Chapter 7

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND STUDENT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The most effective instructional strategies incorporate meaningful and purposeful activities that provide students with opportunities to use world languages in active communication. In response to the needs of world language teachers/specialists, classroom teachers, and other individuals involved in world language instruction, **"Methodology for Innovative Instruction in K-12 World Language Programs"** has been included for classroom reference in Appendix C, Figures 24 through 43.

Lipton (1995, pp. 183-184) recommends the following general instructional strategies, which are characteristic of both elementary and secondary communicative-based language classrooms:

- Keep the use of English to a minimum, with most instructions, directions and explanations given in the target language.

- Use real objects, gestures, pictures, and other visuals to convey meaning.

- Focus on language that is concerned with functional situations and authentic utterances.

- Do not always insist on complete sentences, but mirror natural speech patterns.

- Adopt a conversational approach replicating "real" situations likely to occur.

- Teach vocabulary in context, including all kinds of idiomatic phrases.

- Use paired activities and small-group learning.

- Use technology.

- Use a variety of print and nonprint materials.

- Strive to develop cultural awareness using authentic cultural realia as a springboard for communication in the language.

- Emphasize acceptable communication, rather than near-native pronunciation.

- Ensure a match between the learner and the language in terms of relevance and learning styles.

STUDENT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS AND LEARNING STYLES

The needs of an increasingly diverse and individualized student population, of a global economy, and of a multinational workplace necessitate designing a world language curriculum and learning environment that will best accommodate those needs to facilitate the language acquisition process. Varying learning capabilities, learning needs, and learning styles have specific implications for instructional strategies in the world language classroom.

In this document, student learning characteristics and learning styles will be addressed in five groups:

- Students with Diverse Talents (Multiple Intelligences);

- Students with High Abilities (Exceptionally Able);

- Students with Disabilities (Special Education);

- Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Students Who Are Bilingual; and

- Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Students with Diverse Talents (Multiple Intelligences)

Each student has a dominant *learning style*, which is a unique combination of the types of intelligences identified by Howard Gardner (1983). It is important for world language teachers to identify the learning styles of their students so they can restructure their teaching strategies to allow students to process material more efficiently. **Adaptations are often idea generators or good teaching techniques for adding variety and interest that are beneficial to many students and may be used with all language learners**. See Appendix D, Figures 44 through 47, for additional information and strategies regarding students with diverse talents.

Students with High Abilities (Exceptionally Able)

Exceptionally able students excel in the ability to create as well as the ability to use higher-order thinking skills. These high-ability learners thrive on learning opportunities that effectively challenge them to achieve their potentials. See Appendix D, Figure 48, for strategies regarding these students. More comprehensive information may be found in part two of chapter 12.

Students with Disabilities (Special Education)

Students with disabilities may be provided with special assistance to accommodate their needs. World language teachers can also use adaptive strategies to better meet their specific needs. See Appendix D, Figure 49, for strategies regarding students with specific learning needs and Appendix E, Figures 50 through 58, for examples of graphic organizers. Additional information is given in part one of chapter 12, which includes ideas for modifying instruction based on three learning scenarios found in this Framework.

Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Students Who Are Bilingual

Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, who arrive at school with diverse levels of language proficiency in English, should be given the same opportunity as other students to learn world languages. These students are held to the same standards for mastery of world languages as their English-speaking peers, and thus, districts must have the same high expectations for them.

When feasible, LEP students should be provided with opportunities for developing skills in their native language that are both developmentally supportive and rigorous. Since bilingualism is the goal of a world language program, students who speak another language enter school with a great advantage. Taking affirmative steps to maintain and develop native-language skills ensures that such skills will not erode over time as English becomes their dominant language.

Alternatively, LEP and bilingual students should be provided with the opportunity to study a world language in addition to English. This is particularly relevant for LEP students who speak languages that are not offered for study in the school district. For example, a Chinese-speaking student in a district where Spanish and French are the world languages offered should have the opportunity to choose which language to study. Such students are often faster learners in a third language because they already know how to use the metacognitive strategies required for language learning.

> *In short, educational programs for both language-majority and language-minority students that develop their home language along with a second language, or even a third language, are feasible and effective. These programs have the value-added benefit of developing second language and cross-cultural skills at no cost to other educational goals. These skills open employment opportunities and extend access to people, places, and information that are available only in other languages.*
>
> (Genesee & Cloud, 1998, p. 63)

Whether limited English proficient or bilingual, students who speak a native language other than English should be considered as resources to the world language program. Students who speak a language that is offered as a world language in the district can provide a natural context for language practice for English-speaking students. Having opportunities to interact with native speakers of a language increases the potential for second language learners to approximate native-like fluency in the target language. By providing structured and unstructured opportunities for English speakers to interact with target-language-speaking peers, we not only motivate students to communicate but also create **opportunities for authentic, purposeful interaction—**an essential component of effective second language learning.

In addition, these native speakers can assist in providing information and accurate impressions of the foreign culture being studied. Students who represent different cultural backgrounds can enrich

a world language program by promoting cross-cultural discourse and fostering an appreciation and understanding of other cultures. Such students can provide a context for developing the cross-cultural attitudes and skills needed to relate to people from other cultures. By enhancing global as well as cultural awareness, successful interaction with students from other countries can foster an attitude of respect and understanding and can help lessen ethnocentric and prejudiced attitudes.

Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

The native language for students who are deaf/hard of hearing varies among students, depending upon their cultural and linguistic preferences. Some of these linguistic preferences may be:

- **American Sign Language (ASL)** as their **native** and **primary** language, and **English** as their **secondary** language;

- **English** as their **native language** and **ASL** as their **secondary** language; and

- **English** as their **native language** without the use of **ASL** or another sign system.

As with heritage language learners, these students whose primary language is ASL should be provided an opportunity for further study in ASL. They should demonstrate competencies for meeting the world language standards and cumulative progress indicators as outlined in chapter 4—with the exception of those that refer to oral speaking skills. The American Sign Language Rubrics (in Appendix B, Figures 8A and 8B) should also be utilized.

Students whose primary language is English and who use ASL as a second language, or students with no prior exposure to ASL, may continue to pursue studies in American Sign Language as an option for meeting the world language standards.

Students who are deaf/hard of hearing may also have the option of pursuing any other world language offered. The student's individualized education program (IEP) should address the assessment of the student's competencies in the world language (i.e., whether the student has the ability to be assessed in the speaking component of the world language assessment, or if the assessment will involve only reading and writing).

Students who are hearing may choose ASL in order to fulfill the world language requirement for acquiring a second language. Progress could be assessed according to the American Sign Language Rubrics in Appendix B, Figures 8A and 8B.

All students who are deaf/hard of hearing, regardless of their linguistic preference, will be expected to meet the requirements in the Language Arts Literacy content area. Fluency in ASL should not be considered a substitution for fluency in English competency skills.