

Piedmont Language School:  
Toward a K-12 Vision  
for Language Learning

Presentation to  
K-12 Curriculum Forum  
3/15/12

**PLS Mission Statement**

PLS is committed to preparing and inspiring children for continued study, work and citizenship in our global community.

To this end, we support, advocate and create opportunities for foreign language learning and cultural exposure for children in Piedmont.

## Overview of Piedmont Language School (PLS)

- Primary languages: Spanish, Mandarin
- Secondary languages: Japanese, French
- Program founded in 1970s – serving Piedmont kids for 40 years
- 250-300 students per year in recent years  
(expect greater #s once all elem schools are back in town)
- Serve kids K-6 before and after school, on-site and in central Piedmont

## PLS Program

- **Our classes:**
  - 2-5x per week, 35-75 mins per session
  - collaboration with principals enables on-site classes, a key convenience for many families
  - tuition of \$700-\$1,150 per year (variable class schedules), with scholarships available
- **Primary goals:**
  - deliver high-quality, immersion-based & sequential course
  - achieve stage II/III language proficiency after 4-5 years
  - instill the cognitive benefits of early language study

## PLS Spanish Program

- Transformed Spanish program in 2010-11 through partnership with Viva El Espanol
- Viva provides strong, sequenced curricular materials and teacher training/mentoring
- PLS Spanish is immersion-based:
  - Content based with repeatable thematic kits
  - Multisensory (dance, song, games)
  - Includes cultural activities from across Spanish-speaking world
  - Circular learning building to build scaffolding
  - No homework, topics/vocabulary shared at home for reinforcement
  - Emphasis on verbal/aural, with reading and writing in higher grades

## PLS Mandarin Program

- Newly adopted curriculum
  - written and spoken Mandarin in 5 levels
  - uses Mei Zhou textbook, homework book, vocabulary cards and two audio cds
- Both traditional and pinyin characters used to develop vocabulary and tonal inflection
- Immersive and multisensory program:
  - songs, games, rhymes, and skits
  - traditional Chinese arts - paper cutting, calligraphy brushes, dance, abacus use and tea ceremonies
- Cultural emphasis and celebration of Chinese holidays – New Year, Lantern Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Moon Festival.

## PLS Near-Term Priorities

- Continue to improve and grow our high quality language classes for K-6
- Support language and cultural exposure for all PUSD students and community-wide:
  - Field trips open to community
  - Language classes and cultural events for entire community
  - Support world language review and site council work
  - Source funds for technology, professional development and enrichment programming (assemblies, cultures week) to bolster and expand PUSD world language program
  - Support exploration of models for elementary language programming

## Results from PLS Community Survey \*

- 71% believe foreign language study K-5 is “extremely important”
- 90% believe language study should begin before 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- Given a single choice, 62% would choose Spanish and 18% Mandarin for their child to study in K-5
- Competition with other extracurriculars and finding a convenient time/locations were main hurdles for families not pursuing language study

\* Open survey to community conducted by PLS in spring 2010. 282 respondents; may not be statistically valid data

## Key benefits of learning a second language

- Lifelong ability to communicate confidently, live and work in an increasingly global world
- Gains in cognitive flexibility, creativity, higher order thinking and higher test scores in other academic areas
- Enhanced memory and listening skills
- Metacognitive skills developed early transfer to learning other languages later in life
- An early start (before age 10) helps develop native-like accent and fluency and greater confidence with language learning later.

## Developments in K-12 World Language

- Emphasis on developing skills for meaningful and appropriate communication: “Knowing how, when and why to say what to whom”\*, more than vocabulary and grammar.
- Breaking changes to world language AP exams reflect greater emphasis on communication
- IB (International Baccalaureate): alternate K-12 pedagogic approach with emphasis on global perspective and language
  - IB programs world-wide have nearly doubled from 2,055 in 2005 to 4,000 today; five of the top 10 high schools in the US in Newsweek’s 2011 Rankings were IB World Schools

\* American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*

## Technology Considerations

- A growing body of research supports value of technology and technology-mediated solutions to enhance learning
- ACTFL encourages technology as a tool to support classroom instruction
- Many schools are using web-based and other tools on a variety of platforms: computer lab, Ipads, whiteboards.
- A few tools being used: LiveMocha, Rhinospike, MyLanguageExchange, Tell Me More, Kid Speak, Aurolog, Rosetta Stone Classroom

## PLS as a Resource

- Collaborating with elementary site council task force to identify options
- Assisting with PMS site council survey of other middle school world language programming and transition from PLS to PMS
- Supporting PHS site council
- Can offer technical expertise, programming, research, facilitation and fundraising support for PUSD initiatives, technology adoption and professional development

## Opportunities for K-12 Forum

- Develop vision for K-12 + K-5; explore opportunities, logistics, constraints
- Address questions of program sequencing between elementary (currently PLS), PMS and PHS.
- Explore technology and professional development opportunities
- Consider pilot programs as proof of concept

## Other Resources

- *PLS: Toward a K-12 Vision for Language Learning* summary document
- *PLS Resource List 2012*
- World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools: <http://www.celta.net/standards/standards.pdf>
- PLS website: [www.piedmontlanguageschool.com](http://www.piedmontlanguageschool.com)
- PLS Executive Director: Barbara Love
- 2011-12 PLS Board Members: Jen Cavanaugh, Brigid Gaffikin, Issie Gotto, Sandra Gross, Bin He, Abby Jorcino, Susan Miller-Davis, Stacy Ramsdell, Leslie Santos, Chris Seybold, Sherrie Shoptaugh, Amy Weaver