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Curriculum and Instruction

**SUBJECT:           REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE  
                          COUNTY, FLORIDA, ACCEPT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
                          INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY GRADES FEASIBILITY STUDY**

**COMMITTEE:        INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

At the October 20, 2004, School Board meeting, Mrs. Perla Tabares Hantman brought forth an item directing the Superintendent to conduct a feasibility study to determine how best to offer a District-wide foreign language program in all primary grades. This item was unanimously passed.

The attached feasibility study supports the theory that receiving foreign language instruction in the primary grades improves academic achievement. Current practices in the District and existing national program models point to two possible ways to expand foreign language instruction to students in all elementary grades: (1) extend Spanish instruction for non-native Spanish speakers to grades K and 1, or (2) expand the Extended Foreign Language (EFL) programs to all elementary schools and K-8 centers. Both potential ways to expand elementary foreign language instruction have advantages and disadvantages. One approach EFL offers at least twice as much weekly foreign language instruction as the other, while being fiscally neutral for personnel costs. At the same time, this approach is not supported by the majority of principals and has problems with staff availability (based on the results of a survey conducted as part of this feasibility study). Extending the World Languages-Spanish program to grades K and 1 enjoys the support of the majority of principals, as long as necessary instructional staff can be hired. On the other hand, this approach offers less instructional time and carries a large, potentially prohibitive, financial burden for the District, estimated to exceed five million dollars.

In light of these facts, staff recommends an expansion of the EFL programs to those schools that have broad support for establishing the program, including principals' backing, sufficient qualified staff, and substantial parental interest in the program. Additionally, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages will continue to inform and educate school site administrators on the benefits of bilingual instruction.

**A-4**

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. accept the *District-wide Foreign Language Instruction* feasibility study;
2. direct the Superintendent to expand the Extended Foreign Language (EFL) program at the elementary level on a system-wide basis, to be implemented through a controlled choice model within each feeder pattern; and
3. explore a variety of viable models to incorporate foreign language offerings within the context of elementary and secondary school reform.

## **District-wide Foreign Language Instruction in all Primary Grades**

### **Feasibility Study Executive Summary**

Currently, foreign language instruction at the elementary level in the District is delivered through one of two methods. First, Spanish instruction is offered to native Spanish-speaking students in grades K-5 and to students whose native languages are other than Spanish in grades 2-5. All elementary schools and K-8 centers are required to offer Spanish instruction. The time devoted to Spanish instruction is expected to be no less than 150 minutes per week. Second, foreign language instruction is delivered via dual language programs in selected schools. These programs offer instruction in English and one more language (Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Haitian Creole). Dual language programs currently exist in 51 elementary schools and K-8 centers. The time committed to target language instruction in dual language programs is expected to be no less than 300 minutes per week.

The two modes of elementary foreign language instruction in the District described above correspond to the two primary national program models known as Foreign Language Instruction in the Elementary School and Immersion. Current research on foreign language instruction in elementary schools generally shows that students participating in foreign language programs perform academically as well as or better than their peers who are not exposed to foreign language instruction.

In recent years, following the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Multilingual Task Force created by the School Board in 1997, efforts to expand elementary foreign language instruction were undertaken. As a result, the number of sites implementing one of the dual language programs, the Extended Foreign Language (EFL) program, increased from 21 in 1997-1998 to 51 in 2004-2005.

Current practices in the District and existing national program models point to two possible ways to expand foreign language instruction to students in all elementary grades: (1) extend Spanish instruction for non-native Spanish speakers to grades K and 1, or (2) expand the EFL programs to all elementary schools and K-8 centers. Both potential ways to expand elementary foreign language instruction have advantages and disadvantages. One approach (EFL) offers at least twice as much weekly foreign language instruction as the other, while being fiscally neutral. At the same time, this approach is not supported by the majority of principals and has problems with staff availability (based in the results of a survey conducted as part of this feasibility study). Extending World Languages-Spanish program to grades K and 1 enjoys support of the majority of principals, and necessary instructional staff can be hired. On the other hand, this approach offers less instructional time and carries a large financial burden for the District, estimated to exceed five million dollars.

In light of these facts, staff recommends the expansion of the EFL program at the elementary level on a system-wide basis, to be implemented through a controlled choice model within each feeder pattern. In addition, staff will look at a variety of viable models to incorporate foreign language offerings within the context of elementary and secondary school reform.

