

The Reaching for PASS in Second Languages The Pre-Service Alignment Project

We ask that you please take time to read this document.

Attached is a copy of the Final Report and Recommendations of the Reaching for PASS in Second Languages Project recently submitted to the Oregon System of Higher Education (OSSHE).

The mission of the "Reaching for PASS in Second Languages Project" was to establish, at the pilot level, the beginning sequence of courses for training second language teachers to teach effectively within Oregon's new standards-based system.

This project, funded by an Eisenhower grant through OSSHE, was broken into four phases. Each phase included collaborative working groups of foreign/second language instructors from all levels K-16.

These phases included:

Phase I - a one-day symposium attended by K-16 second language teachers who discussed and drafted several documents regarding basic issues in second language instruction. Among these were: preparation of language teachers - especially outlining knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to teach in a standards-based system - resources, articulation, curriculum, inservice needs, and recommendations for university course curricula. These documents became the basis of the work which followed.

Phase II - a "design team" of foreign/second language teachers K-16 developed a draft set of teacher proficiencies, indicators, experiences, and assessment methods and timelines for language pedagogy training.

Phase III - using the teacher proficiencies and indicators, another "design team" of foreign/second language teachers K-16 developed course modules which would make up the three-course curriculum for basic second language teacher training.

Phase IV - The three pilot courses were field-tested at Portland State University and University of Oregon during the 1996/97 academic year.

Upon reading this document, it is evident that the Reaching for PASS (RFP) Project has identified numerous issues which can only be addressed through systemic change. We invite your comments, recommendations, suggestions, anecdotes regarding these issues. Also let us know if you would be willing to serve on a committee to address these issues.

Please send comments to:

RFP Comments, c/o COFLT, P.O. Box 111, Salem, Oregon 97308-0111

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If you would like a complete copy of the document including the Reports from the May 29, 1995 Symposium, the Teacher Proficiencies and Indicators, Course Modules, etc., please send a \$5.00 check made out to Portland Public Schools to: Mary Bastiani, Portland Public Schools, 8020 N.E. Tillamook, Portland, OR 97213.

Reaching for PASS in Second Languages Findings and Recommendations

As one of the participants who attended all three pilot courses pointed out - *Change takes time*. For teachers going through a curriculum renewal or change process, that time can vary immensely.

The three courses of the Reaching for PASS Project piloted at Portland State University appeared to have two types of participants - current teachers working in classrooms and graduate students who for the most part were not planning to teach in the K-12 system. By contrast, the courses offered at UofO seemed to have been attended by more pre-service and no in-service teachers and again, graduate students (GTA's) who probably will not teach in the K-12 system.

Each of these populations of teachers has varying needs. By and large the GTA's, with pressure to start teaching beginning level classes at the university, tend to be most interested in activities they can immediately use with students. Their desire for gaining an understanding of methods seemed to be limited. It is more of an attitude of "give me what I can use in class tomorrow..." Pre-service teachers, on the other hand, appear to be the budding professionals very interested in building a knowledge base, gaining some experience, and getting their portfolio in order. The in-service teachers in the pilot project had as much to offer as they had to gain. Their years of classroom experience was invaluable when discussing issues and developing activities. Their influence on GTA's, pre-service teachers, and their colleagues was appreciated.

By having these three very diverse populations in a pilot course designed for pre-service teachers, some very insightful information was gained. Also, in the process of implementing these courses several problematic issues came to light. These are delineated below along with some suggested recommendations.

1. **Changes at Higher Ed:** It appears to be the consensus of the foreign/second language community involved in this project that if a permanent curriculum in PASS-oriented teacher training is to come about then current programs and policies at higher education need to seriously be re-examined.

Current offerings tend to stand as roadblocks to the development of programs for foreign/second language teacher training. The majority of language departments are very focused on literature with little recognition or value placed on the role of pedagogy. This attitude not only affects courses which are offered by language departments, it plays a significant role in hiring practices. These practices tend to be perpetuated in promotions and tenure decisions.

Deciding how to staff even the pilot courses for 1996-97 was difficult at best. Regular language-department faculty involved with the grant project lacked expertise and knowledge in several areas of the new curriculum. Therefore, in order to carry out the current project, help from adjunct faculty, colleagues in other departments, and consultants paid by honoraria were used. Currently both UofO and PSU language departments allocate less than 1.0 FTE to teach all systematic pedagogical training. When vacancies occur they are described

in terms of specialization in literary scholarship, and are thus filled preferentially for Ph.D. programs in literature. At the present time at PSU there is not a single tenure-track person in the Foreign Language Department whose formal specialization is pedagogy at any level, much less in the early-learner pedagogy which will become more and more important in the next years of PASS.

Unfortunately, this value-laden recognition of the importance of literature and lack of value on pedagogy appears to become self-perpetuating when graduate students internalize this same belief.

