

District Foreign language Committee
Thursday, January 31, 2008
Humiston Building - Meredith
4:00 p.m.

Minutes

Meeting called to order at 4:09 p.m.

Present: Corey Henderson, Lobin Frizzel, Dan Cunningham, John Hansen, Phil McCormack, Kathleen Burke, Nicole Ainsworth, Lily Newton, Lisa Doscher.

1. Dr. McCormack spoke about a handout "Foreign Language at the Post Secondary level" compiled by Chris Gribbens, Guidance Coordinator for the Inter-Lakes School District. This was done in response to committee question of what language are colleges looking for. Summary is that the language does not matter, rather the student commitment to any language, length of study, and taking advantage of a full complement of courses offered in any one language.
2. Minutes to January 10, 2008 meeting were distributed. No changes were made.
3. Discussion about curriculums being used at other schools. Dr. McCormack spoke briefly of the curriculum he received from the Keene School District; he also spoke to a conversation he had with the principal of the Harrisville Elementary School regarding its language program; Mr. Hansen offered printed copies of the Moultonborough Central School language study from K to 6.
4. Mr. Cunningham summarized his understanding of past meetings. Fluency is not a viable objective. Fulfillment of a level 1A course prior to grade 8 is a realistic goal. Mr. Henderson asked about the time frame for implementation of a foreign language recommendation. Mr. Cunningham did not think it was possible to implement any recommendation until 2009-10.
5. Discussion of what language. Dr. McCormack asked committee for clarification of its expectations regarding the charge of the committee. He wanted to know if everyone was comfortable with the idea that the committee would make recommendations, but that the Board and Administration might make alterations to any recommendation. Ms. Doscher suggested that Spanish would be an appropriate first choice for a language to offer since it is more prevalent, even in this area. She noted that the District has 14 or 15 Spanish speaking students at this time. Ms. Burke, Ms. Newton, Mr. Hansen and Dr. McCormack all spoke in favor of Spanish being the language picked. It was noted that studying any Romance language often helps with study of other languages. A consensus was reached that Spanish would be the language the District should pursue.
6. Discussion of what grade to begin offering a language. Mr. Cunningham reminded group of the goal to finish the equivalent of a level 1A language course by middle school. Ms. Newton advocated beginning the program in kindergarten. Ms. Burke said that the younger the better, based on brain based research. Ms. Doscher felt it should be offered beginning in kindergarten, with the first two or three years spent developing a comfort level with the language. Mr. Hansen

shared that he had spoken with Dr. Kelley and that they both thought that foreign language study could be supported in the elementary level by replacing the computer special with foreign language, and having computer instruction fully integrated into the classroom. A plan such as this might omit kindergarten instruction, as kindergarten has no specials at ILES, though because of multiage in Sandwich, the kindergarten students there do have special classes. Discussion about how instruction would be delivered ensued. Would a textbook be used, or just general exposure to the language for a few years? Ms. Frizzell mentioned that she thought the content of a 1A course could be taught from 3rd to 7th grade. The discussion continued about how to implement within the regular day. It was mentioned that if the bulk of the material is taught from grades 3 to 7, would there be enough material from K-2 to have a 50 minute special class. Mr. Hansen suggested that we could continue with a computer special in grades one and two, with foreign language offered throughout the day in the K-2 classrooms. Then, in 3rd grade, Spanish would replace the computer special and computers would be fully integrated into the classroom.

7. There was discussion about classroom teachers being able to offer instruction and/or integration of the language into the teaching day. The less intrusive we can make this on the classroom teachers' day, the more supported it will be. Also, the more easily integrated it is, the more it will be used. Middle Tier schedule may present some challenges. One suggestion was to use some of the homeroom time once a week. It was noted that the Middle Tier schedule will probably change in the next two years as a result of the NELMS report.
8. Mr. Hansen noted he was uncomfortable with making any recommendation to the Board on how to structure the day without examining other programs throughout the State and country. He noted the amounts of time that Moultonboro spent in each grade for its program. Dr. McCormack wondered how this program would impact French in the high school – would there be less interest.
9. Is it better to meet in one block of time or several blocks of shorter time? Most people felt more blocks of less time.
10. Mr. Cunningham summarized his understanding of the committee consensus: In general, we are intending to recommend the study of Spanish starting in K or 1, up through 2nd grade as a broad intro; then in 3rd through 7th grade offered as a course that would accomplish the goals of 1A high school course.

Meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.