## District-wide Foreign Language Instruction in all Primary Grades

### Feasibility Study

#### I. Status of Elementary Foreign Language Instruction

##### 1. Miami-Dade County Public Schools Models

Currently, foreign language instruction at the elementary level in the District is delivered through one of two methods: (A) Spanish instruction in all elementary schools and (B) dual language programs in selected schools. Each method is described below.

###### *A. Spanish Instruction*

**Spanish for Spanish Speakers** is a Spanish language arts program designed for students of Hispanic origin and others, whose Spanish language proficiency is deemed sufficient to allow them to benefit from the program. The program allows students to improve their language skills and become more proficient in Spanish. Program delivery provides for a minimum of 150 minutes of instruction per week. All elementary schools are required to provide students in grades K-5 an opportunity to participate in the program.

**World Languages – Spanish** (formerly known as Spanish-SL) is a foreign language program designed to help participants develop a functional use of the language and enable them to communicate and interact in Spanish. Program delivery provides for a minimum of 150 minutes of instructional time per week. All elementary schools are required to provide the opportunity for students to participate in the program. Most elementary schools offer the program in grades 2-5. In 33 pilot schools, the program is offered in grades K-5.

###### *B. Dual Language Programs*

**Bilingual School Organization (BISO)** is a school-wide dual language program model designed to develop proficiency skills in English and one other target language. Program delivery calls for 60% of daily instruction in English and 40% in the target language. In addition to the regular elementary curriculum, students in BISO schools are offered one hour of daily instruction in language arts in a target language (300 minutes per week). Furthermore, instruction in content areas (science, social studies) is delivered through both languages. The program is currently offered in eight elementary schools, seven of which offer an English/Spanish program, and one of which offers an English/Portuguese program. If parents/guardians of a student living in an attendance zone of a BISO school do not want their children to participate in the program, the student can receive a transfer to another elementary school without the program within the same Region Center.

**Extended Foreign Language Program (EFL)** is a school-within-school instructional program similar to BISO in its design and goals. The distinction is that only a few classes per grade level participate in the EFL program. Enrollment in the program is voluntary and open to students in the lowest grade level of the program in elementary schools (K or 1), if there is a sufficient

program capacity. Students who participate in it for one school year are automatically enrolled in the program the subsequent year. Schools implementing the program determine the choice of the language other than English and the amount of instruction delivered in that language (60-120 minutes daily). Most schools currently implementing the program offer an hour of daily instruction (300 minutes per week) in language arts in the target language. In addition, some schools offer instruction of content areas in the target language. Currently, the EFL program is offered in 48 elementary schools and 3 K-8 centers. In two of these schools, the program is offered in English/Spanish and English/Italian. One school offers the EFL program in English/Spanish and English/Haitian Creole. In the 48 remaining schools, the program functions in the English/Spanish mode.

**International Studies Program (IS)** is the result of collaborative efforts between the Miami-Dade County Public Schools and education ministries of France, Germany, and Spain. Students in the program pursue an academic curriculum that addresses rigorous standards of both US and European Union educational systems. At the elementary level, the program is delivered in an extended day mode. In addition to studying the regular elementary school curriculum in English, students receive up to three hours of daily instruction in Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science through the target language, working at a level commensurate with that of their peers in Europe. Currently, the IS program is offered in five elementary schools. In one of them, the program is offered in English/Spanish, English/French, and English/German configurations. Three schools offer the IS program in English/Spanish mode only and one school has initiated the program in an English/French configuration.

## **2. National Models**

In the USA, two general program models are used to instruct elementary school students in a language other than English: (A) the Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) model and (B) the immersion model.

### ***A. FLES Model***

The goal of foreign language instruction under the FLES model is not only language attainment, but also learning about the culture of the world language studied. In schools and school districts using this model, instruction in a language other than English generally begins at kindergarten (or preschool) and continues through elementary school. In some districts, the instruction begins later, in grades 2-3. A target language is taught as a separate subject, just like mathematics or science. Individual school districts usually create their own curriculum, and the majority of them employ teachers in their FLES programs who are certified in the target language. Students are typically instructed for at least 30 minutes, three to five days a week. Spanish-S and World Languages-Spanish programs used in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools can be classified as FLES programs.

