



ELEVATE AND EMPOWER:

WORLD LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS as key players in the shift to **COMPETENCY-BASED, BLENDED LEARNING**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2013, Getting Smart partnered with Rosetta Stone to release a report called “[The Next Generation of World Language Learning](#).” The goal of the report was to create a vision for world language learning that acknowledged its role in global competency and to frame the vision inside broader shifts to personalized learning and blended instruction. Pointing to the potential of educational technology, we advocated for accessible, high-quality world language instruction for all students—from elementary through high school.

With a focus on the student perspective, the first report described design principles for next-gen world language learning:

- Active Immersion
- Mobile learning
- Student-centered collaboration
- Interdisciplinary work
- Game-based learning & augmented reality
- Standards-based grading
- Reorganization of physical space

These original seven principles described the vision for next-gen world language learning. The teacher transformation stories featured in this follow-up report describe the reality of implementation. They describe shifts to models for world language instruction that are blended, supplemental and stand-alone options.

The report was well-received by the world language community, and we were honored to participate in discussions with teachers across the country who meaningfully connected with the report’s goals. During a presentation of the report’s findings to the ACTFL World Language Expo, one such conversation launched us toward the path of this follow-up report.

Whereas the first paper focused heavily on the student perspective, this report focuses on the teacher. “Elevate and Empower: World Language Instructors as Key Players in the Shift to Competency-Based, Blended Learning” explores two key questions:

- Are world language educators uniquely poised to act as leaders in system-wide shifts to new models of personalized learning?
- How can world language educators be elevated and empowered to lead this charge?

To answer these questions, we conducted a review of the existing research on world language teachers and technology, and we set off to learn from a group of teachers and leaders who have led shifts in their own school communities. This paper explores our findings through a collection of “Leaders in the Shift” stories that describes teacher-driven transformation from traditional world language instruction to blended, competency-based models. The stories reveal unique drivers, pathways and destinations—with a common thread of personal and professional evolution. Our conversations also revealed six key trends: bottom-up adoption, entry points, personalized media, cultural fluency, slow and steady shifts and the value of the professional learning network. In addition to the individual stories, this report offers a set of recommendations for stakeholders ranging from school leaders to content providers. These recommendations intend to “elevate and empower” world language educators as leaders in the shift to personalized learning.

INTRODUCTION: NEXT-GEN WORLD LANGUAGE LEARNING

The implementation of college- and career-ready standards and the new assessments being built to assess them, coupled with the growing affordability and availability of technology (including devices, content, tools and applications), has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine teaching and learning. As a result, schools and districts are launching deep and systemic shifts across pedagogy and practice. These shifts are driven by goals to better personalize and customize learning to help students reach higher and deeper standards. In these Deeper Learning environments, students are expected to use their knowledge and skills in a way that prepares them for real life.¹ They are driven to master core academic content while learning how to think critically, collaborate, communicate effectively, direct their own learning and exhibit an “academic mindset.”²

Educators stand on the front lines of these shifts, and while good teaching remains as important as ever, the teacher’s role doesn’t stop there. Educators are crucial to the long-term success of new learning models, such as blended and competency-based learning. In fact, educators often drive blended learning implementation through the practice of “bottom-up” technology adoption—devices, apps, tools and content brought into a teacher’s individual classroom based on his/her own assessment of students’ needs. When teachers find tools that improve teaching and learning, they share them with their peers, and adoption spreads.

Accordingly, we believe that teachers can be the catalyst for school- and district-wide shifts to personalized, Deeper Learning that is blended and/or competency-based. As the report describes—because world language educators exhibit a high rate of technology adoption compared to the national teaching population, and because World Language instruction lends itself so well to these new models of learning—we partnered with Rosetta Stone to explore these questions:

- Are world language educators uniquely poised to act as leaders in system-wide shifts to new models of personalized learning?
- How can world language educators be elevated and empowered to lead this charge?

Next-Gen World Language Instructors

“The Next Generation of World Language Learning” described seven design principles for next-gen world language learning for students:⁵

- Active Immersion
- Mobile learning
- Student-centered collaboration
- Interdisciplinary work
- Game-based learning & augmented reality
- Standards-based grading
- Reorganization of physical space

The Benefits of Bilingualism

Studies show that bilingualism benefits the brain in a number of ways, including the ability to focus attention.³ Moreover, research has also demonstrated that learning a second language may help to slow the effects of aging on the brain, regardless of age.⁴ Given the growing body of research in support of the positive effects of language study for brain development, it would seem prudent for schools to take language study more seriously. Moreover, schools should support language programs and its teachers to a greater extent, especially those successfully experimenting with blended learning models to the benefit of the greater school community.

The next-gen principles outlined above are motivated by the drive for interactive collaboration, exploration and practical application to real-world opportunities that allow students to use the target language—the focus of high-quality world language classrooms. Because world language teachers have long been in pursuit of collaboration and practicality in their courses, they often have been open to pedagogies and tools that facilitate these goals, including the movement away from the traditional drill-based models of language study and toward the blended learning design principles described above. As the following information shows, world language teachers, thanks to their openness, consequently tend to be out in front when it comes to using technology and providing a model upon which other teachers have begun to incorporate blended learning in their own classrooms, thus helping to drive innovation within wider school communities.

“World language teachers tend to be out in front of technology use and can thus drive innovation in their wider school communities.”

The next generation of world language instructors, along with educators from other content areas, will embrace the shift toward global education, thereby addressing America’s deficit in producing globalized citizens.⁶ The global classroom is to world language study what the “makerspace” is to STEM classrooms. It will serve an analogous purpose in creating student-centered environments that offer practical applications of the skills taught in class. These include focusing on conversational uses of the target language and emphasizing practical language skills that allow students to take action with these language skills.

Driving the emphasis on global education is the transition from traditional unit-driven curricula that privileged linguistic content to curricula organized thematically and centered on practical, global skills. Such an approach facilitates competency-based instruction that strives toward what students can actually do with their skills in real-world contexts, using both linguistic and cultural knowledge of the target language. This approach also allows world language teachers to build more engaging and personalized classrooms structured within blended learning environments that allow students to collaborate and explore—both inside and outside of the classroom.

“World language teachers who use technology to pursue cultural fluency and globalization offer a powerful and compelling model for Deeper Learning.”

