A Study of the Development of a Second Language Program Proposal for Decatur Public Schools

Linda L. Iciek

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A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SECOND
LANGUAGE PROGRAM PROPOSAL FOR
DECATUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

Linda L. Iciek

A Project
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Specialist in Education
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
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The development of a second language proposal for Decatur, Michigan, Public Schools, was undertaken as a result of an established board goal for the 1985-86 school year. Chairing the committee which investigated the possibility of implementing such a program was undertaken to fulfill the requirements of a Specialist in Education degree through the Department of Educational Leadership, Western Michigan University.

The committee met on a weekly basis to study and develop the proposal by completing the following tasks: (a) identify and visit schools within the state implementing such programs; (b) research the effects of immersion language programs; (c) survey the teaching staff and parents of the district; and (d) develop a budget, time lines for implementation and job descriptions.

The results of the findings were presented in the form of a proposal to the board of education for their consideration. After a month of informal sessions with the committee they approved the project for the 1986-87 school year.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the members of the Second Language Committee, made up of Susie Catto, Don Prediger, Sandy Vanderbilt, Joe Gossler and Sherry Meyer whose dedication and commitment to a project that we all believed in transformed a dream into a practical proposal that Decatur Public Schools could be proud of.

To Ted Culver, Superintendent of Decatur Public, whose support and encouragement always challenged me to strive towards excellence.

To my loving family who tolerated the long hours of work that it takes to complete projects such as this and be an effective school administrator.

To my husband, Rob, who has believed in me, encouraged me and supported me through the stressful times. He has been and will continue to be my Don Quixote.

Linda L. Iciek
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A study of the development of a second language program proposal for Decatur public schools

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Western Michigan University, 1988
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Decatur, Michigan Board of Education established as one of its goals for the 1985-86 school year the investigation of the possibility of implementing a K-12 second language program. The Decatur Foreign Language Committee made up of the following people was formed: Linda Iciek (chairperson), junior-senior high school principal; Susie Catto, high school English teacher; Don Prediger, high school Spanish teacher; Sandy Vanderbilt, elementary teacher; Joe Gossler, elementary teacher; and Sherry Meyer, migrant teacher for the Van Buren Intermediate School District.

Decatur Public Schools is a small rural school district located in southwestern Michigan with a school population of approximately 1200 students. The district has been identified as having the highest ratio of migrant Spanish speaking students in the State of Michigan. Therefore, the district works very closely with the Van Buren Intermediate School District to identify and provide educational services for migrant students in the fall and spring of each school year. The language barrier is an on-going problem for the students, teachers, parents and
administrators. With this in mind, the Committee proceeded with its charge under the premise that Spanish would be the second language to be taught should such a program be implemented.

The Committee met together on a weekly basis to report individual findings and determine the tasks to be completed in developing the proposal which was to be submitted to the Decatur Board of Education by May of 1986. A presentation on the data collected and recommendations to be considered was based on the results of tasks undertaken by the committee that year.

To be successful, the Committee realized that such an undertaking must have the support and endorsement of the teaching staff and parents. To secure that, a parent survey was given out at the spring parent-teacher conferences and the results were tabulated (see Appendix A). The teachers were informed about the program at staff meetings and a survey was handed out. The results can be found in Appendix B. Committee members then met with teachers individually and in small groups to get feedback as to their apprehensions and interest in the program. The Committee discovered that three teachers currently under contract were fluent in languages other than English. Two teachers were fluent in Spanish and one in French. When the teaching staff was asked about the grade level at which they would like to see such a foreign
language program implemented, 20% indicated that K-3 was their preference, 20% indicated grades 7-12 were their preference and 60% of the staff indicated that their preference would be to include such a program across the grades. Eighty percent of the staff indicated that they would support the implementation of a K-12 second language program.

Some of positive comments which were made during the discussion of the topic included the following:

The earlier the better! Children learn languages better when they are young.

Small children pick things up faster and better.

That type of instruction should be started in preschool and reinforced throughout the years.

It would expose children in a positive way to another culture and would broaden their outlook making them more knowledgeable and expanding their horizons.

With our large migrant population we need this type of a program.

It would help our students when they begin their careers in their adult life.

Despite their support, the teachers had apprehensions about the amount of time a second language program would take from "regular" instruction. Some thought that it would be difficult to be consistent if the building administrator crossed grade levels. Others thought that the school system had more pressing concerns at this time and that energies should be directed towards those rather than
including a new program.

An Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) computer search was done to gather recent data as to the value and feasibility of including a second language in the curriculum. The available data were limited and mostly related to Canadian programs and sources. The research was read by all of the committee members. At the weekly meetings discussion continued as to application of the research results to Decatur Public Schools.

Contacts were made with the Michigan Department of Education concerning existing programs and available funding sources. It was discovered that a model program had begun in the Ferndale, Michigan, Public Schools during the 1981-82 school year. A team of two committee members was sent to visit and investigate the development and success of that program. The results of this visitation and contact proved to be extremely helpful in the development of the program proposal.

The Committee came to realize that there are three different types of methodology used in language instruction: (1) traditional, (2) intensive, and (3) immersion. The "traditional" type of instruction is done predominately in English with an increase in the second language at the higher levels. English is used for clarification and explanation throughout the term of instruction. Written and oral skills are developed simultaneously.
An "intensive" program of instruction is one in which the language is taught in a concentrated fashion, often short in term with an emphasis placed on productivity. This type of instruction is used in governmental programs which prepare adults to function in a foreign country.

In an "immersion" program, the foreign language predominates. It is spoken from the first day and students are required by trial and error to discover the meaning of the vocabulary. Repetition, inflection, body language and pictures are used to reinforce learning and understanding. Verbal and listening skills are emphasized mainly because all of the instruction is done in the target language. Ferndale schools use an immersion approach which appears to be extremely effective at the elementary level. The committee agreed that this was the methodology which would be incorporated into the Decatur program.

Don Prediger, Spanish teacher and Committee member, was sent to the State Language Teachers Conference in Lansing, Michigan, to gather additional information on existing programs, make contacts with other districts considering such programs, and acquire supportive data and materials to assist in the development of the proposal. A collection of resource material was gathered through the efforts of the committee and stored for future use should the program be adopted.
Funding Sources

To determine the availability of Chapter 2 state level funding, which provides start-up monies for new programs, the Committee contacted Paul Bialowski of the Office of Grants Coordination in the Michigan Department of Education. Bialowski (personal communication, November 19, 1985) informed the Committee that, unfortunately, no start-up funds were available for at least the next two years. The Chapter 2 discretionary funds, available at the state level through a three-year federal application have been earmarked for teacher mini grants, district cooperative programming and the continuation of exemplary demonstration projects currently being funded. Bialowski suggested that the Committee investigate local resources and foundations for start-up funding. He recommended that the Committee check various funding indexes for sources of money available to the public sector.

Resulting Action

After a year of study the Committee reached a consensus to make a recommendation to the Decatur Board of Education to implement a second language program beginning the 1986-87 school year. Two alternative approaches were presented for the Board's consideration, and after a month of debate and deliberation the Board adopted the proposal to implement the program at its May meeting. After a
millage defeat in June, 1986, the Board reconsidered its motion to adopt the new program and tabled the implementation until additional funds could be secured to support it. The district was faced with budget cuts for the following two years. It is still philosophically behind the concept but is restricted by funding constraints. Therefore, the following report on the effectiveness of such a program relies on the data obtained from Ferndale Public Schools.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Perspective

In the NASSP Curriculum Report (Strasheim & Lafayette, 1985), it is stated that the current unparalleled emphasis on foreign languages is an outgrowth of rapidly changing national and world conditions. The report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, which was done in 1979, was the first of what was to become a wave of national assessments of schooling and education in this country (cited in Strasheim & Lafayette, 1985). The Commission stated that,

Our national inadequacy in foreign language skills has become a serious and growing liability. It is going to be far more difficult for America to survive and compete in a world where nations are increasingly dependent on one another if we cannot communicate with our neighbors in their own languages and cultural contexts. (p. 1)

The NASSP Curriculum Report mentioned other studies which underscore the need for a new and dramatic role for foreign languages in the schools. The following are short excerpts of those studies.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in its report, High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America, stated that "today's high school curriculum barely reflects
the global view. . . . The time has come to stress the centrality of language and link the curriculum to a changing national and global context." (cited & quoted in Strasheim & Lafayette, 1985, p. 1)

In Making the Grade, the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy adds, "From a national perspective, young men and women with proficiency in foreign languages are sorely needed now that we are increasingly involved in competitive trade and investment within the rest of the world." (cited & quoted in Strasheim & Lafayette, 1985, p. 1)

