

Public Schools of Brookline
K-8 World Language Department

K-5 World Language Program Overview

The system-wide Elementary World Language K-5 Program began in January 2009, incorporating the pioneering Driscoll School Chinese program that continues to be a cornerstone of our community. With the exception of Driscoll, all other schools in the district provide Spanish instruction through grade 5.

The K-5 World Language Learning Expectations are based upon the “5 C’s” of the National Standards for Foreign Languages: Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections and Communities. World language teachers, together with the K-8 Coordinator for World Languages, developed a proficiency-based curriculum, grounded in culture, focused on what students can *do* with the language. This curriculum builds a solid foundation in oracy, the partner of literacy in language learning. While literacy entails the ability to read and write fluently, oracy is fluency in listening and speaking, or oral/aural language. Oracy is the natural first step in learning any language. When children are in the beginning stages of acquiring their first language, they primarily use single words. Their language acquisition is supported by lots of repetition as well as visual and contextual reinforcement of those first words.

In order to develop these listening and speaking skills, World Language teachers use the target language of Spanish or Chinese (Driscoll) almost exclusively, providing students with many opportunities to hear the language in context, and for them to practice speaking it themselves, without direct translation to English. Lessons are carried out through the use of songs, games, books, and other interactive activities designed to develop real-world communication skills rather than learning vocabulary words in isolation. Students put meaning to words much as they did when learning their first language, and are prepared, and eager, to communicate. In grades 3-5, students begin to work on reading and writing skills, which are used to foster interpersonal communication. Our goal is for students to be able to ask questions and talk about a learning activity in Spanish or Chinese, using the “product” as a topic of conversation. With a solid foundation in oracy, our students will be well prepared to transition to our middle school program.

All educators have a shared responsibility in the implementation of our K-5 program. In addition to the world language teacher, all K-5 classroom teachers are present in the classroom to support world language instruction, create conditions that are necessary for students to develop as language learners and help facilitate interdisciplinary connections.

Grades K-2 thematic units include school and community, family, and climate. Grades 3-5 thematic units include community, leisure time, climate and food.