

**The Hopkinton Foreign Language Five-Year Plan**  
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**Vision Statement**

**All Hopkinton Foreign Language students will have the opportunity to participate in a course of study that can lead to intermediate proficiency or above in reading, speaking, listening and writing a foreign language.**

**Mission Statement**

Hopkinton Public Schools must graduate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate not only abroad, but also in our own increasingly pluralistic United States. In a global economy, our graduates must be able to communicate in languages other than English, function in cross-cultural environments, and work together to solve global challenges. We must provide our students foreign language instruction that assures that they can communicate and compete in a 21st century world.

**Statement of Purpose**

If our students are to compete in a global economy, then learning a second language is a must. We must convey to our students that acquiring a second language is not simply a high school graduation requirement, nor is it simply a college entrance requirement – it is a necessity in a world that is fast becoming flat. (*The World is Flat*, 2005, Friedman, Thomas). Being able to speak and understand another language is an advantage that our twenty-first century students cannot afford to bypass.

We want the best possible education for our students in Hopkinton and that education should include at least intermediate proficiency in another language by the time they graduate from high school. All research indicates that learning a second language increases cognitive skills in all areas – not only in the area of language study, but also in arts, mathematics and sciences (*Cognitive Benefits of Learning Language*, ACTFL, 2007). Perhaps the most practical reason to learn another language is that proficiency in another language can open doors to a wider range of employment opportunities in an increasingly competitive job market. Studying a foreign language teaches awareness of different cultures and different ways of thinking about and looking at the world – a must in our twenty-first century economy where people from different cultures regularly interact with one another on a daily basis.

Recent studies show that learning a foreign language may have brain health benefits as well. Being bilingual may delay four different forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's, for an average of four and a half years (*Speaking Two Languages May Delay Dementia*, US News, 2013). Another recent study shows that learning a foreign language can increase the size of

your brain (*The Case for Language Learning*, The Guardian, 2014). The same study reiterates that those who seriously study another language are more cognitively flexible than those who do not. The numerous benefits of acquiring a second language cannot be refuted, so the real question is ... *If we want to produce students with truly functional levels of foreign language proficiency, then how do we provide the necessary instructional support to ensure that proficiency can be acquired?*

## What is Proficiency in Foreign Language?

Acquisition of foreign language proficiency is a direct result of the number of *continuous* instructional hours. According to recent research conducted by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies in June 2010:

*Beginning language study before high school leads to large increases in the number of students who can use the language for basic oral and written communication. Students who begin in elementary school, in non-immersion programs such as FLES, [Foreign Language in the Elementary School] are about 70% more likely to reach levels of basic communication, while students who begin in middle school [6-8] are about 50% more likely.*

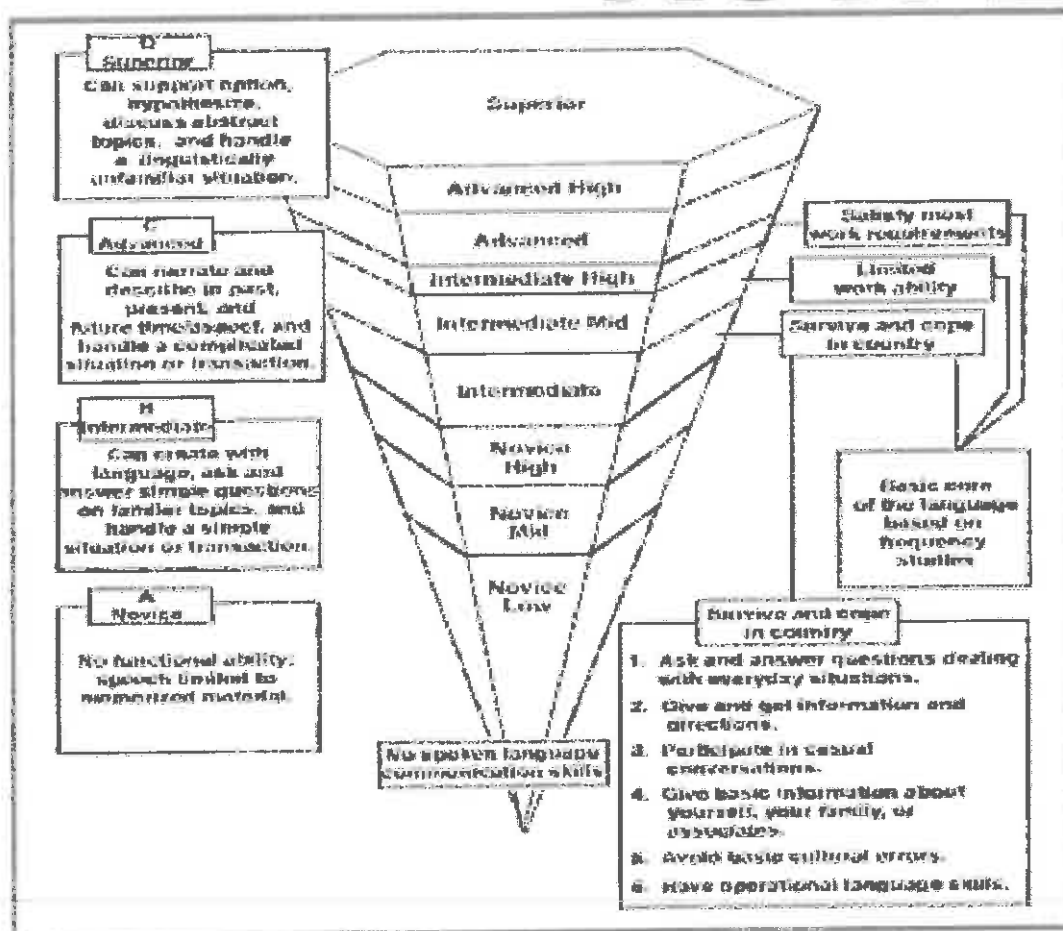
“Basic communication” in the CASLS’ research is defined as **Intermediate Low** on the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language Scale (one of two most commonly used scales to determine foreign language proficiency). On the ACTFL pyramid, intermediate low is simply described as the ability to “survive and cope” in a country that speaks the foreign language. The following provides ACTFL’s detailed description of **Intermediate Low** level of achievement in the area of speaking:

### Intermediate Low

*Speakers at the Intermediate Low sublevel are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target-language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information; for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, and some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate Low sublevel, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information. They are also able to ask a few appropriate questions. Intermediate Low speakers manage to sustain the functions of the Intermediate level, although just barely. Intermediate Low speakers express*

personal meaning by combining and recombining what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors into short statements and discrete sentences. Their responses are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language. In spite of frequent misunderstandings that may require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

# ACTFL



If our goal is that the majority of our students will acquire at least intermediate proficiency in a language, we must provide more instructional time that includes more years of instruction.

An additional consideration is the fact that some languages require more time than others to reach the same level of proficiency. Chinese is a Category 5 language requiring a motivated adult English speaker 2200 hours of study to reach general professional proficiency. French and Spanish are Category 1 languages that require 575-600 hours of study to reach an equivalent level of proficiency ([Languages by Categories, 1-5, Foreign Service Institute](#)).

The United States is in need of speakers of “critical” languages. Chinese is deemed a critical language, which means that the demand for American speakers of Chinese far exceeds the supply. Currently there are only 51,000 Americans studying Mandarin. By simply offering students at Hopkinton the opportunity to learn *some* Mandarin, we are far ahead of the national curve. More Americans are studying abroad in China than are studying abroad in Germany or Australia. China may soon be the world’s biggest economy – it makes sense for us to invest in teaching some Chinese to the degree that we can ([China-U.S. Symposium at Tufts University on April 18, 2014](#)).

## **Update: Foreign Language Advisory Team Report**

Between the years of 2006 – 2008, Hopkinton Public Schools convened a Foreign Language Advisory Team that made several recommendations for the improvement of foreign language study in the Hopkinton Public Schools based on an extensive survey of the community, along with their own team observations and findings. The following list reflects that Foreign Language Advisory Team’s summarized recommendations, along with our progress to date in addressing each area:

**Recommendation #1:** Introduce a Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program.

**Current Status of #1:** Although research shows that the earlier one begins learning a language, the more proficient that person will become in that language, we have yet to begin foreign language study at the elementary level. Beginning language study in the elementary is crucial to a strong foreign language program.

**Recommendation #2:** Introduce Chinese at grade nine.

**Current Status of #2:** We have introduced Chinese at the ninth grade level. The students who are enrolled tend to be highly committed and Chinese students are more apt to stick to their study of Chinese through high school than are their Spanish and French counterparts. Chinese differs from French and Spanish in that there is simply more to learn. English speakers do not share any true cognates with Chinese because Chinese and English are not in the same language family. Category 1 languages, such as French and Spanish, share many cognates with English, so English speakers can learn them more quickly.

**Recommendation #3:** Schedule meetings between teachers of foreign language and humanities to integrate their curricula.

**Current Status of #3:** Teachers of foreign language and teachers of humanities have not met to discuss integrated curricula. It is not because of a lack of desire, but rather it is a problem of scheduling.

**Recommendation #4:** Ensure effective instructional practice particular to foreign language by utilizing a foreign language educator in the evaluation and observation process.

