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International Public Schools in Seattle

by Michele Anciaux Aoki and Sue Ranney

"As you remember the dreamer, remember the dream"

John Stanford, the inspirational leader of Seattle Public Schools from 1995 to 1998 spoke often of his vision for an international school focusing on language and culture that would prepare students for success at school, in their communities, and in the world. Before he had a chance to see his dream realized, John Stanford died of leukemia. At his memorial, his son reminded us: "As you remember the dreamer, remember the dream."

In Seattle, we have not forgotten the dream. The first international elementary school in Seattle Public Schools opened in fall, 2000. The John Stanford International School was named after this beloved leader. But Superintendent John Stanford's vision was of a complete K-12 program. His dream is now unfolding step by step, and the innovations in Seattle can serve as a model for any school or district wishing to embrace international education.

In this article, we highlight developments in international public schools in Seattle since our first article in NHFL's 2001 Spring Journal, John Stanford International School in Seattle.

Transforming a School

In spring, 2001, Hamilton Middle School was designated the first international middle school. Without the federal grant that provided crucial funding for the planning stages of the John Stanford International School a few years earlier, the transformation of Hamilton has not always been easy. But, each year, the school has expanded its global perspectives and language offerings. What was at first a "foreign" idea to many of the Hamilton faculty and staff has now become the defining characteristic of the school.

In fall 2003, Hamilton became the first middle school in Seattle to offer world languages (Spanish or Japanese) to all 6th grade students. As one counselor noted, "If we don't believe they can do it now, why do we

think they'll be able to learn a language in high school? Why shouldn't the path to university be open to all students?"

Beyond expanding its language program, Hamilton has adopted the Companion Flag to remind students of the importance of celebrating what we share in common at the same time we celebrate diversity. In a moving ceremony to commemorate 9/11, the students displayed national flags, representing all of the nationalities of students at the school. And beneath each flag was its Companion Flag, a tangible symbol of all that we hold in common as human beings on this earth. **The Companion Flag is a white flag with a single colored stripe flown with each national flag to remind us of the humanity we all share.*

Hamilton has discovered that international education is not just for the elite; it can be a vehicle to help all students develop their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, as well as global connections. The Japanese American Internment project described below is a good example. During this project, the students learned about Japanese culture in Japan and America, about war and patriotism, and how Americans cherish their freedom and rights. Most important, they learned about themselves.

Project Example : Japanese American Internment

In spring, 2003, Hamilton engaged in a project centered on Japanese internment in the U.S. during WWII. An English-as-a-Second-Language class read Ken Mochizuki's *Baseball Saved Us*, a U.S. History class read Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*, and a Special Education class read Eleanor Coerr's *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Hallway displays were put up with information about Japanese internment. Eighth grade students, who had visited the Puyallup Fair in September, saw pictures of the fairgrounds in a very different light ? when the Japanese Americans from Seattle were sent there to live temporarily. Special Education students learned to fold paper cranes, and then took their creations to drape on the statue in nearby Sadako Peace Park.

Two distinguished Japanese Americans were invited to Hamilton to talk with students about their experiences during WWII. One had been interned while attending a local Seattle high school; both ended up as members of the Military Intelligence Service while their families remained at the Minidoka interment camp in Idaho. After patiently answering many questions, the visitors gently reminded our large Asian American student population not to take for granted the rights that previous generations had gained for them, and made analogies to the current treatment of Arab Americans.

Students also had an opportunity to express their own ideas about freedom. At a family-oriented "Authoring Freedom Night," students presented essays, songs, plays, and other expressions of freedom. Thanks to a partnership with the Seattle Arts and Lectures' Writers in the School Program, the keynote speaker for the evening was author Ken Mochizuki, renowned for his children's books on the Japanese American experience.

Expanding Language Immersion

At the core of John Stanford International School is the content-based partial immersion language program. Students spend half of each

school day learning math and science in Spanish or Japanese. In fall, 2003, Spanish immersion was offered kindergarten through fourth grade, and Japanese, kindergarten through second grade. Each year the program has expanded into the next grade level. By fall, 2006, all children in the school will be participating in language immersion: Spanish, Japanese, or English (for the children in the Bilingual Orientation Center (BOC), which serves newcomers who don't speak English).

In fall, 2005, the first group of Stanford immersion students will be moving on to middle school. Stanford and Hamilton have already begun working together to determine the future of language immersion. Last year, Hamilton researched a number of other middle schools across the country that are continuing language immersion in content areas. One thing is clear: students must have achieved high levels of language proficiency in order to do high-level academic work in the immersion language.

Assessing Language Proficiency

To ensure that students really are learning to understand and speak the immersion languages well, John Stanford International School has worked each spring with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC, to administer an early language listening and oral proficiency assessment (ELLOPA) with the language immersion students. Unlike a standardized test, the ELLOPA involves guided interviews between a pair of students and a trained interviewer and rater. This type of assessment provides a much richer picture of what a student is able to do in the language than a traditional test.

