



NJDOE News

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Four New Jersey School Districts Receive Grants to Increase Instruction in 'Critical Languages'

Four New Jersey school districts will be sharing more than \$500,000 in grant funds over the next three years under the federal National Security Language Initiative. The districts will use the funds to address the shortage of critical foreign language speakers by supporting new and expanded world languages programs.

"New Jersey school districts, which have among the most diverse racial and ethnic student enrollments in the nation, are prime locations to stimulate student interest in learning critical languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Farsi and Russian," said Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "We believe the programs funded by these grants will contribute to an increase in the number of foreign language speakers in languages deemed critical to the global economy."

Three of the four New Jersey districts receiving funding will implement programs in Mandarin Chinese. Synopses of the districts' grant projects follow:

- East Windsor Regional School District will create a dual language immersion program in Spanish that includes a summer professional development institute for elementary teachers. Dual language immersion programs have a proven track record in fostering high achievement levels in English and another language. Children enrolled in dual language immersion programs often surpass their monolingual peers in tests of basic skills in English language arts and math, while developing proficiency in a second language.
- Fair Lawn will begin a Mandarin Chinese program in grade five in each of the district's six elementary schools, building on the district's existing K-5 French and Spanish programs. The ultimate goal is to prepare interested students to participate in an advanced placement Mandarin program. Fair Lawn will work with the Asian Studies Department at William Paterson University for cultural support and staff development. Classroom instruction will be further enhanced through problem based learning tasks with sister schools in China via International Education and Resource Network projects.
- Northern Valley Regional School District, serving students from Closter, Demarest, Harrington Park, Haworth, Northvale, Norwood and Old Tappan, will create a Chinese language program aligned with both national and state standards. This program will initially serve secondary students and later expand to the elementary schools that send students to the district's secondary schools. In addition, the district is launching an interdisciplinary Asian studies program that will include the study of history, literature and art to enhance Chinese instruction and integrate international knowledge and skills into the curriculum.
- Vernon Township Public Schools will begin language instruction in Mandarin Chinese in the fall of 2007 in kindergarten and in grade nine. The project calls for eventual expansion of the program through all grade levels. This project complements the district's existing commitment to international education. Recently 19 students spent three weeks in China learning about the Chinese language, culture and the education system.

In related news, the Linden School District recently announced receipt of \$75,000 in funding from the Italian American Committee on Education for a significant expansion of its Italian language program. The current program includes study abroad opportunities for students and professional development opportunities for teachers.