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CURRICULUM ARTICULATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, GRADES FOUR THROUGH TWELVE.

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AN ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN BASED ON THE USE OF SCHEDULE MODULES OFFERS A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WELL-ARTICULATED FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM FROM ELEMENTARY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL. A THREE-TRACK SEQUENCE IS SUITABLE FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS WISHING TO PROVIDE SUCH A PROGRAM. WITH THIS PLAN STUDENTS CAN BEGIN FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY IN GRADE 4 AND COMPLETE SIX STAGES (9 YEARS), IN GRADE SEVEN AND COMPLETE FIVE STAGES (6 YEARS), OR IN GRADE NINE AND COMPLETE FOUR STAGES (4 YEARS). THE PROPORTION OF TIME DEVOTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS CHANGES AS A SEQUENCE PROGRESSES, AND VARIES FROM ONE TRACK TO ANOTHER ACCORDING TO AGE DIFFERENCES. PHASE I, WHETHER TAKEN IN ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR, OR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, ALWAYS CONTAINS THE SAME NUMBER OF SCHEDULE MODULES OR TIME BLOCKS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR ORDERLY PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS TO THE NEXT PHASE. A SYLLABUS AND A STRONG SUPERVISORY PROGRAM ARE ESSENTIAL IN MAINTAINING CONTINUITY WHEN THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM IS PUT INTO OPERATION. DIAGRAMS OF THE ARRANGEMENT OF SCHEDULE MODULES FOR EACH OF THE THREE TRACKS ARE GIVEN.  
(AUTHOR/AM)

# CURRICULUM ARTICULATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

## GRADES FOUR THROUGH TWELVE

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE  
Office of Education

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### BACKGROUND

An increasingly popular and accepted movement which is giving headaches to secondary school teachers and administrators is the teaching of foreign languages in elementary schools. At the close of World War II, this trend became evident and has developed at such a rapid rate that today thousands of pupils from kindergarten through the eighth grade are engaged in learning a second language. With the launching of Sputnik came a strong cry for the reappraisal of the foreign language curriculum. The demand that foreign languages be taught in the lower grades raised questions as to where to start the instruction and at what age, and how to do it. This demand also revealed the inadequacies of the traditional method, which emphasized the translating and writing skills and neglected the listening and speaking.

Adjusting to all these innovations became difficult for high school foreign language teachers since most of them never had to face entering students with some previous formal training, and many conflicted as to the best approach to beginning instruction. Some endorsed the traditional approach (stressing expository and deductive techniques with emphasis on phonics, grammar, reading, composition and literature). Others pursued the audio-lingual approach in which the pupil must first become proficient in listening and speaking.

Because of the nature of younger children, FLEs programs were and are most frequently based on the audio-lingual approach, and

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high school foreign language teachers--especially those who were teaching with <sup>minimum</sup> certificates--had very little opportunity to speak the foreign language which they taught. Unless they could be guided toward finding ways to adjust their teaching procedures so as to provide for the "advanced" entering freshman, they were likely to neglect him, and perhaps even resent FLES. If they advanced him by placing him with second year or third year high school students, they found him unprepared. To resolve this, some felt that a two-course sequence in high school would be the answer, but the double-track system would have meant that the high school teachers were forced to accept the FLES programs as they were and to revise their curriculum for the "advanced" students trained under FLES. This alone could not provide a desirable well rounded, well articulated foreign language program. A more systematic approach was needed. This article will try to expose the problems which have been involved in articulation and introduce findings which may suggest directions or insights to future planning. It will even attempt to make recommendations based on the author's experience in language teaching and research.

Some authors have given some basic steps which should be undertaken by most high school foreign language teachers in order to carry out articulation. They are as follows:

1. Study the FLES movement.
2. Study the local neighboring FLES programs.
3. Re-examine the high school program.
4. Confer with Elementary school foreign teachers.
5. Make plans for a continuous program of conferences, surveys, etc.

I have found that in some school systems all pupils study foreign languages in a six-year sequence.

The contradiction I note here is that every student in these schools is taking a foreign language regardless of his or her ability. It is recognized that instruction in foreign languages should be differentiated according to the ability of pupils, but in these programs no provision is made for those individual differences (~~increased~~ by the compulsory enrollment in languages). They admit some students will achieve little in studying a language, yet in these programs it is expected that pupils will continue to study the language in grades nine through twelve.

