

# Meeting Minutes

Longfellow PTO General Meeting  
January 16, 2018  
Longfellow Media Center

- I. Meeting called to order by Nikki Richardson, PTO Co-President, at 7:12pm
  - Quorum met
  
- II. Foreign Language Elementary Schools Presentation (Senora Lynch & Senorita Ojeda)
  - Senora Lynch
    - 11<sup>th</sup> year teaching at Longfellow
    - Masters in school administration & has started to present at conferences – TPRS, a methodology used to teach elementary students
    - Grew up learning Spanish from parents
  - Senorita Ojeda
    - First year in District 97
    - Bachelors & Masters from NIU
    - Learned Spanish at home & through travelling
    - Has teacher endorsement in Spanish
    - Teaches at several elementary schools in D97
  - FLES
    - One of first schools in the country to have a FLES program
    - In our district, ended up having a new foreign language program in 2005.
    - For younger kids, Spanish is 3x a week for 30 minutes & shifts to 2x a week for 33 minutes in grades 3-5.
    - District provides language for all students.
  - Language Learning
    - Every year they teach about language proficiencies
      - Start at novice low level at kindergarten & when students leave, they want them to be at novice high /intermediate low
      - Novice Low: The Parrot
        - Repeat single words/short phrases heard/greet others/recognize some words that have heard/give name; name a few things around me
      - Novice Mid: The Toddler
        - Combine different words and phrase they've heard; introduce myself; adding words together; ask simple questions; list things
      - Novice High: The Fighter
        - Words, phrases & short sentences; describe surrounds and people; give opinions; ask simple questions; read/listen and understand main ideas
    - Difference between learning before (when parents were growing up) and now
      - Then: certificate 6-12; dills, lists, translations, book centered

- Now: Certificate k-12; organic natural approach; no translations; thematic units centered
  - We have to remember that...
    1. That our students are young children.
    2. That our students only learn Spanish three times a week for 30 minutes (K-2) or 2x a week of 30 minutes (grades 3-5).
    3. That any activity we create must be interesting and comprehensible for our students.
  - Philosophy
    - We want our student to:
      1. LOVE studying a foreign language
      2. LOVE learning Spanish
      3. Develop a range of skills necessary for becoming proficient in any foreign language, such as using learning strategies and dealing with “foreign” situations
      4. Develop good communication skills for any situation, such as interpreting words in context, and using communication strategies.
      5. Feel comfortable speaking in Spanish
      6. Develop knowledge of other cultures
  - Therefore we use
    1. Methodology based on using immersion using comprehensible input, teaching language in context using TPRS (teaching proficiency and reading through storytelling), cooperative learning groups, communicate task-driven activities, and by collaboration with teachers & staff throughout the school.
    2. Establish a friendly, low-stress, yet disciplined classroom so that everyone has a safe environment in which to learn.
    3. Encourage students to use Spanish whenever possible
    4. Give our students “hints” if they have trouble remembering a word
    5. Create lessons that incorporate language, culture, comparisons & subject area content
    6. Introduce students to a variety of cultural games, items, crafts, songs, holidays & customs.
  - What do the students learn?
    - The FLES Curriculum is based on the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. There are 5 main goals: Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.
- Curriculum (see grade-level handouts)
  - They are re-looking at their curriculum this summer to make sure it is more aligned with TPRS since it is five years old.
  - Can email parents the curriculum if they are interested.
- Foreign Language Week is March 4-10
  - Looking to get families involved – bring in presenters or readers
- How parents can help
  1. Ask your child about what they are learning in Spanish class.

2. Bilingual books read together. The Oak Park Public Library has an excellent selection of Spanish and Bilingual books.
  3. YouTube search for your child's favorite cartoon in Spanish
  4. MUSICA -- listen to music in Spanish. Many of the songs we use can be found online.
  5. MUZZY – Access this award winning language program for free through OP Public Library resources.
  6. The National Museum of Mexican Art – Immerse yourself in Mexican art & culture at this amazing museum in Pilsen.
  7. Speak – Use any Spanish you know with your child, no matter how little! Learning another language takes a very long time so every bit of reinforcement helps!
  8. Movies when watching a movie at home, change the audio and/or subtitles to Spanish!
  9. APPS – Download a language app to use with your child (Duolingo is also part of OP Public Library...but be aware of the chat room feature)
  10. FLIP – Additional exposure through Spanish classes offered here at Longfellow!
- A few last facts
    - It takes 240 hours to improve in Spanish & our students only have class 60 or 90 mins a week
    - On average, students need to hear the word 100 times before they can effectively and efficiently produce the word.
    - Most of our students are novice learners and therefore they need context, visuals, and familiar contexts to help them communicate, and they do so best with those accustomed to interacting with language learners.
    - Spanish is the mother tongue of approximately 350 million people in 21 countries
  - Questions
    - What is the proficiency level when they finish with?
      - Want them to be at novice high or intermediate low when they leave. It depends what the students come in at.
    - What happens when they go to middle school?
      - There is a shift in middle school with IB program. Right now there is not much of a connection with them - Hope the district will allow us to do that. We have recommended students to jump into higher levels, but right now there is not a test.
      - Lincoln students go to Brooks, so those students do take a test or automatically begin at a higher level. For Longfellow, there are no accommodations unless it is a special circumstance. When they get to Spanish 1 at the middle school, then they have more traditional curriculum learning verb tenses, etc.
      - The teachers are really hoping to bridge that gap – we could use parents to advocate for that connection. Hoping that the administration will streamline that.

