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AUTHOR Castle, Pat; And Others
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Abstract

This report of a two-day meeting at Bloomington, Illinois in April 1969 discusses the basic elements of each of the first three levels of foreign language learning. Desired student performance at the completion of levels 1, 2, and 3 of French is enumerated for listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and culture. Suggested basic grammatical items for levels 1 and 2 are specified and a list of conference participants is provided. (WB)

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GUIDELINES
FOR
THREE LEVELS OF COMPETENCE
IN
FRENCH

THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF ILLINOIS
RAY PAGE, SUPERINTENDENT

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DOCTOR PAUL E. WOODS, DIRECTOR

FOREIGN LANGUAGE STAFF

**DERALD MERRIMAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, TITLE III, NDEA
FOREIGN LANGUAGE SUPERVISOR
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
316 South Second Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706
Phone: (217) 525-2829**

**Mr. H. Ned Seelye
Foreign Language Supervisor
38 South 6th Avenue
Apartment A-1
LaGrange, Illinois 60525
Phone: (312) 354-2538**

**Mr. Charles D. Jay
Foreign Language Supervisor
Benton Road
Mt. Vernon, Illinois 62864
Phone: (618) 242-0157**

**Mrs. Pat Castle
Foreign Language Supervisor
1326 Parkview Drive
Macomb, Illinois 61455
Phone: (309) 833-2870**

An Explanation of "Levels" of Competence

In Foreign Language Learning

FRENCH

Levels I, II, III

Prepared by

Pat Castle, Charles Jay, and Derald Merriman

Foreign Language Supervisors

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Based upon

the Deliberations and Recommendations

of Participants at the Bloomington Conference

April 1969

INTRODUCTION

The confusion which has resulted in Illinois from the lack of sound articulation in foreign language programs made obvious the need for more meaningful dialogue among foreign language teachers at all levels of learning. For this reason the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction sponsored a two-day meeting at Bloomington in April 1969, which was called "A Conference for the Improvement of Foreign Language Articulation."

This meeting attempted to resolve many questions that have been raised by Illinois teachers concerning the difference between a "level" of learning and a "year" of learning. The solution to this problem is of the utmost importance if well-articulated programs are to be developed. Classroom teachers agree that it is often unrealistic to expect students to master the skills of one "level" in one academic year because of the tremendous variations in materials used, teacher competency and methodology, class size, length of period, and student abilities. Foreign language supervisors in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction concur with the classroom teachers that only by defining language learning in terms of levels, which will remain constant regardless of the length of time required for a student to achieve proficiency, can sound articulation be achieved. The Bloomington Conference became an actuality because this Office wanted an explanation of levels which would reflect not only the opinions of State Foreign Language Supervisors but also the professional viewpoints of a statewide group of high school teachers and college professors. The representatives chosen to attend this meeting were a cross-section of teachers using many different texts, various kinds of electronic teaching aids, and methodologies from the most traditional to the most audio-lingual. All grades from junior high through beginning college, in both large and small schools from all geographical areas of Illinois were represented. (See Appendix for list of participants and their addresses.)

The task of these teachers was to discuss and agree upon what should be the basic elements in each "level" of learning. They stressed the fact that most students will need a three-year sequence in high school to complete the requirements for the first two levels. Classroom teachers must explain this to their students and also assume the responsibility of discussing this matter with administrators and counselors. Those responsible for student programs in the secondary schools should clearly understand that students who have not successfully completed two foreign language "levels" of learning will be severely handicapped in their first college course. (Students who complete only two "years" in high school will receive credit toward graduation, of course, but they should be warned that they will usually lack many of the necessary skills that are needed in Level III courses in college.)

EXPLANATION

In reading the explanation of "levels" on the pages which follow, it is important to remember these points:

1. The purpose of the Bloomington Conference was not to write a detailed curriculum guide for French, Spanish, and German. Participants were primarily interested in preparing a concise statement which would indicate the language skills and attitudes that should be expected of students at the first three levels.
2. It was generally agreed that the text being used is realistically the teacher's curriculum guide. Because some materials, however, are far more inclusive than others, participants felt that a list of essential grammar items should be included in the Appendix for each language discussed.
3. The question of preferable teaching methodologies was not a part of the discussion or recommendations of the Bloomington Conference. Participants did emphasize, however, that all foreign language instruction should follow through the basic skills -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing -- in order to culminate in speaking proficiency, cultural empathy, and literary appreciation.
4. It was emphasized at the conference that students should have a practical knowledge of all basic grammar by the end of Level II. Although grammar does play an intensive role in Level III, it should be taught in the form of review with expansion and refinement of basic concepts previously studied.
5. The conference decided that the work in Level III (primarily reading and review grammar) is, in most cases, of the same complexity as that required in the first year of college work for students who have completed two "levels" (usually three years) in high school. Secondary schools which have well-articulated sequential courses will undoubtedly offer the equivalent of Level III work to their advanced students.
6. Participants delegated to the Foreign Language Supervisors in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction the task of editing and distributing the recommendations of the conference to all schools in Illinois. Inasmuch as the basic premises which were formulated for each language, as well as the desired student performance at the completion of each level, were so similar, a composite from these ideas has been used for each level in French, German, and Spanish. A separate appendix is included for each language.

