



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Spanish Immersion program planned for 2010-2011

FOREST LAKE, MINN. – A plan to establish an Elementary Spanish Partial Immersion program at Forest Lake Area Schools for the fall of 2010 was initiated Thursday night, as the district school board voted 7-0 to pass a motion to authorize the plan.

The plan was the result of the work of a task force established last spring to investigate the possibility of starting some type of Elementary Immersion program in the district.

The board accepted all of the task force’s recommendations, which included establishing Spanish Immersion programs at two elementary schools in the district; one location would be at Lino Lakes Elementary School and the other would be at one of the three elementary schools located in Forest Lake. The specific Forest Lake location will be determined by the district administration over the coming months. The program would be offered to interested students and families from around the district.

The task force – which was headed by Superintendent Linda Madsen and made up of teachers, administrators, parents and members of the larger school district community – spent months discussing and investigating the possibility of beginning a language immersion program, as well as gaining input from people who have been involved with immersion programs from around the state. The task force was also assisted by Dr. Tara Fortune, who works at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota. Fortune is considered one of the nation’s leading experts on language immersion programs.

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Spanish Immersion Program

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“The business community has recognized that we all are part of a world economy, and the ability for people to be bilingual, or even to speak several languages, will become more and more critical in the coming years,” Madsen said. “Because of this, more and more parents are interested in the option of having their children experience a language immersion program, which has proven to be much more effective in providing students with strong language proficiency skills.”

The superintendent and school board are leaving open the possibility of expanding the program in future years to include Chinese, and they may also consider the possibility of beginning immersion programs at other schools in the district. Any expansion would depend on the success of the initial programs and the types of programs that local parents wish to have.

“Our goal is to provide parents with quality options,” Madsen said. “If many parents in this community want language immersion as an option, then it is incumbent upon us to try to offer those programs.”

“We realize that language immersion programs are not for all students, and our district will continue to provide a first-class education to every student who walks through the doors of our schools, regardless of the type of programs they are in,” Madsen explained. “But for those parents who want their children to experience language immersion, this will be a chance for them to not only benefit from that type of program but to benefit from all of the other excellent opportunities that our district has to offer.”

All students starting in first grade in the fall of 2010 will have the opportunity to participate in the program. Registration or participation requirements will be determined by January 2010.