The National Commission on Excellence and Education advances the argument by defining the benefits of foreign language study. According to A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, achieving foreign language proficiency "introduces students to non-English-speaking cultures, heightens awareness and comprehension of one's native tongue, and serves the nation's need in commerce, diplomacy, defense, and education." (cited & quoted in Strasheim & Lafayette, 1985, p. 1)

The National Advisory Board on International Programs in its report to the Secretary of Education, Critical Needs in International Education: Recommendations for Action, adds a capstone to the accumulating testimony to the importance of putting foreign language study "front and center" in the curricula of our schools. After noting those curricula had been seriously deficient in foreign language and international studies, the Board came to the conclusion that: "An emerging consensus places the study of foreign languages and cultures along side the five basics of English, mathematics, computer sciences, social studies, and the natural sciences as fundamental components of a sound education mark." (cited & quoted in Strasheim & Lafayette, 1985, p. 1)

A historical perspective clarifies the predicament that we find ourselves in today. After World War I, war-weary Americans turned inward. Most states passed laws
forbidding the teaching of foreign language in their elementary schools. In 1923 the U.S. Supreme Court rendered a decision declaring those laws null and void because they violated the 14th Amendment.

After World War II, Americans became aware that they could no longer maintain an isolationist attitude. The need to prepare people who could communicate with enemies as well as allies was clear. A language program, begun in Somerville, New Jersey in 1949, provided the initial data that are currently being confirmed by programs begun in the last decade. Murphy (1984) summarizes their evaluation report in, A FLES Program for Grades 1-3: A Non-Intensive, Non-Foreign Approach concluding that, "The elementary foreign language pupil does as well as the non-language pupil in subjects other than language; the time and effort required by the program apparently does not impede learning in other areas" (p. 9).

Murphy (1984) also states that, in the 1950s, the U.S. government began to play an active role in the development of foreign language programs in elementary schools. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 (cited in Murphy, 1984) was to help repair our deficiencies in the teaching of science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages. What is particularly significant . . . is the fact that this was first recognized in peace time that our ability to communicate with other people and their languages as a matter of national self-interest and security. (p. 12)

It was not long before a critical shortage of qualified teachers caused the use of television as a medium for foreign language instruction. In 1963, Slack and Gadoury (cited in Murphy, 1984) conducted surveys of 18 areas using the instructional television show, "Parlons Français." They concluded that television instruction without classroom follow-up practice is ineffective. Elementary foreign language again began to wane in the mid-1960s because of a lack of teachers, quality instructional materials, and the failure to plan for articulation between the elementary school programs. By 1976 a survey conducted by Adcock (cited in Murphy, 1984) reported that an elementary foreign language instructor "is an almost completed defunct creature" (p. 16). As stated earlier, the 1980s brought with it a renewed interest and commitment to improve in this area. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) cited a report issued in 1981 under sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Education which listed the
following eight recommendations:

1. **Definition of Goals.** It is essential that each program's goals be clearly defined so there are no misunderstandings concerning the level of foreign language proficiency and cultural awareness.

2. **Articulation.** Elementary foreign language programs with long range goals should place priority on the process of articulation from elementary to secondary school for their students.

3. **Language Assessment.** Achievement tests can be used to assess language proficiency, and subject-content proficiency, and to determine placement in the appropriate track.

4. **Program Administration and Cost.** It is critical that schools designate qualified personnel to administer the foreign language program. Positions include supervisory personnel, resource personnel to work directly with the teachers, curriculum writers, and, if possible, art, music, and physical education teachers proficient in a foreign language.

5. **Parent and Administration Support.** Support of both parents and administrators is essential to the success of any foreign language programs.

6. **Resource Materials.** Currently, schools have very few texts in foreign languages to choose from and do much of their own materials. Non-immersion programs also have difficulty in obtaining texts partly because foreign language textbooks publishers have not yet realized the extent of the market for elementary materials.

7. **Teachers.** Universities should be encouraged to prepare teachers to work in elementary school language programs. Only a few states that we are aware of (Texas, Louisiana, and California) offer courses for elementary foreign language certification.

8. **Supplemental Classroom Activities.** Programs with before or after school classes or other non-immersion classes find it very beneficial to have regular classroom teachers.
reinforce cultural or language aspects that are taught in language class. It is important for students to sense their teacher's interest and support of their foreign language study. (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 87)

Justification for Elementary Foreign Language

It has been shown that studying another language, especially if the child starts early enough to achieve real fluency, offers both personal growth and career opportunities. The Decatur committee's research review confirmed that children who have studied a foreign language do better in a number of essential skills than children who have not had the benefit of foreign language training. Several of the studies that were discovered will be discussed in this section.