The only sensible premise that is made here is that which gives a conviction about a longer sequence in the study of the language and the method and approach in teaching. It is universally accepted that a longer sequence of study makes it possible for pupils to have the opportunity to really develop reasonable skill in a language. In the early grades attention can be directed toward the development of oral skill before the pronunciation patterns of the child are clearly established. Later, in the upper grades, literature can be emphasized when pupils have the maturity necessary to appreciate better the abstractions and symbolisms of the writing that are studied.

#### LEARNING A LANGUAGE

The question of the optimum age for the beginning of instruction in a foreign language course is often debated in the literature of this subject. Dr. Wilder Penfield, a noted neurologist, writing in the Foreign Language Bulletin states that the infant possesses speech potential mechanisms and that these are not related to any language in particular but receptive to all. He feels that the speaking of a second language should be started before the mechanisms of the children become rigid. He also

believes that the brain of the child is plastic. The brain of the adult, however effective it may be in other directions, is usually inferior to that of the child as far as language is concerned.

Not many writers agree on a definite age for the beginning of instruction in second languages. Some believe that they have found no indication as to what may be the best age to begin. They also report that researchers favor beginning anywhere from the first to fifth grade. On methods, they report that reading should not be introduced in grades three or four, not because the children would not be capable, but in order to capitalize on the oral facility which the students have at this age.

As was previously stated, there are now programs starting in every grade from kindergarten to high school. However, the most favored age for starting a language in the elementary schools seems to be either in the third or fourth grade. This age is suggested to allow the children to accustom themselves to school life prior to beginning a foreign language. It should also be noted that most elementary schools find it impractical to introduce any substantial number of children to foreign language study before grades three or four because the primary grades must concentrate on basic skills of literacy and number work as well as orientation of young pupils in the physical and social world.

Writing in regards to progression within a sequence in foreign language, Theodore Anderson, of the University of Texas urges that children who finish language classes in elementary school should continue their studies together without being mixed with those who began their study in high school.



Dr. Anderson writes:

Children who have benefited from a FLES program must of course not be put in the same class as those who begin their foreign language study in grade seven. Nor do they belong in FL II or III. They belong in a class which continues and builds on the FLES program. An educated guess suggests that not until FL IV ( the beginning of the third year of high school instruction) can the two streams--the FLES stream and the stream beginning in grade seven--be merged. 11

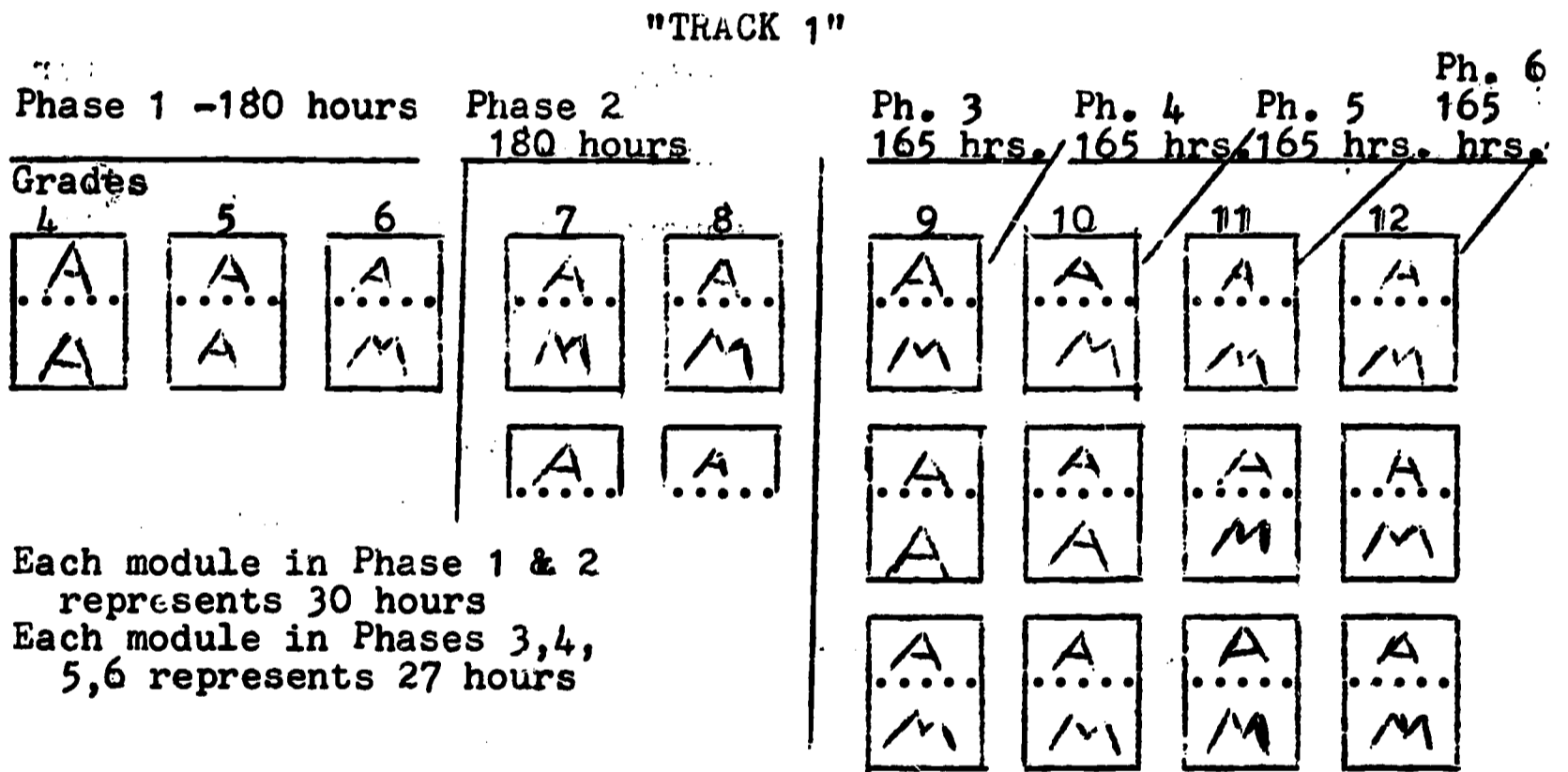
Later in this paper, the reader will see these ideas nearly developed into several recommendations for an articulated plan of sequence in foreign language curriculum.