Non-cognitive or “soft” skills, traditionally overlooked in comparison to content-based skills, prove to be of crucial importance in developing real-world skills, including cultural fluency. Consequently, world language classrooms with a global perspective will devote time to building skills like empathy, creativity and collaborative skills, among others, to forge a core of social and emotional intelligence. World language teachers who use technology to pursue cultural fluency and globalization can thus offer a powerful and compelling model for Deeper Learning. Technology, when focusing on globalization and the non-cognitive skills necessary for taking global action, becomes a means to an end rather than a goal of its own.

Though most high schools have language requirements for graduation, programs typically require fewer years of study than in other subject areas; specific languages are seldom required. Therefore, world language teachers often find themselves treating their courses like electives, knowing that students do not have to take a given language course unless they choose to do so. World language teachers, unlike teachers of other required courses, frequently become salesmen in advertising why students should take a particular language, and they must embed various enticements for studying language that go beyond simple practicality. Some world language departments tend to be quite close-knit, learning from each other by building collegial and collaborative communities.

Building Biliteracy

Woodrow Wilson Elementary (in the Denton Independent School District) became a bilingual school in 2001 to meet the needs of the city’s changing Hispanic demographics. In 2006, administrators, teachers and parents decided to implement an English and Spanish two-way immersion program. Beginning in Kindergarten, students participating in the program take classes made up of a mix of native Spanish- and English-speaking students. Each class has two teachers and students split their time between their native language and their non-native language. Starting in second grade, 50% of their learning is in English and 50% is in Spanish. The idea is that all students in class are learning a new language (English or Spanish) while also learning academic and cognitive skills, with the goal of students being biliterate by the end of fifth grade.

Likewise, world language departments tend to be some of the more diverse within a school, thanks to the large number and level of courses taught (i.e., offering multiple languages with multiple levels of each language). Quite frequently, world language teachers find themselves teaching multiple courses, which can help to broaden their perspectives about pedagogy and program goals. Due to this level of diversity within other language departments, world language teachers can often find themselves relatively isolated from teams and other teachers. With less accountability and more exposure to diversity, this kind of isolation can give teachers the opportunity to take more risks like experimenting with technology in their courses.

“The nature of language study is well suited for the rapidly evolving global classroom and new models of teaching and learning.”

Language teaching is necessarily based in trial and error, with a variety of activities offered in each course to encourage students to work with the target language by speaking, listening, reading and writing. For this reason, language courses rarely rely on a single pedagogical technique or activity to drive instruction, and they consequently require that teachers be nimble in adopting new pedagogies and technologies for students. The nature of language study and the teaching approach, then, is well suited for the rapidly evolving global classroom and the blended learning model. Tools are changing day by day, and students have different needs that cannot be met by the traditional, “one-size-fits-all” models. Like world language teachers, other next-gen teachers working in blended learning environments must learn to adapt to change and to maintain a strong community on which to rely for support.

For all of these reasons—namely having embraced globalization within the context of school communities and having a willingness to experiment to fulfill classroom goals—world language teachers tend to be some of the earliest adopters of technology in their classrooms; they have been using it for the longest time within their school communities, beginning with early language labs. The world language teachers who continue to experiment with new technologies and pedagogical ideas have thus become leaders among their peers, often serving as the catalyst for more widespread change within a school community, including the use of more blended learning models (e.g., expanding on language labs), more collaborative work⁷ and the addition of competency-based systems like integrated performance assessments and even standards-based grading.⁸

World Language Professional Development

Though few language teacher-specific preparation programs are offered for world language teachers, these teachers have always incorporated travel into their own professional learning programs, both with and without students. For example, world language teachers often use the summer for immersive experiences during which to work on their own language skills and to build cultural resources, including pictures, video and newspapers to share with their students. Regular travel of this sort helps to broaden teachers’ global perspectives and to build empathy for target cultures that can later be shared in the classroom.

Moreover, traditional teacher preparation programs rarely privilege blended learning strategies within language programs. As a result, world language teachers have had to rely on their own exploration of technology, along with learning from one another, to develop effective blended learning teaching practices. Self-reliance has served to galvanize some world language teachers through building resilience and a growth mindset toward experimenting with technology.

World Language Teachers and Technology

Evidence suggests that world language teachers have embraced technology more broadly than teachers as a whole. According to Project Tomorrow’s 2013 Speak Up survey, 46 percent of world language teachers view technology as integral to the development of their students’ 21st-century skills.⁹ That’s significantly higher than the general teaching population surveyed (10 percent). Additionally, 87 percent of world language teachers report using digital tools, as opposed to 72 percent of general teachers. In the survey, teachers report using technology to improve their productivity and to personalize students’ learning, adding that they believe technology contributes to their students’ creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking skills and ability to apply classroom learning to the real world.

Other studies of world language teachers' use of technology find a more complex situation. A 2009 review of computer-assisted language learning noted that teachers “may use e-mail, word processing and digital audio; they may find authentic materials on the Web to use in class or to make available to students, and they may use their institutions' course management systems to post syllabi and assignments and to manage their grading.” But it argues that “these uses of technology do not constitute ... the full integration of technology into language learning.”¹⁰

Similarly, a 2009 study of curriculum-based technology integration among K–12 teachers argued that “many current methods are technocentric, often omitting sufficient consideration of the dynamic and complex relationships among content, technology, pedagogy and context,” noting that while research emphasizes technology that supports inquiry and collaboration, teachers “tend to focus on using presentation software, learner-friendly Web sites and management tools to enhance existing practice.”¹¹

Even the detailed results from the 2013 Speak Up survey show that world language teachers primarily use technology for assessments, homework and to communicate with students' parents/guardians.¹² Eighty-five percent use the Internet to conduct research for their classes, and they use other tech tools—like creating videos and multimedia presentations—at slightly higher rates than other teachers. More world language teachers participate in professional online communities and websites like Edmodo than other teachers, but the percentages (43 percent for online communities, 28 percent for sites like Edmodo and only 9 percent on Twitter) may be lower than expected, given how tech-savvy and active online world language teachers seem to be. However, it should be noted that this survey does not capture the whole picture of a teacher's pedagogical practice. Furthermore, access to devices and Internet likely play a role in some teachers' ability to adopt education technology in their classrooms. Fifty percent of teachers (both world language teachers and otherwise) responded that their school provides devices, and approximately one in three use their own device. Student access to devices and at-home Internet was cited as a major obstacle by a majority of teachers, with roughly half saying that their students don't have enough computers to use and 67 percent saying that not all their students have access to Internet at home.

