World language program in elementary schools

Claire S. Whittaker
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd

Part of the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you - share your thoughts on our feedback form.

Recommended Citation
Whittaker, Claire S., "World language program in elementary schools" (1999). Theses and Dissertations. 1899.
https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1899

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact LibraryTheses@rowan.edu.
WORLD LANGUAGE PROGRAM

IN

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

Claire S. Whittaker

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May, 1999

Approved by______________________________  Professor

Date Approved ____________________________
ABSTRACT

Claire S. Whittaker

World Language Program in Elementary Schools
1999
Dr. Ronald Capasso
School Administration

The purpose of this study was to discover and evaluate the effectiveness of a World Language Program on the elementary students of St. James Regional School using a school wide action research design. This study's result were formulated into an evaluation to parents, teachers, and administrations on the progress of a FLES Language Program.

This project took place at a small Catholic elementary school consisting of the students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. This school is small and located in an economically depressed area. There is little exposure to foreign language in the community and none has been taught in the school.

The parents were asked to complete a questionnaire about previous knowledge of the Spanish language. The teachers were asked to observe students progress, and the students themselves were interviewed. The data collected from teacher, parents, and students was analyzed to learn if the students were responsive to this FLES Program.

The study seems to indicate that the program had a beneficial influence on the students in the school. The students in Kindergarten through 5th grade showed a greater percentage of participation and retention of the new language skills. The students in the upper grades did learn but were not as enthusiastic.
MINI-ABSTRACT

Claire Whittaker

World Language Program in Elementary Schools
1999
Dr. Ronald Capasso
School Administration

The purpose of this study was to discover and evaluated the effectiveness of a World Language Program on the elementary students in a small Catholic School. The study indicated that the program had a beneficial influence both on learning the Spanish language and in introducing the awareness of other cultures.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Focus of the Study</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 2 Review of Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kinds of Programs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Standards</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 3 Design of the Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of Research Design</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development and Design of Research Instruments</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample and Sampling Technique</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection Approach</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis Plan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

Focus of the Study

Introduction

Today, there is a renewed interest in looking at the benefits of introducing a foreign language program to our students in the elementary schools. The Federal Government and many State Governments are encouraging this initiative. The National Goals 2000 and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards both advocate a foreign language program in all the schools by the year 2000.

This study will focus on the effectiveness of a Foreign Language in Elementary Schools Program (FLES) on the population of St. James Regional Grammar School. The students in Kindergarten through 8th grade will be observed and the teachers interviewed in order to evaluate its benefits and the students performance according to the goals of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards for World Language.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover and evaluate the use of a World Language Program on the elementary students of St. James Regional School using a school wide action research design. This study will determine this FLES Programs ability to enable students to develop basic listening and speaking skills, as well as develop an awareness of other cultures and ways of viewing the world.

This study will result in an evaluation to parents, teachers, and administration on the progress of a FLES Spanish Program used by the students and teachers. This will help determine the effectiveness of this type of program for St. James Regional Grammar School.
Definitions

**World Language Program**

A program of study that will introduce and expose students to the variety of foreign languages through the world. World language programs are recommended by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards to be promoted in all schools by the year 2000.

**New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards.**

The outline and guide for all New Jersey Public Schools with the goal of coordinating the educational requirements for all students within the state.

**FLES Program**

FLES stands for Foreign Language in the Elementary School. This type of program aims to develop rudimentary listening and speaking skills. The program provides foreign language instruction anywhere from two to five times a week. The lessons are approximately 20 to 40 minutes long for each class.

Limitations of the Study

This project will take place in a small Catholic school located in a rural location in Southern New Jersey. The school is located in an economically depressed area of Salem County and has a present enrollment of approximately 200 students in Pre-School through 8th grade. For this study, the students in Kindergarten through 8th grade will be the interest group. This is approximately 153 students. The teachers of these students will be the main providers of information for data gathering.