Here again there is agreement that it is essential that vertical coordination take place between the junior high school and the senior high school. So many of the junior high schools are receiving students who have had foreign language in the elementary grades. Therefore, junior high school years must be considered an integral part of the entire sequence rather than as a separate period of instructing only loosely related to what comes before and after.

A study of surveys and research shows that most of the elementary schools offering foreign languages are starting either in the third or fourth grade. Several state departments of education have set up various sequences in foreign language curriculum. These include articulation and plans for four, five, and six year sequences. Based on the best procedures of the most successful programs, I would like to recommend certain steps toward the setting up of an articulation sequence, steps to standardize the number of contact hours, steps to insure an orderly progression in the sequence, and some steps for the supervision of the program.

RECOMMENDED SEQUENCES IN ARTICULATION

It is felt that at the present time a six stage sequence stretching over nine school years would best serve the interests of conscientious school districts. The program would consist of six phases or stages. The first phase would be in grades four, five, and six. The second phase would be covered in grades seven and eight. The next four phases would be provided in grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve. Each grade would provide specific blocks of time as seen in the sequential diagram below. Each block in the diagram represents two modules of time necessary to complete each of the six phases.



In this sequence students having participated in the program since its beginning could be ready for placement in phase three in the ninth grade provided that the time element is standardized and the procedure for progression that will be suggested is accepted. This six phase program can be called "Track 1" and will be made up of 18 blocks or 36 modules. Each module in the first two phases make up thirty hours of study. It will be noted that the

modules marked with an "A" indicate 30 hours of Audio-Lingual approach in teaching a language. The modules marked with an "M" indicate mechanics (writing, composition, translation, etc.) In phases three, four, five and six, which are generally high school courses, the modules are weighted at approximately twenty-seven hours since each class period extends for 55 minutes for 180 days a year. The six phases of language study in "Track 1" will contain a total of 1000 hours, 620 of which will be in the direction of audio-lingual, and 380 will be in mechanics. Students beginning this track in grade four could merge with third year high school foreign language courses at the fourth phase of their study, or when sophomores. If a merger does occur students in this track could be placed in sixth semester of college for language or take a placement test. If they remained together from 4th grade through 12th they would be placed in the seventh semester college language. I would recommend twenty minute periods daily for grades four, five, and six. This would provide sixty contact hours per year or one hundred and eighty hours for the three grades (Phase 1). This would compare favorably with the one hundred and sixty-five hours of instruction contained in each phase in the high school. Under the suggested sequence, the junior high school should provide daily periods of thirty minutes. This would amount to ninety hours per grade or one hundred and eighty hours in the seventh and eighth grades (Phase 2).