Secretary of OpenExam Peter Smith, writing for Edutopia, sums up the dilemma succinctly: “Today with the abundance of e-mail, social networking platforms and online language labs, teachers have the tools to provide the global connections we wanted [in language classrooms of the 1970s] but lacked. But are they being used as effectively as they could be?”¹³

Research supporting the integration of appropriate technology into the classroom exists—and so does help for teachers who want to learn to use it. Many professional associations and conferences for teaching world languages offer extensive support to teachers, including workshops and knowledgeable advice. Thousands of online resources exist, including websites to help teachers sort through and find those best suited for their students—for example, calico.org and llt.msu.edu. Language pedagogy journals such as *Language Learning & Technology*, *Language Teaching* and *Language Teaching Research* provide teachers with recent research, evaluations and reviews.

Successfully integrating technology into teaching any subject requires confidence, competence and experience. This might put world language teachers as a group in a better position than most to tackle the challenge; the 2013 Speak Up survey found that world language teachers tend to be more educated (possess a master's degree) and more experienced (an average of 10 years) than the general population of teachers.¹⁴ Research on teachers' incorporation of technology into the classroom has found that teachers tend to be either early adopters or hesitant adopters; a 2013 study found that “teachers who are early technology adopters and commit a significant portion of their time to incorporating educational technology into their teaching are more likely to adopt new technology, regardless of its complexity. However, teachers who are not early technology adopters and only commit a small portion of their time to integrating educational technology are less likely to adopt new technology and are prone to abandoning the adoption at identified points in the process.”¹⁵ Additionally, teachers' attitudes towards technology adoption play a significant role in the integration of technology in the classroom, and world language teachers tend to have positive attitudes towards technology.¹⁶

“I think that language teachers have been ahead of the pedagogy curve—meaning active learning and student-centered—simply because you have to interact with the language to learn it! So that may be why we've been more of the early adopters and have been studying the use of technology for language learning for decades!”

—Marlene Johnshoy

KEY FINDINGS: LEADERS IN THE SHIFT

To gather information to inform our research questions, we reached out to teachers and school administrators to determine their level of comfort and experience with technology as well as their use of technology to inform blended, competency-based and Deeper Learning in the classroom. We also discussed the support they receive in their efforts, including whether they benefit from tech-related professional development and/or get help and recommendation from peers. A majority of interviewees described themselves as “tech savvy” and pleased by institutional support for integrating educational technology into their classrooms. Others who may not have identified themselves as particularly tech-savvy, but instead identified qualities of curiosity, open-mindedness and willingness to experiment with innovations in teaching and learning. Thus, our group of interviewees is not a representative sample of world language teachers as a whole. With that caveat, our interviews left us with the impression that world language teachers can indeed be trailblazers for their schools and districts when it comes to shifting towards blended learning.

Teacher Transformation

World language teachers have long been driven by the purpose of teaching students to communicate in the target language, using the tools at their disposal to facilitate the process. Now that technology has spread into classrooms with blended learning environments, world language teachers have been able to further shift toward competency-based assessment of students and to focus on real-world applications of language skills. The pragmatism of language instruction has been advantageous to world language teachers, since it has allowed them to drive instruction with a natural purpose that embraces technology and experimentation.

On account of their flexibility and openness, the world language teachers we engaged with have embraced change and taken leadership roles in implementing blended learning strategies at their schools. The stories that follow suggest that world language teachers can assume the role of teacher-leader within their communities through modeling how technology can be effectively used to establish competency-based progressions with real-world applications in world language education and beyond.

From World Language Instructor to Tech Integration Specialist

Mina Marien, Evanston Township High School

Mina Marien has eight years of teaching experience, including five years as a high school Latin teacher at Evanston Township High School (ETHS) in Evanston, Ill., a large and diverse high school that serves over 3,100 students and 230 faculty. This year, ETHS has gone 1:1 with Chromebooks in ninth grade, followed by a progressive rollout over the next few years. Though ETHS has no formal language requirement for graduation, the school offers eight language options, including American Sign Language, French, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Latin, Mandarin and Spanish, with a separate track for heritage Spanish speakers.

Like most world language teachers, Mina had little exposure to blended learning techniques specific to language study during her teacher training. She began blending her classroom a few years into her career to allow students to access resources on their own time and to better prepare for class by sharing resources through “flipped” lessons and enabling them to check their own work. Once she was awarded a classroom set of iPads, she was able to push her exploration further by including apps that gave her students the kind of access to the materials that she wanted for them. Mina’s students now use a wide variety of tools, including Google Apps for Education, YouTube videos and screencasts for students, digital storytelling tools, note-taking tools like Evernote and Notability plus polling tools like Poll Everywhere and Socrative.

Her department chair supports blended learning and has infused department meetings with discussions on using technology, asking teachers to share what they are doing in their classes. Moreover, ETHS has warmly welcomed increasing the use of technology and, in place of more traditional professional development, grants “open time” throughout the year (on shortened Mondays) when teachers can collaborate with each other. To help further spread this kind of collaboration throughout the school, Mina has left the classroom this year to take on a full-time Technology Integration Specialist role in which she will support the entire school’s movement toward blended learning.

Thanks to the openness of her Latin instructor colleague, Mina led the adoption of tech in her department and now notices a “ripple effect” spreading throughout her department and faculty; more colleagues have taken notice of blended learning models and are curious to try adopting their own. And since the administration at ETHS allows faculty independent time during which teachers can talk with one another and spread ideas, faculty who use technology have been able to make connections with their school colleagues. Technology adoption has thus been mostly teacher-driven.

The World Languages Department at ETHS, moreover, has been leading the way in utilizing tech for performance-based assessments using ACTFL standards. Technology has led to more authentic assessment. Following Mina and her department chair’s lead, language learning has become much more authentic through the adoption of blended learning, for example, using Skype to practice communication with other Spanish classes.

Sharing a Vision for Blended Learning

Eric Schmidt, KIPP Courage College Prep

Eric Schmidt is the School Leader of KIPP Courage College Prep in Houston, which is part of both a “traditional” school district and KIPP Houston schools. Schmidt’s school opened in 2012, when both districts were increasingly implementing educational technology and assigning devices to every classroom. “At our school we’re pretty close to one-to-one,” explains Schmidt, “but we have mass carts of iPads and Chromebooks. We’re somewhere between two-to-one and one-to-one.”