Setting of the Study

This project will take place at a small Catholic elementary school consisting of students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. This school is located in a rural area of Salem County, New Jersey. The school is small and located in an economically depressed area. There is an ongoing reduction of jobs in the community and very little industrial growth.
The school is supported by three Catholic Parishes representing three townships of this county. The families are typically blue collar workers with a high majority of both parents working. The percentage of single parent homes and children being raised by grandparents is on the rise. Approximately 18% of the students in the school qualify for the federal and state free or reduced lunch program.

St. James Regional School has been in existence for 76 years at this site. The present population consist of one of each grade. There is a Pre-School for three and four years olds which was established six years ago and is growing in numbers. The main school has Kindergarten though 8th grade with an average class size of 18 students. There are 11 full time teachers, three part-time classroom aides and a support staff of three specialized teachers, one secretary and one administrator. The school also has a before and after school care program. The school has an executive board consisting of the three pastors and the principal as well as a functioning advisory School Board and an active PTA Association.

**Significance of the Study**

The research on the advantages of just introducing a foreign language program for the younger students is growing with encouraging news. Foreign language instruction at an early age benefits students "cognitively and academically, contributes to the achievement of school multicultural goals, and can help meet the needs of the nation." (Met, 1991)

According to the research that Met reviewed, students who begin the study of a foreign language in early childhood score better on measured cognitive functioning than their peers who have not been exposed to a second language. Other research indicates that pre-adolescents are more receptive to learning about language and people of other cultures. They may be more likely than older students to develop positives cross-culture attitudes.
St. James Regional School is small and located in an area that has little exposure to foreign language in the community. None has been taught in the school in any formal setting. The lack of previous knowledge will be helpful in determining the effectiveness of the use of a FLES Program in the school.

**Organization of the Study**

In Chapter 2 there will be a review of the literature on the existing World Language Programs and a review of the types that are working in the elementary schools today.

In Chapter 3 the design of the study will be addressed. There will be a description of the research instruments, and the sampling groups. The data collection and analysis plan will also be explained.

Chapter 4 will present the research findings and Chapter 5 will describe the study's conclusions and implications on the FLES Program in St. James Regional Grammar School.
CHAPTER 2
Review of Literature

The purpose for this review of literature is three fold. First, to investigate the information on the benefits of introducing a world language to the students in elementary schools. Secondly, to find out what types of programs are available and which type would be beneficial to the students of St. James Regional School. The third reason is to find the type of program that will meet the requirements of the National Standards and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards for World Language in the elementary schools.

Of all the academic subjects taught in schools today, the one that is least likely to be found in the elementary school is foreign language. There is a consistent effort nationwide to improve our students reading, math and science skills. In the early grades less and less time is spent on art, music, physical fitness and play. Our limited resources are being spent on computers, testing and assessment tools, and materials to enhance the academic programs. Foreign language studies have been delegated to the high schools, if developed at all. (Wardle, 1992) Less attention had been given to the ability of our children to speak to the peoples of our ever shrinking global world.

There was a push for foreign language study in the elementary schools in the late 50’s and 60’s. The efforts over those years were not very successful. The students enrollment in both the elementary and the secondary foreign languages programs fell sharply during the 1970’s. Experts offer reasons such as cuts in the federal funds, shortages of qualified teachers, and a reneging of a commitment by the government to advance and support a foreign language program. (Black, 1993)
Other specialists fault educators for the demise of a foreign language program. They state that too little time was dedicated to instruction, not enough communication between elementary and secondary teachers, too sparse a rational and a disjointed curriculum helped cause the decline in the program. Support from parents eroded when parents and school leaders realized that the students were not achieving the results that they had been promised. Foreign language advocates had led people to believe that the students who began their studies in the elementary grades would eventually write and speak the language with proficiency. In reality, the students only mastered little more than basic numbers, colors and some key phrases. By 1978 these programs enrolled only about 15% of students in grades seven through twelve. (Black, 1993)

