



# WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## World Languages Curriculum Review Report

*May 2024*

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. Review Committee

During curriculum review processes, the Westwood Public Schools makes an effort to ensure thoughtful representation on the review team of individuals with different roles and perspectives from each of the schools and grade levels. The following team members contributed to the 2023-2024 review process.

Erin Banty, *Thurston Dean of Students*  
James Beggan, *Student Representative*  
Allison Borchers, *Assistant Superintendent*  
Hillary Carpinella, *World Languages Department Head*  
Christina Durant, *English Language Teacher*  
Lateefah Franck, *Director of Equity, Integration & Community Partnerships*  
Joanna French, *Westwood School Committee Representative*  
Deb Gallagher, *Downey Principal*  
Karen Hughes, *Spanish Teacher*  
Ann Pappas, *Parent Representative*  
Katherine Stewart, *Thurston Humanities Department Head*  
Becca Weydt, *Spanish Teacher*  
Shawn Witt, *Spanish Teacher*  
Ted Zarrow, *Latin Teacher*

### B. Review Cycle and Goals

The Westwood Public Schools has an ongoing curriculum review and development cycle so that each curriculum area is examined every six to eight years. Through this process, curriculum review teams of teachers, administrators, students and parents review our curriculum, research best practices, review educational literature, and examine learning standards in order to make recommendations for program improvement. Teams of teachers work during department meeting times and during the summer curriculum development process to update curriculum and implement the recommendations. The World Language Review started in the fall of 2023 and concluded in the spring of 2024. Implementation of the recommendations will take place over the next several years.

An updated chart of the recent and upcoming curriculum reviews appears below.

## Westwood Public Schools

### Curriculum Review Cycle, 2018-2024

|           | Review                                                                                  | Recommend/Develop                                                                  | Implement                                                                     |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2018-2019 | English Language Arts & Literacy                                                        | SEL                                                                                | Science & Engineering                                                         |
| 2019-2020 | Social Studies Wellness                                                                 | English Language Arts & Literacy                                                   | SEL                                                                           |
| 2020-2021 | Social Studies Wellness                                                                 | n/a                                                                                | English Language Arts & Literacy                                              |
| 2022-2023 | Spring: Mathematics<br>Fall: Library Media/<br>Digital Literacy and<br>Computer Science | Social Studies/<br>Wellness                                                        | n/a                                                                           |
| 2023-2024 | Library Media/<br>Digital Literacy and<br>Computer Science<br>&<br>World Languages      | Mathematics<br><br>Library Media/<br>Digital Literacy and<br>Computer Science      | Social Studies/<br>Wellness                                                   |
| 2024-2025 | Visual & Performing Arts                                                                | Library Media/<br>Digital Literacy and<br>Computer Science<br>&<br>World Languages | Mathematics<br><br>Library Media/<br>Digital Literacy and<br>Computer Science |

#### C. Curriculum Review Process

Every review process involves visioning, conducting an internal scan in order to understand the impact of current programs and practices, investigating promising approaches and resources used in other schools and districts, researching best practices, and generating recommendations for improvement.

During the World Languages Review, the review team: examined the curriculum frameworks as well as guidance documents from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ([Assessing Your Curriculum Landscape](#) and [The Case for Curricular Coherence](#)); reviewed current curriculum maps for middle and high school world language classes in the Westwood Public Schools; watched John McWhorter's TED Talk [4 Reasons to Learn a New Language](#); developed, administered and analyzed data from surveys for students

families and faculty; observed classes in a nearby district; and looked at the program configuration in other districts via [LExplorers MassLang: School and Language Database](#).

At the conclusion of these investigations, team members generated ideas for specific recommendations. Their ideas were the basis of the recommendations that the full team drafted which were then revised and organized by the World Language Department Head and Assistant Superintendent and reshared for final review prior to inclusion in this report.

#### **D. Vision Statement**

Early on in the process, the team began to develop a vision statement that was refined over several sessions. This vision is designed to reflect what the team hopes to see Westwood Public Schools students doing as they engage in World Language learning:

*All students in the Westwood Public Schools are engaged in regular, immersive world language study. By the time they graduate, students feel proud of what they have achieved, confident in their skills, and excited about the opportunities that proficiency in another language has created for them. They see their language skills as something they can continue to develop over a lifetime.*

*Beginning in elementary school, children build proficiency as they talk, sing, and play games regularly in the target language. Through middle school, students speak and listen with increasing skill and confidence in the target language. They interact with peers and teachers and learn to navigate family, school, and social contexts. In high school, they communicate with native speakers, engage with authentic sources, and read and write progressively complex texts in the target language.*