### ***B. Immersion Model***

The goal of the immersion model is for students to become proficient in English as well as in the second language. Under the immersion model, the target language is usually instructed through a

regular elementary curriculum subject, such as science or mathematics. Immersion models can be implemented as either a partial or total immersion program. In partial immersion programs, students are taught in a target language for 20-50 percent of daily instructional time. In total immersion programs, all subject areas except language arts are instructed in a language other than English. Many immersion programs employ teachers who are bilingual but not necessarily certified in a target language. BISO and EFL programs used in our District can be classified as partial immersion programs.

## II. Research Findings

Current research on foreign language instruction in elementary schools generally shows that students participating in foreign language programs perform academically as well as or better than their peers who are not exposed to foreign language instruction. One recent study utilizing random assignment of students to experimental and control 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms, found significant improvement in language art skills for students who received 90 minutes of weekly Spanish instruction during one academic year. Students involved in the study did not know any Spanish at the outset. More surprisingly, students in the experimental group outperformed their peers in the control group on mathematics assessment despite the fact that time for Spanish language instruction was borrowed from time for mathematics instruction. (Armstrong, P. W. & Rogers J. D. (1997). Basic Skills Revisited: The Effects of Foreign Language Instruction on Reading, Math and Language Arts. *Learning Languages*, 2(3), 20-31.)

Another study of 13,200 third and fifth graders in Louisiana public schools revealed that regardless of race, gender, or academic level, students taking French classes for 150 minutes a week performed better in the English section of the Louisiana Basic Skills Test than those who did not. (Dumas, L. S. (1999). Learning a Second Language: Exposing Your Child to a New World of Words Boosts Her Brainpower, Vocabulary, and Self-Esteem. *Child*, February, 72, 74, 76-77.)

A study conducted by the Office of Program Evaluation in 2004, considered academic progress of students in the EFL program in 15 District elementary schools, and compared it to that of students in 15 demographically similar schools without the program. Academic progress on the reading and mathematics components of the norm-referenced component of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test during 2002-2004 school years was examined. During this period, students in the study moved from grade 3 to grade 5. The results of this study indicated that students in the EFL group had significantly higher initial levels of academic achievement in both academic disciplines compared with students in the non-EFL group. In addition, the results showed that the average annual rate of academic growth in reading was about the same as that of students in the non-EFL group. In mathematics, the average annual rate of growth of students in the EFL group exceeded that of students in the non-EFL group. Taken together, these results indicate that students in the EFL group maintained their initial academic advantage over students in the non-EFL group during the 2002-2004 period.

### **III. Recent Efforts to Expand Elementary Foreign Language Instruction**

During the 1992-1993 school year, the Elementary Extended Foreign Language Program was initiated in five pilot elementary schools. At its meeting of March 23, 1994, the School Board directed the Superintendent to take further action to expand student opportunities to become bilingual and biliterate. At the November 6, 1996 School Board meeting, the Board approved the Plan for Developing Bilingual Programs for the Twenty First Century. In response, 21 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, and 6 senior high schools initiated the EFL program in their schools. In August 1997, The School Board approved Item B-7, Reaffirmation of Dade County Public Schools' Strategic Planning Goal IV, Bilingualism, and in September 1997, the Board directed the Superintendent to design and implement a plan to improve the delivery of bilingual programs. To assist the District in developing this plan, an Ad Hoc Multilingual Task Force was created. The report of the Multilingual Task Force was presented to the Board at its March 1998 meeting. This report had several recommendations, two of which dealt directly with the extension of foreign language instruction at the elementary level. The first was a recommendation to expand the number of schools offering the EFL program by ten elementary schools each year beginning with the 1998-1999 school year. As a result of this recommendation, the EFL program was expanded from 21 sites in the 1997-1998 school year to 51 sites at elementary schools in the 2004-2005 school year. The second recommendation was to establish BISO elementary schools in Region Centers that did not have them by the school year 2000-2001. Since then, the number of BISO schools has increased to 8 located in Regions 3-5.

In order to reassess the district's progress toward expanding opportunities for students to become bilingual and biliterate, the Ad Hoc Multilingual Task Force was reconvened in 2001 and a status report and new action plan were presented to the Board in 2002. The new three-year action plan focused on articulation and continuum of programs, staff development, and community awareness and marketing strategies. Most of the no-cost recommendations have been implemented and continue to be part of ongoing activities.

### **IV. Resources Required for an Expansion of the Elementary Foreign Language Instruction**

Current practices in the District and existing national program models point to two possible ways to expand foreign language instruction to students in all elementary grades: (1) extend World Languages-Spanish to grades K and 1, or (2) expand the EFL programs to all elementary schools and K-8 centers. These options are discussed below.

