

## Partnerships Between State and Local School Districts and Community Language Schools

By Betty Lau

*Optimally, providing K-12 education about Asia should go hand in hand with classes in Asian languages and cultures. The following article is a description of how a partnership between Washington state's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), local school districts and community-based language schools launched a highly popular summer language camp program which featured Chinese, Japanese, and Korean as three of the five less commonly taught languages offered during the project. Project components included:*

- ◆ university training in foreign language in elementary school (FLES) methodology for native speakers recruited from community-based language schools,
- ◆ guidance provided by certified teachers who could speak the target languages with varying degrees of fluency,
- ◆ high school or college-age native speakers or students of the target languages who served as teacher aides,
- ◆ enough clock hours in the practicum experience to allow participants to qualify for Washington state conditional teaching certificates upon successful completion of the program.



On Day Three, Korean language campers practice animal talk: "Lions roar, ROAR, ROAR!"  
Photo by Betty Lau, 2000.

## THE PROJECT

In 1995 OSPI applied for a three-year Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant, one of several to be awarded to state education agencies, called for the establishment or enhancement of programs in the less commonly taught languages of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, or Russian in elementary schools. OSPI received one of those grants in 1996.

Major grant conditions required the involvement of native speakers, selection of one or more of the target languages, focus on elementary schools, and replicability of the program. Because of the large immigrant communities in Washington state, the grant writers chose to design a program encompassing all the target languages. The majority of project participants came from community-based language schools. Some were ESL instructional assistants from local school districts. (Because of the newness of the immigrant community from the former Soviet Union, Russian language community schools do not yet exist.)

The work of the FLAP committee was divided into five areas, each headed by a chairperson: curriculum, technology, higher education, staff development, and communities.

## THE PLAN

Program design revolved around training teams of four adults with two high school or college aides. Each target language team comprised one certified teacher, who provided guidance in classroom management and practices, and three native speakers from the target language communities. Inclusion of high school students from community-based language schools and/or world language college students as aides served two purposes: to provide language students with practice in the target language, and to provide exposure to careers as world language teachers.

Adults took a three-credit university course in FLES methodology during spring quarter and then applied what they learned in two two-week teaching practica set in the context of world language summer camps. During the last few weeks of the methods course, the language teams met outside of class time to plan a schedule of activities and lessons for their particular camp.

Participants were required to write lesson plans that were later collated into language activity manuals by the team leaders. Successful completion of the program enabled participants to earn sixty clock hours, which enabled them to apply for and receive conditional teaching certificates to begin teaching one of the target languages in the state's public schools.

Camps were limited to two back-to-back sessions, with Session B as a repeat of Session A. During Session B, unsuccessful lessons could be dropped, and those that were marginal or successful could be improved. Students were allowed to repeat the session by parental request, but otherwise, Session B was composed of a different group of youngsters. Because of the nature of the grant, no tuition was charged; however, a \$10 per child materials fee was required. Some parents donated additional funds to help those families that could not afford the materials fee. Camps were operated from Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-noon for two weeks each. During the final year of the grant,



A Chinese calligraphy lesson given by Marie Sommers and Mun Huey Chou.  
Photo by Betty Lau, 2000.

the materials fee was increased to \$15 (to cover custodial costs) and a week-long break was added between sessions to give participants a rest from the intense schedule and to allow time for lesson revision and Session B planning. To narrow the scope of what would be taught, each team selected a theme, and all vocabulary, expressions and sentences revolved around the theme. Some of the themes used over the three years of the grant were "The Four Seasons," "Animals," "Sharing and Caring," and "Family."

Staff spoke the target language as much as possible, even during recess and snack time. Recess consisted of supervised games using the target languages. Because the last day of each session was a recital for each language camp to demonstrate what the children had learned, some language teams used recess time as an opportunity to practice dance moves under the guise of P.E. exercise.