Speaking with teachers and leaders at schools around the country made a huge impression on Schmidt, especially in seeing how educational technology could help differentiate student learning. As his school’s founding principal, Schmidt had the advantage of establishing a vision for the school from day one. They began with a learning lab stocked with desktops (loaded with software such as Rosetta Stone) and saw such encouraging results that they added iPad and Chromebook carts. Teachers are not required to use blended learning or flipped learning models, but the tools to do so are available—and the school is working to increase the number of core content classrooms that use a station rotation model from four to eight.

“When we opened the school, we built a learning lab with 30 desktops in it, and we scheduled it so that all our students would spend at least an hour a day Monday through Thursday in the learning lab,” explains Schmidt. “I built it because I wanted to use Rosetta Stone as a way to help our students develop their English—a lot of our students are [English Language Learners] —but also to make sure students were building their academic Spanish skills, too.”

While Schmidt and his assistant principal were won over by the results they saw, Schmidt notes that it took a community to make his vision a successful reality—including “early adopter” teachers and others who helped make sure the school had what it needed. So far, blended learning and educational technology remains optional for teachers at KIPP Courage, and Schmidt and his staff are focused on helping teachers figure out how they can make good use of the available resources. Having “model” classrooms in the school has made it easier for teachers to see the possibilities and to plan blueprints for their own classrooms. The emphasis, says Schmidt, is not on implementing blended learning per se, but on differentiating learning and meeting the needs of all students.

Personalization & Collaboration

Melissa Strong, Harvard-Westlake Middle School

Melissa Strong is entering her 11th year at the Harvard-Westlake School (HW) in Los Angeles, an independent day school with about 1,500 students and 220 faculty split between a middle school campus (grades 7–9) and an upper school campus (grades 10–12). She teaches Spanish to grades 7–9 and serves as the chair of the middle school’s World Languages Department, which requires that incoming students start with one of the four languages offered by the department: French, Latin, Mandarin or Spanish. Last year, the school began a 1:1 laptop program in seventh grade that will be moved throughout the entire middle school this coming year.

In graduate school, Melissa received little technology-specific training for the classroom (even though she learned the value of building and maintaining a website for her professional career). However, in another course, she learned video filming and editing techniques, for which she saw immediate use in her own Spanish classes. Specifically, she used technology for digital storytelling purposes, having her students make videos and PowerPoint presentations to increase their level of engagement with the class content and to bring personalization to their learning. Since her

college teaching experience, Melissa now uses a much wider variety of technology with her students, including various Web-based digital story tools.

Like Melinda, Melissa also never thought of herself as “tech savvy.” When implementing blended learning within her classrooms, she and the rest of her Spanish team members ask themselves what they want to accomplish in their classes, ensuring that their techniques remain grounded in solid methodology and pedagogy when having students first and foremost communicate in the target language. In reference to learning how to use new tools, Melissa says, “If we didn’t have a clue, we asked,” referring to her colleagues and PLN that she built through conferences and on Twitter (using especially the hashtags #caedchat, #dtk12chat, #isedchat and #mexedchat).

After several years of building her blended learning structures, Melissa sees its positive impact at HW for engagement and personalization. Given her crucial role as department chair (in which she oversees a diverse number of courses), she has been able to effectively model technology use and to directly oversee the department’s use in their courses. The HW World Languages Department is now the most blended at the school, thanks in part to the department being very open to collaborative tools like Google Apps for Education and the Canvas LMS. The department, moreover, has become a model for other departments on which to build their own blended learning programs.

Projects, both individual and group, have always been a large part of world language instruction; however, more traditional instructor-directed projects are now being replaced by open projects and more authentic project-based learning (PBL) that revolve around real-life tasks. Of special importance to the department are integrated performance assessments (IPAs), which have become an essential component of world language instruction. In IPAs, rather than curriculum or textbook-driven content within the traditional model, students focus on real communicative tasks based on theme or context that involve interpretive tasks with authentic documents, an interpersonal and personalized component and a presentation component. IPAs thus move language classrooms away from test-based evaluation and toward more authentic assessment. Due to Melissa’s leadership in the department, more world language colleagues are now shifting toward blended learning and IPAs, and other departments at the school have begun to take note of technology’s ability to create more authentic contexts for target languages.

Necessity Breeds Innovation

Catherine Ousselin, Mount Vernon High School

Catherine Ousselin, French teacher and technology coach at Mount Vernon High School (Mount Vernon, Wash.), offers several reasons world language teachers might be ahead of the curve in the implementation of technology in the classroom: “We are not tied to a state mandated test (save for some East Coast states), we have flexibility in our curriculum (in most states), our courses are labeled “electives” so we are required to be creative to maintain enrollment (especially for French, German and Japanese) and, lastly, we cover most of mainstream curriculum topics in our classes: history, science, language arts and culture/arts. This last area requires that we be extra creative and think outside the trenches.” Languages, cultures and current events change daily, Ousselin notes, and WL teachers use tech tools to bring authentic resources into their classrooms. “Using a textbook from 1995 is embarrassing, so many teachers rely on Web resources such as YouTube, news outlets and cultural sites (1jour1actu for French) to keep up with popular culture. We have strong communities on Twitter (#langchat) and Pinterest (way too many!).”

Ousselin started using iPods in her classroom in lieu of her school’s computer lab, which was always occupied by “core curricular” classes. The iPods were connected to students’ Google accounts and e-portfolios, allowing students to use a range of apps, including assessments apps like Quizlet and review apps like FeedMe. She later added Chromebooks and moved towards a flipped classroom, where students were able to work through various stations in class, using tools to record, listen, read and produce language.

Ousselin teaches workshops to world language teachers around the U.S., and says she finds them “engaged, enthusiastic and eager to explore the wide range of technology tools available to them. The only drawback is that [world language] teachers are most often considered last for funding.” Nonetheless, world language teachers seem to be a resourceful group. “We share and discuss our ideas on Thursday nights (during the school year), at our state conference, and at the national ACTFL conference,” says Ousselin. “While there is no ‘hive’ at this time, we are a well-connected group, and we try to assist our non-connected colleagues. Building our network has been one of the major success stories for world language teachers in the past few years.”

Experimenting Teacher to Model & Coach

Melinda Sears, Oak Mountain High School

Melinda Sears is beginning her fifth year of teaching, and after two years out of the classroom in a tech-support role, she is moving back to teach high school French at Oak Mountain High School (OMHS) in Birmingham, Ala., a college preparatory school enrolling over 1,400 students with a school-wide BYOD program in place. The OMHS Foreign Language Department offers three languages: French, Latin and Spanish. Thanks to her openness to exploring technology and resources to help her put it to practice, Melinda will this coming year assume an additional role of tech coordinator within the school in support of their school-wide BYOD program—one of only three such roles at her school.