#### ***1. Extending World Languages-Spanish to Grades K and 1***

Currently, there are approximately 21,000 students in grades K and 1 who are not receiving foreign language instruction. To offer foreign language instruction to these students would require hiring about 92 new teachers (1 teacher for every 230 students) certified to teach Spanish. Using current year's figures for average teacher salaries and benefits and assuming the current proportions of teachers with and without advanced degrees (48% with advanced degrees), the following estimates can be made.

	Current Average Salary + Benefits	Number of New Teachers Required	Total in Salary and Benefits
Bachelor Degrees	\$55,325	48	\$2,655,600
Advanced Degrees	\$61,918	44	\$2,724,392
		Total	\$5,379,992

In terms of teacher availability, the District's applicant tracking system has 43 teachers certified in Spanish eligible to be hired now and an additional 7 teachers with incomplete applicant data. The Office of Instructional Staffing estimates that additional needed certified instructors could be recruited in a sufficiently timely fashion to staff near-term expansion of the program.

## ***2. Establishing the EFL Program in all Elementary Schools***

From a financial standpoint, establishing the EFL program in an elementary school does not involve a fiscal burden for the District because existing (linguistically qualified, but not necessarily certified in the language) instructional staff can be used. The availability of sufficient staff as well as other issues pertaining to the possible extension of foreign language instruction to all elementary grades was addressed in the principal survey.

## **V. Principal Survey**

To determine school principals' views on the potential extension of elementary foreign language instruction, principals of all 206 elementary school and K-8 centers were surveyed. Of those, 180 responded to the survey (an 87% return rate). Three-quarters of all respondents favored the extension of World Languages-Spanish to grades K and 1. Of those, most (133) provided reasons for their support. Sixty-nine principals (52%) stated that the earlier foreign language instruction starts, the more successful students are likely to be in acquiring the language. Another reason cited often was that becoming bilingual would benefit students by providing them with more opportunities, especially in Miami's multicultural community. This opinion was offered by 22 principals (17%).

Principals of the schools not having dual language programs were asked a series of questions regarding possible establishment of the EFL program in their schools. A total of 116 principals responded to these questions. In the first of these questions, principals were asked whether they would support the establishment of the EFL program in their schools, assuming that they had qualified staff and sufficient parental support. Less than half of the respondents (41%) were in favor of starting the EFL program in their schools. Of the 68 principals who were not in favor of starting the EFL program in their schools, 64 provided rationale for their decision. Two reasons were cited most often. One was that the EFL program would take valuable instructional time away from the mandatory elementary school curriculum. This reason was offered by 18 principals (28%). Another reason stated often (by 12 respondents, or 19%) was that students must learn English language first before being introduced to another language.



In addition, principals were asked about the availability of qualified staff and parental support for starting the EFL program. Only 32 principals (28%) reported having sufficient linguistically qualified staff to begin offering the EFL program in grade K in 2005-2006 and subsequently expanding it to higher grade levels. Only 12 principals (10%) stated that students' parents or community groups expressed an interest in establishing the EFL program in their schools. It should be noted, however, that if parents of students in schools not having dual language programs had been asked directly about their interest in the EFL program, the proportion of those interested in it might have been different.

## VI. Comparative Summary and Recommendations

A summary of considerations for the two possible ways to expand elementary foreign language instruction is presented below.

	Weekly Instructional Time	Estimated Fiscal Impact	Staff Availability	Principals' Attitudes
Extending World Languages-Spanish to grades K and 1	150 minutes	\$5,380,000	100%*	75% in favor
Establishing the EFL program in all elementary schools	300-600 minutes	--	< 30%	41% in favor

\*Staff would need to be hired.

Both potential ways to expand elementary foreign language instruction have advantages and disadvantages.

One approach (EFL) offers at least twice as much weekly foreign language instruction as the other, while being fiscally neutral. At the same time, this approach is not supported by the majority of principals and has problems with staff availability.

Extending World Languages-Spanish program to grades K and 1 enjoys support of the majority of principals, and necessary instructional staff can be hired. On the other hand, this approach offers less instructional time and carries a large financial burden for the District.

In light of these facts, staff recommends the expansion of the EFL program at the elementary level on a system-wide basis, to be implemented through a controlled choice model within each feeder pattern. In addition, staff will look at a variety of viable models to incorporate foreign language offerings within the context of elementary and secondary school reform.

