

Foreign Language Assistance Program: 2004-06

EA06-194-4

At a Glance

Languages: Russian & Spanish
Grade levels: Pre-K – 12 grades

Enhancing Education Through Distance Learning: Russian & Spanish is designed to establish, enhance, and expand delivery of basic to advanced foreign language instruction of Russian and Spanish to students on diverse campuses in the Dallas Independent School District. This project maximizes resources by providing students with foreign language instruction primarily through distance learning, or video instruction, with the support of the district's teachers who are facilitators in these classrooms. The program was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; the amount set for the evaluation was \$3,000.

Program Goals

- Students will develop listening and speaking skills in a second language: Russian or Spanish.
- Spanish curriculum will be developed and videos produced for pre-k and third grades.
- *Russian World* and *Nuevos Amigos* enrollment will increase as new grade levels are added each year.

Program Description

The Five C's approach is taken in teaching these languages using the National Foreign Language Standards, *A Texas Framework for Languages Other Than English*, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)*. This approach, which includes **communications**, **cultures**, **connections**, **comparisons** and **communities**, is stressed for both languages at all grade levels.

Spanish. *Nuevos Amigos*, a Lone Star Emmy-nominated program, brings Spanish language instruction to English-speaking students in the elementary grades through a fun and interactive manner. This video program is targeted to English-speaking students who learn Spanish as a second language, but it also benefits Spanish-

speaking students who want to maintain and/or improve their native language skills.

Russian. *Russian World*, a Russian I-III distance learning program, was produced and implemented in selected Dallas ISD high schools eight years ago. Each level is a one-year fully developed for-credit course for students in grades 9-12. The distance learning television/video instructor is the primary teacher and the teachers in the classrooms are the facilitators who guide their students and learn the language along with them. Students watch three 30-minute video lessons per week; they complete the activities in their workbooks and *Russian for Everybody* textbooks; they interact with a native Russian speaker via weekly telephone conversation classes to practice and re-enforce their language skills; and they take tests and quizzes after each chapter lesson. Two out-of-district schools also participate in this program since it is difficult for them to find certified teachers of Russian in their own districts.

The elementary Russian program is interdisciplinary. Students not only learn the language but they learn about Russian culture, art, music, dance, social studies and geography. Students in grades 4-6 are taught by an on-site Russian language teacher, but the teacher also supplements the curriculum using six district-produced cultural videos including *Russian Folk Art and Dance*, *Russian Impressionism: 1930-1980*, and *History of Russia: Parts I & II*.

Since participation in both the Russian and Spanish programs is voluntary, presentations were made at principals' meetings and schools to encourage participation and expansion of the programs.

Performance Measures

- At the end of each project year, 80% of the students will demonstrate increased understanding and awareness of the Russian language as measured by a

locally developed pre- and post-test of early language acquisition skills.

- Annually, 80% of the students will demonstrate increased understanding and awareness of Russia as measured by a locally developed pre- and post-test of basic Russian geography and history and oral presentations.
- Scripts and curriculum were written and developed with 100% completion for third grade and pre-k *Nuevos Amigos* by the end of the first and second project years.
- The project will provide information about the Spanish and Russian distance learning programs to other local education agencies through brochures, website, promotional videos/DVDs, etc.
- Students will demonstrate an increased understanding and awareness of the Spanish language as measured by a locally developed pre-and post-test of basic Spanish language.

Professional Development Activities

Fifty-five teachers attended a two-hour training workshop in the fall to learn how to implement the *Nuevos Amigos* program and curriculum into their lesson plans. Teacher training was provided for each grade level separately from kindergarten through second grades. The distance learning teacher led the facilitators through a step-by-step video lesson. Since the curriculum goes above and beyond the video lessons to include enrichment activities, teachers will be able to extend these lessons to include culture, art, music, dance, geography, etc. Note: Videos and curriculum for the pre-k and 3rd grade levels were developed in 2004-06.

Teachers in the *Russian World* classes have facilitated these classes for several years, so they received updated information and training as needed. They attended conferences including Texas Distance Learning Association (TXDLA), Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT), and Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA), to keep abreast of current distance learning and/or foreign language strategies.

Outcomes

The *Nuevos Amigos* enrollment in Grades K-2 totaled 4,462 in 2004-05, including 2,162 students in Grade K; 1,265 in Grade 1; and

1,035 in Grade 2. Year one determined the baseline for *Nuevos Amigos*' enrollment; future comparisons in enrollment will be made using this baseline.

Elementary students began their Russian program studies in Grade 4 at McNair Elementary and Grade 5 at Marsalis Elementary. A middle school component will be added in 2006-07.

Certified elementary teachers developed and wrote the curriculum in 2004-06 and aligned it with the TEKS/TAKS and the district's learning standards in social studies curriculum for *Nuevos Amigos* pre-k and third grades. From this curriculum scripts were developed and written for the video lessons.

New Spanish vocabulary words were introduced in each lesson and kept in the students' Spanish journals. Depending on the grade level, students learned about the history and culture of different Spanish-speaking countries and wrote short compositions about what they learned in each lesson using as much Spanish as possible. (Videos and curriculum for kindergarten through second grades were previously developed and produced.)

Russian World and *Nuevos Amigos* have increased students' awareness of the existence of a country that is not their native or adopted country; students have developed listening and speaking skills in Spanish or Russian through the exposure of content-based video lessons.

In the study of the Russian language, the results of a post-test showed that 83% of the 98 students enrolled in the elementary Russian classes demonstrated an increased understanding and awareness of Russian history, geography and culture. These students also perform annually as a Russian choir at the Russian American Center's *Russian Winter Festival* at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. In 2005 they performed at the joint conferences of SWCOLT and TFLA.

Russian World and *Nuevos Amigos* are broadcast on Dallas Schools Television's cable channels to the Dallas ISD schools and throughout the City of Dallas to cable subscribers.