



# World Language Program Evaluation

2018-2019

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## Overview

At the regional New York State Association for Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT) conference held this March at Nazareth College, the opening session was a panel discussion about the importance and need to retain and recruit Foreign Language teachers. The teacher panelist shared a quote with the group and charged local educators to look for and support students who love language. Her quote was “The world needs people who love what they do.” Our 6-12 World Language Department does just that – they love what they do and they love to share and experience that passion with their students. The program evaluation committee was comprised of twenty members of our Brighton learning community and represents almost all of our TCMS and BHS language teachers.

The 6-12 foreign language program of Brighton Central School is exemplary. Unlike many neighboring districts, Brighton students start their language studies in sixth grade and have opportunities to continue that learning throughout their high school careers. A key finding in the 2017 report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences titled “America’s languages: Investing in language education for the 21st century” is that the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in world languages, in addition to English, is critical to success in business, research, and international relations in the twenty-first century. You can see our students in action building their communication skills and their knowledge of culture through the many incredible learning experiences in Spanish, French and German at TCMS and BHS. The report goes on to emphasize the link between learning a second language and improved learning outcomes in other subjects, enhanced cognitive ability, and the development of empathy and effective interpretive skills. The accompanying powerpoint presentation visually represents points of pride connected to these important report elements as well as represents ways the department actively engages in district initiatives aligned to the Brighton Blueprint.

## PROCESS

As a learning community concerned with continued improvement, Brighton Central School District utilizes a program evaluation process to access information about student achievement and how effectively current curriculum and instruction supports that achievement. The program evaluation process is an opportunity to fully understand areas of strength of a given academic program as well as identify areas of particular need. The foreign language teachers welcomed such an opportunity.

However, one of the challenges with the program evaluation process is meeting all of the committee recommendations within the five year time period. This occurs for a variety of reasons – too many recommendations, recommendations are too lofty, changes in district and/or state level goals/priorities, and more. The Foreign Language department found

itself in such a place and decided to alter the typical course of action for the review. The committee took a less familiar pathway which will be outlined in this report. The results were similar to other content area reviews though, with regard to the development of an action plan of next steps and recommendations that will lead to high levels of student achievement into the future.

While in the midst of the review this school year, there was a push at the state level for changes and action in the area of World Languages. In November, the state hosted a conference titled “World Languages in the 21st Century” and that was the kick off for a number of other events and actions promoting the importance of world language learning. This was the impetus behind the program evaluation committee’s decision to “rename” the department. We will move forward from this point (in the report and in nomenclature) as the World Language department instead of Foreign Language department. As is typical in the world of education, one name is not always possible. Languages Other Than English, or LOTE, remains an acronym for our program as well since it is used on NYSED documentation.

Given the challenges of program evaluation and the changes from the state, our process became two-fold -

1. To reflect on the past program review 2013-2014 to guide decisions about a work plan to complete or abandon previous recommendations
2. To learn about the state initiatives and align ourselves with those best practices

## PART 1 – PAST RECOMMENDATIONS & WORK PLAN

A department survey was administered to help us determine which recommendations needed further discussion/attention and which recommendations were either completed and/or not needing to be addressed at this time. Of the 19 members of the 6-12 department, we received 10 responses to the survey with an equal split of middle school level and high school level voices. Because the program evaluation committee represents almost all members of the TCMS and BHS faculty, the committee used the survey as a jumping off point for discussion of what was important to address through the review work. We defined areas of continued need and attended to each item to varying degrees. The chart outlines this work:

Areas of continued need	Actions taken and/or ongoing work
Communication – continue to fine-tune our communication with students and families to promote the importance and value of learning another language	Updates were made to TCMS and BHS webpages as a way to enhance our communication with families. Further organization and enhancements will be made as teachers move to Schoology and away from teacher webpages to insure that

	the information parents and/or students need is accessible in the fewest number of logical clicks from the Brighton webpage.
Intern program – There was interest in bringing back a fourth intern.	This is a valued aspect of the Brighton experience. Students are able to work directly with a native speaker and to learn about the culture of our interns’ community. Several years ago we cut back from 4 interns to 3. The department felt strongly that we need the 4th intern particularly to support our Spanish classes as these classes have the highest student enrollment. TCMS and BHS re-allocated department funds to support a 4th intern for the 2019-2020 school year.
Placement – This was not directly from the previous evaluation recommendations but came through in the comment section of the survey.	A “World Language Course Placement Protocol” was developed and will be shared with counselors and administrators to better articulate and communicate the process for new entrants around World Language course placement.
Support for struggling students	This will remain an ongoing area of focus and further review. The committee brainstormed possible strategies to consider for future such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use of college students (pre-service teachers) to volunteer or gain field experience – connected with local colleges with language programs</li> <li>– Possibility of Teaching Assistant support</li> <li>– More flexibility with new entrants</li> <li>– Start new 7<sup>th</sup> graders in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class or in 1A</li> </ul>
Spanish Exchange - There was also interest in exploring a school exchange opportunity for students studying Spanish.	We are happy to announce a BHS trip to Spain in February 2020. The trip will be focused on art and architecture with a planned visit to a school in Spain. This is not yet an exchange; however we may decide in the future to build a school partnership.