Having received little technology-specific training in her teacher preparation programs, Melinda took it upon herself to explore the use of blogs, wikis and podcasts while teaching French in college, and she began using technology within her French courses, where she explored bringing real-world examples of French language and culture into her classrooms. Capitalizing on real-time opportunities provided by the Cannes film festival and political elections, she used technology to transform these cultural events into opportunities for her classes to connect to the grammar and vocabulary being learned in class. Quizlet.com and Conjugemos.com helped students to strengthen their vocabulary, while also helping them engage more deeply in conjugation-based activities. Eventually, after earning the respect of her colleagues, Melinda now leads her own professional development activities for her world language department, including monthly meetings within her district for world language-specific PD.

With the administration's trust and full support, including release time from her teaching load, Melinda will facilitate the expansion of the school's BYOD program as a key driver of technology adoption.

Despite the variety of technology that Melinda has used in her classes, she does not consider herself “tech savvy,” echoing the sentiment of Mina Marien, Melissa Strong and others. Instead, she simply thinks of herself as adaptable and flexible, in that she is willing to explore new tools and ideas, with the support of her professional learning network (PLN). In particular, Twitter, through which Melinda often connects to her French and Spanish colleagues, serves as a source of much inspiration, including the #langchat and #mfltwitterati hashtags. Furthermore, Melinda rejects using technology solely for the sake of technology. As she learned in college, blended learning models must always be driven by some purpose. In Melinda's case, she uses technology to drive engagement and, in her own words, to “wrangle kids in by capturing their attention.” Melinda is thus a model of a growth mindset, demonstrating to colleagues how an open mind and willingness to explore new tools can ultimately benefit students.

Blending a Foreign Language Elementary School

Kenneth Junge, Fairfax County, Virginia

Kenneth Junge serves as a principal in the 10th largest school district in the U.S., and he's not shy about his school's success with blended learning. He says, “We've had great success using a blended learning model for world languages at our school ... We understand that our students will need to know more than one language to be active members in their global community. Our school system also values the importance of children learning a second language. We know that the younger the students are when they are exposed to a language, the higher the likelihood they will retain that learning and be able to replicate a language with a native dialect.”

Junge's school integrated Rosetta Stone online language learning solutions into Spanish classes in grades three through six. (Kindergarteners through second graders attend Spanish class, and the school will be piloting Rosetta Stone Foundations for these grades this school year.) Students have classroom instruction twice per week, and they have the opportunity to access Rosetta Stone at the computer lab before school, during the school day and at home. “Both approaches are complementary,” notes Junge. “As digital natives, our students were comfortable using Rosetta Stone language learning program. It complements the classroom instruction and is a 24/7 resource for students that supports their language development. Our school district has also designated our school as a Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) school, so all of our students receive Spanish instruction utilizing the FCPS FLES curriculum.”

Students have some extra motivation: each year, fifth- and sixth-graders have the opportunity to take a trip to Costa Rica. “The students know that being able to speak Spanish will maximize this unique experience. They rely on Rosetta Stone Foundations and our Spanish classroom instruction to prepare for what is a real world competency-based

learning opportunity.” Another real world opportunity students took advantage of: talking to astronauts from the US and Germany on the International Space Station. “When our kids grow up, they’re not just going to be talking to people down the street or family in another state. They could be talking to people in Buenos Aires, Mumbai, in Beijing and Paris. I love that they’re digital natives and that talking on Skype to family in another town or around the world is an everyday experience for them. While the adults involved were in awe of our capability to talk with astronauts aboard the ISS, to our students it seemed like a natural extension of how they already communicate.”

Differentiated Classrooms: A Difference of Pedagogies

Don Doehla, Berkeley World Language Project

Don Doehla is not your typical world language teacher. He’s a high school French Teacher in Napa, Calif. (and has taught high school for 32 years)—but also a facilitator for Edutopia.org, a moderator for #langchat on Twitter and co-director of the Berkeley World Language Project at UC Berkeley. Don’s been using personal computers since they were first available, finding ways to incorporate games, fun activities and desktop publishing into his classes.

“Right from the beginning I was using media to bring the real world into the classroom—songs and videos and what have you. Now in terms of the things I do, it’s about developing 21st century skills, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and presentation skills in addition to the content. I’m still wanting to bring in authentic resources but in addition, I’m asking kids to take that, think about it critically and transform that into learning opportunities and be able to present products that they make out of it.”

But being tech savvy isn’t the whole story. Like many world language teachers, Don belongs to a worldwide network of teachers who collaborate online, sharing ideas and methods, offering advice and trouble-shooting tips and generally supporting one another.

“We’re collaborating constantly, sharing ideas and things that we learn. I’m also a researcher, so part of my work for Edutopia is to research and help the discussions happen on the site. So I’m also researching tools that are out there and thinking of ways that I can use them. I have a core set of 12 to 15 French teachers with whom I work very closely, sharing ideas and tech tools.” Between Twitter, discussion on Edutopia.org and Edmodo groups, Facebook and collaborative group work via Google Drive, Don and his peers are perhaps not blazing a trail so much as helping each other navigate toward a common destination: engaged students with successful learning outcomes.

That said, Don’s school district is not typical, either, having pioneered project-based learning more than 15 years ago and having supported the efforts of its teachers—even if Don and a Spanish-teaching colleague took the initiative themselves to apply for grant money to pay for classroom technology. While support and school resources play an obvious role in the implementation of educational technology and blended learning, Don thinks the divide between early and hesitant adopters has more to do with differences of pedagogical ideas than reluctance or inability to incorporate technology.

“It’s less about technology than about methodology,” he says. “I have a lot of [world language] teachers who think the way to do it is through grammatical, structural approaches with fixed lists of vocab and traditional tests, and they’re very, what I would call, ‘traditionalists’. They’re a little more reticent because they don’t really see EdTech as necessary when they can keep doing what they’ve been doing.” Traditionalists have been successful with high achieving students, he adds, but languages need to be accessible to all students—and that’s where educational technology and pedagogies such as project-based learning have the advantage. “We need to start doing more differentiation and supporting broader skills-based learning,” Don says. “I’m of the opinion that anyone who speaks one language can learn another one.” And when it comes to instructing the teachers on how to integrate educational technology? “It’s been my experience that when a learner—whether a student or teacher—has a real need to know, they become motivated to overcome the obstacles and actually find what it takes to learn something.”

