

## **WORLD LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**

### **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

Goethe clearly saw it when he wrote that s/he who knows no foreign language does not truly know her/his own. One may say that the knowledge of the foreign language stands to that of the native one in the same way as knowledge of algebra stands to the knowledge of arithmetic, enhancing it and turning it into a concrete application of algebraic laws. The child's approach to language becomes more abstract and generalized... the acquisition of foreign language...liberates her/him from the dependence on concrete linguistic forms and expressions (Vygotsky, 1986, p.160)

The greatest achievement for students of world languages is the ability to communicate with confidence and self-esteem in the target language and to develop a foundation for intercultural awareness and international understanding.

In order to help students achieve these goals, the World Language Department is approaching language teaching with methodological techniques and activities designed to facilitate, encourage, and improve the levels of communication and develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for other cultures.

The World Language faculty at Jericho is aware of the following observations stated in the New York State Modern Languages Syllabus (1986) and the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996):

To study another language and culture gives one the powerful key to successful communication: *knowing how, when and why, to say what to whom*. All the linguistic and social knowledge required for effective human-to-human interaction is encompassed in those ten words. Formerly, most teaching in foreign language classrooms concentrated on the *how* (grammar) to say *what* (vocabulary). While these components of language remain crucial, the current organizing principle for language study is communication, which also highlights the *why*, the *whom* and the *when* (the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of language). The approach to second language instructions found in today's schools is designed to facilitate genuine interaction with others, whether they are on another continent, across town, or within the neighborhood (National Standards, 1996, p.11).

In teaching for oral proficiency, instructional materials, course outlines, and lesson plans are designed to include several components, which are essential in achieving this goal. The sources for instructional planning begin with a focus on the World Language Readiness Standards (ACTFL, 2015) and the revised Themes for 21<sup>st</sup> Century for World Languages (FLACS, 2013).

Language course outlines are prepared to provide direction in teaching for communicative, linguistic, and cultural competency. They include more than just content and informative framework and guidelines of what is expected of students. They also include the goals and objectives, instructional methodology, essential and optional materials, ancillary and related materials, and methods of assessment.

Although all course outlines follow the same format, their individual emphasis may vary to accommodate language level and students who come to us with a wide range of background needs, aptitudes, learning styles and readiness levels. All courses aim at developing and encouraging a sense of success, personal achievement, and social and emotional connectedness. In addition, they are designed to expose students to other cultures to foster an international and intercultural awareness of how (despite our differences) we all share our residence on this planet and the commonality of our humanity.

The course contents are a combination of subject matter taken from the textbook series in use at Jericho, teacher-prepared curricula, the National Standards, college syllabi, and topics outlined in the Themes for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning in the World Language Classroom as well as topic from the NYS Modern Language Syllabus.

They also include optional auxiliary materials such as culturally authentic videos, educational trips to theatre, museums and restaurants, the use of community resources, and many departmental activities such as Diversity Day, International Night, participation in local and national competitions, regional language exams, and more. Whenever possible service learning is included in our program and we are proud of the many charities we support. Our honor societies (Chinese, French, Italian, Latin and Spanish) provide on-going opportunities for community service and enriching activities based on the target cultures.

One of the highlights of our global outreach is our work in planning and implementing trips abroad and our exchange programs. These trips underscore the importance of using language in an authentic context and learning from actually “living the language and culture.” We currently offer travel to Quebec for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, are in the planning stages for a trip to France for high school students, we have a trip to Italy for students of Latin and Italian, an exchange program with Spain and an exchange program with Xi’an, China.

### **Philosophy of Instructional Methodology**

Although experts of world language teaching agree that there is no single way or method a teacher must follow to teach World Languages, it is critical that instructional methodology applied to develop communicative competency follow the most recent literature and research findings and recommendations (Asher, 1982; Cummins, 1981; Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Higgs, 1984; Krashen, 1981, 1983; Lipton, 1998; Omaggio, 1992; Savignon, 1983; Seelye, 1984; Swain, 1981; Vygotsky, 1986).

The literature supports the following concepts. Instructional methodology must:

1. Be adapted to each level of language study and as students move from elementary “performance” to ... communicative competency both in spoken and written language (Higgs, 1984).
2. Include relevant activities that encourage students to express what is relevant and important to them: their feelings, thoughts and needs. In this endeavor relevancy and students’ engagement through functional activities in the target language are crucial (Omaggio, 1992).
3. Be geared to providing real-life situations for students to exchange likes and dislikes, ideas and dreams through oral readings, storytelling, storyreading, storywriting, singing, dialogues, oral presentations, role playing, playlets, cartoons, questionnaires, correspondence, signs, letter writing, journal writing, interviews, questions and answers, projects and dioramas and other cultural and authentic materials. Through context (specific situations) students will know how to make appropriate choices in register and style to fit the particular situations in which communication occurs through negotiation of meaning (Krashen, 1981).
4. Be designed to reach out and make the language learning experience accessible and meaningful to all students by keeping in mind their academic background, mental ability, and learning styles (Curtain & Pesola, 1994).
5. Aim at an integrative development of the four language skills through different strategies and techniques. By doing so, students will be encouraged to develop grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence which will enable them to express themselves more fully as they progress from level to level. As a result, they will build their self-confidence and experience a feeling of personal reward and success through a better knowledge of culture and a more active and extended personalized vocabulary. This will empower them with the ability to negotiate meaning through dynamic interpersonal spoken and written communication (Lipton, 1998; Seelye, 1984; Vygotsky, 1986).