What is FLES?

FLES stands for Foreign Language in Elementary School. The model is one that emphasizes learning content students already learn but in a different language. This allows students to simultaneously develop basic communication skills in the target language while also reinforcing the core curriculum.

What are the goals of FLES?

Students in a FLES program gain intermediate proficiency in a world language by the time they finish fifth grade. Intermediate proficiency, based on ACTFL’s standards, allows students to participate in everyday social interactions in the target language and understand simple text. In addition, students gain the ability to navigate some basic academic interactions as well, including giving basic presentations and describing simple processes. The goal of the FLES program is to have students achieve a “Novice High” level of oral proficiency by the end of 5th grade.

What are the other benefits of FLES?

Learning multiple languages develops the prefrontal cortex: the part of the human brain responsible for higher order thinking, or what scientists call the “executive functions” (Carlson & Methzoff, 2008; Bialystok, 2001; Bialystok & Shapero, 2005). Development of these functions leads to better math, science, and reading outcomes; emotional self-regulation, and enhanced creativity for students (Wilson, Evans, Alderman, & Burgess, 1998; St ClairThompson, & Gathercole, 2006; Bull & Scerif, 2001; Koenigs & Tranel, 2007; Miller & Cohen, 2001; Qureshi, Apperly, & Samson, 2010; Ricciardelli, 1992). The cognitive benefits of multilingualism may even act as a buffer against Alzheimer’s disease since a bilingual person’s brain has more pathways to work around the degeneration that occurs in Alzheimer’s (Craik, Bialystok, & Freedman, 2010).

What grades will be part of the FLES program next year? The years beyond?

We will begin with a K-1 program and then increase by 1 grade each year. Our hope is that within three years, we will be able to offer an opt-in immersion opportunity for students.

What will FLES be replacing in the curriculum?

Nothing! Students will be learning the foundation of a second language by engaging in lessons that complement the current curriculum. Students may partake in the same morning meetings, math games, and project-based learning among other activities … just in a second language.

Will parents need to know the world language in order to help their children with their schoolwork?
No. There are many ways parents can help their children develop a new language even if they do not speak that language themselves. Teachers will work with parents to support them in understanding how to help their children develop their new language. Of course, if parents want to learn the new language along with their children, this could be a wonderful and enriching experience, but this is not expected or necessary for students to acquire the new language.

**How will FLES and classroom teachers work together?**

The FLES teacher will co-plan and teach lessons with classroom teachers. For example, a kindergarten teacher may work with the FLES teacher to implement a bilingual unit that includes descriptive vocabulary of colors and shapes. A 4th grade teacher may work with a FLES teacher to build a bilingual unit on important geographical features in the United States, in which students learn vocabulary for words like mountain and river in Spanish, locate these on a map, then complete a project that demonstrates the cultural impacts of geology on regions in the country.