A Deliberate Approach to Blended Learning

Nicole Naditz, Bella Vista High School

Nicole Naditz is a French teacher at Bella Vista High School in California. She's also a Leadership Team Member for California's Capital World Language Project and a Google Certified Teacher. She's been teaching since 1993. Her district is fairly diverse and, although her school consists of mostly upper-middle class families, these families' incomes have fallen since the recession, and the rate of students eligible for free and reduced lunch has gone from seven to 19 percent.

Nicole considers herself tech savvy: "The arrival of the Internet in my school just a couple of years [after 1993] completely transformed my teaching because, for the first time, I could easily access authentic documents and information about the French-speaking world, and I could design activities that allowed my students to interact with those documents ... I was hooked. Since then, I have come to value purposeful, targeted use of technology to enhance student proficiency as a key component of the learning experiences I facilitate for my students." These days, Nicole connects to the education community online via LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, to name a few.

When it came to blending her classroom instruction, Nicole knew she wanted to use technology deliberately and to emphasize access to content for all her students. "For me, 'blended learning' means that students have access to content, extra practice and enrichment 24/7," she says. She gives students a week to complete at-home assignments, allowing students without home access to use the Internet at school or the public library.

Maintaining student-teacher interaction is a big goal for Nicole. She explains, "One of the reasons I don't flip everything is because I strive to design lessons that are student-centered and highly interactive, and I don't feel I am skilled enough yet to figure out how to do that via video. For many courses, I think flipping the entire curriculum (teaching *all* content via video) is actually a step backwards; it brings us back to the age of teacher-centered instruction and allows teachers to feel OK about delivering instruction that is essentially a lecture with no student involvement or engagement." Nicole works hard to ensure that her videos are engaging, meaningful and high impact, "In my videos, I work hard to ensure that first and foremost I continue to provide all instruction in French, supported extensively with culturally authentic contexts and that I also infuse opportunities for students to pause, reflect and check their progress during the lesson, with feedback provided automatically during the videos."

Nicole's intensively engaged approach also solves one potential stumbling block that teachers and school districts face: There is no one-size-fits-all or a "fix it and forget it" recipe when it comes to implementing education technology and blended learning. "I actually redesign lessons every year based on new media related to the topics we are learning and on new tools that allow us to develop and practice language skills differently than how we did it before," she says. "As a result, I don't have a set list of tools or resources because the field is changing so much and so constantly. I design learning based on learning targets, which in the world language community are called 'can-do' statements."¹⁷

This constant refinement of curriculum and tools proves no small feat, but Nicole has an almost Zen-like approach to the challenge of keeping up with technology and best practices. She notes that we try to teach students to accept failure as a part of life, and teachers should, too: "I absolutely hate it when technology doesn't work, especially in class or during a presentation at a conference! But I don't give up on it. And I'm not afraid to push a different button, so to speak, and see if that helps. In addition, the learning process does get easier. Learning one new tool makes it easier to learn another one, which then makes it easier to learn another one, and so on. This makes total sense: It's just like languages. Once you have learned one new language, it is easier to learn another one."

Focusing on World Language Achievement

Gisele Falls, Tallwood High School

Gisele Falls is the World Languages Department Chair and a Spanish teacher at Tallwood High School's Global Studies and World Languages Academy (Virginia Beach, Va.). A 17-year veteran teacher, she's taught all levels of Spanish for grades 9–12, and she currently teaches several different levels of Spanish as well as AP Spanish Language and Culture.

"Our Academy is a school within a school," she explains. "Our students are required to complete at least four years of one language and two years of another. The challenge of teaching a world language in this day and age is finding a way to make it 'real' to the student. If language, or anything for that matter, is not authentic or does not have real-life application, students will lose interest."

The Academy offers eight world languages and provides all students with a Rosetta Stone account to supplement their language study. Student may also make a Rosetta Stone account for an additional language not offered by the school's teachers. "As the Academy has a number of student delegations that travel out of the country (to Israel, China, Germany, Northern Ireland, the Philippines and, this spring, to Spain), students, many times, will choose to study a language that is not offered in the traditional face-to-face classroom setting but rather for one of the countries to which they hope to travel," says Gisele, adding that teachers and staff also use Rosetta Stone accounts to brush up on a language or just to try something new.

Eight years ago, Gisele began to integrate technology and blended learning into her classrooms, which challenged her to reevaluate "not just the technology itself," she says, "but where it fits into the classroom. In all honesty, my students teach me a great deal ... I have learned about Twitter and Facebook, smartphones, iPods and iPads from these young technology-savvy kids!"

To Gisele, educational technology and blended learning offer real benefits: "Blended learning has provided me with a great number of tools. I am able to differentiate instruction, allow students to work at their own pace in some instances and motivate the unmotivated student. I have a wealth of resources for my most advanced students in AP (authentic listening practices, newspaper/video articles and reports) that are current and relative to what we are studying. This was something I couldn't even imagine when I first started teaching the course in the early '90s ... We [world language teachers] have been doing 'blended learning' since before it was called that. Like with performance based assessments, it's just what we do to get our kids to communicate in the target language for meaningful purposes."

The Academy enjoys strong support from school administration for its integration of educational technology and blended learning, and Gisele has found a strong community of world language teachers both locally and via the Internet. In addition to the courses she's taken on incorporating technology into world language classrooms, she belongs to a world language group on Edmodo, where she learns a lot from her colleagues. "I am fortunate to work in one of the best world language programs in the country," she says. "We have excellent teachers in our city who share their knowledge in formal and informal settings. We collaborate extensively in our building and throughout the district. I have found most WL teachers to be willing and excited to share anything new."

"To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture," concludes Gisele, quoting Afro-French philosopher Frantz Fanon. "Working in an academy with 'world languages' in the title shows the commitment that our district, community and school have to educating students who are striving to be global citizens."

Blazing An Edtech Trail

Christine Lanphere, Natomas High School

Christine Lanphere is the World Language Department Chair at Natomas High School (Sacramento, Calif.) and a 21-year veteran teacher. She's the only French teacher at Natomas High—a diverse school where about 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch—and teaches students in grades 9 through twelve, plus French I through Advanced Placement French.