**Current Status of #4:** Prior to July 1, of 2013, educators who were part of the Hopkinton Teachers' Association were not permitted to contribute to the educator evaluation system. As of July 1, 2013, educators hired under the newly negotiated positions of Subject Matter Leaders, can now observe and contribute to the evaluation process. This practice supports principals and ensures leadership to foster effective instructional practice particular to foreign language. Co-observations (principals/assistant principals and the FL SML) take place on a regular basis at the high school level. The practice of co-observation has proven useful on many accounts. In the past, principals found it difficult to comment on subject matter delivery because they didn't understand the language of instruction. Now they have the point of view of a foreign language instructor and are better able to evaluate what they are observing. Also, more observations overall are being conducted, thus teachers are being provided with more feedback on their instructional practices.

**Recommendation #5:** Provide professional development to foreign language teachers specific to their needs.

**Current Status of #5:** The MAFLA conference is an annual three-day conference that showcases workshops that focus on promising practices in the field of foreign language instruction. Few content specific professional development opportunities exist for foreign language instructors, and this opportunity is arguably the best one.

In the spring of 2012, the high school was awarded a large grant to support an educational program – \$26,500. The Hopkinton Education Foundation purchased Digital Language Lab software (DiLL) to support the foreign language program. Since the implementation of the new DiLL software in the high school language lab, high school teachers have had significant training in its use and will continue to receive training as professional development time permits. The proficient use of this software will increase our students' ability to understand and speak their chosen foreign language at higher levels of proficiency.

**Recommendation #6:** Establish French V and Spanish V for students who do not want to take Advanced Placement classes.

**Current Status of #6:** Spanish V has been established at the high school and has run as a class for the last four years. An average of 15 students a year take advantage of this opportunity – three years ago there were 24 students in a class. French V did not run last year because there were not enough student requests to justify a separate class.

**Recommendation #7:** Develop enrichment components to establish enthusiasm and support for the FL program as well as providing the opportunity for authentic use of language.

**Current Status of #7:** Prior to September 2013, the foreign language lab provided access to computers to allow students to engage in written grammar practice or access their online textbooks. As of September 2013, the addition of DiLL (Digital Language Learning) software in the language lab has significantly increased opportunities for individual student participation in authentic speaking and listening practice in his/her chosen foreign language. Students are getting much more practice at the skills that best prepare them for in-person interaction with a native speaker and they seem to be highly enjoying the experience.

In the last two years, additional foreign language enrichment and authentic learning opportunities have included:

- Visits from various native Spanish speakers
- Professional Salsa dancers and a professional Afro-Cubano dancer (Funding HPTA)
- Dance Duo from Senegal who have performed and provided a full-day dance/instrument workshop. (2013, 2014) (Funding HPTA)
- Immersion lunches at the MS. French and Spanish students from the HS visit the MS on a regular basis. They speak in eat lunch and speak in the target language with the MS students studying that language. The lunches have been highly successful and both MS and HS students look forward to them.
- French Study Tour (2013, 2014)
- China Study Tour (2013)
- Non-foreign language sponsored study tours to Costa Rica and Ecuador (2013)
- Speakers from the business community and members of the community: EMC, parents, relatives, guest speakers.
- Trip to Bocado's, a tapas restaurant for AP Spanish and Honors V (2014)
- Trip to the Newport mansions to see the French influence on architecture (2014)

**Recommendation #8:** Increase common grade level assessments to better inform instruction and evaluate curriculum effectiveness.

**Current Status of #8:** Course partners at the MS and HS have been highly successful in creating common assessments, common rubrics, and this past year, instituting common grading practices. This past year all grading has been re-categorized to align with the assessed language skills of reading/writing, speaking, and listening to better reflect what a student can say and do in the foreign language. Common benchmarks have been created for each level at the high school and middle school for each language and common District Determined Measures have

been selected. Work will continue this year and next to perfect selected benchmarks so as to obtain the best data possible to inform instruction.

## **FUTURE PLANNING: FIVE-YEAR FOREIGN LANGUAGE PLAN**

### **School Year 2014-2015**

**Goal 1 – Foreign Language Survey: We have surveyed the community to solicit their input with respect to Foreign Language instruction in the district.**

A twelve question survey was disseminated the second week of September 2014 and responses were collected. Seven hundred and ninety-five responses were recorded, demonstrating high interest on the part of the Hopkinton community in foreign language learning. Responses from this survey were taken into account when determining goals for the foreign language program for Hopkinton Schools. The survey is included as appendix A with this document.

