



## Community Based Program

### Background Information

**Institution:** Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski Polish School

**Program address:** 3636 W. Wolfram St. Chicago, IL 60618

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### Contact person

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**Languages/dialects taught:** Polish

**Grades taught:** PreK-Grade 11

### Program Description

**Purposes and goals of the program:** Our goals are two-fold: to teach students to speak, read, and write in the Polish language, and to provide students with knowledge about Polish history and heritage.

**Type of program:** Saturday academy

**Program origin:** The program was founded in 1984 by a group of parishioners at the Roman Catholic Church. With the collaboration of a priest, they came up with the idea of a Polish language school for their children.

## Parents

**Parents' expectations for the program:** Parents want their children to practice reading, writing, and speaking in Polish. They also expect their children to learn about the history, geography, and religion (Roman Catholicism) of Poland.

Many parents are very much involved in assisting the program during school hours and in volunteering to help organize events. Parents' meetings are held twice every school year.

## Staff

**Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program:** The program staff are expected to follow guidelines to ensure that students get placed in the appropriate level as they complete each grade.

## Students

### Students:

- First-generation immigrants (45%)
- Second-generation immigrants (50%)
- Third-generation immigrants (3%)
- Children of interethnic marriages (1%)
- Non-ethnic background (1%)

**How the program identifies heritage speakers:** A placement test is administered to determine the language proficiency of incoming students. Recent Polish immigrants go through oral interviews to determine what level suits them best.

**Possible reasons for student withdrawal:** Families may have to relocate to another part of the city, where it may be possible to complete the program at a different Polish language school. About 75% of the students complete the program during elementary school, and about 90% of them complete the program during high school.

**Students' expectations of the program:** Students expect to learn the language and the culture, while also having fun.

## Instructors

**Number of instructors in the program:** 24 language and geography instructors, 6 religion instructors (3 priests and 3 sisters)

**Languages in which instructors are proficient:** Polish and English

**Proficiency level:** All instructors are highly proficient in Polish.

**Credentials:** 3 instructors have a B.A. in Education and History, 20 have an M.A. in Education, and 1 has a B.A. in Early Childhood Education

**Professional development opportunities instructors have:** Instructors are involved in the Polish Teacher Association, which offers courses and training in educational methodology.

**Professional development opportunities instructors need:** Instructors need computer training, particularly with programs or tools that may help instruction. Instructors try to connect what students learn in their elementary or high school to what they are teaching in the Polish school, so that students get the most out of this educational opportunity.

### **Instruction**

**Total contact hours per week:** 3 hours, once a week

**Student grouping:** Students are grouped by grade level.

### **Language skills**

**Skills developed by the program:** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing

### **Culture**

**Aspects of culture taught:** Geography, history, festivals, customs, traditions, beliefs, religion, folktales, arts and crafts, dances, songs, rhymes, social and cultural norms, and cultural appropriateness

**Kind of student identity program fosters:** The program seeks to develop young Americans who are aware of their Polish roots and understand the culture.

### **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:** Traditional direct instruction

### **Materials**

**Other materials used for instruction:** Films and maps

### **Assessment**

**Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:** Weekly quizzes, chapter tests, mid-term tests, final exams, student self-assessment instrument, teachers' observations and portfolios

## **Articulation**

**How the program develops home/school connections or promotes parent involvement:** Annual meetings are held with parents and teachers, and an open house is organized each year. The program practices an open-door policy for parents.

**Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program:** A great opportunity to develop cultural knowledge outside the program lies in the neighborhood and the greater Chicago area in the form of various ethnic shops and restaurants. Many students also go on to study Polish at universities in Poland.

## **What the program has in place**

**Financial support the program receives:** Tuition fees; profits earned at school functions; profits from the school store; and donations from private persons, firms, or organizations

**Other support the program receives:** Parents help by donating their time.

**Solicitation of funding:** The school board requires that parents pay tuition for the students.

**Assistance or funding the program would like to receive:** Classroom equipment and technology are needed.

**How students graduate and/or how they receive credit:** Students must pass an examination to receive credit for a high school diploma. Students are eligible to receive 3 credits at their high school for Polish as a foreign language through the Illinois State Board of Education. Letter grades on performance determine if students in the lower levels are promoted.

## **Special challenges**

**Challenges the program has experienced:** Funding and changing demographics of the surrounding neighborhood are major challenges for the program.