## A TYPICAL MORNING

While each language camp schedule varied, they all had elements in common. On the first day of camp, each child took home an introductory letter stating the goals and schedule of the language camp. Camp staff arrived by 8:30 a.m. and signed in at the camp office. Most arrived earlier in order to meet with team partners for better coordination and review of the day's activities. When students arrived, each faced the routine of greeting the teachers and putting on a nametag made on the first day or pre-made by teachers and aides. Having called each student's home prior to camp opening, the teachers knew which child had a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean name beforehand. If a student did not have a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean name, one of the teachers created one or transliterated the English name.

Students learned the target language through immersion in activities such as songs, crafts, and games. Teachers displayed a great deal of inventiveness in creating new craft ideas and games. In general students were divided into pods or learning groups based on age or grade. Pods were named, usually after colors, animals or something related to the theme. The pods rotated between the teachers, who worked with the children on a particular skill. Sometimes all pods would come together for a



Escorted by teacher Young Hee Lee, Korean campers sing "Animal Talk" on the way to the lunchroom for snacks.  
Photo by Betty Lau, 2000.

team-taught song or dance lesson. For example, the Chinese teachers team-taught directions (right, left, up, down) during a P.E. dance exercise; the Japanese teachers taught each pod to count by having students make abacuses from Popsicle sticks, barbecue skewers and beads; and the Korean camp children learned colors by making and coloring masks they later used in a dance.

About midmorning, all language camps scheduled snack time. Snacks were provided on a voluntary, rotating basis by parents, who were called prior to camp opening or asked to sign up the first day. The aides set up the snacks in the school cafeteria when children were washing their hands. To save time, some language camps opted to use liquid antibacterial hand soaps in lieu of making a trip to the restroom. In the cafeteria, students sat by language groups. They learned how to use chopsticks, the names of snack foods, and how to ask for food and beverages. Most camps asked parents to bring healthy snacks such as fruit, nuts and juice.

Recess always took place outside or on the indoor play court. It consisted mainly of relay races or outdoor games in the target languages and required close cooperation among the language team staff to keep students interested and involved.

Just before noon, students of all language camps were put through a "good-bye" routine consisting of a review of the morning's vocabulary and the proper way to bid farewell in their respective camp language. Depending on the school district, students were picked up from their classrooms or were escorted to the parent pick-up point in front of the school. Staff dismissal time was set at 12:30 in accord with state regulations on teacher arrival and departure from schools. Nearly all camp language teams stayed past 12:30 in order to evaluate the day's activities and prepare materials for the next day.

## THE PARTNERS

OSPI provided overall management of the grant, budget, and in-kind matches. During the first year of the grant, in winter 1996, press releases were sent out to announce the grant project and solicit participants from the Chinese and Korean community language schools. Eight were selected, creating a mix of native speakers and nonnative speakers.

Each team was led by a certificated teacher who could speak Chinese or Korean to guide the respective teams in classroom management, student discipline and lesson plan writing. We started with Chinese and Korean languages the first year because of time constraints. The large numbers of Chinese and Korean language schools greatly facilitated participant recruitment and selection.

In spring 1997, project participants took a FLES methodology course at Pacific Lutheran University. In the summer, Chinese and Korean immersion summer language camps for elementary children were piloted in the Mercer Island School District and Federal Way School District, respectively. Each camp had approximately twenty-five to thirty children who were team taught using an activities-based approach called Total Physical Response. Each school district donated use of a school building, Island Park Elementary School on Mercer Island, and Adelaide Elementary School in Federal Way.

At the end of each session, surveys of parents and student participants showed a high degree of satisfaction and a desire to participate in future immersion language camps. During the following year, Japanese, Arabic and Russian language camps were set up in addition to the Chinese and Korean language camps, this time in Meany Middle School of the Seattle School District. Because the number of students involved had sharply increased, a camp principal was added to the staff to provide on-site supervision. The University of Washington provided the college credit methods course under the auspices of its University Extension program.

