



Community Based Program

Background Information

Institution: Polish School Jan Matejko

Program address: 316 W. Mill St., Wauconda, IL 60083

Telephone: (847) 809-9375

Web address: www.matejkopolishschool.com

Contact person

Name: Hanna Walas

Title: Principal

Email: hanna.walas@matejkopolishschool.com

Languages/dialects taught: Polish

Grades taught: PreK-12

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: The purpose of the program is to promote Polish language and culture among the younger generations and to help children develop proficiency and fluency in using the Polish language. The program's mission is also to instill appreciation and love for the Polish culture and heritage by providing sufficient levels of instruction to develop proud and confident individuals who will be successful and positive citizens in both Polish and American societies.

Type of program: Saturday Academy

Program origin: The program was founded in 2002 by a group of dedicated individuals.

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: Parents' expectations include, but are not limited to proper education for their children, respectful treatment of their children, and positive role models.

Additional Comments: Parents are very involved in the school's activities. They are highly encouraged to help the teachers and attend school functions and meetings. The parents believe in and support the program.

Staff

Teachers' and administration's expectations for the program: The administration expects the teachers to do their best in teaching students about Polish heritage and language. The administration is expected to hire qualified teachers and wisely use the funds available. Everyone employed is expected to cultivate a sense of pride for our heritage and model proper behavior for the students.

Students

Students:

First-generation immigrants, 10%
Second-generation immigrants, 85%
Third-generation immigrants, 4%
Children of interethnic marriages, 1%

Countries of Origin: Poland, United States

Total student enrollment: About 200 students

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Teachers use short surveys in the classroom to gather information about heritage speakers and language proficiency. Parents are also questioned about previous education and the child's needs. The teacher makes the ultimate decision about the student's placement.

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Relocation is the main reason for student withdrawal, and time conflicts with other extracurricular activities.

Students' attitudes towards the language varieties they speak: Students are very open to learning their language, and they enjoy the experience of an environment where they can foster their new skills.

Students' expectations of the program: Students expect to become more familiar with their heritage and feel welcomed in the Polish community.

Additional Comments: The majority of students in the program are children, ages 3-9 years old. The program incorporates appropriate activities and interactive games for the children to create an enjoyable and nurturing atmosphere.

Teachers

Number of teachers in the program: 14

Languages in which teachers are proficient: Polish, English

Proficiency level: All teachers are fluent in both writing and speaking.

Credentials: Teachers for grades 6-12 have an M.A. in Polish. Teachers for grades PreK-5 have either an M.A. in Early Education or a B.A. in Elementary Education.

Professional development opportunities teachers have: Teachers are encouraged to visit other institutions where similar methods are in use. They are advised to observe other instructors and discuss various approaches.

Professional development opportunities teachers need: The teachers need exposure to new teaching methods, especially due to their Polish education. Knowledge of teaching styles in U.S. classrooms such as cooperative learning would be highly beneficial to the program's progress.

Additional Comments: The teachers are very open to learning new methods and techniques that would benefit and enhance their teaching styles.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 3.5 hours per week

Student grouping: Age and language proficiency

How often students receive instruction in the heritage language: Students receive instruction during regular schools hours: 8:30am to 11:45am for PreK-3rd grade; 8:30am to noon for 4th-12th grade.

Time devoted in class to language and culture teaching: Language and culture are equally intertwined within the school day's lesson plans.

Language skills

Heritage language skills: Listening, speaking, reading, and writing

Skills and levels of proficiency reached by the end of the program: Although language proficiency levels depend on how long the child has been in the program, students should be able to read, write, and communicate verbally by the end of the program.

Additional comments: Students are encouraged to speak Polish exclusively during school hours. A variety of methods are being implemented to help children become confident in this skill.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: Geography, history, festivals, customs, traditions, religion, folktales, arts and crafts, dances, songs, rhymes, social and cultural norms, cultural appropriateness, and sports are incorporated within the context of textbooks and extracurricular activities.

Kind of student identity program fosters: The program fosters students who are proud of their Polish heritage and appreciative of Polish contributions to the world's culture. They are encouraged to incorporate their pride and knowledge in their personal growth.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods including traditional lecture style and hands-on cooperative style. Both methods are used appropriately depending on the age and needs of the students, and the teacher's judgment.

Materials

Textbooks: A series written specifically for immigrant youth is used. This series and all other textbooks are distributed by The Association of Polish in America.

Other materials used for instruction: Overhead projectors, television, DVD players, CD players, PowerPoint presentations, and worksheets created by the instructors

Technology used for instruction: Teachers are encouraged to use PowerPoint, computers, overhead projectors, and television to diversify and supplement instructional methods in the classroom.

Additional comments: School administrators purchase and select most of the materials, but teachers are highly encouraged to research other materials that would help their instruction.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: Weekly quizzes, chapter tests, mid-term tests, teacher observations, and portfolios

Additional Comments: Keeping up with a Polish tradition, an oral and written maturity test is administered for the final year of high school. All other students receive a report card signifying their promotion to the next grade level.

Articulation

How the program develops home-school connections or promotes parent involvement: Parents are encouraged to participate in school and classroom meetings. Conferences are scheduled for parents to be kept informed of student progress, and the school organizes events such as dances for which parents and teachers are both welcomed to join and chaperone. Parents are also asked to volunteer as teacher aides. The program has recently implemented monthly bulletins on the Web site for better communication.

Connections with other institutions: The program participates in activities sponsored by schools that share the same purpose and goals of cultivating Polish culture. The program also collaborates with the Association of Polish Teachers in America.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Students use the language at home and at the local church. They are encouraged to participate in local competitions within the Polish community as well as attend organized trips to museums, the Association for Polish in America, and other schools.

What the program has in place

Financial support the program receives: Most of the financial support is received from tuition.

Other support the program receives: Several Polish delis offer catering services and advertisement for the program's events and activities. They also reimburse the program for receipts brought in by students, parents, and the Association of Polish Teachers in America. The delis, along with the Polish Embassy and several other private businesses, also sponsor and donate prizes or specific services for contests.

Solicitation of funding: The school administration solicits funding, and teachers and parents are encouraged to solicit funding whenever possible.

Assistance or funding the program would like to receive: Any type of support such as sponsorship, donation, prizes for contests, or necessary materials for the classroom, are welcomed and appreciated.

How students graduate and/or how they receive credit: The school administration is working with the state of Illinois to receive recognition. It would be ideal to give credit towards high school and universities with a completion of the full program and a final exam.

Additional Comments: For the most part the program relies on tuition and parent volunteers. Small businesses assist by providing prizes, catering, printing services, and advertisement

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: The biggest challenge the program is facing is location. The program rents a school building, and the rental contract has not been stable.

Additional Support the program would like to receive: Any kind of support is greatly appreciated, though books, printer cartridges, and technological tools are the most beneficial.

Insights and Future Directions

Insights to share with others: The program flourishes and grows every year thanks to the dedicated work of the administration, the teachers, and the parents. Language, culture, drama, and technology all play a vital role in our plans to educate the Polish youth in America.

Improvements that need to be made: The program is working on enlarging student enrollment in the higher grade levels and sparking interest in high school students. The program tries to accomplish this through increased advertisement and more energetic staff members to contribute to the school's development and growth.

Vision for the program in the future: The vision for the future is a regular flow of student enrollment and a stable location where we can stay and flourish effectively. The program also looks forward to the implementation of the best teaching methods available to ensure the best education possible.

Additional Comments: The Polish School of Jan Matejko is a small institution with support and dedication from parents, teachers, and local Polish businesses who give the value and benefit of working within this Polish community.