Today we are looking at the benefits of reintroducing a foreign language program to our students in the elementary schools. The federal government and many state governments are encouraging this reintroduction. The National Goals 2000 and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards both advocate a foreign language program in all the schools by the year 2000. Our Government has also realized the importance that foreign language and international studies can have on helping to improve our national security and diplomatic relationships. Foreign language programs that incorporate studies of the literature and cultures of other nations can expand and challenge the students horizons by providing new ideas or new ways of looking at old ideas. "International knowledge and effective cross-cultural communications are essential components of any effort to reduce tension, eliminate misunderstandings, and facilitate negotiations." (Edwards, 1992)

Self-esteem is now recognized as a critical partner for successful learning. Yet we continue to introduce a foreign language to the students in the secondary schools knowing that there is a high probability of failure. Some will learn, but few will retain any meaningful information. (Chase, 1997) Research has also promoted the idea that the more time students spend learning a foreign language, the more proficient they will
become. Students who study a foreign language in the early grades and continue through high school are more likely to approach or achieve mastery.

The research on the advantage of introducing a foreign language program for the younger students is growing with encouraging news. Foreign language instruction at an early age benefits students "cognitively and academically, contributes to the achievement of schools multicultural goals, and can help to meet the needs of the nation." (Met, 1991)

According to the research that Met reviewed, students who begin the study of a foreign language in early childhood score better on measured cognitive functioning than do their peers who have not been exposed to a second language. She also states that students in elementary foreign language programs have equaled or outperformed those in control groups on standardized achievement tests. This was also found to be true in the study done by Black. She found higher scores in reading, language arts, and mathematics. (Black, 1993, Met, 1991)

Other research indicates that pre-adolescents are more receptive to learning about languages and people of other cultures. They may be more likely than older students to develop positive cross-cultural attitudes. Learning a second language can expand a child's view of the world, its people and their cultures. It may even help encourage the development of better geography skills in our children. Studies reviewed by Wardle also state that children who study a foreign language show more creativity, divergent thinking, and a higher order thinking skill such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of materials. (Wardle, 1992)

Researcher Marianne Funsen, in the article by Black, reports that foreign language study prompts younger students to develop new language strategies. As students learn a new language, they also learn about language. The strange new words and sounds the students encounter represent "cognitive conflicts" that force students to try new ways of thinking and solving problems. These new skills can then be used in other subject area as
Researchers, according to Black, note that students transfer skills, especially memory and listening abilities from one language learning experience to another.

Once a student learns about language such as its symbols, forms and structures, they learn language more quickly. (Black, 1993) Beginning early also has the advantage of giving the student more time to develop higher level of skills in that language.

**Kinds Of Programs**

There are several different types of foreign language programs that an elementary school could adopt. They are generally classified into three categories: *Immersion* (total or partial), *FLES* and *FLEX*.

With the *Immersion Program*, all schooling is conducted in the foreign language. The total immersion program uses the foreign language from the first day of school. Everything is taught in that language only. Time is spent learning all subject matter taught in the foreign language. It is incorporated throughout the total curriculum. English would be introduced in the second or third grade and then there would be a gradual increase of the use of English up to 50% of the school day.

The goal of an immersion program is three fold. First, for the student to become functionally proficient in the foreign language. Second, to master subject content that is taught in the foreign language. Third, to acquire an understanding and appreciation for the foreign cultures.

The partial immersion program has instruction split 50% in English and 50% in the foreign language. Students learn to read and write in English first and in the foreign language later. The goals of this program are the same as that of the total immersion program.

The students who are taught in the total immersion program have outstanding results. They become highly fluent in speaking the language and in reading and writing it as well. The students in the partial immersion program do extremely well, but not to the extent that the total immersion students perform.
The next form of foreign language program is *FLES* or *FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL*. This program provides foreign language instruction anywhere from two to five times a week. The lessons are approximately 20 to 40 minutes long for each class period. The three goals for this type of program are first, to help the students acquire proficiency in listening and speaking. Secondly, a FLES program aims to develop rudimentary listening, reading and spelling skills. This will depend on the amount of time the program is allotted. The third goal of a FLES program is to help develop a knowledge of the culture and customs of the people who speak the foreign Language.