Adiv and Dore (1983) reported on their study which was designed in 1980 to assess French proficiency as a second language, native language skills, and academic achievement of students in an intensive French program in an English language school in Montreal. The subjects consisted of three groups of fourth grade and three groups of fifth grade students, each grade level having one group from the intensive French program and two control groups: One from an early immersion program and one from the regular French second language program. The results show that, in both grades, the intensive French group scored lower than the immersion and higher than the regular
French group on French tests, except for oral production. There was no significant difference among the three groups on the English and mathematics test. They concluded that the intensive program promotes increased French proficiency without detrimental effects on the development of native language skills and academic achievement.

Research conducted by Roy (1983) in Manitoba on French Immersion Programs for grades 6 and 9, compare students' achievement in English language skills and mathematics to the national norm and within the immersion groups in those grades. Achievement in French language proficiency was also compared. Different immersion groups were considered and questionnaires were distributed to students, teachers, parents, and principals. It was found that performances of French immersion students were as good as or better than national norms in English and mathematics. The program had no negative effect on achievement in those subjects. Early total immersion programs produced the best results. Parents generally expressed satisfaction with the program, and teachers and principals expressed a belief that the immersion setting was more conducive in achieving the program goals than other approaches.

The favorable effects that these studies have had on elementary foreign language programs is undeniable. It is unfair, however, to compare these programs set in a
different social, economic and political environments to those in the United States. Earlier studies were conducted in New York and Connecticut which lend credibility to the effectiveness of such programs in the United States.

In 1967, Vocolo evaluated elementary foreign language and non-language students in their high school years in three Buffalo, New York, area schools. The experimental group consisted of 31 ninth grade students who had had elementary foreign language through grades 5 through 8 and were now enrolled in the intermediate level of French. The control group was in the intermediate level of French. The groups were closely matched in terms of intelligence, academic, and social-economic level. The same teachers worked with both groups and were unaware of the background of these students.

The LLA-Cooperative French Test (cited in Vocolo, 1967) was used to measure academic achievement. Vocolo concluded that the results indicated a significant superiority of the elementary foreign language students in listening, speaking, and writing. There was no significant difference in reading.

A similar study was done in 1968 by Oneto in Fairfield, Connecticut. The same evaluation tool was used in his study. Oneto concluded that: "Pupils who began continuous study of foreign language in grade 3 can achieve
in most instances, significantly greater skill in reading, writing, speaking, and understanding the language than their peers who begin language study in high school" (p. 11).

In 1973, Landry conducted an interesting study. He theorized that, "the experience of learning a second language at the elementary school level is positively correlated to divergent thinking in figural tasks" (p. 111). He compared the development of figural fluency and flexibility of elementary children who study a second language with that of children who are monolingual. Two urban elementary schools were paired in this project. The schools were situated in lower middle class areas. Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking measured their divergent thinking. Landry (1973) concluded that foreign language did foster and facilitate the development of better divergent thinking as measured by the degree of figural fluency and flexibility.

DiPietro (1979) reported in his Key Elementary School experiment that not only did language instruction have a positive effect on overall academic achievement, but attitudinal changes were also documented. He stated that "the language instructors felt that their students' general interest in school work increased as the language classes continued" (p. 194).

Southern Illinois University (cited in Haire, 1985),
analyzing the American College Test (ACT) scores in 1979, found that students who had studied foreign languages scored higher on the ACT than students who had not. The longer the foreign language study, the better they did. Another discovery was that foreign language study had the greatest positive scores effect in English among students who were not in the top quarter of their class and who did not consider themselves to be in a college preparatory program.

Three years after the elementary foreign language program was initiated in Ferndale Public Schools, a study was conducted to collect base data for use in research and to provide guidance for policy decisions about the future direction of the program. Verbal reasonings and analogy sub test VRA scores were obtained from the Test of Cognitive Skills (Haire, 1985). Skill scores were obtained from district reading, vocabulary, and writing tests. Two comparison groups were identified: third graders who had participated in the elementary foreign language program and third graders who had not participated in the program. The evidence investigated in this study indicates the students who have participated in the elementary foreign language program have not experienced a decline in learning basic skills as a result of instructional time devoted to foreign language instruction. The evidence as a whole, suggests that the students have obtained achievement
levels equivalent to or higher than the levels of third
graders not in the program. Whether the findings of high
achievement levels may be explained by elements of the
elementary foreign language program or as a result of
other variables not controlled is speculative.

