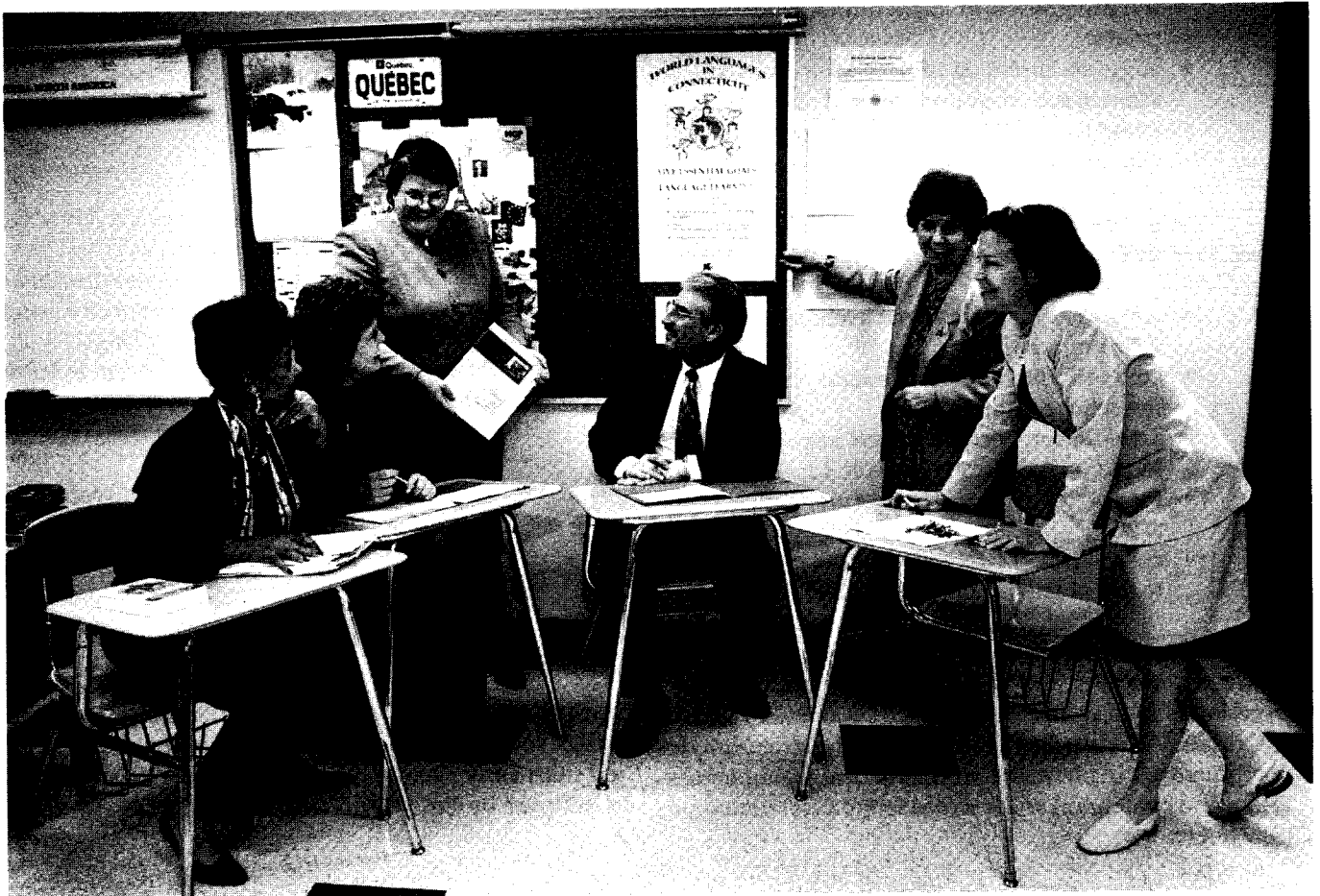


# DEVELOPING A DISTRICT CURRICULUM 4

*"Begin where you are, but don't stay there."*

Zambian Proverb

Key Components Of Curriculum Development  
The Curriculum Development Process  
Statements Of Philosophy



A district guide to K-12 program development in world languages is a structured, written document that delineates the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources and assessments that comprise the world languages program. It also provides a critical link between national and state guidelines and frameworks and the goals, objectives, unit plans and progress indicators used in the world languages classroom.

An exemplary guide to K-12 program development in world languages:

- establishes a clear philosophy and set of overarching goals that guide the entire program and the decisions that affect each aspect of the program;
- establishes sequences both within and between levels and assures a coherent and articulated progression from grade to grade and course to course;
- outlines a basic framework for what students should know and be able to do;
- allows for flexibility and encourages experimentation and innovation within an overall structure;
- promotes interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of curriculums when appropriate;
- suggests methods of assessing the achievement of the program goals and objectives; and
- provides a means for its own ongoing revision and improvement.