The third program is call *FLEX* or *FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE*. A FLEX program main objective is to help the student gain a general exposure to the language and culture, and learn a few basic words and phrases. Time may be spent sampling one or more languages or just learning about language. The hope is that the students will develop an interest in foreign language study for the future. Instruction is generally provided with 15 to 20 minute classes two or three times a week. This model serves as a good introduction to a more traditional foreign language instruction that takes place in the middle and upper grades.

**National Standard**

The National Standard for foreign language and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standard have the following components:

1. Communicate in languages other than English. The national standards describe communication competence as the "ability to convey and receive messages of many different types successfully." Skill include the arts of listening, speaking, and writing in a variety of cultural contexts.
2. Gain knowledge of other cultures. This entails understanding the attitudes, values and mindset created or adapted by members of a culture. This will help to avoid cultural misunderstandings and promote the learning of similarities and differences and help create global understanding.

3. Access new information and knowledge. Students should learn to use authentic documents and media. The access to the information highway will be a value to the exchange of first hand information.

4. Develop insight into our own language and culture. The process of learning another language can lead to increased ability to think critically, solve problems, tolerate ambiguity, and develop multiple perspectives.

5. Participate in multilingual communities and global society. The advances in communication media requires the ability to communicate directly and with cultural correctness. (VonVillas, 1997)

In order to comply with the National Goals 2000 each elementary school will have to make a choice on how to implement a foreign language program for their individual school. The type for program chosen will need to be evaluated based on the needs, resources and funding available. The lessons learned by the mistakes made in the past should help in the creation of a practical working curriculum and enable the program to lead our students to succeed.

The results of this literature review, in my opinion, makes it imperative for the Catholic Schools in New Jersey and in other states to keep abreast of this World Language goal for all their students. We need to continue our efforts to offer our students the same standard curriculum as the students in the public sector. The limited finances and personnel will be a factor in the choice of a world language program.

For St. James Regional School the introduction of a FLES Program will be instituted for the school year 1998-1999. It is a practical way and an affordable way to introduce a World Language Program to our students. The program will be introduced to
our Pre-School on a very limited bases and to the entire Kindergarten through 8th grade population.

"The early years are clearly the best time to learn a second language. To regain our competitiveness in the world marketplace, and to provide our future citizens with a better career choice, we must teach a second language in our schools, starting in pre-school." (Wardle, 1992)
CHAPTER 3
The Design of the Study

Description of the Research Design

This study took place at a small Catholic elementary school consisting of the students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. This school is located in a rural area of Salem County, New Jersey. There is little exposure to foreign language in the community and none has been taught in the school. This lack of previous knowledge was helpful in determining any effect of the FLES Program on the population of the school.

All of the students in Kindergarten through grade 8 took part in this Spanish language program. There are 153 students in the nine levels. The teacher in the school are Degreed and hold their New Jersey Certification in Elementary Education. None of the teacher have experience in teaching a second language.

All of the students were exposed to the same FLES Program. This program consists of video lessons, cassettes tapes, flash cards, and puppets. The lessons are 15 minutes in length and each lesson reviews and builds on the previous concepts before new information is introduced. The lesson can be reinforced by using the tapes, flashcards and teacher encouragement of conversations and practice of learned vocabulary. Little writing or reading skills are encouraged at this introductory level.

Development and Design of the Research Instruments

The development and the design of the research instruments were created by the FLES Language Committee and this intern. It was decided that several tools would be needed. There was a need to know what exposure the students already had to a second language. Also, a follow up to see if the students were using any of their new knowledge of Spanish at home. An instrument was needed for the teachers to use when observing their classes. They
would be looking for development of listening and speaking skills, as well as cultural awareness growth and interest levels. There was also a need to create a tool for the random interview questioning of teachers and students.

