

# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WHITEFISH BAY

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An Exceptional Place To Learn

Dear First through Fifth Grade Parents and Guardians,

As a part of the district's on-going curriculum review cycle, every few years curricular areas are reviewed by a committee and recommendations from that committee are brought to the School Board. The World Language completed their review in spring of 2015. The report outlines the committee's efforts and a brief overview of the future implementation, professional development and program evaluation.

Our current elementary World Language program's goal is to expose students to an additional language; it is not a language acquisition program (proficiency or fluency in speaking, understanding and writing the language). As you are aware, students are introduced to the Spanish culture and to the language as general concepts. While some proficiency in vocabulary may be attained, the emphasis is not on reaching proficiency in the new language. A key learning benefit to an exposure program is that it primes the neurological pathways in the brain for easier acquisition of any additional language in the future, particularly if the exposure occurs before the age of 10 years old.

One of the recommendations accepted in the Board report was to pilot an elementary World Language Lab without negatively impacting the current Spanish program. The pilot was complete during the 2016-2017 school year. The School Board used student and staff survey data, compiled during the pilot, along with lab usage data to finalize a decision regarding the language lab usage. The results showed that there were many positive aspects of the lab:

- Students enjoyed having a choice of world languages to study
- Students were able to take advantage of 24/7 learning
- It differentiated to student needs and instructional pace
- Feedback was timely and specific

Additional results showed potential draw backs and concerns:

- Technology was inconsistent
- Time was not being monitored
- Additional cost to the District
- First grade students struggled with not only the technology but the appropriateness of the actual software
- Staff and students need additional technology and program training

During the spring of 2017, the Whitefish Bay School Board approved the permanent implementation of a language lab in grades 2-5. A Language Lab allows student to explore a world language of interest to them (Spanish, French, German, Chinese for example) with 24/7 access. It stays consistent with our current program goal of exposure to an additional language, without the District restricting the language studied, or the desire of the student to learn more of the language at an individualized pace. Many of the concerns from the pilot are either being addressed now, or were already resolved later on in the pilot. The language lab has their own dedicated chromebooks, first grade is no longer going to participate in the language lab, but they will continue with face-to-face lessons, and additional student and staff training will be given this fall.

A benefit of our newer elementary school day schedule, is we do have time built in to allow for this additional learning experience. If your child would LIKE to spend more time in the language lab, outside of the one day a week, we will try to accommodate them, and they will also have access to it outside of the school day if they wish. We will continue to collect survey data from the students and families regarding the language lab experience during this expanded language lab experience.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your building principal, or Maria Kucharski, Director of Teaching and Learning at [maria.kucharski@wfbschools.com](mailto:maria.kucharski@wfbschools.com).

Sincerely,



Maria Kucharski