A second Ferndale study was conducted a year later to
compare the test scores after an additional year of for­
eign language instruction. Although an indication of a
positive effect of the foreign language learning upon
basic language development was found in some of the com­
parisons, the preponderance of the evidence suggested that
the language learning of the two groups was essentially
similar. No indication was found to support the concern
that time devoted to foreign language instruction was
detrimental to the development of basic skills.

Conclusion

After considering the data available, the Decatur
Foreign Language Committee concluded that there does seem
to be a positive correlation between foreign language
study and developing English skills. This is, of course,
an added benefit to the development of proficiency in
another language. Research also indicated that the ear­
lier the language instruction began, the better the
chances of achieving proficiency in the target language as
well as achieving the other side benefits mentioned
previously. Even though much of the research may not be conclusive, it is convincing and provided the data the Committee needed to pursue the development of just such a program. There is a need for further study. However, the limited amount of research already conducted on past programs demonstrates that the benefits of this type of early language program are undeniable. The Decatur Foreign Language Committee felt that the justification of such a program was valid.
CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF FERNDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

The Ferndale, Michigan, Elementary Foreign Language Program began in 1980 as a concept developed by Dr. Edward Sharples, School Board President. He was also the Chairman of the English Department at Wayne State University. Throughout his years of teaching, he observed that students who had studied foreign language seemed to have a better grasp of the mechanics of English. With his encouragement, the Board set as one of its goals for the 1980-81 school year to look at the possibility of developing a comprehensive foreign language program from kindergarten through high school.

As a result of that goal, a staff committee was formed to investigate the resources available. They reviewed programs and information on programs in the United States, Europe, and Canada. They reported a positive relationship between foreign language study and English skills. There was convincing evidence, but the research was not conclusive. The group felt, however, that giving children proficiency in a foreign language was reason enough to establish a program.

They then surveyed kindergarten through fifth grade
parents as to their feelings about the inclusion of such a program. Ninety percent of the respondents were in favor of the idea. The recommendation was made and adopted by the Ferndale Board of Education to pilot a program for the 1981-82 school year.

The next task was to decide on the language to be taught. They considered the available teaching resources and chose German because of the expertise of Mathilde Rakowsky, Chairman of the Schools' Foreign Language Department. She had gathered a large following of German students throughout her 23 years of teaching and was considered extremely competent.

Rakowsky developed a curriculum which operates on the principle that "young children can best learn a second language in the same way that they acquire the first: through listening and then experimenting with language sounds and rhythms, followed by speaking" (Haire, 1985, p. 3).

Two elementary schools were selected as sites for the pilot classes of kindergartners and first graders. An elementary certified teacher who spoke German with near native fluency was hired and the program began in September, 1981.

During the first year, foreign language instruction ideas were tested and the curriculum was developed. Ferndale was the only school district in Michigan to offer
this type of instruction in the primary grades. There were few other schools on which to model their program. Cincinnati, Ohio, Public Schools offered a different type of program but were helpful in offering assistance to them. The first year was judged as a success because the students were learning and seemed to be enjoying their experience.

According to Haire (1985), current program coordinator, the Board began a gradual expansion program. In 1982-83, six other elementary schools were serviced and French and Spanish were added to the curriculum. This required three additional teachers which increased the number of staff to four. The Board voted to continue with the program in 1983-84, bringing the total to 6.5 foreign language teachers which serviced 1200 students.

Again, in 1984-85, the programs were continued by the Board. Instruction time for the fourth grade was expanded to 30 minutes daily. This required the further addition of 2.5 teachers to serve the 1500 students involved in the program.

Another 2.5 teachers were added to cover the 1985-86 program which now serviced 1850 students. Appendix C summarizes the status of the program as it exists in Ferndale Elementary Schools with the full implementation K-6 being achieved by the 1987-88 school year (Haire, 1985, pp. 4-6).
The Ferndale teachers, in most cases, traveled to individual classrooms for instruction periods ranging from 15 to 30 minutes. The kindergarten students received 15 minutes, first through third grade students 20 minutes and the fourth through sixth grade students 30 minutes of instruction. In a few of the buildings there is additional space available to serve as a language room. In these situations, the students travel to the rooms with their classroom teacher.