## PART 2 – WORLD LANGUAGES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

While in the midst of the review this school year, there was a great deal of changes and/or action in the area of World Languages at the state level. In November, the state hosted a conference titled “World Languages in the 21st Century” and that was the kick off for a number of other events and actions promoting the importance of world language learning. Highlights include:

- In November, the state released an updated LOTE FAQ (Languages Other Than English Frequently Asked Questions document).
- Candice Black, a former East Irondequoit teacher, was hired as Director of World Language for the New York State Department of Education.
- Several professional development opportunities were advertised and implemented across the state. Brighton educators attended the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT) State Conference in October and the Regional Conference in March and a few teachers participated in a February teleconference for administrators and lead teachers on World Languages in the 21st Century.
- Monroe BOCES 2 developed a World Language Leadership Forum that has begun this year and will continue into the future. This is an opportunity for local teacher leaders and administrators to network and to discuss the work being done with regard to World Languages. Brighton was represented at both meetings and information from those meetings was disseminated to the department.
- In April, the Board of Regents received an overview of the LOTE standards review process which is beginning this month. Regional Standards Review Committees are forming across the state to update the standards.
- There is a great deal of momentum with regard to updating NYS standards, reinstating a LOTE Regents exam and providing teachers with resources, tools and networking opportunities to enhance World Language instruction across the state.
- There is a continued focus on supporting districts in recognizing student language success through the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (Board of Regents approved in 2016). Available supports include state guidance documents, BOCES support sessions and continued PD sessions at the local and state conferences.

When considering curriculum work between the 2013-2014 program evaluation and current time, the committee knew there was a great deal of work to be done. Curriculum maps had not been updated to a large degree. Unit templates reflected vocabulary and grammar relative to topics of study and were aligned to the most recent textbooks. However, there was a need to add to and embellish that work to truly reflect the

Understanding by Design framework and to emphasize best practices in language learning such as use of authentic resources and use of the target language through comprehensible input. Efforts had begun in the development of common writing tasks and rubrics across courses for each language. The rubrics used the Can Do statements from the American Council for Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) standards. These standards have been the basis for much of the state initiatives. They shift the focus from four isolated skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) to three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive and presentational). Students practice all three modes through Integrated Performance Tasks.

Integrated Performance Tasks (IPAs) shift the focus away from grammar to a focus on communication. They make language accessible for all students – answering the question, “What can you do with what you know?” They’re project based and put students into an authentic, engaging learning experience. We provide these experiences in many ways at both buildings already as evidenced in the powerpoint presentation. However, the Can Do statements also are a continuum and show a developmental sequence of language development. We need to insure that we follow this sequence vertically and horizontally within our program. We also discovered that we need to organize our teacher created materials and resources in a more user friendly, systematic way.

The last stage of the Can Do continuum is the Intermediate High level. This connects the IPAs and instructional shifts to the New York State Seal of Biliteracy. In the NYS Seal of Biliteracy Handbook, several important points are made as to the intent of the seal – “The intent of a seal of biliteracy is to: encourage the study of languages; identify high school graduates with language and biliteracy skills for employers; provide universities with additional information about applicants seeking admission; prepare students with twenty-first century skills; recognize the value of foreign and native language instruction in schools; and affirm the value of diversity in a multilingual society.’ (Slentz, 2012). We agreed with this statement believing the seal is a positive way to promote love of learning in the languages and to celebrate the hard work and achievement of our students. As a result, a timeline was agreed upon by the committee to spend next school year 2019-2020 planning for the implementation of the seal in the 2020-2021 school year.

## DATA

Much of the committee meeting time was spent on areas other than data. One sub-group did review and discuss the past three years of data on our passing rates for the Checkpoint A and B exams. In general, our student performance is strong. The drops in student performance reflect our area of continued focus/need around support for struggling students. The sub-group recommended we consider ways to better analyze our data possibly changing our end-of-year grading/scoring practices. We also linked this discussion to the IPA work recognizing that we believe we will get more detailed, timely

and relevant information about student performance through IPA work. We plan to develop a systematic way to look at student work once IPAs are more well-established.

In addition, Linda Palmer, BHS department leader, analyzed three years of enrollment data and shared this with the committee. See chart below.

	Spanish	French	German
# of 6 <sup>th</sup> graders	151	78	45
# of students taking Checkpoint A	199	79	40
% of students beyond 1 year	83	100	98
# of students taking Checkpoint B	145	65	33
% of students beyond 3 years	66	75	88
# of students taking highest level available	17	17	21
% of students took Checkpoint A through AP	9	22	53

## SUMMARY/NEXT STEPS

In summary, this has been a busy year filled with new learning, reflection, collaboration and planning. There is much work to do and much excitement about the possibilities that come with new, updated New York State learning standards. We will continue to strengthen our relationships and communication across all constituencies (teachers, students, counselors, administrators, families) in order to positively promote the outcomes associated with language learning. From a logistical standpoint, this means meeting as a 6-12 group this summer to learn and plan together followed by at least two 6-12 department meetings in the 2019-2020 school year. A 6-12 One Note will be created to facilitate on-going communication and an electronic organizer for agendas, minutes, resources and tools. Short term curriculum and instruction goals include creating/revising assessments to follow the IPA format, organizing a systematic approach for looking at student work (to determine our student and program strengths and needs) and continuing to participate in professional development opportunities around best practices in world language pedagogy. Long range goals will be established once the new standards have been generated and shared. Lastly, the Seal of Biliteracy committee will form in the fall to plan for a 2021 implementation.