The following instruments were developed:

1. General questionnaire for parents sent out in October of 1998
2. Monthly review form for teachers for class evaluation
3. Progress survey for Parents.
4. Standard interview questions for students.

**Sample and Sampling Technique**

The students in kindergarten through grade 8 were the sample group for this project. There were 153 students enrolled at the time of this project. The age range is 5 through 16. The average class size is 17 students. There is one of each grade and one teacher for each class.

The students that were interviewed were picked at random with a minimum of 3 students from each grade picked at one time. Approximately 90% of the students were interviewed. The samples of students work that was submitted was also picked at random by the classroom teachers.

**Data Collection Approach**

The parents of the students were asked to complete a short questionnaire (see Appendix A) about previous knowledge of the Spanish language. This was used to help provide a base to scale the FLES Programs benefits. The teachers were asked to observe their students (see Appendix B) and discuss with the committee and this intern at a monthly meeting what has been observed on each grade level and to submit any work samples for evaluation. Students were observed and interviewed (see Appendix C) at random by this intern to tally usage of language skills, interest level and any increase of cultural awareness. The parents were issued a second survey to help track the students use of the language at home. (see Appendix D)
Data Analysis Plan

The data collected from the teachers, parent surveys, student interviews, classroom observations and teacher interviews were analyzed to learn if the students were responsive to the introduction of this FLES program. This intern was looking to see if the students had internalized any of the basic listening and speaking skills of the Spanish language. From the data gathered, this intern learned if the students were using the introductory lessons of Spanish for classroom use, and in everyday use while at school and at home. This intern was also looking for evidence that exposing younger students to a second language would help develop awareness of cultural diversity.
CHAPTER 4
Presentation of Research Findings

This study took place in a small Catholic School. There are approximately 93 families with 153 students enrolled in the school. All the students in Kindergarten through 8th grade took part in this project. The students were introduced to a FLES language program that was intended to expose them to basic conversational Spanish. The lessons were presented on a video using a teacher, puppets, and songs. The teacher in the video introduces basic phrases, numbers, colors and conversational vocabulary. The lessons were approximately 15 minutes long and could be presented once or twice a week. The classroom teacher was to reinforce learned vocabulary by encouraging the students to use Spanish words in the classroom and at home. The classroom teachers are not language teachers, most have no second language teaching experience.

Parent Survey

In order to determine the amount of exposure the students might already have to a foreign language, a parent survey (see Appendix A) was distributed. Of the 93 families involved there were 79 surveys returned, which is a response rate of approximately 84%. The following information was retrieved.

The first question asked, if English was the primary language in the home. 99% responded yes and 1% responded no. Question 2 asked for the primary language if the response to question one was no. The primary language in this one household was Spanish. The third question asked if the child was exposed to another language. The responses were: Daily 5%  Occasionally 15%  Seldom 23%  Never 53%.
The next two questions were posed to see by which family members and what languages the students were exposed to. The family members that had some influence on exposing the students to a foreign language were: Mother 25%, Father 15%, Grandparents 28%, and Friends 15%. Aunts, Uncle and Babysitters each received a 3% response.

There were seven different languages to which some of the students have been exposed. Five families have contact with Spanish. The following three languages had 2 families each with student contact. They were Italian, Korean and Polish. Portuguese, German and French each had one family contact.

The next question asked the parent to rate the students use of this second language. The responses were: Daily 0% Occasionally 5% Seldom 14% Never 81%.

The next series of questions were asked to see if the students could speak, read and write in the second language. The responses were all in the no or does not apply category.

The information received from this survey helped establish that the majority of the students in this school had little or no exposure to a second language. The students did not read, write or speak Spanish on a regular basis. The introduction of a Spanish FLES program could be the beginning of a student's knowledge of a language and the culture of its people.

