The Attitudes of People in CVUSD Towards an Optional Foreign Language Program in Public Elementary Schools

AP Research 2016-2017
Overview

- No public elementary school (PES) in Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) currently offers a foreign language program (FLP)
- Community was surveyed to measure interest
Background

- Proposition 227 (1998) discouraged FLPs
- Proposition 58 (2016) encourages FLPs
- CVUSD Board Policy supports FLPs
  
  - “Recommend world languages to be taught...based on student interest, community needs, and available resources.”
Benefits of Foreign Languages for Students

- Early language learning leads to:
  - Increased memory, attention, and focus\textsuperscript{4}
  - Better problem solving skills\textsuperscript{5}

- Bilinguals exceed monolinguals in:
  - ACT and SAT scores\textsuperscript{6}
  - Hypothesizing in science\textsuperscript{4}

Long Term Benefits of Foreign Languages (FL)s

- Higher performance in other subjects\textsuperscript{7}
- Gives an advantage in the job market\textsuperscript{8,9}
- Greater acceptance of other cultures\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{7} Zelasko and Antunez, 2000
Factors of Success in Establishing a FLP

- Parent interest to enroll children
- Faculty support
- Student interest
Methods

- 6 out of 18 PESs in CVUSD were studied
  - Principal interview
  - Parent & teacher surveys
- Surveyed students at one CVUSD high school
- Interviewed two CVUSD board members
Importance of Learning FLs

- Number of Parents
- Number of Students
- Number of Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Should CVUSD offer an optional FLP in at least one PES?
Would a FLP be a deciding factor in choosing an elementary school?

- No: 46.5%
- Yes: 53.5%

Consideration of switching a child to a different school with a FLP

- No: 41.6%
- Yes: 58.4%
Which Language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Parents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Should a FLP Begin?

- Kindergarten: 93 parents, 27 students, 10 teachers
- 1st-3rd grade: 65 parents, 53 students, 11 teachers
- 4-5th grade: 74 parents, 32 students, 3 teachers
- 6-8th grade: 54 parents, 16 students, 1 teacher
- 9-11th grade: 10 parents, 3 students, 1 teacher
Importance of Culture

Number of Parents  Number of Students  Number of Teachers

1 (Not at all important)  3  8  0
2 (Not important)  17  12  4
3 (Neutral)  45  33  2
4 (Important)  42  71  8
5 (Very important)  105  103  12
Principal Interview Analysis

- 4 out of 6 expressed possibility at their PES for a FLP
  - Main factor: community interest
- All 6 think culture is very important
- All 6 think Spanish is best for CVUSD
CVUSD Board Member Interviews

- 2 interviews conducted
- Proposition 58 should foster more FLPs
- Bilingual programs lead to biliteracy most effectively
- Principals should understand dynamics of English and FL groups
Interviewee Concerns of a FLP

- Not enough time in the school day
  - Possible after-school program
- Very limited number of bilingual staff (only 5 in PESs)
- Maintaining enrollment in the FLP
- Budget of a FLP
Overview of Best Fit FLP

- Language: Spanish
- Time spent in FL Instruction: 10-40%
- Duration: 5 or more years
- Year to Begin:
  - Parents favored Kindergarten
  - Teachers favored 1st-3rd grade
  - Students favored 4-5th grade
- Culture should be taught with the FL
Limitations

- Cost was not analyzed
- Majority of students contacted through FL classes
- Children of parents surveyed are already in PES
Conclusion

● Future research:
  ○ Economics of a FLP
  ○ Incoming PES parents’ attitudes
● Special thanks to Dr. Garcia-Ramos
● The CVUSD community overall is supportive of an optional FLP in PESs
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