

LAKE FOREST D67 BOARD OF EDUCATION

New elementary school world languages program introduced

NICKI KOETTING, Editor

Elementary schools in District 67 are going to see an overhaul to their world languages programming beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

Lauren Fagel, District 67 and 115's assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction, technology and assessment, presented on the district's revision to its world languages program at the Lake Forest School District 67 Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, March 24. The revised program will introduce proficiency in one world language to the district's elementary school students sooner, in the second and third grades, rather than later, in fourth grade, Fagel said.

"District 67 has a long history and a strong commitment to world language learning at the elementary level," Fagel said at the meeting. "But we needed to make some changes. We wanted to re-align parts of the program with best practice, and that is specifically speaking to re-examining

the 'FLEX,' or the exploratory year in third grade. ... We wanted to adjust the program to match our enrollment trend, which we know we've gone down by several hundred students since 2006. Our ability to offer such a broad range of choices at the elementary level has really become compromised. Finally, we wanted to address staffing challenges in terms of our ability to hire and retain highly qualified, elementary-certified language teachers."

Currently, the world languages program in District 67's elementary schools is known as a Foreign Language Exploratory Program, or FLEX. It consists of exposing students to Latin in the second grade and exposing students to all four world languages (Spanish, French, Latin and Mandarin Chinese) in third grade. In fourth grade, students and their parents select one language for the student to learn and hopefully continue to learn through eighth grade and even into high school.

Cherokee Elementary School, however, is in the first half of a year-long pilot program that incorporates world languages into daily class time. For the 2014-2015 school year, all students at Cherokee in full-day kindergarten, third grade and fourth grade participate in a daily "inspiration block." During this block, students choose one of two areas of study: Mandarin language acquisition or STEM/Inquiry. Students in the Mandarin inspiration block learn to read, write, speak, and listen to the Mandarin language.

As of December 2014, 17 students across the district's three elementary schools are

District to cut six teaching positions

NICKI KOETTING, Editor

The Lake Forest School District 67 Board of Education held a public hearing regarding its proposed reduction in teaching positions for the 2015-2016 school year at its Tuesday, March 24 meeting. At the meeting, Dr. Lori Wilcox, District 67 and 115's assistant superintendent of growth, talent and human relations, reported that six teachers will be honorably dismissed for the 2015-2016 school year.

"We've had conversations about the need for a reduction in force," Wilcox said. "These particular positions are impacted due to declining enrollment. Since 2006, we're down over 400 students."

enrolled in French, 98 are enrolled in Spanish, 32 are enrolled in Latin, 26 take Mandarin and 25 Cherokee students participate in the Mandarin inspiration block.

A culmination of several months' work of revising the world language program at the elementary level resulted in the new elementary school world language program, Fagel said. The new program, known as Foreign Language in the Elementary School, or FLES, emphasizes the study of one language, rather than the FLEX program's style of having students explore multiple languages.

In this program, in second grade, students will have a choice of studying either Spanish or Mandarin for two days a week, 30 minutes a day. In third grade, students continue studying

District 67 will let an art teacher and a part-time music teacher go, as well as a fifth and sixth grade Latin teacher, a French teacher, and two part-time Spanish teachers.

Wilcox said that while the number of staff for the art and music programs at the elementary schools will be reduced, the programs will stay the same.

"In the elementary schools, because of declining enrollment, we need to slightly reduce the overall staffing for the district, but we feel strongly about maintaining the programs as is," Wilcox said. "There will be no change for the art or music programs. There will be no change to the minutes or the program-

the language they chose, this time for three days a week, 30 minutes a day. In fourth grade, students continue studying that language, much like the third grade curriculum.

At the end of fourth grade, students will choose to either continue their study of the same language at Deer Path Middle School or switch to studying French or Latin.

While French will not be offered for students in the second through fourth grades due to past low enrollment, Latin will be embedded in the elementary schools' language arts curricula through the study of words and their roots, Fagel said.

For students who enter Cherokee, the inspiration block will still exist at the school as part of a pilot pro-

gram."

The world language staff reduction is due to the changes in the elementary schools' world language programming and enrollment, Wilcox said.

"Based on the number of students entering Latin, we can't sustain a full-time position," Wilcox said. "The reason for recommending honorable dismissal [for Spanish teachers] is because families have not yet made their selections for elementary world language, so we're not sure what our staffing needs are in Spanish or Mandarin. Until those choices are made, we can't staff appropriately."

No members of the public commented during the public hearing.

gram, but will be tweaked a bit for the revised world language program. Students at Cherokee will either choose from an intensive Mandarin language study option or an intensive STEM/Inquiry option for their daily "inspiration block." Those who choose the STEM/Inquiry option will still study a language, Spanish, a few days a week, Fagel said.

The new world languages program in District 67 will have students follow five possible language study paths. Students at Sheridan and Everett schools can study Spanish from second grade through middle school; they can study Mandarin from second grade through middle school; they can study Spanish from second through fourth grades and then switch to French or Latin in middle school;

or they can study Mandarin from second through fourth grades and then switch to French or Latin in middle school. At Cherokee, students who choose the Mandarin inspiration block can either take advanced Mandarin in middle school or choose to study French or Latin.

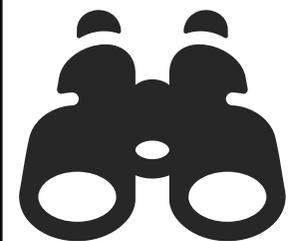
The choice to limit students switching to Spanish or Mandarin was tough, but necessary, Fagel said.

"One of the concerns going into this process was [looking] several years ahead," Fagel said. "We really want to preserve four languages at [Deer Path Middle School]. We believe that our parents and community value that choice, and we want French and Latin to be a part of the world languages curriculum. But in order to do that, if [students are] going to change languages, it has to be to French or Latin. If you choose Spanish or Mandarin, you have to choose younger. Also we'd be offering so many different levels of the languages we'd never be able to sustain it in terms of staffing and student class sizes."

This new program for the 2015-2016 will affect this year's third-graders the most, as they will only be able to choose between Spanish and Mandarin, but Fagel said this program is overall beneficial for the district.

"We feel that the FLEX model does align more with best practice in terms of building towards proficiency," Fagel said. "We think this is a sustainable program, staffing-wise and [with] enrollment, and we feel like this maintains something this community values, which is choice."

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