Teacher Monthly Review

The information received from the classroom teachers helped this intern track the use of the FLES program in the individual classrooms. Each teacher was asked to report on a monthly basis on the progress of the class lessons. (see Appendix B) There were 6 basic questions that the teachers were asked to complete through their observations of their students.
The first question asked if the students were enjoying the lessons. Overall the teachers responded very positively to this question. They felt that the students over the four months reviewed did enjoy the lessons.

The second question asked if the material provide for them to guide the lessons for their classroom were easy to use. Here again all the teachers responded 100% in a positive note.

The third question asked if the teachers were reviewing the lessons and its vocabulary in the classroom. To this question 25% of the teachers responded to Sometimes, while 75% responded to Most Times. This changed as the months progressed. In February the response was 100% for Most Times.

The 4th question asked the teachers to observe if the students used any of their Spanish vocabulary in the class room. In the months of October and November the responses were evenly divided between the choices given of Seldom, Sometimes, and Most Times. By December and January the responses had changed to 59% for Sometimes and 50% for Most Times. The responses in February and March were 100% for Sometimes.

The teachers were also asked if they were assigning any homework or class work in Spanish. In the first several months of the program the answer was 100% no. By the December and January reports the response was beginning to change. 33% of the teachers were now assigning homework or project work on a Sometimes basis.

The final question that the teachers were asked to respond to was a question on cultural awareness. Through classroom observation the teacher was asked to rate the students display of an awareness of Spanish culture. This response was negative until December. During the months of December, January and February there was a small rise in the number of teachers that responded positively to this question. The teachers in the younger grades were beginning to see some cultural awareness. Students talked about
food, dress, and were beginning to acknowledge that there was more than just one Spanish speaking country.

The last section of this observation survey was an opportunity for the teachers to make open comment. Here, in the beginning, the teachers all made positive comments on how the students were interested and excited. During the third month the 6th, 7th and 8th grade teachers began to mention that the older students were losing interest in the tapes. They were commenting on how the tape lessons seemed too young for this age group of students.

These monthly reports from the classroom teachers, helped track the interest of the students. We learned that the younger students responded more enthusiastically and for a longer period than the older students. The teachers also played an important role in the interest level of the students. The grades that were involved in project, homework and more class review seemed to help keep the students interested in the FLES Program.

Students Interview

The students in all the grades were interviewed by this intern (see Appendix C) with a series of 10 questions. These were asked to find out the students' reaction to the Spanish FLES program, to see if the students were beginning to use some of the learned vocabulary and to see if the students were becoming aware of a different culture connected to the new language.

First, the students were asked if they liked the new Spanish lessons and to tell this interviewer something they liked and did not like about the class. The students in the younger grades K through 5 all responded in a very positive manner. They were eager to talk and tell about their classroom experiences. They each told several new words that they had learned and had very little negative comments. Many of the students expressed a wish that they had the lessons more often. The students in grades 6, 7 and 8 were positive in that they were learning something new, but though that the tapes were too
young for them. They also shared some basic conversation words and how to count and
say some of the colors in Spanish. Many of the students requested a textbook and a real
teacher for their classroom.

The next set of questions required the students to tell if they used any of the
Spanish words in the classroom and at home. Most of the students in the younger grades
were very free to tell the interviewer that they use the words in class and that they do try
at home. Many stated that their parents ask them to share what they had learned in school
when they come home. The older students again were not as positive as the younger
ones. They stated that they used little of the Spanish vocabulary in the classroom and
less at home. They again stated that they wished they had a textbook.

The last set of questions for the students interviews were to see if the concept of
cultural awareness was being tapped. The younger class again were eager to tell the
interviewer things that they had learned from the lessons on tape. They sang songs,
repeated words, told of food and clothing that were used by the Spanish people. The
older students shared the names of the many Spanish speaking countries but were not as
forthcoming with cultural information as the younger students. The older students
requested that they have more contact with people who could speak Spanish with them in
the classroom.