Christine's school made a big leap several years ago—thanks to a new superintendent—from TVs that were too small to display PowerPoints to having WiFi and LCD projectors in every classroom. "I had been teaching for about 17 years before I was able to have access to the technology tools. Once I had access to equipment and connectivity,

I began integrating technology using PowerPoint presentations rather than overhead transparencies.” She and a Spanish colleague also purchased netbooks and Chromebooks for their department using annual grant money. “We have assembled a cart of 32 individual computers, which allows us to have the students use technology, primarily through Google Apps for Education,” she says, adding that she also uses Animoto, Blendspace, YouTube, Wikispaces and ClassCards.

Even without classroom technology, Christine says she was fairly tech savvy. “I could manage traditional software applications in a fairly sophisticated manner,” she says, “but I was less familiar with the Google Apps and some of the Web 2.0 technologies. [In 2012], I attended a Google Apps for Education Summit, which brought my ‘savviness’ up quite a bit. The following year, our school had Google Apps for Education, and I began using it more with my students, mainly to train them in 21st Century Skills.”

Despite all this, Christine remains modest about her EdTech adoption. “I would not really say that I currently implement blended learning because I am still in the transition from ‘old’ to ‘new’ and am slowly introducing opportunities for technology in my classroom ... Mostly, I am implementing technology in my direct instruction and then am transitioning or creating student projects that incorporate Web 2.0 technologies.”

Although Christine hasn’t gotten any formal EdTech professional development from her school or district, she does enjoy administrative support and a group of like-minded peers. “There is a core group of tech-savvy teachers across curricular areas, and they are very collegial and willing to assist colleagues to learn technologies.” Common Core has also spurred EdTech adoption in Natomas Unified School District: “With the upcoming online assessments linked to Common Core, our district has purchased Chromebook carts for each of the schools. With an additional purchase of Chromebooks by our principal, we now have nearly 300 Chromebooks on campus. Our teachers are beginning to use this equipment with their students, but this is the start of the movement. I am actually one of the more tech-savvy teachers on the campus. I share new technologies through conversations when I have the chance.”

Trends

We observed the following trends based on our conversations with the 10 teachers and administrators we interviewed.

Bottom-Up Adoption of Technology

The most effective world language classrooms have always been driven by a clear purpose in teaching students how to effectively communicate with the target language. Effective communication requires not only linguistic competence of the target language, but also a solid understanding of the culture that produces the language. Since world language teachers understand that effective language classrooms are driven by people-to-people interactions, world language study tends to be driven by a clear purpose. Therefore, world language teachers generally start using tech early on in their careers to make their classrooms more “authentic” in alignment with this purpose. Aiding the creation of authentic classrooms are a number of technologies that help expose students to the target culture and to help personalize language study, while creating engaging environments for students. When colleagues see how well this sort of approach works, the use of technology spreads outward radially, with the world language teachers serving as a model for effective use of technology driven by purpose, rather than some other extrinsic motivator. Most importantly, as we have learned, the most effective blended learning models are often built by teachers from the ground up. In other words, world language teachers take ownership of their blended learning programs, thanks to the fact that they personally attribute a clear purpose to its design; on account of this purpose, the programs prove successful enough to be emulated by other teachers within their schools.

Entry Points

Entry points into blended world language vary from teacher to teacher, but some commonalities exist. Language labs have long been a staple of instructional technology within world language classrooms, long before schools began to adopt 1:1 programs. World language teachers have learned to use language lab technology to give students active practice with the target language and to expose them to authentic materials, including a variety of print media, videos and music. Language labs, moreover, have also given world language teachers insight into self-paced learning

focusing on the acquisition of skills with competency-based models. Other entry points for teachers along the path to fully-blended and competency-based learning include options ranging from using tools like PowerPoint and piloting models such as the Flipped Classroom.

Personalized Media from Travel Experience

Given that the best language programs incorporate cultural fluency beside linguistic skills, travel has played a significant role in the professional growth of world language teachers. Travel immerses teachers within a target language, allowing them to improve their own linguistic skills, while deepening their understanding of specific cultures. Immersive travel, then, offers a fantastic opportunity to build authentic resources to share with students back in the classroom, especially when such media chronicles important cultural institutions and events for the target culture. Additionally, students say that pictures and videos (sometimes referred to as “realia”) featuring their world language teachers are more engaging than (often outdated) stock photos used in textbooks.

Cultural Fluency as a Driver

One of the more prominent trends in education sweeping through schools is the shift toward active “maker” models driven by a clear purpose. For example, the STEM/STEAM movement seeks to inspire students’ interest in science and technology by allowing them to influence the curriculum and engage with content through project-based models of learning that make these subject areas more relevant to students. Within world languages, teachers have begun to address the relevance of linguistic studies in a similar way. In particular, skills like building empathy for the target culture, collaborating effectively and understanding the role that globalization plays in the world economy have begun to find a foothold in language classrooms. Hence, cultural fluency is becoming just as important as linguistic fluency in language study, in that it places high value on people skills alongside language skills. As a result, cultural fluency is becoming a significant driver for change in world language classrooms, and world language teachers are taking advantage of blended learning models to facilitate this shift, expanding the possibilities of what can be accomplished within their classrooms.

Slow and Steady Shift

While all of the interviewed teachers have a high facility for technology, most of them would not call themselves “tech savvy,” nor were most trained in using technology during their various teacher-training programs. Instead, they consider themselves to be adaptable and nimble in their use of classroom technology, and they have learned to rely on their highly-valued PLN for support. Being savvy is not an innate skill, as much as it represents a mindset and willingness to experiment patiently with tools. Using technology, then, is not about leveraging those who already know and understand how to use it when building 1:1 programs; rather, it is a slow and incremental process of creating more effective classrooms through trial and error, letting the purpose behind technology use drive classroom goals. It involves being open to new tools and flexible in how they are used by students and teachers, with the administration providing support for training and a reliable infrastructure. Because world language teachers have traditionally used classroom goals to drive their pedagogical choices, they have been particularly good at welcoming experimentation when learning new technological skills.

Value of the Personal Learning Network (PLN)

All interviewed teachers appreciated the value of a strong PLN, such as maintaining a presence on Twitter and other social media. Our teachers often participate in a number of Twitter chats (e.g., #edchat, #langchat and #mfltwitterati, among numerous others), some of which are specifically for language teachers and others geared toward education and pedagogy in general. To complement their use of Twitter, world language teachers are active participants of conferences during which they enjoy interacting with teacher colleagues in person. Through their PLN, world language teachers participate in conversations with teachers from around the globe, thereby taking advantage of a diverse number of ideas and forging collaborative relationships outside of their own school. Such diversity allows for the sort of creativity that facilitates innovation within the classroom, while also energizing teachers and inspiring them to try new things. By encouraging teachers to move beyond comfort zones, the support of a strong PLN inspires world language teachers to take more risks and to become more resilient in their endeavors. The high value placed on the PLN underscores the importance of collaboration outside of the classroom, which world language teachers then use as a model for their students.

