

**Foreign Language in Elementary Schools-FLES
Proposal
Unionville-Chadds Ford School District
September, 2008**

The Unionville-Chadds Ford School District is considering the implementation of a Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) program in the 2009-2010 school year. This program has been researched and developed for the past year by our teachers and administrators with input from parents and students. Currently a FLES Steering Committee, made up of staff and parents, is guiding the administration in developing a strong program for our students. The Committee has several recommendations regarding the implementation of FLES, including that Spanish be the language of instruction. The Steering Committee will present the complete plan, with all of the recommendations, to the Board of School Directors in November.

As the committee moves forward with its planning and development of the FLES program, we would like to share the following information regarding the tentative plan for the FLES program. If you would like to respond to or give input to us regarding this preliminary plan, please email the Steering Committee at: fles@ucfsd.org

Foreign Language in Elementary Schools-FLES

Rationale:

The committee has studied current research on the positive effects of a FLES program. In addition the committee visited surrounding school districts with FLES programs in order to observe the foreign language instruction and to interview students, teachers and administrators regarding the strengths and challenges of FLES. Through our research we have identified several positive effects for students when implementing and sustaining a FLES program.

- A FLES program will give students a good foundation in second language acquisition, with the ability to communicate at a “Novice-High” level. With this foundation, students will be able to continue the study of a foreign language or languages in middle and high school with greater success. With early exposure and success in studying a foreign language, students will arrive at middle school motivated to move forward with the pursuit of additional studies in this area.
- The research indicates that students develop an increased understanding of their own language through second language study. Grammar and vocabulary can be enhanced in students’ native language.
- Research also points out that studying a foreign language in elementary schools enhances of students’ cognitive development and increases the ability to engage

in higher order thinking skills. Being able to apply and synthesize knowledge and information is a critical skill both in school and in work.

- Through the FLES program students will also have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of other cultures in our world. This will help prepare our students for understanding and working in our diverse and ever changing world. The FLES curriculum will be tied to the social studies standards, which outline cultural studies as a key component of the geography strand.
- Student confidence as language learners is enhanced as they realize early success in the elementary school years.

Program Goals:

The goals for the program would be the following:

- Students will demonstrate a level of proficiency in speaking and listening in Spanish (as specified by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.) At a minimum, students will reach the level of “Novice-High” upon completing fifth grade.
- Students will develop a deeper understanding and awareness of other cultures, their history, geography and customs.
- Students will develop enthusiasm for the study of a second language that will be transferable to the study of any language.
- Students will have increased opportunities K-12, to become proficient in a second language, which will increase their academic, career, and cultural opportunities.

Program Design:

- The Steering Committee recommends that our students have formal instruction in Spanish in the first through the fifth grades. Staff will also develop some basic activities in Spanish for kindergarten teachers to implement in kindergarten and pre-first classes.
- Schools will develop other opportunities for students to access Spanish within the local community.
- The FLES program will be phased in, starting with first and second grade the first year, and then adding a grade each year until the program reaches the fifth grade.

- The Steering Committee recommends that the program begin in 2009-2010, with instruction for first and second grade students. The program would require two teachers for the initial year. When the full program is implemented, at current student enrollment, 4.5 teachers would be required.
- Students will have Spanish instruction from a Spanish teacher twice in a 6-day cycle for 30 minutes each session. As stated above, there would be other opportunities throughout the school year for students to communicate in Spanish.
- The curriculum will be tied directly to Pennsylvania's social studies academic standards and national world language academic standards. We would implement the instruction of Spanish during the allotted social studies time in the school day, teaching social studies concepts in Spanish.
- Research indicates that all children can benefit from the study of a second language and, therefore, our program will be for all Unionville –Chadds Ford Students.
- As students finish fifth grade our recommendation is that they have additional language choices in Middle School. Students will be able to continue with their studies in Spanish or they can take an exploratory course in French, German, and possibly Latin. Our expectation is that many students will gain proficiency in more than one foreign language in High School.

Summary

The students of the Unionville-Chadds Ford School District will receive great benefits from a foreign language program in elementary schools. Our schools, with excellent teachers and wonderful parent support, will implement this program with great enthusiasm and effectiveness. Our students will be highly motivated to learn and experience a second language, and will be successful in this endeavor. This will help our young learners to be stronger students in the study of world languages as they move to middle and high school and then college. This study of foreign languages will give our students a better understanding of English and help them to develop the critical thinking skills needed in twenty-first century careers. Our students will also have an enhanced awareness of other cultures through this program, which will help our graduates be more successful in college and in a global economy.