Due to the popularity and success of the world language camps, Seattle Public Schools linked its magnet grant to the third and final year (1999) of the world language summer camps, intending for the camps to be a springboard into the opening of the John Stanford International School (JSIS). The JSIS provided funding to add three more languages: Spanish, German and Swahili. A Title VII grant received by Seattle Central Community College covered costs of the tuition, text, and materials for the University of Washington coursework for those participants who were also bilingual instructional assistants or ESL teachers in the Seattle School District.

The Chong Wa Benevolent Association donated meeting space in its hall in Chinatown and functioned as a link to the Chinese community language schools in the state. The Korean School of Seattle provided a similar link to the Korean community. In addition, the Chinese, Japanese and Korean language newspapers, radio and TV, as well as the local English language dailies, provided outstanding news coverage of the language camps.

Pre-camp preparations included designing a combination flyer/registration form sent home with the district's elementary students in grades K-4, processing of returned registration forms and checks, notification of families about acceptance of students on a first-come, first-served basis, making of class lists, arranging for fingerprinting and background checks of camp staff, arranging for office space, phones, a photocopier, refrigerator, and purchase of supplies needed by all language camps, such as paper plates, cups, napkins, crayons, scissors, construction paper, glue and photocopier paper.

## THE RESULTS

Although the methodology dictated language immersion within a rich activities-based environment to develop the children's speaking abilities, we learned that the intense schedule of near nonstop activities exhausted both staff and children. Consequently, we asked staff to introduce writing activities and arts and crafts appropriate to the cultures of the target languages as a way of incorporating "quiet time" into the schedule. Our goals were twofold: that the children recognize the form of writing used by the target language, specifically, characters, Hangul, or syllabaries, and that they know if the characters, Hangul, or syllabaries were right side up or not. Contrary to one expert's opinion, we found that even the early elementary-school-age children enjoyed the writing lessons, particularly when using brush and ink in the calligraphy segments. The difference could stem from the novelty of learning non-roman scripts as well as the art and etymology of the simpler pictographs.

All the language teams' lesson plans and schedules have been collated into separate activity manuals which will be edited, published and made available on-line for school districts or schools that want to start world language and culture programs. Although designed specifically for younger children, many of the activities, such as calligraphy, can be adapted for middle school and high school students.

The world language summer camps have been resoundingly successful. As a result of this teacher training project, several native and nonnative speaking participants have been hired to teach Chinese, Japanese, and Korean in school districts such as Seattle, Bellevue and Federal Way. The 1997 Korean camp team leader went on to a full-time teaching job in Federal Way. She reports that the training and camp experience have stood her in good stead in teaching Korean to high school students. With the cooperation and support of the faculty, she has developed an annual student exchange with South Korea as well as arranging for faculty and student group visits during school breaks.

Teachers who have continued in the community language schools report that students respond well to activities-based instruction, and that they have more success in getting their young charges to use the target languages.

The summer 1999 camps were filled to capacity, with parents registering as early as March. Over 1,000 students applied for 240 slots per camp session. Parents volunteered to help with sign-in on opening days, and those who could speak the target languages volunteered to assist in the classes.

Due to the conclusion of the U.S. Dept. of Education FLAP grant period, World Language Summer Camp 2000 was limited to one two-week session of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Spanish co-funded by the John Stanford International School's magnet grant and Seattle Central Community College's Title VII Bilingual Education Program grant.

Instead of a university methodology course, participants attended a series of workshops given by previous project participants. One question that comes up year after year from all the native speakers is how to teach Americanized youngsters, who are viewed as much more independent minded in their behaviors



Korean camp aide Harrison Yu and teacher Ellen Jung direct students in a self introduction game: "Throw the ball, ask a name; catch the ball, say your name."  
Photo by Betty Lau, 2000.



Identifying vehicles and colors as asked in Chinese by Frank Mei.  
Photo by Rose Yang, 1999.

than the children "back home." Our workshop topics therefore encompassed a methodology overview, public school rules and regulations, classroom management, student record keeping and discipline, and how to use the curricula, activities and materials developed by language teams in previous years of the project.