Recommendations

The interviewees above agree that a clear purpose must drive the implementation and use of technology in any classroom. Also, engagement and personalization of learning typically mark two of the more central motivators in creating blended learning environments, especially for world language teachers who have embraced the emergent importance of globalization and authentic assessment in creating engaging and personalized experiences for their students.

A strong, collaborative and open community proves one of the strengths of successful world language departments most often celebrated by their members. And based on the data collected from interviews, the most effective blended learning environments have been developed and led by teachers, with technology adoption spreading from the bottom up. World language teachers have also made it clear that they find sufficient time for open collaboration within these communities to be essential for exploring new technologies and building quality blended learning programs. One of the most common pitfalls in scaling up blended learning programs in schools stems from a lack of sufficient shared time for discussion—the sort seen in world language communities, in which teachers can talk openly with each other (e.g., open Mondays or late-start Wednesdays, etc.).

Hence, in order to cultivate an open exploratory environment in which teachers can efficiently and effectively offer support and partnership, it is strongly recommended that schools establish regular blocks of time for teacher collaboration, both inside and outside of one’s designated department. In practice, the agendas in these meetings prove most effective when set and led by teachers—including teacher-leaders of the sort described above—who can discuss issues of direct relevance to them.

It is also clear that effective blended world language programs are driven by strong teacher-leaders. Schools must also cultivate teacher-leaders by giving them leverage and support to effect change within their community; they must be endorsed and encouraged to participate in various types of professional development, including doing conference work and traveling abroad, while also building strong and diverse PLNs. Quality professional development encourages divergent thinking and, for world language teachers in particular, builds empathy and cultural fluency that helps to diversify thinking and approaches toward problem solving. In addition, teachers who engage in regular professional development, thanks to increased exposure to new tools and pedagogies, become more open to alternative modes of thinking that become an asset when implementing blended learning models.

Due to a lack of time and resources, too often, teachers cannot take advantage of quality professional development opportunities, let alone travel abroad for immersive experiences. Thus, it is also recommended that schools—and their teacher-leaders in particular—foster professional development however possible, whether sending teachers out to conferences or even hosting their own activities, like taking advantage of the free EdCamp or Playdate models.¹⁸

All of the suggestions above have proven helpful in shaping culture and community. As world language teachers have shown, a strong community with the right kind of environment becomes necessary to sustain change and the challenges brought about by technology. A successful community is built upon collaborative relationships and open communication that foster the flexibility required for using technology in the classroom; trust by both colleagues and administrators to embrace new opportunities; and finally, the time to explore these additions and test the value they can bring to classrooms, while relying on each other to best learn how to use them.

Teachers can and should be the drivers of blended, competency-based classrooms, but they are best equipped to thrive within an ecosystem that supports their efforts. Because the broader policy environment plays a key role in creating space for the overall shift to innovations in teaching and learning, the policy recommendations from “The Next Generation of World Language Learning” warrant repeating.

Three Ways World Language Teachers Can Support the Shift

1. Share with other teachers how they measure and track competency-based progressions;
2. Share how they have shifted from a turn-it-in culture to active & immersive learning where students are presenting, posting, publishing and using a portfolio; and
3. Share tips, tools and entry points for running a blended classroom.

In order to build an ecosystem in which world language educators are elevated and empowered to advance leaning innovations, states should:

1. Incorporate a goal for global competence and proficiency in more than one language (including bilingual schools).
2. Add language proficiency to graduation requirements.
3. Provide on-demand (or frequently scheduled), end-of-course exams in the world's top six languages (grades 6–12).
4. Authorize/approve multiple statewide online world language providers.
5. Provide free/discounted elementary access to online world language resources.
6. Provide portable course-based funding (grades 6–12).

Districts, networks and schools should:

1. Incorporate a goal for global competence and proficiency in more than one language.
2. Add language proficiency to graduation requirements.
3. Support development of a global competence portfolio including video and written artifacts.
4. Start weekly exposure to leading world languages in primary grades.
5. Offer at least the top six world languages to all students (grades 6–12) in either online and/or blended environments.

Philanthropy should:

1. Provide financial support to encourage state and district leaders to set world language goals and requirements.
2. Support public/private innovation partnerships between districts/networks and providers to pilot next-gen language-learning environments (e.g., similar to a recent Washington, D.C., new school grant program but focused on world languages¹⁹).
3. Invest in innovative language-learning providers.

Content and service providers should:

1. Situate their product development within broader education shifts toward blended, competency-based and Deeper Learning.
2. Provide robust resources to world language teachers, acknowledging that many of them often implement their products without much support from the school or district.
3. Create blended learning products that support cross-curriculum integration to help world language instructors work across departments and create opportunities for blended learning models to spread.
4. Design mobile products that encourage high engagement and extended use beyond traditional classroom settings.

CONCLUSION

Because we believe in the power of teachers as key agents of change, we partnered with Rosetta Stone to explore whether world language educators are uniquely poised to lead system-wide shifts to personalized learning models. Our review of the research and our discussions with practitioners confirmed that world language educators can be elevated and empowered to lead this charge. World language educators understand the value of personalized learning and have thus been quick to adopt the technologies that allow them to create these sorts of environments for their students.

Each of the teachers and principals we interviewed described a unique path toward personalized world language instruction. Their stories reveal a common theme of evolution—beginning with the implementation of classroom tools from their own experimentation and often ending with transformed learning environments that have torn down the walls of traditional learning. Some were driven by necessity and others by their own curiosity. Most teachers and principals found support within active and ever-growing professional learning networks that helped to supplement support they might have initially lacked from their own schools. All exhibited mindsets that placed student-learning front and center, as they reached out for tools to better connect students to high-quality opportunities for world language learning. Many initiated ripple effects throughout their schools and classrooms, allowing innovations in teaching and learning to thrive beyond the world language classroom. Several grew from individual classroom instructors to school- and district-wide positions of leadership to help shape the future of personalized instruction across the curriculum.

We are confident declaring that world language instructors can and should feel elevated and empowered to initiate the shift to personalized learning, and we're excited to help connect them with the tools and resources they need to lead the charge.

Acknowledgements

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