As it has been discussed previously, the introduction of the first phase of three blocks (six modules) should be almost entirely audio-lingual. The listening and speaking skills should almost be the only skills studied at this phase in order to capitalize on



the vocal flexibility of the students. As the students reach the sixth grade, reading should be introduced. At least one module is reserved for this skill. Actually, most areas of the mechanics of the language should be introduced at this thirty hour module. The reading material at this stage should be familiar material that has been previously mastered orally. It should be remembered that in introducing the four skills, one skill should be based on the mastery of the previous skill and follow the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

As these students should qualify for placement in phase three, which would be a consolidation course for the previously introduced four skills, the high school should add a third course which differs in content from the traditional third year high school language course.

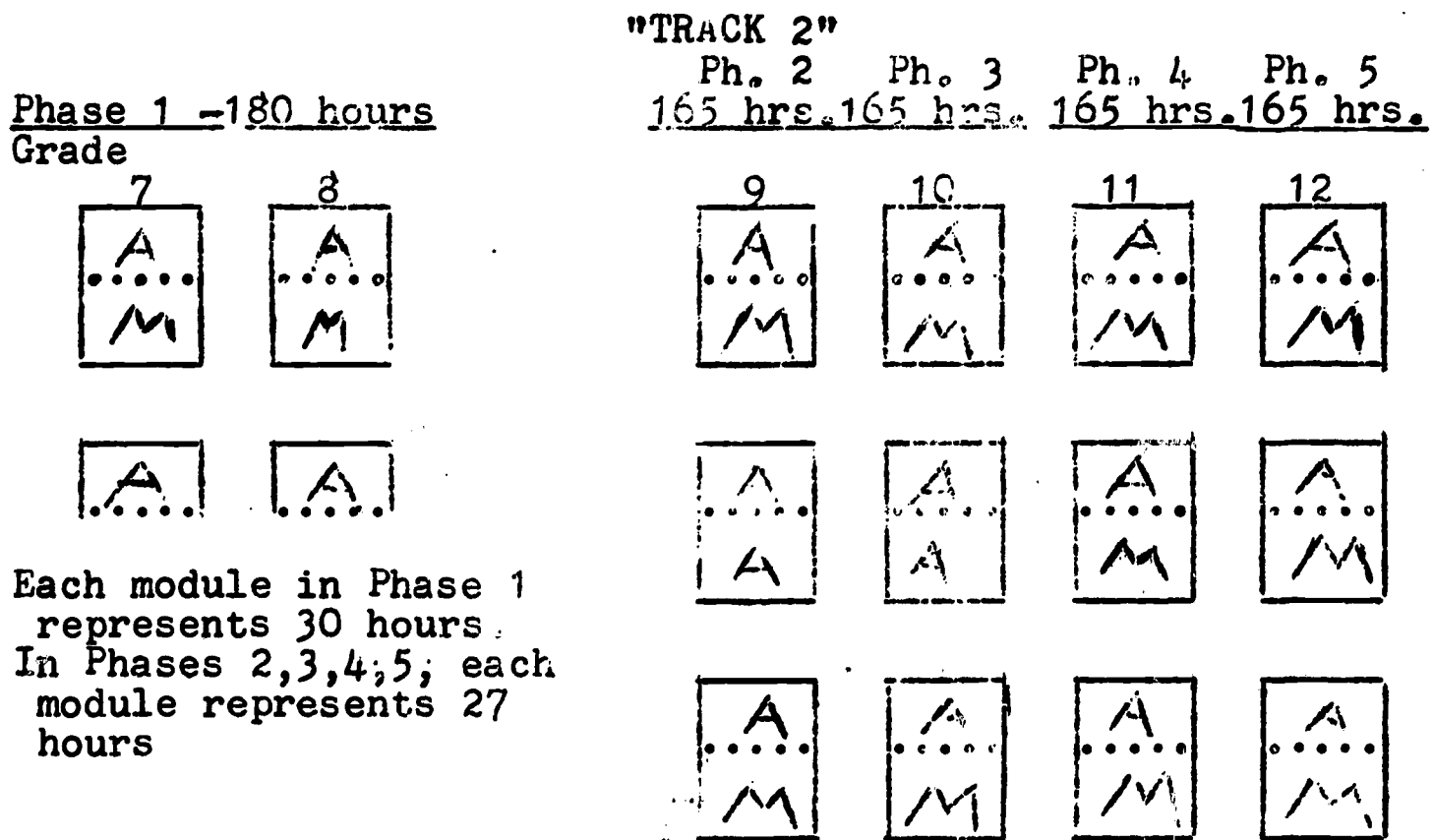
#### REQUIRED OR ELECTIVE PARTICIPATION

It is felt that the present practices of schools as to the required selection of foreign languages are too irregular, and that compulsory participation should be practiced in the first phase. To reap maximum benefit from a sequence of this type it is felt that uninterrupted participation is the best. I feel and would recommend that participation in the second phase (grade seven and eight) be left elective and that the student electing participation should meet certain requirements. Until such a time when periodical evaluation is instituted in the first phase, the students should meet the three following requirements: (1) recommendation of the previous teacher, (2) satisfactory participation in the previous phase, and (3) acceptable score on an achievement test. As there are no standard achievement tests available to measure achievement

at this level, it is felt that the first and second phase teachers should co-operatively build such test.

