

## Notes from the East High United meeting on Thursday, October 16, 2008

Jill Jokela began the meeting with around the room introductions. At least 13 parents were present at 7 p.m., with more arriving during the meeting, as well as Principal Alan Harris, Assistant Principal Randi Kubek and several teachers, including three from the World Languages Dept., Chair A. Jay Lenz, Claudine Clark (French), and Monica Severa (Spanish.)

### Principal's report

#### **Enrollment**

East's enrollment was projected to be 1592 students; the actual enrollment, as of the third Friday count, is 1724 students. Being above the projected enrollment meant some additional staff allocations for East: some sections of Spanish and other academic classes were added. The aim was to have minimal disruption to students and their schedules while balancing classes.

#### **PSAT and PLAN tests**

A record number of students signed up to take the PSAT, with an increase in the diversity of the students taking the test. In response to a question about whether AVID may have contributed to this increase, it was noted that there is a heightened awareness at East about what students need to do to go to college, probably due at least in part to the AVID program. The PSAT (and the PLAN, the pre-ACT test) were also talked up during Purgolder time.

#### **Staff development**

For the half day on Monday the 13<sup>th</sup>, Doug Buell presented to staff about reading and writing in every class, as part of the SLC grant-funded literacy initiative at East.

### World Languages Curriculum

#### **Presentation by World Languages Dept. staff**

Mr. Harris introduced the presentation by the World Languages Dept. by explaining that in the spring of 2007, it was decided to discontinue offering German as a language choice at East. Steps were taken to enable students currently enrolled in the German program to continue, but no new students were accepted. Mr. Harris stressed the importance of thinking about how to grow and build another language offering.

Mr. Lenz then took over. As stated in one of the handouts, "...[c]hoice is the key word. French & Spanish are not enough." When the World Languages Dept. began its discussion of what other language to offer at East, these were some of the points they considered: would the language be comparable in scope and sequence to other World Languages in the district? Would the language fit a scope and sequence that would align skills with college entrance requirements? Would the language be sustainable? Would it grow and align with East's culture, and its mission to help students succeed in school and in life? The World Languages Dept. explored what other schools are offering. The four high schools' language offerings, and the level offered:

<u>East:</u> French 5/AP	<u>La Follette:</u> ASL 2	<u>West:</u> French 5/AP	<u>Memorial:</u> Chinese 5
Spanish 5/AP	French 5/AP	German 4	French 5
	German 4	Japanese 4	German 4
	Spanish 5/AP	Latin 5	Spanish 5/AP
		Spanish 5/AP	

Additional comments included: do not want to end up with a class that is not sustainable, due to low enrollment and low interest, nor a class that is overly dependent on the personality and skills of one teacher (if that teacher leaves, does the program die?); but do need a teacher with a strong personality and the ability to promote the new language.

East's current language programs, French and Spanish, are competitive, as good as or better than those offered at any other MMSD high school.

"Critical languages", for instance, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, are those that are fledgling in this country. There are not a lot of speakers, not a lot of certified teachers, not a lot of ancillary materials. Language teachers need to understand America—even if a person is a native speaker, they may not be able to engage students and actually teach the language they speak to American high school students.

In the world market, monolingual Americans increasingly have a handicap. To be competitive, schools really should offer a language earlier than middle school.

There are too many Spanish students at UW—they can't accommodate all the incoming freshmen who want to take Spanish.

And finally, some background on historical World Languages at East: in 1923, French, Latin and German were offered. German was cut for WWI and WWII. In the 1950's there was no French for a while, and Spanish was offered. Latin was cut in the late 1980's. The trend in German enrollment over the last 3-5 years was decline both in overall enrollment and in students sticking with German.

**First group of questions** (answered by World Language Dept. staff, Mr. Harris and Ms. Kubek)

What **percentage of East students are enrolled in a World Language?** 62%, which is an increase over the percentage of a few years ago. Followup question: how does this compare to the other three high schools?

**How do other high schools sustain more languages?** West and Memorial have more students.

Is there **Federal (or other grant) money for another language**, e.g. Homeland Security for Arabic? Grant money will definitely be pursued. If there is a vision and a plan for building capacity and sustainability for another language offering, it will be easier to secure grant money.