The information gained from these interviews relays that the younger the students,
the more interest and enthusiasm was generated for the FLES Spanish Program. The
older students were looking for the traditional means of book and workbook to aid them
in learning a new skill. They were more cautious and less curious to the new ideas being
presented through the taped lessons.
Parent Assessment

The final piece of information was a second parent survey sent out in March (see Appendix D). The survey consisted of 6 questions. There were 74 surveys returned from the 93 families in the school, which is an approximate rate of 80%.

The first question asked the parents if their student was starting to speak any Spanish. The responses were: No 8%, Sometimes 82%, Often 10%. The second question asked if the students were sharing any new Spanish vocabulary at home. The responses were: No 8% Sometimes 70% Often 22%.

Question three asked if the parents talked with their students about what they are learning in their Spanish classes. The responses were: No 1% Sometimes 43% Often 56%. The 4th question asked the parents if their child showed any excitement when discussing Spanish class at home. The responses were: No 9% Sometimes 56% Often 35% The 5th question asked the parents if they thought that their children showed any interest in learning more Spanish. The responses were: No 2% Sometimes 42% Often 56%.

The last question was asked to see if there were any family members who would have the time to visit school and speak with the students in Spanish. The results were positive from the few families that were capable.

The information from this survey showed that the students were beginning to learn and use, on a limited basis, some of the Spanish that they were learning from the FLES program in their classroom. The students were sharing the information at home and the parents were starting to be more involved with the students progress. This program was not intended to have the students speaking fluent Spanish in just a few short months. The program is intended to introduce and stimulated the students wish to learn. This program at this time seems to work better for the students in the younger grades, K through 5.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Conclusions

This project was established to see how a Spanish FLES Program would benefit the students in a small Catholic Elementary school. The students in Kindergarten through 8th grade were the subjects of this study. The FLES program consisted of a Spanish video series that would be used to present one 15 minute lesson once a week. The lesson would be reviewed and vocabulary reinforced by the classroom teachers.

The study seems to indicate that the program had a more beneficial influence on the younger students. This was evident in the student interviews and through the observations of the classroom teachers. The students in grade K through 5 were eager, enthusiastic, and willing to share information about what they had learned in class. This would seem to agree with present day research that the younger a child is exposed to a new language the easier it is for them to learn and the more they want to learn. The younger students in the interviews with this intern were very eager to share what they had learned and to try and engage a conversation with the limited vocabulary they had learned so far. This seemed to show that they were retaining and using the new language skills they acquired through listening and repeating the vocabulary in the classroom. The teachers observations affirmed this. The younger grade teachers stated that the students were very eager to have the lessons and even asked to have them more often.

This study seemed to indicate that the students in the upper grades, 6th, 7th and 8th, were not as open minded about the language lessons and were more comfortable learning with the traditional method such as textbooks and worksheets. The older students also made a request for a real live Spanish teacher to be in the classroom instead
of the video teacher. Despite this drawback, they did learn. They shared vocabulary that they had been exposed to, but they were not as open during their interviews or forthcoming with their acquired knowledge.

Another aspect of the study was to see if exposing younger students to a new language and its culture would aid the students in tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. This project seemed to be making a very slight inroad to this probability. The students were beginning to talk about different countries that spoke Spanish. They were surprised to learn that there are over 20 different countries that do speak Spanish. The older students were able to name at least 6 different countries on an average. The younger students could name at least three. The students at both age levels did mention customs, foods, and different types of clothing as new things that they learned about Spanish Culture from the taped lessons. They seemed to realize that some things were different than what they experience in their own homes. This would seem to indicate that with more time, the understanding of a different culture could be explained and possibly accepted.

Implications

The implications of this study would seem to suggest that the introduction of a FLES Program on the population of an elementary school could be successful. The students at this early age seemed to embrace the newness of the ideas of learning a second language. They showed a willingness to learn more, and a general enthusiasm for the task.

