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World Language Program ENRICHES EDUCATION

Island Park schools are providing students with a head start on foreign language learning and cultivating a lifelong



interest in world cultures. The district's Foreign Language in Elementary School program was implemented in 2009 for grades K-3 and has since expanded to include grades 4, 5 and 6. Students learn vocabulary, grammar and an assortment of language skills under the direction of teachers Beth Rotella and Diana Vazquez. Spanish becomes a core class in seventh and eighth grades and is taught by Allison Heumann and Irlanda Feil.

The aim of the World Language program is to introduce young students to the Spanish language and culture through a variety of content area instruction and hands-on activities. "Early language instruction not only improves foreign language acquisition in later years but also enhances cognitive development of elementary school students," said Ms. Rotella and Ms. Vazquez.

"One of the greatest things about teaching language in the

early years is the way we get to start," said Ms. Feil, who taught FLES at the elementary level in the program's initial years. "It is fun and easy for students to learn when they are younger. There are a lot of games, songs, physical activities and gestures that make the content exciting."

Some of those techniques include jumping while counting, imitating movements associated with sports, and using sounds to associate with words for animals. The FLES teachers also read famous children's books in Spanish and often integrate the curricular areas of science, math, geography, etc. into lessons to reinforce content learning. General classroom teachers cover topics in English, then the FLES teachers introduce them in Spanish for reinforcement and extension purposes.

FLES teachers go into the regular classrooms to work with the students. All classes in grades 1-4 receive Spanish instruction

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twice every four days for approximately 45 minutes. Kindergartners have Spanish once every four days and the fifth and sixth-grade schedules also include FLES. By the end of first grade, students already know how to count to 100 – in Spanish. They are writing sentences in fourth grade and are equipped to write compositions before the time they transition into seventh grade. As a parent of two bilingual children in the district, Ms. Feil noted that even native Spanish speakers benefit, as they are learning proper spelling, grammar and pronunciation.

For seventh- and eighth-graders, Spanish is a core class taught five days a week for 45 minutes. At these levels, dialogue is a major component of the curriculum and students regularly engage in classroom conversations in Spanish. They take speaking and dictation quizzes and participate in discussions about everyday topics such as food shopping; health and doctors' office visits; and vacation, travel and leisure activities such as birthdays, museum visits, and concerts.

Eighth-grade students write 100-word compositions, complete research projects and gain a great deal of cultural knowledge about Spanish-speaking countries. This winter, they studied the various ways in which holidays are observed and completed assignments about famous Spanish artists such as Francisco Goya, Frida Kahlo and Pablo Picasso. Classes have also taken field trips to see Latin dance shows as another tie-in to the arts. Eighth-grade students take the FLACS exam at the end of the school year, which provides them with the prospect of earning a high school foreign language credit.

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BOND & CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

Projects for the bond are proceeding as planned. Classroom security doors that were on back order are being installed, and construction for the districtwide roof replacement and recovery is anticipated for this summer. Several other projects have been submitted to State Education Department for approval, and the Board will be reviewing the timeline for future bond work.

The district is discussing the possible

installation of a black chain-link fence (5 feet in height) around the fields at the Lincoln Orens Middle School. Student safety is of the utmost importance, and a great deal has been done over the years to secure the buildings' interiors and outdoor grounds. New perimeter fencing was installed last year at Francis X. Hegarty School and in select locations at Lincoln Orens; additional high-definition cameras were installed outside of both schools.

Mentor Program Provides

Ongoing Professional Development and Support

The Island Park Public Schools' Mentor Program was introduced approximately two decades ago and has evolved over the years. As part of their induction into the district, all new first-year teachers are placed in the program and paired with a veteran teacher of corresponding subject area or grade level.

The program focuses on best and new instructional practices and their application to the district's existing models and practices. The teacher pairs attend monthly Mentor Program gatherings, which administrators participate in as well, and also meet less formally on their own each week. The larger sessions cover designated topics and involve presentations, books, videos and other informative resources in addition to interactive exercises. They set the stage for the smaller conversations, which present opportunities for the teachers to delve deeper into the content.

"A school district can only do so much in-service training, but this program provides another avenue for professional development," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Rosmarie Bovino. "Most of the teacher pairs continue to have a strong connection after their year together."

Pre-K teacher Kellie Rubino is

mentored by Lorraine Drago, currently a fifth-grade teacher who taught pre-K and kindergarten for many years. "It's really helpful," Ms. Rubino said. "It's great to be paired with an experienced teacher. She comes into my room often and observes, and we talk later about things that can be tweaked."

Math teacher Susan Krukas mentors Charlie Appel. "Meeting with her is helpful," Mr. Appel said. "I have someone to bounce ideas off and with her assistance was able to get adjusted to the school culture quickly." The two noted that they regularly share ideas about applying the workshop topics to math lessons in their classrooms.

Dr. Bovino and Assistant Superintendent Vincent Randazzo determine meeting topics at the start of each school year based on new developments in education and feedback from the past participants, who complete evaluations to indicate which aspects of the program they found most effective and beneficial.

The February session concentrated on questioning and discussion techniques. Dr. Bovino and Mr. Randazzo shared insights from a visit that members of the Nassau Association of School Technologists took to the Google



Mentee Darlene Morales with Mentors Lorraine Drago and Heidi Lazare during an activity at the February meeting.

headquarters, where team building, problem-solving and communication were cited as the top skills that will be needed in the workforce that students will enter. They also shared a video that supported the need for these capabilities in future jobs.

Attendees explored the 6 Ps Framework for Questioning; a structure that calls for teachers to Prepare, Present, Prompt, Process, Publish and Partner with students. They engaged in brainstorming and collaborative activities, relating the framework back to the district's teacher evaluation rubric with a cross chart.

Other meetings this year have covered the teacher evaluation system, essential elements of effective instruction, brain-based instructional practices, purchasing, special education, and Response to Intervention. Those scheduled for the upcoming months will review use of formative and summative data to drive instruction and cooperative learning and program evaluation.



Assistant Superintendent Vincent Randazzo oversees groups engaged in the 6 Ps Framework session.

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Island Park Public Schools

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ECRWSS RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

A Model for Technology in the Classroom

The district hosted a Nassau Association of School Technologists workshop that brought school district leaders from across Nassau County together at Lincoln Orens Middle School for a half-day of explorations and activities focused on technology in education.

NASTECH is comprised of technology directors, other administrators and staff members who take time to learn from one another to improve and make the most of their own programs. The group holds seminars and

meetings with an emphasis on collaboration and professional development related to the redesign of learning spaces.

The session in Island Park featured several of the district's technology opportunities including the Makerspace Lab, robotics, and Lego robotics. In the Zspace Lab, the guests observed students engaged in a lesson about the solar system in which they were able to dissect planets and view them up close. They also witnessed demonstrations from award-winning robotics students who

explained the building and programming work they did in preparation for the FIRST Lego League robotics competition.

"It was an honor to welcome our fellow educators and share what we have been doing here in Island Park," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Rosmarie Bovino. "We are all a team, working together to fulfill the common mission of providing Nassau County students with educational initiatives that get them excited about learning and help to ensure future success."



Students dissected planets and explored the solar system through Zspace.



Jelsie Marte and Kaitlyn Griffin put their robots to the test.



Robert Amato and Josh Jarama programmed a robot during the NASTECH workshop.