Is there a **district-wide discussion about World Languages?** There is not, but it needs to happen. The MMSD long-range planning process that will begin in January must include discussion of World Languages. Most MMSD middle schools don't offer languages other than Spanish and French. Compared with most other districts in Wisconsin, MMSD offers more languages, and more Advanced Placement (AP) language classes. 5<sup>th</sup> year/AP are needed for students going on to college; they can sometimes be "converted" to college credits. Possible to **share teachers between schools?** Possible, but difficult due to bell schedules (class times) being slightly different at West and Memorial and LaFollette's 4-block schedule; language classes, like other classes, need to fit into the overall master schedule for each high school.

### **Facilitated Language Study proposal**

A proposal developed by the World Languages Dept., and explained on the attached handout, "Facilitated Language Study – proposal", was presented. Very briefly, groups of motivated students who had successfully completed level 2 in a traditional language classroom would choose a language to study; their study would be facilitated by a certified language teacher and tutors. This approach is currently being used at the college level, for example at Yale, the University of Massachusetts, and Emory University; if adopted at East, East would probably be the first or among the first high schools in the country to use such an approach.

Some additional notes: the Facilitated Language Study teacher would be a certified language teacher, but would not necessarily, or even probably, be certified to teach the language(s) chosen by the groups of students. The teacher would know how to teach a language, and how to connect with UW graduate students and others who would serve as tutors. The teacher would be a resource person, facilitating how the students would learn; the teacher would be in the classroom with the students at all times. Students would have weekly oral language practice with tutors. The idea would be to find cohorts of students to choose a language, so they would be learning together. There would potentially be two or three language groups in the same classroom. Ideally, the classroom would be a mobile language lab with headphones and computers. Tutors could be drawn from students enrolled in these UW Madison graduate language programs:

African Languages and Literature	Japanese
Chinese	Languages and Cultures of Asia
East Asian Studies	Latin
German	Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies
Greek	Scandinavian Studies
Hebrew and Semitic Studies	Slavic Languages and Literature
Italian	Southeast Asian Studies

**Second group of comments and questions** (answered primarily by World Language Dept. staff)

Would **Facilitated Language Study be piloted** before being adopted as the additional language offering at East? Yes, possibly next year.

What **percentage of students would actually be able to do this**? Difficult to give a definite answer, but there are certainly students currently studying French and Spanish at East who would be capable of doing it.

Would the **UW graduate students** be international students or language students? Would they **know how to teach**? **Pedagogical techniques are different** for teaching for example Spanish and French. As it is now, UW offers its language education students methods classes concurrently with their student teaching, so East's World Language teachers are already instructing their student teachers in how to teach.

**How would students' performance be assessed**? Students would be graded on work completed, and also on other criteria that would be determined.

What about **credit towards high school graduation, transcripts, accreditation** (to be accepted as a language for college entrance)? There is no model for this, but there are students now in the MMSD who are doing independent language study.

What about **linking classes at East, West and Memorial by videoconferencing**, for example? Distance learning model doesn't work well for learning languages. Adolescents want and need peer groups. Providing a **central location for students to go to be taught together, or having the teacher move from place to place**?

At this point, Mr. Harris wrapped up discussion by asking those present to think about the presentation in terms of three main areas (in bold), and heard a few suggestions: **What are you hopeful about**? Multiple language choices. **What are you concerned about**? The very specialized skill set needed by a Facilitated Language Study teacher, and also by the students in the program. **What other ideas should we consider**? Offer content courses (e.g. math, literature, history) taught in French and Spanish.

**Next steps:** a subcommittee including parents will be formed to study the Facilitated Language Study proposal and other options; the subcommittee will report back at the January East High United meeting.

### **MMSD Referendum on Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>**

School Board member (and East parent) Ed Hughes spoke briefly about the importance of the referendum on the November ballot.

**Next meeting: Thursday, November 13, 2008 7:00 p.m.**

**TAG/AP/Honors Curriculum discussion**

East TAG teachers, Annie Potter and MMSD TAG staff will be part of the discussion