One of the major problems that surfaced during this project was the obvious age limitations of this particular FLES Program. This program seemed to benefit the students in the primary and intermediate grade levels. The junior high students found it somewhat immature. This did not stop them from learning and using some basic new language skills, but it did hamper their enthusiasm which could impede their retention and use of this new skill. For this program to be successful for this age group a different more age appropriate program should be investigated.
Further Study

This study was conducted over a short period of time and with a very small population. A FLES Program is intended to introduce very limited and basic language abilities. It is used to help develop listening and speaking skills. It also seems to help introduce students to a culture that is different from their own. This could possibly lead to a better understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity.

The possible effects on English language skills and achievements in other subject areas would seem to be open for further study.

Research indicated that students will do better with foreign languages skills in high school if they are exposed during their early formative years. Also the earlier students accept that there is more than one way to think and live, the more tolerance for diversity they develop. For these benefits to be truly evaluated, the students should be tracked over a longer period of time.
References


APPENDIX A

INITIAL PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Parents and Guardians,

This survey is to help us evaluate the new Spanish Program introduced to our students this year. Please answer the questions and return to school. Thank you for your cooperation.

My child is in grade ____________

1. Is English the primary language spoken in your home?
   
   Yes          No

2. If you answered number 1 no, what is the primary language spoken?

   __________________________

3. Is your child exposed to a second language?

   Daily   Occasionally   Seldom   Never

5. Who in the family speaks this second language?

   Mother, Father, Grandparents, other ________________

4. Does your child use this second language?

   Daily   Occasionally   Seldom   Never

5. Can your child speak this language fluently?

   Yes   No   Does not apply

6. Can your child read in this language?

   Yes   No   Does not apply

7. Can your child write in this language?

   Yes   No   Does not apply
TEACHER MONTHLY REPORT

Teacher_________________________ Date_____________________

Grade______________ Lessons Completed_____________________

Please circle appropriate month of this report.

REVIEW of OCT. NOV. DEC. JAN. FEB. MAR. APR. MAY JUN.

1. Did the students enjoy the lessons? yes no

2. Was the material easy to use? yes no

3. Are you reviewing the lessons and vocabulary as a class?
   seldom sometimes most times always

4. Are the students asked to use Spanish words in the classroom?
   seldom sometimes most times always

5. Are the students assigned any Spanish homework?
   seldom sometimes most times always

6. Are the students working on any projects in relation to understanding the Spanish culture?
   yes no

If yes, please describe the project

COMMENTS

CONCERNS
1. How do you like the Spanish class?

2. Tell me something that you have learned?

3. What do you like about the lessons?

4. What do you dislike about the lessons?

5. Do you use any of the Spanish words you are learning in school?

6. Do you use any at home?

7. What countries do you know that speak Spanish?

8. Have you learned anything about Spanish speaking people?

   What?

9. How would you improve the lessons?

10. Anything you wish to tell me?
APPENDIX D

PARENT ASSESSMENT SURVEY
SPANISH SURVEY

Please circle the answer which applies

1. Are your St. James Regional School children speaking any Spanish?
   No  Sometimes  Often

2. Are your children sharing new vocabulary with you?
   No  Sometimes  Often

3. Do you ask your child to share what they are learning?
   No  Sometimes  Often

4. Do your children show excitement when discussing Spanish Class?
   No  Sometimes  Often

5. Do your children show interest in learning more?
   No  Sometimes  Often

6. Could you or someone you know come into school to share knowledge of the Spanish Language and/or Culture with the students?
   No  Yes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BIOGRAPHICAL DATA</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **High School**        | Archbishop Prendergast  
                        | Drexel Hill, PA |
| **Undergraduate**      | Bachelor of Arts  
                        | Social Science  
                        | Elementary Education  
                        | Neumann College(OLA)  
                        | Aston, PA |
| **Graduate**           | Master of Arts  
                        | School Administration  
                        | Rowan University  
                        | Glassboro, NJ |
| **Present Occupation** | Principal  
                        | St. James Regional School  
                        | Penns Grove, NJ |