As the sixth grade would mark the end of phase one, I would recommend that a "Track 2" be initiated at the junior high school.

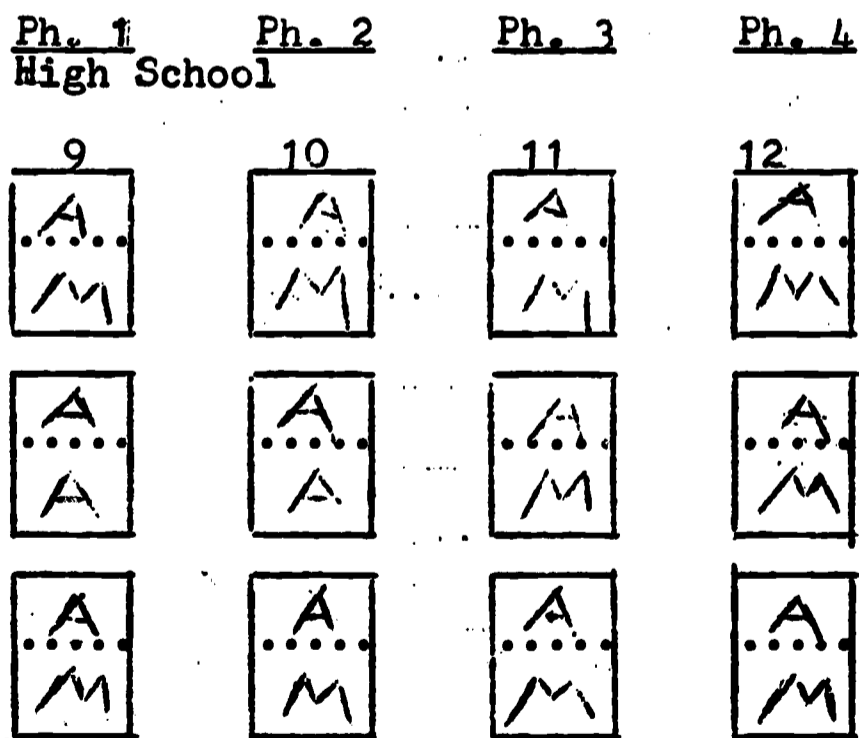
This would take care of the students who did not meet all the requirements for progression on the phase two but still desire not to abandon language study completely, and would also accommodate those students who may be transferring from other schools. It would also provide an opportunity for students who began one language in the first phase or at another school to start another, provided that they have the recommendation of their former teacher. Track 2 would incorporate five phases or 15 blocks of time. In this respect it would be similar to Track 1; it would be shorter in total hours--320 (470 hours in audio-lingual instruction, and 350 hours in mechanics).



Students beginning this track-(2) in grade seven could merge with third year high school foreign language students at the third phase of their track, or when sophomores. Also, as sophomores they could merge with students in phase four of Track 1. This could allow students in Track 1 and Track 2 to adjust to high school life for one year prior to progressing on to phase four and three respectively. If students remained together in this track until graduation, they could be eligible for the sixth semester language in college, or undergo placement tests to determine his level of achievement. If a merger does occur they would be placed in the fifth semester of college foreign language.

As was explained before, high school foreign language study would contain four phases, and a third track should be established or continued as it was, in order to accommodate students beginning foreign language study as freshman in high school. The entire track would be made up of 12 blocks or 24 modules (14 in audio-lingual and 10 in mechanics, 370 hours and 270 hours respectively)

"TRACK 3"



Each Phase = 165 hours  
Each Module = 27 hours

To insure the orderly development of this program in articulation, administrator of any school involved should press for the cooperative development of a general syllabus or guide for each and every grade of the sequence. After all, a vertical program encompassing nine school years should be carefully supervised. In order to maintain continuity and sound supervision in such a comprehensive foreign language program, a position of language coordinator or chairman might be established. This person should be the central figure of the program, and therefore, he or she should have the authority that goes with the position. On the other hand, if it has to be a curriculum coordinator he or she should understand the foreign language sequence and materials as some of the findings and research in learning a second language; this person should provide the leadership and supervision so often lacking in public education.

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