

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

Presentation to
Tri-School Site Council
3/6/12

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 all children in Piedmont schools.

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 schools are back in town)
- Our classes:
 - before and after school, on-site or in central Piedmont
 - 2-5x per week
 - 35-75 mins per session
 - collaboration with tri-school principals enables on-site classes, a key convenience for many families
 - tuition of \$700-\$1,150 per year (variable class schedules)
- Primary language program goals:
 - deliver high-quality, immersion-based and sequential classes
 - 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 total immersion:
 - 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

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 such as paper cutting, calligraphy brushes, dance, abacus use and tea ceremonies
- Cultural emphasis and celebration of Chinese holidays such as 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 FLES/FLEX programming

Results from PLS Community Survey *

- 71% believe foreign language study K-5 is “extremely important”
- 90% believe language study should begin before 3rd 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.

Emphasis on Communication

“Knowing how, when and
why to say what to whom” *

- In past, teaching focused on how (grammar) and what (vocabulary)
- New emphasis in field on developing skills for meaningful and appropriate communication, the “why, when and whom”
- Breaking changes to world language AP exams reflect greater emphasis on communication

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

Program Types for K-5

- Immersion (14% of existing programs): grade level content taught in foreign language
- FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) or Language Focus (39%): sequential learning aiming for proficiency
- FLEX (47%) : exploratory exposure to one or more languages
- IB (International Baccalaureate): alternate K-12 pedagogic approach with emphasis on global perspective and language
- 88% offered Spanish and 3% offered Chinese

All data from Center for Applied Linguistics national survey in 2008 and related to elementary only.

Sampling of Elementary Language Programs

- Public, charter and private schools across the country are pursuing foreign language programs in myriad ways
- SF Unified has 20 immersion/dual immersion schools and 5 FLES schools.
- Many local public schools are implementing world language: Montclair Elementary (Oakland), Fiesta Gardens (San Mateo), Hatch Elementary (Half Moon Bay), Manzanita SEED (Oakland), McKinley Elementary (Burlingame), Encinal School (Menlo Park), Castro Elementary (Mountain View), River Glen (San Jose), Meyeholz Elementary (Cupertino), and schools in Berkeley Unified
- Many local private and independent schools weave language into daily instruction: Greenwood Elem (Mill Valley), Mills College Children's School, Northern Light Elem (Oakland), Park Day, Head Royce, Bentley
- Public and magnet programs in CA, CT, OR, FL, MD, MN are pursuing immersion, FLES and IB programs

Key Elements of a FLES program

- 3-5 days per week, 30-40 mins per class - frequency is key
- Sequenced learning, through stages of linguistic & cultural acquisition
 - Stage I: silent/receptive; formulaic (up to 500 receptive words, repetition is key)
 - Stage II: early production (1,000 receptive/active words, one- and two-word phrases)
 - Stage III: speech emergence (3,000 active words, simple phrases)
 - Stage IV: *extended* (6,000 active words, complex statements, opinions)
 - Stage V: *advanced*, use grammar and vocabulary comparable to same-age native speaker
- Meets national and state content standards
- Seamless transition to middle school and high school programs

Technology Considerations

- A growing body of research supports value of technology and technology-mediated solutions to enhance learning
- ACTFL encourage technology as a tool to support classroom instruction
- Schools are using web-based and other tools on a variety of platforms: computer lab, Ipads, whiteboards. Use among elementary language programs has tripled since 1997 (CAL survey)
- A few tools being used: LiveMocha, Rhinospike, MyLanguageExchange, Tell Me More, Kid Speak, Aurolog, Rosetta Stone Classroom

Possible Site Council Activities

- Develop vision for K-5: immersion? FLES? FLEX?, and explore opportunities, logistics, constraints
- Additional research and interviews with other elementary schools (similar to PMS site council)
- Arrange visits to assess various schools, programs or technologies of interest
- Assess interest in parent and educator community for world languages and how needs are currently being met
- Consider pilot programs as proof of concept
- Identify sources of support (i.e. fundraising, grants) for program, professional development or technology needs
- PLS can provide support, technical assistance and fundraising

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.csta.net/standards/standards.pdf>
- PLS website: 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