- Fourth and fifth graders read books in Spanish. The books are scaffolded by the teacher. They do mini-stories for the little kids.
- Social Media
  - Twitter @d97Spanish @SraMlynch
  - Facebook D97Spanish
  - Website <http://d97spanish.weebly.com>

### III. FLIP Program (Kim Plaxton, FLIP Program Coordinator)

- Parents can join a group run by Dawn Deaton who is at Whittier – the D97 World Language Advisory Committee. Can participate & make sure concerns are being heard.
- Longfellow Foreign Language Instruction Program (FLIP) started in the mid-80s. Offer French, German and Spanish. The German teacher was one of the first teachers who started FLIP. There has often been a parent coordinator & then 3-4 teachers who have taught the various classes.
- Two levels of Spanish, basically broken down k-2, 3-6 grades, but kids who come in with preschool/childcare experiences can be moved up. French & German each have one level. FLIP had 31 students seven years ago, with our high at 43; at 37 this year.
- It is before school in the morning from 7:25-7:55am. French goal is to make it fun & make it practical, along with cultural things here and there.
- The extra reinforcement really makes a huge difference. They can carry it on to the middle & high schools – eases their transition. It is good for the brain!
- Ties it back to geography, math, language -- has them find local places with French names (e.g., Des Plaines, Marquette, & La Grange)
- Contributes to understanding issues of diversity & to analytical skills.
- Questions:
  - At this age, should I also put my first graders in something else besides FLIP or is that good at this point?
    - You want to be at this language level. You don't want to overwhelm him.
  - When is FLIP taught?
    - End of September to beginning of April, with a performance at the end
    - Twice a week

### IV. Principals Report (Mrs. Cahill, Assistant Principal)

- In the midst of winter benchmarking window: AIMSWeb, MAP testing
- 5 Essentials – a Parent Survey to give input to Longfellow. In order for our results to be compiled, we have to meet a minimum of 20% participation. We are at 10% right now.
- Revamped our digital backpack – now called the Longfellow Weekly News to be consistent with how district is doing it. It is an email with a link to our website. Limits a little of what we can share. Broadens our audience to the whole community.
- Cold weather procedures: When we look at the wind chill or real feel. When wind chill is in single digits, we are indoors. This practice is not consistent across the district. They used research to guide the decisions. During lunch recess, they are out there for 30

minutes, so they want to make sure they are playing it safe. Class recess is about 15 minutes, so that is up to classroom teachers whether to go outside.

- V. Motion to approve September general PTO meeting minutes by Jennie Hill & 2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Cindy Wolthusen. **Motion passed.**

VI. Executive Board Announcements

- Co-President Nikki Richardson
  - Carnival – presale tickets are available. \$600 in sales are already made. There are unlimited game bands (minus the balloon guy & food).
  - Art Night is Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>
- VP of Community Stephanie Fojas
  - Teacher Luncheon February 8<sup>th</sup>
  - Someone from the library is going to come to End of Year Picnic to get kids excited about summer reading program.
- VP of Diversity Camile Lindsay Kumi
  - Longfellow Diversity Committee events – these are open to the community
    - Teach Us All is on Monday January 22<sup>nd</sup> (documentary on schools in America & a panel after that including our Principal Angela Dolezal); there will be childcare available
    - Karen Thomas is coming Feb 15<sup>th</sup> talking about transracial adoption & racial identity
    - Harambe February 23<sup>rd</sup> – this year we will have the Beye Gospel Choir
- VP of Communications Diane Wendt Uher
  - Volunteers needed for Science Night tomorrow night – still need 3 more. (6-7:30pm)
  - Book Fair is another place we need volunteers.
- Co-Treasurer Jessica Gavlin
  - Copies of budget provided as handouts. Overall doing very well. Good shape cash-wise to get us through the rest of the year. We got our tax returns filed. We are in the process of switching to the Community Bank of Oak Park/River Forest.

VII. Comments

- Reading night – great idea to have parents come in to read & have them represent different countries and continents.
  - Would be helpful to make it clearer which classes/readings were happening at what times.
- Last General PTO meeting will be in May – we will have elections then, so consider joining. We always love ideas.
- Super Summer Math – we will need someone to help coordinate that.
- Thank you Kim Plaxton for coordinating FLIP!

- VIII. Meeting adjourned at 8:26pm by Nikki Richardson

Upcoming dates:

1/17 Science Night

1/22 Teach Us All Screening/Discuss

1/26 No School/Institute Day

1/30 Mathathon Donations Due

2/5-9 Parent Teacher Conf

2/2-9 Book Fair

2/8 Teacher Appreciation Lunch

2/10 Winter Carnival

2/13 Spring Pictures

2/19 No School/Presidents Day

2/23 Harambee

3/16 ALL Classes End

3/20 No School

3/22 Art Night

3/26-3/30 Spring Break

Meeting notes compiled by Michelle Mangan, Recording Secretary

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