The foreign language teacher uses no English during the instruction so that the students hear only the foreign language in that setting. According to the teachers, this intense immersion seems to increase the oral language development in the short instruction time available. The instruction at the K-2 level is almost entirely verbal with the inclusion of reading and writing at the third grade level.

In addition, using a games and song approach to instruction makes it interesting and enjoyable for students to learn. The games provide motivation and interest; other students and their teachers offer reinforcement to the learning. The children learn only a limited number of terms during the first few years; however, they are provided with opportunities to use these terms over and over in different ways for meaningful communication.
Commercially produced primary foreign language texts are extremely rare. The foreign language staff of Ferndale invested a great deal of time in adapting general education materials and collecting illustrative objects. To give an example, the teaching of a song involves not only repetition of sounds but also the use of objects mentioned in that song or pictures so that the students may understand.

As this program develops the language teachers attempt to integrate as much of the learning as they can to what is being taught in the regular classroom. This has been a challenge because of the number of classes each language teacher is exposed to within the day (10-20) and resistance from regular classroom teachers to accommodate their instruction to what is being taught in the language class.

The foreign language teachers use hands-on teaching methods. Although they speak only the target language in the classroom, they communicate effectively through the use of visual aids such as pictures, charts, real objects, and pantomime. Students participate both orally and physically. Techniques such as Total Physical Response (TPR), chanting and peer correction are used. Teacher correction is nonthreatening. Generally, the teacher will model the phrase correctly after a student makes a mistake. The teacher may raise an eyebrow or otherwise
indicate a problem to the student who will then self correct. Often, the teacher provides a hint or clue to help the student produce the correct response. Students who were observed during the visitation of the Decatur Foreign Language Committee showed no signs of discomfort and were not afraid to speak or make mistakes.

The teachers themselves have developed all of the materials that they are using including curriculum guides for each grade, visual aids, picture dictionaries, workbooks, reading and writing materials.

Teachers

The Ferndale Board of Education was farsighted in insisting that certification in a language was not enough for the kind of program they wanted to implement. They require native or near-native fluency and called in outside experts to evaluate teacher candidates' language abilities. Their staff was expanded gradually from 2 to 11 teachers in five years to teach German, French, and Spanish. In 1984-85 they hired a part time coordinator who also taught German classes. Lynn Haire has provided the leadership and coordination needed for a successful program. She is also a liaison for the district with other schools interested in starting up such a program. Ms. Haire was extremely helpful to the Decatur Public Schools as they explored the possibility of initiating an
elementary foreign language program.

The Decatur Visitation Team questioned teachers as to whether they have an active role in curriculum development. The teachers indicated that, especially with the pilot German curriculum, many readjustments have been made to fit the students' ability at each grade level. All of the teachers participate in curriculum development and consistently evaluate its success. Changes, such as the introduction of the first person singular in the first grade and past tense deferred to the sixth, are common concepts under scrutiny.

The original mandate of the Ferndale program, especially in the lower grades, was for the classroom teacher to be with the group during foreign language instruction. Now, however, attendance is optional, although kindergarten teachers attend the first few weeks with their classes to provide a transition from English to the new language. Initially there was some question of whether foreign language instruction should be an enrichment program. Ultimately there was a philosophical split between teachers who judged that language instruction is fundamental and those who did not.

There still seems to be some resistance. The program coordinator suggested that more time should be spent inservicing staff before it is implemented. It would help convince them that language will reinforce and add skills...
rather than take time away from instruction. Early elementary teachers report observing the reinforcement of vocabulary and language concepts in their classrooms.

Consultation occurs between the foreign language teachers and the classroom teachers especially when enhancing a unit and making it more interesting for students. As stated previously, the time restraints on the foreign language teachers prohibits this from occurring frequently.

Students

The Ferndale Public School believed that "all students can develop foreign language skills if they start in kindergarten, have teachers who are native to the language or speak it fluently and have instruction that is creative and stimulating. Because the foreign language program offers so much, we want every child to enjoy its benefits" (Haire, 1985, p. 14).

As stated previously, the teacher used only the foreign language during the instruction time. Children, however, interact with the teacher in both languages until third or fourth grade. Children have to want to speak only the target language, so some of the groups are not ready until the fourth grade. Students are taught to ask, in the language, if they might speak English to ask questions about game rules or to explain a difficult concept
to another child. Students are trained early on to ask common requests for water and bathroom privileges in the target language.

