



# Progress Memo

<b>To:</b>	Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning & APS Department on Teaching and Learning
<b>From:</b>	World Languages Advisory Committee
<b>cc:</b>	Elisabeth Harrington
<b>Date:</b>	December 4, 2020
<b>Re:</b>	Progress memo on World Languages during distance learning in fall 2020

## Introduction

Information shown here is from responses to questionnaires provided by WLAC members, including student members, 34 secondary school language teachers, and 94 parents of children currently studying a language in APS. The questionnaires were developed by the WLAC under the guidance of our APS Liaison, Elisabeth Harrington.

Efforts were made to obtain representative input from all APS language programs, but we were unable to obtain questionnaire responses from elementary immersion teachers. Also, because the Foreign Language in Elementary School program (FLES) was terminated this year after 15 years of being offered, we have no information from elementary FLES teachers or parents.

Statistic results from the questionnaire include the following:

- 49% of the parents surveyed Agree or Strongly Agree that their children are “generally enjoying language learning this year.” Another 28% agree with reservations.
- 51% of the parents indicated that the learning materials and assignments have been clear and appropriate.
- 97% of teacher responses showed agreement with the idea that their students are “making satisfactory progress in language learning” this year.
- 88% of the teachers indicate that they have enough resources needed to teach, and 85% feel they have adequate support for their teaching.
- 82% of teachers feel that they are able to assess their students’ learning effectively.
- Only 40% of the parents Strongly Agree or Agree that their children are “generally making progress” in language learning. Another 35% agree with reservations.
- 44% of parents indicated that they and their children receive adequate feedback from the teacher to help the children’s learning.
- Almost 20% of teachers do not feel that they are able to assess students’ progress effectively this year.

## 1. What is working well for teaching and learning?

<b>Topic:</b> Ability to redo work	<b>Information source:</b> Parents
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**Description:**  
Some students like the opportunity to redo their work to “get it right.”

<b>Topic:</b> Teacher collaboration and dedication	<b>Information source:</b> World Language Teachers and Parents
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**Description:**  
Teachers significantly appreciate collaboration and support from their colleagues, and also from their department heads and from APS Central. Much appreciation was also given to the students. The teachers miss them and are uplifted by any responsiveness to their greetings, questions, and bidding farewell in each session. Much appreciation was also given from the parents to the teachers. Despite comments asking for changes or making suggestions, parents were very cognizant that the teachers are doing the best they can in this situation.

<b>Topic:</b> Teaching tools	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**  
When asked about tips and tools they find helpful, teachers and parents mentioned Nearpod, Peardeck, and Quizlet most favorably, and several also appreciate Canvas. “Less is more” was advice that came up too. Instead of getting fancy in presentations, stick to basics, said several teachers and parents. Examples were given such as going back to old fashioned pencil and paper note taking strategies, practicing more useful words and everyday phrases. The need for workbooks and even textbooks was mentioned by several teachers and parents. Advice was also given for teachers to put everything for the day or week on a hyper doc with all links, even including where to submit on Canvas.

## 2. What is not working well for teaching and learning?

<b>Topic:</b> Fewer opportunities for speaking in the target language	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**  
Parents and teachers are reporting less opportunity for students to practice the language this year. Most especially less ability to practice speaking and conversing in the target language. There were many requests for small group practice for the students if virtual learning is to continue. In addition, students at all levels miss friend interaction in their language classes.

<b>Topic:</b> Too little use of the language	<b>Information source:</b> Immersion program parents
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**Description:**  
Some parents of immersion students said some teachers are using more English in class than parents would prefer or showing too many videos as opposed to using the synchronous time more dynamically or for real world practice.

<b>Topic:</b> Intimate and meaningful teacher-student relationships.	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**

Parents and teachers report missing their students' close relationships with their teachers this year. Teachers understand that there is no requirement for students to turn their cameras on, but would very much appreciate having it encouraged so as to facilitate interaction. Students also really need to turn their microphones on during synchronous study. It has been harder to get to know their students as closely as in traditional classes this year, and having cameras off does not help. Parents would also like their children to have more teacher time.

<b>Topic:</b> Lack of visual cues	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**

Parents and teachers both note that students are missing a lot of visual cues by being online that are easier to notice while in a classroom setting. Teachers are likewise missing visual cues, especially of students who keep their cameras off. It is hard for the teachers to tell if the student is understanding or not.

