Implementation
September- November 2008	Identify level one world language courses to be offered at each HCPS middle school based on current offerings at the feeder high school	Executive Director of Secondary Education Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Supervisor of World Languages	High school world language departments Middle school world language teachers Human Resources	Hold meetings with stakeholders	Time to meet Substitute Teachers	List of level one world language courses for each middle school
September- November 2008	Develop criteria and guidelines for students participating in level one world language and Foreign Language Exploratory Program (FLEX)	Supervisor of World Languages Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Middle School Principals	Curriculum Area Supervisors Special Education Supervisory Personnel Middle School ILT's Teachers Parents	Form a study group	Time to meet Substitute Teachers	Criteria and guidelines approved and published
2008-2009 School Year	Identify and hire instructional staff necessary to implement a level one world language program and the FLEX program at each middle school	Executive Director of Secondary Education Supervisor of World Languages Human Resources Middle School Principals	Middle School Staff	Analyze staffing needs based on number of FLEX and level one classes to be offered Realign the existing staff Request additional staff be put in budget Recruit and hire certified world language teachers	\$60,000 per world language teacher hired	Certified teachers hired Evidence of world language in master schedules
2008-2009 School Year	Secure instructional materials necessary to implement a level one world language program and the FLEX program at each middle school	Executive Director of Secondary Education Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Supervisor of World Languages Middle School Principals	Middle School Principals Supervisor of World Languages World Language Teachers and Students	Review instructional materials Submit budget request Coordinate instructional materials review and purchase with publisher representatives	19 sets of level one textbooks (classroom texts-not take home texts) <i>Approximate cost \$35,000</i> FLEX texts and ancillary materials <i>Approximate cost \$5,000</i>	Budget requests approved Textbooks and materials of instruction purchased

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Project Manager: Supervisor of World Languages						
Timeline	Step/Goal	Persons Responsible	Stakeholders	Strategies	Budget Implications	Indicators of Implementation
Spring 2009	Enroll students in a world language program for the 2009-2010 school year	School Administration School Counselors Middle School Teachers	School counselors Students Teachers Parents	Utilize normal scheduling process	NA	Middle school enrollment data Middle school master schedules World Language Enrollment Report
2009-10 School Year	Implement the level one world language program and the FLEX program in every middle school	Executive Director of Secondary Education Middle School Principals Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Supervisor of World Languages	Middle School World Language Teachers Middle School Students Middle School Parents	Establish cross-curricular connections Support teachers during regular professional development sessions	Salary and materials noted previously	Middle school master schedules World Language Enrollment Report

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Evaluation Plan for World Language Recommendations (3, 4, 5)

Project Manager: Supervisor of World Languages	
Data Point	Indicators of Success
MSA	<p>Increase in the percentage of all groups of students who meet the state academic standards and score at proficient and advanced levels in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The goal is to reach 100%.</p> <p>Elimination of the achievement gaps of disaggregated groups</p>
<i>The HCPS World Language Enrollment Report</i>	<p>Increase in the number of eighth grade students enrolled in world language programs</p>
Report Card Grades	<p>Evidence of success in eighth grade world language course as demonstrated by report card grades</p> <p>Evidence of success in high school world language courses by as demonstrated by report card grades of students who took level one world language course in grade 8</p>
SAT Scores	<p>Above average SAT scores (at the county level) on the verbal section of the SAT for students who continued world language instruction in high school</p>

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Bibliography for World Language Recommendations (3, 4, 5)

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