*In learning to communicate in another language, students express themselves, take risks, make mistakes, and develop skills to support one another as learners. Students strive to stay in the target language, learn to ask for help, persist with support, and build confidence as well as skills through their efforts.*

*Throughout their years in school, students engage with diverse cultures. They converse with native speakers, explore and make connections within communities where other languages are prevalent, travel to other countries, and enjoy frequent opportunities to learn about the art, food, music, history, religion, and contemporary issues of non-English speaking communities. Over time, students develop awareness of and sensitivity to the nuances of language and culture. They learn to navigate interactions with respect and consideration for others.*

This vision works in concert with the broader vision for Westwood students as stated in the district's strategic priorities outline:

*Graduates of the Westwood Public Schools are skilled, confident, curious, and kind:  
excited for their futures and ready to contribute to their communities*

## **E. Recommendations Overview**

As the curriculum review team examined our program, a few themes emerged across the grade levels. First and foremost, the review team focused on the link between language study in elementary grades and fluency. Expansion of the current program into grades K - 6 as well as an earlier start to Mandarin are key recommendations that will help students gain stronger skills by the time they leave high school.

The need for high quality curricular resources to support French and Spanish instruction was another important theme. Investing in strong curriculum materials (text or online or both) as well as PD for teachers and collaborative planning time helps to ensure that students' experience across different classrooms is comparable AND that students have the opportunity to maximize progress from year to year.

A third major theme related to increasing opportunities for students to gain both language skill and cultural insight through immersive experiences: opportunities to interact with heritage speakers, field trips, travel and study abroad options and exchanges. These types of experiences not only support learning about language, they also support the development of social emotional skills (e.g., problem solving and perspective taking) that are critical for success in school and beyond.

The review team discussed the challenges of committing to expanded programming. Adding language study to earlier grades has been a key recommendation in earlier World Language reviews—one that has yet to be implemented. In addition to adding staff, the change requires schedule reconfiguration, investment in materials and expansion of the Department Head role. Accordingly, the team is advocating for a step-wise approach to expansion such as the following:

1. Add French, Mandarin and Spanish to grade 6 and Mandarin to grade 7 (Fall of 2026) - approx 2.4 FTE, plus \$10,000 funding for program materials
2. Expand Mandarin to grades 8 (Fall of 2027) - 0.2 FTE
3. Begin adding French, Mandarin and Spanish to Elementary grades (Fall 2028) - approx. 2.0 FTE initially

An approach like this allows for smaller expansion investments that support a sustainable approach to staffing.

A complete listing of recommendations appears in Appendix A.

## **F. Timeline**

Work to address recommendations has already started. This timeline begins with Summer 2024, and highlights the order for addressing critical recommendations. Some work () not included on the timeline below is ongoing.

#### *Summer 2024*

- Begin curriculum mapping
- Plan for school year pilot of new curriculum resources

#### *School Year 2024 - 2025*

- Pilot new curriculum resources for introductory French and Spanish
- Provide departmental PD focused on standards-based grading
- Explore international travel option during J-term
- Develop new WL elective proposals
- Engage in community outreach regarding the Seal of Biliteracy

#### *Summer 2025*

- Write curriculum for new WL elective(s)
- Refine curriculum maps in introductory programs based on curriculum pilot results
- Work with Thurston leadership team on developing proposal for master schedule that supports grade 6 world language study and Mandarin at Thurston

#### *School Year 2025-2026*

- Develop budget proposal for middle school expansion (grade 6 and Mandarin)
- Conduct community outreach related to the Seal of Biliteracy
- Explore possible expansion of the World Language graduation requirement at WHS
- Create communication plan to support families' understand of standards-based grading in World Language

### **G. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the Westwood Public Schools are already graduating students who are learning to speak, listen, read and write in multiple languages. In the class of 2023, twenty-three students took the AP exam in French or Spanish Language and Culture. One hundred percent of Westwood students who took the exams scored a 3 or higher. This data is higher than the national averages where 74.7% of French students scored 3 or higher and 79.7% of Spanish students scored 3 or higher. In addition to modern language AP exams, the Westwood Public Schools are graduating students with the State Seal of Biliteracy. In the class of 2023, thirty-two students graduated with the State Seal of Biliteracy (seven of whom earned the State Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction).

The recommendations put forward by the review team are designed to promote continuing investment in world language study. As students develop fluency in another language, they also gain insight into other cultures, increased opportunities related to work and study in the US and abroad, and the sense of satisfaction of having mastered a valuable skill.