## THE FUTURE

The world language summer camps generated tremendous media coverage and created a groundswell of public support for world language study beginning in elementary school. Parents clamor for continuation of the camps, but now that the original grant funding has ended, other sources of funding must be found. The University of Washington, the John Stanford International School of the Seattle Public Schools, community language school representatives, and cultural and consular officials are meeting to explore the possibility of holding future world language camps.

Washington state's education reform laws do not include world language study, and the popularity of the camps heightened parent involvement in lobbying the state legislature to include world language study as part of education reform. In addition, local businesses are finding it difficult to recruit enough multilingual employees, particularly in the field of technology. Such parent and business demand for world language study fuels the legislative debate on requiring foreign language study in the public schools.



Aide Angelina Suito and teacher Parke Nietfeld encourage students to speak Japanese during a ball and stuffed toy game.

Photo by Betty Lau, 2000.



"Itadakimasu!" Language campers practice Japanese meal etiquette under the tutelage of team leader Su-Chen Wang and teacher Naoki Hirata.

Photo by Betty Lau, 2000.

Regardless of whether or not world language study is required of schools at the state level, individual schools and school districts can do much to establish programs on their own. For example, a survey of parents in Seattle revealed that the top priority for curriculum change was the addition of world language study. The survey also asked parents which languages should be taught. Japanese and Mandarin Chinese topped the list for Asian languages. Businesses responded to a similar survey. Asked which language needs they had, businesses chose Japanese as one of the immediate needs with Mandarin Chinese as a need within ten years.

As a result of these surveys, schools are looking at innovative ways to add Asian languages to their curricula. Most rely on contracts with private language academies to provide before or after school language instruction. Some are funding world language teachers through PTA auctions and other fundraisers. The language teachers of choice are those trained through the above world language summer camp model.

However, schools are discovering that starting a world language program has a ripple effect. In order to phase in sustained K-12 world language instruction, several issues must be addressed. Among them are the capacity of the state's colleges and universities to provide methodology classes, models of instruction, articulation between grades and schools, identifying and training enough language teachers, and development of materials and curricula.

The recently concluded OSPI world language summer camp program provides some answers. It clearly demonstrates how teachers can be recruited from community-based language schools, how they can be trained, and how one model of an immersion program can work.

Changes in state policies regarding world language study must include technology, distance learning, and participation of the community language schools to help fulfill the growing demand for world language classes that smaller school districts and individual schools cannot meet, as well as to ensure that students will be able to take the languages that they want, wherever student enrollment is insufficient for districts to hire a teacher.

Washington state is in a transitional period between where the state is now, with virtually no elementary world language programs and few four-year programs at the secondary level to some point in the future when most of the state's students will graduate with some degree of proficiency in a second or even third language. During this transition period, the community-based language schools will be the principal suppliers of language instruction to elementary school students, especially for the less commonly taught languages.

Recognition for study of Chinese, Japanese and Korean in community language schools is now granted by some Washington state school districts and private schools, but because of the vagueness of the regulations governing out-of-school study taught by non-school district personnel, principals have not always granted such credit.

Institutionalizing the role of community language schools within the public school domain requires two main areas of concentration: (1) generating greater public support for community language schools, and (2) incorporating community-based language school study into a student's official transcript.

The model outlined above can be replicated in other school districts. While its primary focus is language acquisition, the curricula developed for each language proved to be effective in teaching students basic expressions and cultural elements of the target languages they experienced. We found that language cannot be separated from culture, and any program of Asian cultural studies should incorporate language study as well. This melding necessitates collaboration between Asian language teachers and social studies teachers. The rewards of such a venture would be well worth the extra effort. Each discipline reinforces the other's curriculum, resulting in students solidly grounded in Asian history, geography, language, and culture. ■

Note: For more information about the world languages summer camp project, contact Betty Lau at: [trannhu@isomedia.com](mailto:trannhu@isomedia.com), or write to her at: 4920 S. Ferdinand St., Seattle, WA 98118-2028. For information on world languages in Washington state, check out <http://www.kl2.wa.us/WaLang/index.htm>.

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