For a new student or someone who is having difficulty with the concept, the teacher may appoint a translator for the day or until the problem is resolved. New students seem to pick up the language faster because of the numerous peer models they are exposed to.

Students have not been formally surveyed as to their thoughts about the program. It was observed by the Decatur Visitation Team that the students were very enthusiastic. They made such comments to the team as: "I really like it," and "I hope you can have Spanish classes next year like this."

All students are included in the program which means the main streaming of special education students. The foreign language teachers told the team that they were unable to identify any special needs of such students other than the hearing impaired. In general, since foreign language teachers do not speak English with the students, they have limited opportunity to observe growth in oral language development.

Each year there is a solid review of skills. At one point 14 new students entered the advanced German class and a tracking system was initiated to assist them in catching up. It was not as successful as the practice of
mainstreaming new students, used previously, because of what they could learn from other students. It appears as though wide ability differences are not insurmountable.

Parents in Ferndale are enthusiastic about the program and are very pleased with their children's performance. A community survey was done during the study of the program and follow-up surveys were completed each year which indicated their support. In addition, there are two foreign language open house programs and progress reports every year. The teachers are seeking as many parent contacts as possible.

According to the Foreign Language Report published by the Ferndale School District (cited in Haire, 1985) an evaluation process was developed in 1984 by Dr. Roger McCaig, an outside consultant, to determine the effectiveness of the elementary foreign language program in improving English language proficiency. His concept was approved by the board and data collection began at the end of that school year.

Methods of evaluating elementary students' proficiency in the foreign language continue to be researched by the elementary foreign language staff. Foreign language proficiency testing however, has proven itself problematic at all levels and is currently a topic of nationwide concern within the profession.

Haire (1985) stated that,
To date there are no completely satisfactory standardized tests or testing norms against which measure students proficiency in the foreign language. Existing tests, reflecting an emphasis on foreign language teaching, focus on reading and writing proficiency in the foreign language are written for the language students in high school or older. These tests are of little or no use to the Ferndale Program which emphasizes oral proficiency. (p. 16)

Ferndale's staff evaluated students individually according to their established objectives. They do see a need to develop group testing procedures, as individualized testing is time consuming and subject to variables of the testing procedure. The teachers continue to monitor and record progress on a daily basis.

At this point, the initiating of a program to give students a choice of languages at the elementary level has not been possible. This concept is currently under consideration.
CHAPTER IV

COMMITTEE'S PROPOSAL

Why Elementary Foreign Language

After considerable research, discussion and debate, the second language committee identified the main reasons for offering foreign language at the elementary level and including it in the regular curriculum. They are:

1. Children enjoy learning a foreign language.
2. Children are naturally curious about different sounds and secret codes.
3. Children are excellent mimics.
4. Children are less self-conscious about pronouncing strange sounds than are adolescents.
5. Children do not generally object to repetition and drill.
6. Children, because of their ability to imitate so well, are capable of developing good listening habits and correct pronunciation.
7. Children, by starting a second language early, are led to an early awareness and an increased understanding of their own language.
8. Children benefit from a longer sequence of language study.
9. Children develop a firm foundation for continuing language study.

10. Children enjoy correlating the study of a foreign language with other areas of the elementary school curriculum.

11. Children gain a cultural awareness of the foreign language and the people who speak it.

12. Children, because they are able to feel comfortable with the second language, develop a feeling of "at homeness" with the second language.

Recommendations

The Decatur Foreign Language Committee recommended to the Board of Education in April of 1986, a proposal to implement an elementary second language program during the Fall of the 1986-87 school year. The initial proposal was a comprehensive six-year plan to begin the first year with grades K-1 with the inclusion of an additional grade each of the following five years (see Appendix D for the breakdown of the proposed number of classes, students, teachers, and costs needed to implement such a program). The program was to parallel the type of instruction offered in Ferndale Public Schools with 15 minutes of instruction for kindergarten students and 20 minutes of instruction for grades 1 through 3. Instruction would increase to 30 minutes for grades 4 through 6. It should be noted that
the average cost estimate per student over the six year projected plan would be $116 per student as compared to $189 per student currently, computed for the Ferndale program.