The ELLOPA assesses the four language areas of Oral Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Listening Comprehension at four levels: Junior Novice Low (1), Junior Novice Mid (2), Junior Novice High (3), and Junior Intermediate Low (4). Students' language proficiency is rated using a rubric, or rating profile, that describes characteristics of each language area at each level. For example, Oral Fluency at the Junior Novice Mid level is described as follows:

- Uses a limited number of isolated words, two- to three-word phrases, and/or longer memorized expressions within predictable topic areas.
- May attempt to create sentences, but is not successful. Long pauses are common.

Some conclusions we have reached based on students assessed during the first two years of the immersion program include:

- Listening Comprehension develops before Oral Fluency (i.e. students generally score higher on Listening Comprehension than they do on Oral Fluency)
- Each new kindergarten class has a different baseline (i.e. the kindergarten Spanish classes in 2001 and 2002 did not show the

same level of proficiency after one year)

- Spanish proficiency develops faster than Japanese proficiency (i.e. students in Spanish were generally rated higher than students in Japanese)
- For Spanish, the average increase from kindergarten to 1st grade in each language area was one level (e.g., from Jr. Novice Mid to Jr. Novice High)

In spring, 2003, Hamilton and John Stanford language teachers attended workshops on using the SOPA (Student Oral Proficiency Assessment) Rating Profile, which expands the ELLOPA levels from four to nine -- enough to accommodate advanced language learners and even children who are native speakers. In addition, with CAL's assistance, we developed a Student Self-Assessment for fourth-eighth grade students. One teacher is now using the SOPA Rating Profile to assess his students' growing language proficiency throughout the year. All of this data -- from the interviews, teacher ratings, and student self-assessments -- will help us design the most effective language program possible.

Partnerships with Families, Community, and the University of Washington

John Stanford International School's early involvement in the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University has paid off. For four years now, the school's Action Team has helped the school focus on involving families and community in achieving the school's goals. For the past two years, both John Stanford and Hamilton have been recipients of Family Partnership Grants from the Seattle School District's newly formed Office for Community Learning. These grants have helped fund specific projects at the schools, such as offering English as a Second Language classes for parents of students in the Bilingual Orientation Center.

The arts have proven to be a powerful vehicle for connecting with community, while students study culture and global perspectives. Through a partnership with the Seattle International Children's Festival, Hamilton and Stanford schools formed an International Arts Consortium. Now in its fourth year, the Consortium provides teacher training, extensive international arts residencies at the two schools, and professional performances for students. Funding is provided by the Washington State Arts Commission's Community Consortia Program, PTSAs at both schools, and donations from the local business community.

The UW/Public International Schools Partnership, begun in 1999, has evolved in new ways. A number of special projects have been initiated on both sides. For example, the UW Business School has brought international students into Hamilton to talk with the American students

about the realities of marketing to the world. Linguistics students from the UW have carried out research projects on early language learning at John Stanford International School. Recently, the UW Language Learning Center and Stanford and Hamilton were invited to partner with a university in Spain in a cooperative agreement to research early language learning.

The schools and UW have also taken a leadership role in promoting international education state-wide. They joined the Washington State Coalition for International Education in co-sponsoring the P-20 International Education Summit "Teaching and Learning in a Global Community" at the University of Washington on September 18, 2003. The principals and teachers and parents from both schools participated in the Summit.

The Dream Continues

Step by step we are seeing the expansion of John Stanford's dream of providing an international education to all children in Seattle schools. Beyond the exciting developments at Stanford and Hamilton, there are many examples of innovations at other schools in Seattle. Here are just a few:

- Ingraham High School now offers the International Baccalaureate Program
- Elementary schools, such as John Hay Elementary, have begun offering language classes before, after, or even during school hours
- Arabic language is being taught to over seventy high school students in an after-school language and leadership program, developed by the non-profit organization One World Now!

Recently, the new Seattle Schools Superintendent, Raj Manhas, visited John Stanford International School. For Mr. Manhas, learning other languages and cultures is second nature. (A native speaker of Punjabi, he only began learning English in elementary school in India.) We asked him to imagine that some day a student from Seattle Public Schools might have the language skills and cultural competence to become the superintendent of a school district in another country where English was not spoken. We look forward to that day.

During International Week, November 17-21, 2003, John Stanford International School was awarded the Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education at a ceremony during the States Institute for International Education in Washington, DC. Hamilton International School was a finalist for the award. With this great honor comes the responsibility to share what we've learned. Remember the dream!

References

See original article in *New Horizons for Learning* Spring, 2001:
John Stanford International School in Seattle

For further information, visit these websites:
John Stanford International School
Hamilton International Middle School

International Education:
Guidelines for Global and International Studies Education
Washington State Coalition for International Education

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