<b>Topic:</b> Cameras off	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers
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**Description:**

Teachers noted that during many assessments, students cannot keep their cameras on even if they want to. It seems that using certain apps automatically blocks the camera's ability to show the student. This makes it difficult for the teachers to tell how much the student actually knows by heart rather than relying on the numerous resources now available. We've already mentioned that having the cameras off hinders the ability of the teacher to read the student's understanding and to get to know the student.

<b>Topic:</b> Technology	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**

Teachers mentioned a significant limitation of what they can do in class based on being restricted to online resources. There was emphasis that the technology must work, students need access to high speed internet, and it would be helpful for ITC to do some technology training for the students so the teachers do not lose as much class time having to coach the students through some of this.

Teachers could be more successful if all the apps they are using spoke to each other. An example was given of having to input grades into more than one system, instead of just inputting once and having the systems speak to each other to carry over the information.

Teachers need newer computers as well as more file storage space. Some teacher computers are so old that they cannot be updated and some computers freeze when multiple platforms are opened. Filming lessons creates large files, and downloading PowerPoints with film is difficult.

Many miss and would like physical resources, and a few teachers made mention of needing physical textbooks or workbooks for their students. Several parents mentioned preferring non-digital assignments.

<b>Topic:</b> Assessments & feedback	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**

Assessment of student progress is difficult this year, and partly as a result, parents and students often feel they lack feedback from their teachers. The option for students to use so many resources when being assessed also makes it difficult for the teachers to see how much they know without the books and textbooks, etc. Many students are not submitting assignments, and some parents report that completed assignments are sometimes not seen by the teacher, resulting in a poor grade on the assignment. Though on a positive note, one teacher wrote, "I am learning to turn assessment into student self-assessment where students are charged to correct their own errors. So I am not grading students on the errors they make but rather on the errors they don't correct. This enables the students to excel while taking more responsibility for their learning and forward progress." This is an idea that could be adopted for other classes. APS also needs to commit to providing timely constructive feedback (not just grades) next term.

<b>Topic:</b> Pacing and differentiation	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers and parents
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**Description:**

Teachers are noting a slower pace this year and that not as much information will be covered, and many families have noticed a lack of advancement in language this year, especially in speaking and spoken interaction. Parents find themselves having to be more involved than in the past and seeing it necessary to supplement with their own tutors or non-APS resources for those who can afford it. (This highlights an equity issue.) There are some families though who find the pace just fine or even a little too fast even still. There does not appear to be much ability to differentiate for the different learners in the virtual environment. This is true both of more advanced students and those who are struggling.

<b>Topic:</b> Time	<b>Information source:</b> World language teachers
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**Description:**

TIME is the most common need that the teachers have. While there are a lot of resources, the teachers just don't have time to read another article, take another webinar, etc. They need more time even for their planning, e.g., with colleagues, and time with their students. And teachers are spending a lot of time emailing parents, students, counselors. Parents and students are noticeably more needy this year. This seems to be the case in the day to day work (locating the work, navigating technology) as well as socio-emotionally without being able to more easily create the meaningful intimate relationships as can happen more naturally in non-virtual times.

<b>Topic:</b> Single semester language option for 6th graders	<b>Information source:</b> Parents
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**Description:**

There is concern from 6th grade parents about their children only having a half-school year of language, especially this year.

<b>Topic:</b> Understanding instructions	<b>Information source:</b> Parents
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**Description:**

Many parents would like to have the students' assignment instructions translated into English (and Spanish for Spanish-speaking families) to be able to assist the students' understanding of the lesson. This seemed to come from more families of the younger students.

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**3. What are implications and/or solutions for teaching & learning for the longer term?**

There were requests from parents for lists of recommended television shows to watch, vocabulary lists, and printed texts instead of emphasizing applications. In addition, there were requests for country interchanges.

As mentioned above, every teacher needs to commit to providing timely constructive feedback to students, and to the parents of younger students.

Ways need to be found to provide small-group synchronous learning activities, even if it's only for groups of students. Teachers should be able to monitor these groups.

Students need to be encouraged strongly to be sure to turn on their cameras and microphones during synchronous spoken interactions between the teacher and students.

Teachers suggested that ITCs offer some technology training to the students to avoid losing more class time coaching the students through some of these issues.

Parents ask, "Can someone help the kids who are struggling?" and "What about the families who cannot afford the extra outside help such as tutors, etc.?"