2. **Teacher-Educator Training:** Whether they are tenured, non-tenured or adjunct faculty, teacher-educators need additional training to gain the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to train teachers for a standards-based system. Teacher-educators involved in this pilot project expressed anxiety regarding training future teachers for foreign language instruction in several areas. One area of much concern was appropriate instruction at the K-5 level. Possible topics for workshops could include: elementary program models; rationale; articulation; appropriate methods and materials for elementary school; the nature of the elementary school learner; children's literature; and the nature of the elementary school curriculum. It is viewed that the best way to gain some of this knowledge and experience would be through specific workshops and experiences in the field.

Another area of concern which eludes most teacher-educators is second language acquisition theory. Although this has traditionally been a requirement for ESL or bilingual education, it has not been a part of foreign language teacher training. A third area of great concern is cross-curricular, integrated, and/or content-based instruction. These concepts are very "foreign" not only to second language teacher-educators, but to classroom teachers as well. Although Oregon has many years of experience with immersion programs where content is the focus of instruction and the second language is the vehicle, this idea has been slow to move into traditional courses. The participants in the spring term course at PSU which focused on content-based instruction were energized and very enthusiastic about this shift. The course was structured to provide them with substantial time and opportunities to interact, discuss with others, and receive feedback.

Just as teachers need opportunities to dialogue with each other, develop curricular materials, and/or share materials, so do teacher-educators.

Additionally, it was felt that universities need to have OPI evaluators in the various languages who are qualified to assess the language proficiency of prospective teachers and teachers working on their "standard" certification. This does not appear to be the case at the present time.

3. **In-service Training Needs:** The Reaching for PASS Project was designed to be a pre-service course, but it was very apparent that the serious need for in-service training in methods, assessment, and development of curriculum

materials is tremendous. In-service teachers who attended the PSU pilot course expressed gratitude at the opportunity to learn classroom strategies which promote proficiency and assessment techniques. Additionally, we found most teachers anxious to move away from their textbooks and use teacher-made units of instruction provided they had time to develop them and feedback in the process. Collaboration with colleagues with input or feedback from a teacher-educator (mentor) seemed to work very well.

It will be necessary for in-service programs to be flexible and recognize that teachers will differ in their needs, experiences, attitudes, skills, and knowledge. It can be recognized that the majority of in-service teachers will need assessment training, but they may differ vastly in their need for proficiency-based methods. Judging by the wide spectrum of knowledge, skills and experiences of the teachers in the pilot courses - which ranged from those with no knowledge of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines or any concept of proficiency-based instruction to those who were in the process of redesigning their own curriculum to move students up the proficiency scales - a wide variety of in-service workshops and/or courses may be necessary for some time to come. Perhaps a good approach to this diversity of needs would be to survey teachers to find out what their priorities might be.

Having access to resources in the form of information and models of good practice will be essential. Developing a list of teachers who regularly use proficiency-based techniques and demonstrate best practices in second languages would be invaluable. Opportunities to observe master teachers is highly recommended for in-service and should be a requirement for pre-service teachers. When observations are not possible, videotapes of proficiency-oriented classrooms and testing techniques should be established. Resources are and should continue to be posted on the internet. A mechanism to encourage teachers to submit curricular materials and activities for proficiency-oriented classrooms should be established and encouraged along with providing opportunities to share materials at in-service workshops.

4. **Proficiency:** Teachers need ongoing opportunities and appropriate courses/experiences to continue their personal language proficiency development. The need for an ACTFL Advanced level of proficiency in all modalities was seen as an absolute minimum requirement. In 1996, the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) came out with the recommendation that *"It is highly recommended that modern foreign language teachers possess a minimum oral proficiency level of Advanced on the ACTFL/ETS proficiency scale."*

It was felt by the taskforce working on the proficiencies and from feedback by COFLT that every preservice teacher should be given a full Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and reading/writing assessment by a qualified evaluator as a part of the admissions requirements to the College of Education. This baseline assessment would be used to develop the student's course of study. If the student is below the ACTFL Advanced level, coursework and experiences

would be included as a part of the student's requirements to bring their level of proficiency up to the Advanced level.

For teachers who already possess a "basic" teaching certificate, the requirement for the Advanced level proficiency could become a part of their professional development plan to receive the "standard" certificate. Documentation should be required.

Equally important are opportunities to improve teachers' cultural knowledge. Weekend retreats and summer workshops could be established to provide opportunities for teachers unable to travel to target language countries.

- 5. **Program Issues:** - Further work needs to be done regarding the issues of articulation. Articulation is a very significant issue when moving students along a language learning continuum whether it be from elementary through university or at the minimum from high school through university. Administrators and teachers at the varying levels need opportunities for program planning.
- 6. **Training for Administrators:** Not only do administrators need to understand the performance standards in second languages, they need to know what is involved in getting students to those standards. This knowledge includes program offerings, articulation of programs, appropriate instruction, assessment, and program evaluation. With this information, they would be better informed to support the classroom teachers in developing programs which will lead to student success.
- 7. The Reaching for PASS Project pilot courses should be regarded as minimum training in standards-based pedagogy for language teachers.