The Committee endorsed that proposal but offered an alternative plan should necessary funds be initially restricted. The alternative plan was to hire a part time foreign language consultant for the 1986-87 school year for approximately $15,000. The consultant would coordinate and plan for implementation of the program during the 1987-88 school year. The duties and responsibilities listed in the job description (see Appendix E) would be the same as with the proposed program with the exception of a teaching assignment included in the initial proposal.

The difficulty that the Committee saw with this alternative was that it may be extremely difficult to locate and recruit the caliber of individual needed by offering only a part-time position. The committee urged the Board not to consider this as a "pilot project," but to make a strong commitment to seeing that the program is implemented in its entirety on a long range basis.

As stated earlier this proposal was presented and approved by the Decatur Board of Education in May, 1986. After a millage defeat in June, 1986, the Board reconsidered their motion to adopt this program and tabled the implementation until additional funds could be secured to
support it.

The Decatur Board of Education took a risk in stating such a goal and approving a progressive language program. It was a position which would face community opposition in the form of financial restraints. This rural community is made up of a very conservative mind-set especially in terms of education; this is in contrast to that found in Ferndale. It should be noted that Don Prediger, a member of the Committee, is now the high school principal and will continue to remind the Board of this tabled proposal should funds become available in the future.
Appendix A

Results of Second Language Parents Survey
Decatur Public Schools

(Conducted During Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences)

(1) Has your child been exposed to a second language in or out of school?
   Yes 32 (38%)  No 53 (62%)

(2) Do you think a foreign or second language would be beneficial for Decatur elementary students?
   Yes 67 (79%)  No 18 (21%)

(3) If such a program was offered, would you like your child to participate?
   Yes 67 (79%)  No 18 (21%)
Appendix B

Results of the Teacher Survey
Decatur Public Schools

1. Are you fluent in a foreign language?
   (3) Yes (2 in Spanish, 1 French)
   (40) No

2. What level would you like to see a second language program implemented?
   (20%) K-3
   (20%) 7-12
   (60%) K-12

3. Would you support implementing a K-12 second language program in Decatur?
   (80%) Yes
   (20%) No
Appendix C

Ferndale Expansion Plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>YEAR BEGIN</th>
<th>IN GRADES</th>
<th>1985-86 GRADES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>K-3 Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harding</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>K-4 German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>K-5 French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>K Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>K-5 German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taft</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>K-4 Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>K-5 French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>K-5 German</td>
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Appendix D

Proposed Second Language Program Budget
### Proposed Second Language Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>No. of Classes*</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>Salary/Benefits</th>
<th>Staff Develop.</th>
<th>Teaching Supplies</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cost Per Student**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>K,1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>145</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>K,1,2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>29,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>K,1,2,3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>40,472</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>44,472</td>
<td>112</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>K,1,2,3,4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51,820</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>55,570</td>
<td>123</td>
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<td>1990-91</td>
<td>K,1,2,3,4,5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54,449</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>57,949</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>K,1,2,3,4,5,6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>57,716</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>61,216</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program to parallel instruction offered in Ferndale Public Schools with 15 minutes for Kindergarten, 20 minutes for 1-3 grades, 30 minutes for 4-6 grades per day.

* 10-12 classes are considered ideal per teacher

** Average cost per student over six-year project: $116.00.

(As compared to Ferndale 1986 - $189.00 per student.)
Appendix E

Elementary Foreign Language Teacher/Coordinator
Decatur Public Schools  
Decatur, Michigan

TITLE: ELEMENTARY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER/COORDINATOR

REPORTS TO: Superintendent

QUALIFICATIONS: Minimum

1. Valid Michigan teaching certificate
2. Foreign language teaching experience

SUPERVISES: To provide overall coordination and supervision of the district K-12 foreign language program.

JOB GOAL: 1. Assume responsibility for district-wide foreign language curriculum articulation and coordination.

2. Advise the district in the development of foreign language instructional policies and district-wide instructional goals and objectives.

3. Assist in the preparation of grant applications for outside funding.

4. Coordinate instructional planning with colleagues.

5. Coordinate the evaluation and selection of instructional materials and textbooks.

6. Interpret district's foreign language instructional goals and objectives to the public.

7. Interpret and report program testing and evaluation results to the board, staff, and community.
8. Plan and administer department in-service activities.

9. Maintain foreign language department files and records.

10. Represent the district at state and local foreign language meetings.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Canada: Bureau de l'Education Française Department of Education.

