

# Spanish Immersion: A Vision for the K-12 Pathway

November 3, 2011

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## Why are we here?

- We would like to provide the Board with an update on the progress that has been made developing the South Washington County Secondary Spanish Immersion Pathway.
- This continuation of the elementary immersion program will extend best practices across each level and complete the immersion program.

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## Strategic Plan Objectives

- Students come first.
- Students are challenged and learn based on their unique needs and abilities.
- Education is a partnership among students, educators, families, and community.

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## Strategic Objectives met by Spanish Immersion

- Develop learners into critical thinkers achieving proficiency, continuous growth, and lifelong success.
- Spanish Immersion provides a framework for development of student cognitive abilities while also embracing lifelong language success and a value added educational experience.

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## **..and more**


- Develop and sustain effective partnerships among students, staff, families, and communities
- Spanish Immersion parents are involved in the educational process and partner with the District

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## **What do we know about Immersion from Research?**

1. Benefits
  - Academic, cognitive, linguistic
2. Challenges
  - Linguistic, academic, programmatic

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## Academic Benefits

- English speaking immersion students of various academic abilities are capable of achieving high levels of functional proficiency in the immersion language while at the same time achieving academically at or above their non-immersion peers on standardized tests administered in English (Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Lindholm-Leary, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 1982)

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## Cognitive Benefits

- Research finds evidence for greater cognitive flexibility (Bruck, et al., 2007) and better nonverbal problem-solving abilities of foreign language immersion students (Bamford and Mizokawa, 2000). These findings point towards a relationship between second language proficiency and the development of symbolic reasoning.

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## ...additionally

- Fully proficient bilinguals outperform monolinguals in the areas of divergent thinking, pattern recognition, and problem solving (Baker, 2006).



## Challenges

- Without a continuation of the elementary and middle school program, students will be at a fluency level above that found in most language classes.
- Increased rigor needs to be provided for the SI students.
- A K-12 articulated curriculum needs to be in place for future success and support for developed fluency.




## First, SI needed a mission...

- Every organization has a mission, a purpose, a reason for being. Often the mission is why the organization was first created—to meet an identified need. Sometimes the same problems that the organization initially tried to address continue to haunt generation after generation.
- Our mission needs to be current and alive. A good mission statement should accurately explain why Spanish Immersion exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the organization's essential nature, its values, and its work.

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The South Washington County Schools Spanish Immersion Pathway is a partnership composed of teachers, parents, students, administrators, and community members dedicated to preparing children linguistically, academically and socially to contribute to, and thrive in, an ever-changing world. In an environment which depends on each person's strengths and contributions, students will achieve academic excellence in all subjects in English and Spanish. Building upon our diverse backgrounds and through rich learning opportunities, students will develop respect for each other and for different cultures.

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## What else parent responses state?

- Fluency
- Cognitive Benefits
- Value added for students

“When you compare two high school graduates, one with Spanish fluency and one without, which student will be given preference, all other things being equal?”

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## What existing programs have we explored?

- CARLA Institute at the University of Minnesota: attended the Summer Program designed for administrators
- Collaborated with Madison, WI schools, St. Paul Public Schools, Eden Prairie Schools
- Many programs at or near the same development level as is SWCS

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## Exploration of exemplary program


- Tara Fortune, University of Minnesota CARLA representative indicated stellar programs we might explore
- Portland, Oregon public schools have multiple immersion programs which in existence for 20+ years with exemplary results

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## Partnership with Portland, Oregon schools

- Elise Block, Linda Plante and Patrick Brown involved in observing Portland Schools immersion
- Met with Peyton Chapman, Principal at Lincoln High School, Marisol Kreuzer, Spanish Immersion District Coordinator, Emily Gaffney, Profesora, Bobi Regan, School Board member, along with Spanish Immersion Parent Advocacy group.
- Observed grade, 6,7,8,9,10,11 and 12th grade classes.

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## **We saw an extraordinary program!**


- High quality teachers
- A dedicated parent group
- Advocates on the school board
- Articulated curriculum
- Capstone project

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## **What did we learn in Portland?**

1. We are on the right path!
2. Language Assistants are necessary
3. District support issues in Portland as well, even though the program is across the District and has been in place for 20 years.
4. Spanish Immersion is a program for all students.
5. Parent support group would be best as a k-12 group.
6. Spanish Immersion staff need time to develop curriculum.

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## SWCS Secondary Spanish Immersion Pathway

- Part of a K-12 Spanish Immersion Program
- One way immersion program at the secondary level
- Located at Cottage Grove Middle School for the middle years portion
- Located at Woodbury High School for the high school portion
- Guarantee of two full immersion class offerings at each grade level
- Objective to have two sections of immersion students in each of the two class offerings at each grade level

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## Proposal for High School pathway

- Social Studies and Language Arts taught in Spanish
- This format would be in place in grades 9 and 10
- Grade 11 would provide Social Studies and high level Spanish Language/culture class
- Grade 12: Capstone class with service component: Humanities would emphasize authentic communication in Spanish related to the various Spanish and Latin American literature and other texts. Students will write text analysis, interior monologues, and journals related to project based experience.

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## What is needed....

- Staff development time for teaching staff
- Library books/publication in Spanish Language
- Care in Social Studies/Language Arts textbook selection to ensure Spanish language versions
- Clear support at the District level, assuring parents that the program is valued and supported.

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## And at the Middle School.....

- Social Studies and Spanish language/culture classes at grades 6, 7, and 8.
- Capstone activity at end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. Schools visited, as well as research from CARLA points to the need for an authentic experience made available for students through parent groups.
- Continued fluency measures in place.
- Continued proficiency measures in place.

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## And what is needed.....


- Library materials in Spanish.
- Continuation of the classroom assistants.
- Staff development time for instructors.
- Development and oversight for the grade 8-12 curriculum.
- Clear support at the District level, ensuring parents that the program is valued and supported.
- Text selections with an eye for Spanish language versions.

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## Next Steps

- Work with teachers at all levels to develop a K-12 continuum.
- Present at School Board meeting for formal approval of the program if needed.
- Develop curriculum framework activities for existing staff.
- Support, support, support!

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## Timelines

- Summer/Fall 2011 Visit and discuss existing Spanish Immersion Program
- October 2011 Spanish Immersion Parent and District Admin meeting
- November 2011 Present Spanish Immersion vision and challenges
- November 2011 Formulate a plan to start writing the K-12 Spanish Language Curriculum framework – ongoing process k-12
- December 2011 Begin registration process for Spanish Immersion
- December 2011 Make decisions regarding hiring process and licensure - ongoing
- December 2011 District communication regarding SI - ongoing
- January 2012 Plan professional development of existing staff/parallels all staff - ongoing
- January 2012 Involve a parent group in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade capstone discussion - ongoing
- February 2012 WHS explore partnership with College in the Schools (CIS) -ongoing
- March 2012 Budgeting and staffing discussions - ongoing
- April 2012 Discussion regarding library materials for MS and HS - ongoing
- April 2012 More district communication regarding SI - ongoing
- April 2012 Summer school or jump start program for identified SI students
- May 2012 Plan for continued summer writing - ongoing

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