An exemplary world languages curriculum is developed with the following underlying criteria:

- consistency with research in child growth and development;
- compatibility with the general philosophy of the school district;
- articulation (programmed sequence) from kindergarten through Grade 12;
- ease of use by all teachers of world languages; and
- collaboration by a broad-based committee of teachers and other interested parties.

The development of an effective curriculum is a multistep, ongoing and cyclical process that integrates the efforts of many and is supported by a broad range of resources. After the key components of curriculum development are in place, the process of design, implementation and evaluation of the world languages curriculum may begin.

## Key Components Of Curriculum Development

A high-quality curriculum in any discipline is the result of a carefully planned process that integrates the efforts of many participants and is supported by a broad array of resources. These include a curriculum committee, ample time for writing and review, collection of relevant documents and allocation of additional resources, as needed, to complete the project.

1. **A Curriculum Committee.** The curriculum committee should consist primarily of teachers who represent the various school and grade levels in the district, and also include administrators, members of the community, and perhaps students. It is critical that the committee be led by a knowledgeable, effective and responsible chairperson.
2. **Time.** The curriculum committee must have ample time for research, discussion, writing and review. Full- or half-day released time, after-school, evening or weekend meetings or summer work may be required. Summer work has proven successful because participants can devote their complete attention to the task.
3. **Collection of Relevant Documents.** Among the source materials that should be available to every world languages curriculum development committee are:
  - *The Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, ACTFL, 1996;
  - *Articulation & Achievement: Connecting Standards, Performance, and Assessment in Foreign Language*, The College Board, 1996;
  - *A Guide to K-12 Program Development in World Languages*, Connecticut State Board of Education, 1999;
  - *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*, 1986; rev. 1999;
  - exemplary world languages curriculums and/or curriculum guides from other districts and exemplary curriculum frameworks from other states; and
  - district resource materials and textbooks.

For a more extensive list of world languages curriculum development resources, particularly on program design for early elementary study, see Appendix B. For the chart *Early Foreign Language Program Goals* (Rhodes, as adapted by Pesola and Curtain, 1993), see Appendix A.

**4. Additional Resources.** Adequate resources should also be allocated for the curriculum development process. These may include:

- released time for teachers to participate in the work;
- secretarial services and duplication of materials;
- equipment (language lab, computers, multimedia technology, etc.);
- consultant services;
- visits to other school systems;
- printing of sufficient copies of the pilot/review versions and the final version of the curriculum; and
- professional development needed to implement the curriculum.

### The Curriculum Development Process

The design and evaluation stages of this process should be carried out in a planned and systematic manner that includes the following steps:

1. convene the curriculum committee;
2. assess the needs of the program and the district;
3. develop a K-12 program philosophy;
4. develop sequenced K-12 program goals and grade-level and course goals and objectives;
5. identify resource materials and equipment to help with program implementation;
6. pilot and/or implement the curriculum, then solicit feedback from participants; and
7. identify and/or develop assessment items and instruments to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

During the development process, the curriculum should be periodically reviewed by a variety of individuals, including district and school staff members, parents, students and community members.

Additional detail on each of the components listed above is offered here:

- 1. Convene the curriculum committee.** Members should be representative of all grades and course levels in the district and include a parent and an admin-

istrator. Meeting times should be posted for all interested parties.

- 2. Assess the needs of the program and the district.** A needs assessment survey can best ascertain the perceptions, concerns and desires of each of the stakeholders in the process. The survey should address the following elements of the current program: effectiveness, student performance, availability of resources and coordination with state and national standards.
- 3. Develop a K-12 program philosophy.** An effective philosophy statement has the following characteristics:

#### Accuracy

- The philosophy makes an educationally appropriate case, supported by research, for the role of world languages in the K-12 curriculum and the importance of world language education for all students.

#### Linkages

- The world languages program philosophy is consistent with the district's philosophy of education.
- The philosophy provides a sound foundation for program goals and objectives.
- The teachers of the district are sincerely committed to each belief outlined in the philosophy.

#### Breadth

- The philosophy is aligned with sound pedagogical practices at age-appropriate levels, K-12.

#### Usefulness

- The philosophy is written in language that is clear and can be understood by parents and non-educators.

A sample program philosophy from one Connecticut district and the Statement of Philosophy from the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* are shown on page 158.

### Statement Of Philosophy – Wethersfield Public Schools

The mission of the Foreign Language Program of the Wethersfield Public Schools is to enable students to acquire practical and meaningful communication skills in the target language and to learn about and from other peoples and other cultures. The approach to foreign language study is competency based and follows the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines and The College Board's Articulation and Achievement Project (1996). Communicative competency combines both the underlying knowledge about a language, i.e., how it functions, with the ability to use the language, i.e., actual performance, in the five skill areas of listening,

speaking, reading, writing and cultural awareness. With the publication of the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996) and the Connecticut *Guide to K-12 Program Development in World Languages* (1999), the Wethersfield Foreign Language Department will incorporate into its curriculum and instruction the national goals and standards.

