

K-12 Heritage Language Program Profile Alabama School of Math and Science

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Languages taught: German and French

Grades: 9-12

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: Language acquisition for students to the AP level, directed readings available for post-AP, and special focus on literature and civilization

Type of program

- Partial immersion
- Foreign language program
- Content-based
- Exploratory
- Extracurricular club

We teach in 55-minute sessions, for 4 times a week on an accelerated track with three semesters a year. Our exchange program and extracurricular activities help keep motivation, curiosity, and creativity. As a native speaker, I am flexible enough to respond immediately to the input from any student. I begin by accompanying all English with the German equivalent. I gradually stop speaking English to enable students to learn to interpret my visual clues and gel as a group. We require a minimum of four consecutive terms of language, so a personal relationship develops and helps students learn about a living sample of a foreign culture. This aspect usually provides natural comical relief from the rigorous course of study I demand from my students.

Program origins: The program was founded in 1984 by the public school system.

Parents' expectations for the program: Academic excellence and uniqueness in acquiring the language

Staff expectations for the program: The staff share the same views as the parents. However, being called a school of math and science casts a shadow over our excellence in the humanities.

Students

- First-generation immigrants
- Second-generation immigrants
- Third-generation immigrants
- Children of interethnic marriages
- Children of interethnic adoption
- Non-ethnic background

Countries of origin: Brazil, China, France, Germany, Kenya, Korea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Russia, and Taiwan

Total student enrollment: approximately 290

Identification of a heritage speaker:

- Personal interviews with respective language teacher, or interview with residential life staff
- Home language survey: several personal interviews with trained and experienced residential life staff and teachers
- Teacher interviews and long-term observation
- Brigham Young University placement test

Reasons for not completing the program: The residential life setting coupled with a rigorous academic pace is a challenge. Some students find this too difficult.

Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak: That varies greatly. Generally our youngest students in 10th grade lack formal speaking experience and have a weak native language awareness and foundation. Most love their language connections, but some are coerced by the family and resent their continued involvement.

Instructors

Languages in which staff members are proficient: French, German, and Spanish

Credentials

- Teacher certification
- BA
- MA
- Doctorate

Professional development opportunities teachers have: Generous continuing education offered mostly during summer break.

Professional development opportunities teachers need: Immersion opportunities with native speakers in proximity, several times a year in short and longer (up to two-week sessions)

Courses

Hours per week students receive instruction: 3 hours and 40 minutes

Students are grouped by level: Beginning 1 and 2, Intermediate 1 and 2, Advanced 1 and 2, AP 1-3, post-AP, and electives (post-intermediate and up)

English skills

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Heritage skills

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Skills and levels of language proficiency students reach by the end of the program: Proficiency in all areas including cultural knowledge and conversational settings

Culture

- History
- Festivals
- Customs
- Traditions/beliefs
- Religion
- Folktales
- Arts and crafts
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness

- Literature
- Other culture-related topics: implicit attitudes, contemporary politics, and typical prejudices

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: Multi-media, multi-modal learning, constantly varied and changing approaches, NOT lecture style, interactive and lively, open to unpredictable learning, and learning in terms of personal growth as well as with academic focus

Materials

Textbook: *Deutsch Na Klar* (McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2003)

Other materials used for instruction: I hand out copies with my personal overviews of language issues or comments on cultural aspects. Additionally, I pass out current newspapers and internet links for current events as much as other areas of learning.

Technology used in the program: Interactive and audio materials in language lab and on the Internet. These materials are tied to the textbook exercises. Other materials include: presentations for certain units on Power Point or flash, audio and TV, DVD, Video, and satellite TV in class.

Assessment

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Final exams
- School/District developed tests
- State testing
- Standardized test, ACT and SAT.
- Student self-assessment instrument
- Teacher's observations
- Performance-based tasks or assessment
- Portfolios

Articulation

Students come from all high schools in AL and continue their study at all universities in the U.S., sometimes outside the U.S.

Connections

- Colleges
- Universities

- Home-school connections: parent organization

Opportunities students have for using the language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Extracurricular activities organized by teacher, yearly AL competition at Tuscaloosa, library or university film series, area restaurants. But there is too little diversity down here.

What the program has in place

Financial support

- Local/state government support
- Foundations
- Development and foundation office solicit funding for the program
- MIT grant for physics this year
- Intel grant

System for graduating students and granting credit for study in the program: A total of 2 credits needs to be taken in a language, at least 1 language credit needs to be completed at our school.

The program monitors students' overall academic achievement in school with probation and remedial processes if needed. If there is no improvement in a student's academic work, then they are not invited back to the school.

Research on or evaluation of the program underway or planned: Accreditation process passed recently

Special Challenges and Comments

Challenges the program has experienced: Area high schools perceive us as competition for their gifted students. However, their gifted programs don't offer the variety and depth of learning that we do.

Other insights about your program: Our language program is exceptionally strong, and we have some of the best teachers in the state. Also, our students come to us nationally and internationally. Therefore, the stress of academic focus is alleviated by peer support through the residential aspects of the school. We have a rigorous application process, but all who are admitted are encouraged to make the most of the opportunities.