



Paint Branch High School World Language Program



Foreign Language Courses at Paint Branch

Paint Branch currently offers three modern foreign languages: French, Japanese, and Spanish. French is offered at levels 1 through 6 and AP Language. Spanish is offered 1-5 and Japanese 1-4. Honors courses begin at level 3. For further information contact the foreign language department at Paint Branch by phone (301-388-9940) or by e-mail to: Resource Teacher, Megan_S_Tomas@mcpsmd.org

Course Objectives / Instructional Approach

The curriculum framework for levels 1 through 3 in French and Spanish is organized thematically and follows a set of performance indicators that state what students should know and be able to do at each level of instruction. These performance guidelines meet the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. Some of the thematic topics that students cover include community and professions, personal/biographical information, school and pastimes, weather, travel, food, family and interpersonal relationships, shopping and numbers, the environment, health and fitness, geography, social occasions and holidays, and current events. In levels 4-6, themes are broader – identity, creativity, discovery, change – and include such topics as cultural and ethnic diversity, systems of government, the impact of technology and science, architecture, film, theater, literature, philosophy, everyday life, career awareness and contemporary issues. Students of Japanese study the same thematic units in their program of studies in addition to studying Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji.

Teachers use a variety of resources and teaching approaches to meet varied student interests and abilities. Differentiated instruction recognizes students' learning styles, strengths and interests. Students are actively involved in language learning through teaching strategies such as large and small group instruction, pair and group communicative activities, class discussions, individual projects, dramatizations, and games. Thinking and reasoning skills are enhanced as the students learn to negotiate meaning through two-way interpersonal exchanges, one-way negotiation with text (*interpretive communication*), and one-way expression of content and perspective (*presentational oral and written communication*).

High School Graduation and College Entrance Requirements

To graduate from high school, students must earn 2 credits of a foreign language, 2 credits of advanced technology education, or they must complete a career development program. In order to enter the University of Maryland, students are required to have studied two levels of a foreign language. Most colleges and universities prefer more. Since institutions vary as to their entrance requirements, students are encouraged to examine their published information to make sure they fulfill the required coursework in languages. Students may also be able to receive college credit for their high school foreign language experience if they pass the Advanced Placement exam or the College Board Achievement Test with a high enough score.

Middle School Credit

Students may earn credit for high school foreign language courses taken in middle school after they have successfully completed the same final exams as the high school students. The credit for these middle school courses will automatically appear on student transcripts. It is highly recommended that students who have begun in middle school, continue their foreign language study in high school to at least level 4.

Honors Classes

The Honors program is designed to create an opportunity for students to experience a more challenging curriculum in foreign language learning. Honors courses begin in level 3 and continue through level 6. The requirements for admission to the program include meeting the performance criteria (see below) and receiving the recommendation of the current foreign language teacher. Students who are interested in the program can receive more information about the criteria from their current language teacher.

Performance Criteria for Honors Classes

The student in an honors course should be able to speak and write with proficiency on topics studied in previous levels.

Speaking: The honors student:

1. generates an extended series of related sentences on topics studied
2. regularly uses a variety of verb tenses with accuracy
3. moves from the declarative to the interrogative with ease
4. uses vocabulary appropriate to the level of instruction
5. uses the target language interjections and culturally appropriate speech patterns

Writing: The honors student:

1. can create a product of quality and quantity
2. uses a variety of sentence structures
3. attempts to write idiomatically
4. uses a variety of verb tenses with minimal errors
5. uses the vocabulary appropriate to the level and is able to use synonyms and antonyms

AP COURSES AND AP EXAMS IN WORLD LANGUAGE

Paint Branch offers French AP Language courses along with French and Spanish honors 4, 5, and 6. The curriculum in upper level classes is such that conscientious and willing students can take the AP exam with the expectation of passing with a score of 3 or higher. Many students are thus able to receive college credit for their performance on French AP exams, depending on where they enroll after high school.

The AP Language exam has sections which test listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar. A typical student coming through the MCPS program of studies in levels 1-3 will be particularly strong in listening and speaking. The upper level courses are designed to continue to strengthen those skills but also to emphasize reading and writing skills as well.

In upper level courses students practice some specific tasks which are required on the AP exam with sample materials from previous exams, but they follow the MCPS content and culture-based curriculum which has been developed over many years and recently updated. Students may have to do extra work individually or in study groups at lunch or before or after school in order to better prepare for the exam. This depends on the individual needs of the students. Success on the AP exam depends on individual skills and conscientious preparation. Teachers in the Foreign Language Department are happy to provide opportunities for honing these skills, but the individual student's skills and resolve will ultimately determine his or her success.