Some important things we learned from this survey were:

1. 84% of respondents agree or strongly agree that fluency in a second language is important.
2. 95% of respondents agree or strongly agree that developing awareness and understanding of other cultures is important.
3. 88% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “I would like to see my child(ren) graduate with at least intermediate low proficiency in another language.”
4. 72% of respondents agree or strongly agree that students should continue their language study through senior year.
5. 43% of respondents believe that foreign language instruction should start with K-1.  
22% of respondents believe that foreign instruction should start with 2-3.  
18% of respondents believe that foreign instruction should start with 4-5.  
17% of respondents believe that foreign instruction should start with 6-8.  
2% of respondents believe that foreign instruction should start with 9-12.
7. Of those that disagreed that the choice of languages offered was satisfactory:  
19% of respondents would like to see Latin offered.  
15% of respondents would like to see American Sign Language offered.  
15% of respondents would like to see German offered.  
13% of respondents would like to see Italian offered.

Other percentages: 8% Arabic, 2% Farsi, 3% Hindu-Urdu, 8% Japanese, 6% Portuguese, 8% Russian.

8. If only one language can be offered in the elementary school of the languages we currently offer (Chinese, French, Spanish):

73% of respondents would like to see Spanish as the language offered.

13% of respondents would like to see Chinese as the language offered.

11% of respondents would like to see French as the language offered.

**Goal 2 – Reaching Proficiency: Make parents and students aware that proficiency in a foreign language is a direct result of the number hours of engagement in foreign language instruction and program continuity.**

Since proficiency is the desired result, and since proficiency is a direct result of the number hours of engagement in instruction and program continuity, the benefit of the last year of language study in high school cannot be disregarded.

**Goal 3 – Sixth grade foreign language implementation: We will design a schedule that includes foreign language instruction in sixth grade.**

Starting foreign language instruction with the sixth grade will provide a more solid foundation to our high school foreign language program, giving these students a greater chance of reaching intermediate proficiency in their language of choice. Offering foreign language study in the sixth grade should also result in fewer students repeating their first year of Spanish study at the high school level and in more students continuing their study of French at the high school.

### **School Year 2015-2016**

**Goal 1 – Grade 6 Foreign Language: Provide foreign language study in the sixth grade.**

If supported by the budget, we plan to offer French and Spanish to our sixth graders because these are the languages that currently exist at the middle school level, and they form the base for currently existing programs at the high school.

An additional year of study at the sixth grade level will allow MS teachers to get further along in their curriculum, building an extremely solid foundation for students entering the high school. This will allow the high school to start an advanced second year curriculum, ensuring students more practice at higher levels of foreign language proficiency throughout their high school career. As the CASLS' study indicated (CASLS, Do Early Language Programs Improve High School Proficiency? <https://casls.uoregon.edu/pdfs/tenquestions/TBQEarlyLanguage.pdf>), adding 6-8 grade foreign language study in addition to 4 years of high school study can increase our students' opportunity to reach intermediate levels of proficiency to 50% if they continue to study foreign language throughout their high school career.



#### **Goal 4 – Study of Elementary Foreign Language Instruction Implementation.**

The 2014 survey clearly indicated that the community very strongly supports the introduction of a foreign language at the elementary level. We will study the implementation of foreign language instruction at the elementary level.

#### **Goal 3 – Staff Development: We will support our foreign language teachers by giving them the opportunity to take advantage of foreign language specific professional development.**

It is through continued exposure to the study of instructional promising practices that our foreign language teachers keep current and improve their instructional practices. We will provide our teachers with as many opportunities as possible to observe best practices in use, whether through workshop attendance or through observation of exemplary foreign language programs in other school districts.

#### **Goal 4 – AAPPL Mandarin Exam: Provide Chinese students with the opportunity to assess their skills via an external standardized proficiency assessment.**

HPS will plan to implement the use of external standardized proficiency-based assessments of Chinese language skills to inform instruction and help learners pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. We hope to pilot AAPPL (Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Language) exams for students of Chinese IV in the 2014-2015 school year. AAPPL exams are administered by the ACTFL (American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

### **Years 2016-2017**

#### **Goal 1 – Implement Foreign Language Program beginning in Kindergarten**

If supported by the budget, we plan to begin by adding foreign language to kindergarten. As mentioned throughout this report, research supports that the earlier a child begins learning a foreign language, the better that child's chances are of reaching proficiency in that foreign language. Best practices also dictate the hiring of an elementary certified bilingual teacher with native or near-native fluency. This teacher would create the curriculum to enhance and support the current kindergarten curriculum.

If we hire one teacher a year, by the year 2021, foreign language instruction would be offered in fifth grade:

**2016-2017:** Kindergarten

**2017-2018:** First grade

**2018-2019:** Second grade

**2019-2020:** Third grade

**2020-2021:** Fourth grade

**2021-2022:** Fifth grade