A Report of the Foreign Language Study Committee.  
Wethersfield Public Schools, Wethersfield, CT, 1996, page 7.  
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### Statement Of Philosophy – K-12 Student Standards Task Force

*The following statement was developed by the K-12 Student Standards Task Force as it began work on developing national standards in foreign language learning. From this philosophy, the goals for foreign language education were derived, and all the work in standards setting relates to these concepts.*

Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English-speaking backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language.

Supporting this vision are three assumptions about language and culture, learners of language and culture, and language and culture education:

*Competence in more than one language and culture enables people to*

- communicate with other people in other cultures in a variety of settings,
- look beyond their customary borders,
- develop insight into their own language and culture,
- act with greater awareness of self, of other cultures, and their own relationship to those cultures,

- gain direct access to additional bodies of knowledge, and
- participate more fully in the global community and marketplace.

*All students can be successful language and culture learners, and they*

- must have access to language and culture study that is integrated into the entire school experience,
- benefit from the development and maintenance of proficiency in more than one language,
- learn in a variety of ways and settings, and
- acquire proficiency at varied rates.

*Language and culture education is part of the core curriculum, and it*

- is tied to program models that incorporate effective strategies, assessment procedures, and technologies,
- reflects evolving standards at the national, state, and local levels, and
- develops and enhances basic communication skills and higher order thinking skills.

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, p. 7. *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*. Yonkers, NY: National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. Reprinted with permission.

4. **Develop sequenced K-12 program goals and grade-level and course goals and objectives.** The K-12 program goals, as stated in the *Connecticut World Languages Curriculum Framework* and at the beginning of Chapter 2 of this Guide, summarize the key expectations of the program.

**As a result of education in Grades K-12, each student will be able to:**

- **communicate** in at least one language other than English;
- gain knowledge and understanding of other **cultures**;
- make **connections** with other areas of study and acquire information;
- understand the nature of language and cultures through **comparisons**; and
- participate in multilingual **communities** within a variety of contexts.

The specific grade-level and course goals and objectives delineate what students should know and be able to do. When writing objectives, key questions to ask include:

- Is the objective compatible with the goals and philosophy of the program and the needs of students?
- Is the objective realistic and attainable by students?
- Is the objective sufficiently specific to give the reader a clear understanding of what the student should be able to do, without being so detailed as to make the statement labored or the objective trivial?
- Are appropriate materials and other resources available to make the objective achievable?

As objectives are selected and written, they must be organized by grade or strand, in units or sequential levels of instruction, or through some combination of these, and they must be appropriate to the goals of the overall world languages program. Please note the following:

- A *graded* structure organizes objectives by the grade in which a student is enrolled.
- An organization by *units* groups objectives by themes.
- A *strand* organization places all of the objectives for a specific topic or theme in a sequential order, without regard to specific grade.

- A *sequential* organization allows for individual student progress along a continuum of skills and experiences.

Often, an effective guide will incorporate more than one format. For example, a common arrangement lists objectives grouped by strand within each grade level. In this manner the third-year teacher has a complete list of the third-year objectives organized by strand or major topic. It is also important for this teacher to have access to the second-year objectives containing skills that may have been introduced, but not taught for mastery, as well as forthcoming fourth-year objectives.

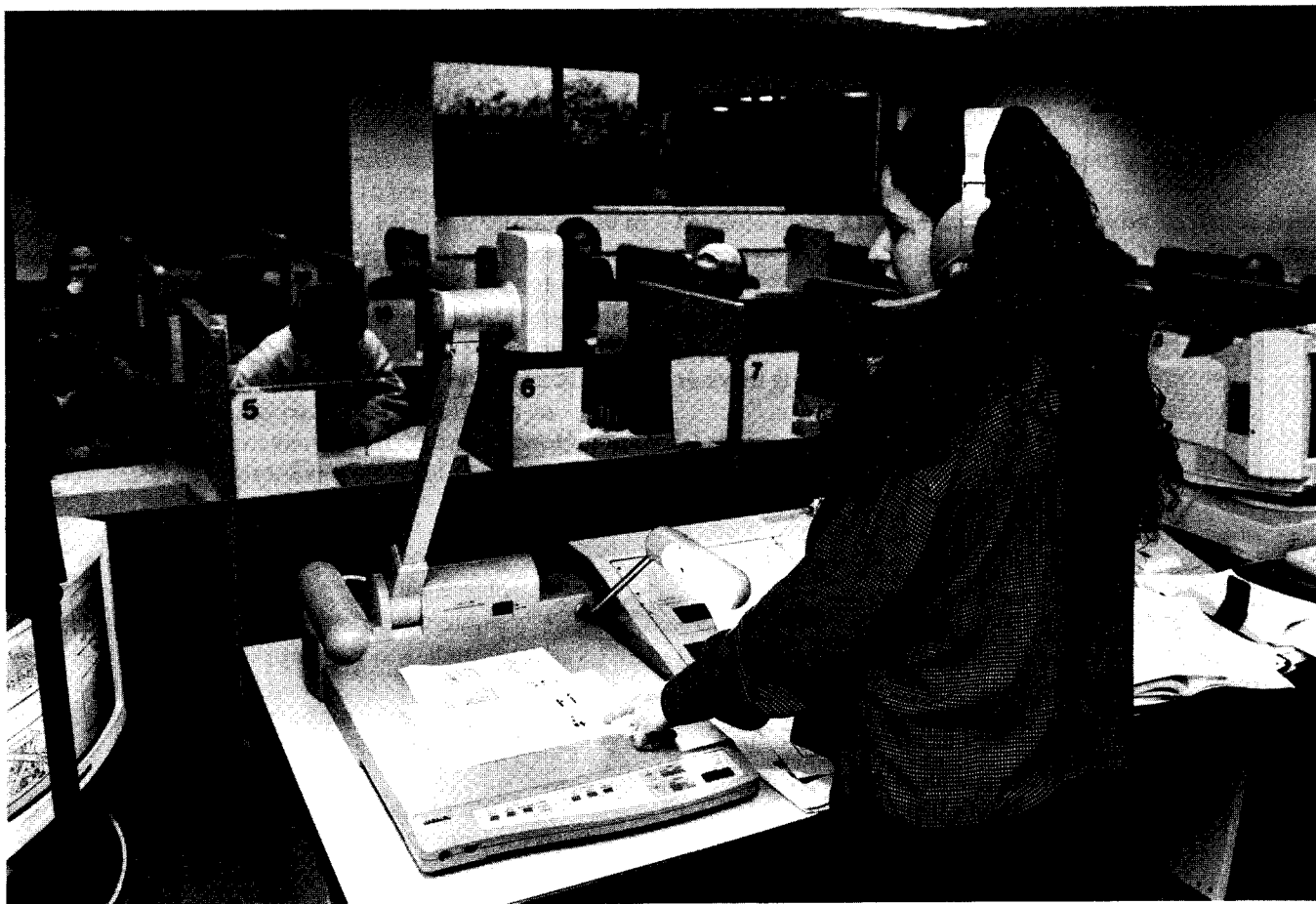
In addition, many curriculum guides provide other information to help teachers more effectively implement the curriculum. For example, some curriculum guides:

- provide an example of what is meant by each objective;
- suggest instructional techniques, strategies or materials that support specific objectives; and
- provide information on how the objectives can be evaluated.

Accordingly, curriculum developers have a range of options for formatting and designing an effective curriculum guide. Samples of two formats, a year planner and a unit planner from the *Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks*, are illustrated in Appendix A.

5. **Identify resource materials and equipment to help with program implementation.** An effective curriculum guide goes beyond just a list of objectives and identifies suggested instructional resources to help answer the question “What instructional materials and equipment are available to help me meet a particular objective or set of objectives?” Because teachers and programs use a broad range of materials, it is increasingly important that the curriculum guide link available resources to curriculum objectives. For an example, please see the illustrative learning activity *Compañeros electrónicos*, which incorporates technology into the lesson, on page 42 of the guide.

6. **Pilot and/or implement the curriculum, then solicit feedback from participants.** As the curriculum is developed, there can be many opportunities to gauge its effectiveness. Prior to full implementation, piloting a particular course within a sequence provides valuable data. Modifications can then be made if necessary. Feedback throughout the process gives all involved a say in the development and implementation of a high-quality curriculum.



7. **Identify and/or develop assessment items and instruments to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.** This culminating piece of the curriculum development process helps focus instruction and ensures alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Assessment answers the question "How will I know that my students know and are able to do what is expected of them?" Evaluation instruments should mirror the various strategies employed in instruction, providing students of all learning styles the opportunity to achieve success. For information on the Farmington (Connecticut) Language Proficiency Test, please see Appendix A.

For specific examples of assessment, please see the following Prototype Assessments in Chapter 2 of this guide:

- **Grades K-4:**  
What clothes shall we pack? (German), page 31.  
Shopping for fruits and vegetables (Japanese), page 71.
- **Grades 5-8:**  
Skits about French food (French), page 20.  
Music is the key! (Spanish), page 56
- **Grades 9-12:**  
English Derivatives (Latin), page 102  
A French Family Interview (French), page 132

A district curriculum is the result of a comprehensive, sequential process organized to reflect the district philosophy, mesh with state and national goals and provide students the greatest opportunity for success in the language(s) of their choice.