French - Level I

Basic Premises:

1. Development of oral comprehension and speaking skills are the major goals of instruction in Level I.
2. Introduction of grammatical concepts is an essential feature of Level I programs.
3. Instruction in the appreciation of the culture is an integral part of the regular-class and extra-curricular activities.

Desired Student Performance at Completion of Level I

LISTENING: Comprehend the language spoken at normal classroom speed, within the range of vocabulary and constructions found in the more generally used Level I textbooks; this also includes recognition of cognates and the use of gestures.

SPEAKING: Reproduce meaningful utterances with reasonably correct pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, that demonstrate control of the whole sound system.

1. Form and answer questions relating to familiar subject matter.
2. Participate in a directed dialogue with acceptable accuracy and speed.
3. Relate facts about a familiar object or situation.
4. Attempt conversation, using language acceptable to a native, about previously studied topics.

READING:

1. Relate the sounds of the language to the printed word by reading that material which has previously been learned orally.
2. Comprehend, while reading silently without translation, the basic reading materials of the text.
3. Read aloud a familiar text.
4. Read additional material whose meaning can be derived through inference.

WRITING: Reproduce accurately, spelling and punctuating correctly, in limited, guided writing the spoken vocabulary in the following ways:

1. Write familiar sentences from dictation.
2. Formulate questions and answers about previously learned material.
3. Answer questions which would form narrative.
4. Supply the dialogue of one person in a conversation.
5. Write statements about a stimulus (i.e., a visual aid).
6. Rewrite a simple familiar narrative, making simple changes in tense.
7. Do written exercises that involve simple manipulation of number, gender, word order, tense, replacement, negation, interrogation, command, comparison, possession.

Level I (Con't.)

GRAMMAR:

Although additional grammar may be introduced in order to preview work which will be studied in the succeeding levels, emphasis should be placed upon attaining usable control of the basic grammatical principles. (See Appendix)

CULTURE:

NOTE:

In the first years of study the acquisition of the basic linguistic skills is in itself an important cultural goal. It is essential to remember that language is the most complete expression of the culture of any people. In addition, the student must learn to identify the needs, desires, and aspirations that are common to all mankind while also becoming aware of how people are uniquely different.

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the cultural connotations of the language within his structural control, as well as of the accompanying gestures and expressions.
2. Show an awareness of the social conventions which regulate the what and how of communication in the foreign culture.
3. Have an initial acquaintance with the manners, foods, clothing, customs, and family life unique to the country being studied, as derived from the text, audio-visual aids, and outside readings in English.
4. Reflect attitudes which show a human understanding and respect for a society uniquely different, and yet similar, to his own.
5. Know some folklore as well as a few anecdotes and proverbs.
6. Demonstrate as a result of class discussions and club activities an introductory knowledge of the music, dance, art, geography, and history of the country.

French - Level II

Basic Premises:

1. Continued development of oral comprehension and accurate control of the sound system when speaking are major goals in Level II.
2. A practical knowledge of all basic grammar is essential by the end of Level II.
3. A firsthand knowledge of brief examples of cultural and of contemporary writing is an integral part of the reading of Level II.
4. An awareness in written and oral work of the similarities and differences of each culture, and the continued development of empathy with the value systems of the foreign society are major goals in all Level II courses.

Desired Student Performance at Completion of Level II

LISTENING:

1. Relate sound to symbol, recognize phonetic items in speech, and easily understand the spoken alphabet when used in spelling activities.
2. Recognize the correct sounds and sound combinations of the language.
3. Recognize all of the basic syntactic patterns of speech.
4. Comprehend an educated native speaking at normal classroom speed on a topic concerning everyday situations in the contemporary culture of the country.

SPEAKING:

Develop an active vocabulary of approximately 1000 words and easily produce in oral speech the verb tenses and moods of the commonly used verbs.

1. Reproduce all sounds of the speech system in such a way as to be recognized by a native speaker and distinguish clearly those sounds where an error can distort meaning.
2. Use correctly all basic sentence patterns.
3. Initiate simple questions, and answer in complete sentences questions asked by other students, the teacher, or the text.
4. Participate in an impromptu dialogue using ten statements from material or topics previously studied and make appropriate rejoinders to the comments of others.
5. Retell an anecdote of approximately 100 words or describe an everyday activity of interest to the class.
6. Converse in simple terms about the cultural and contemporary reading selections studied during this level.
7. Sightread orally material containing familiar vocabulary.

Level II (Con't.)

READING:

1. Read materials of a difficulty equal to that found in most standard Level II texts. This material should contain all cases, tenses, moods, and voices.
2. Develop a passive reading vocabulary of approximately 1300-1800 words, deriving meanings from context without using the dictionary until all other means have been exhausted.
3. Read simple selections in newspapers, magazines, and graded readers on travel, geography, history, and social customs, as well as biographical sketches, short stories, and poems rather than long examples of "literature."

WRITING:

1. Write from dictation text material previously examined for details of written form.
2. Display the ability to write controlled sentences using the subject, direct object, indirect object, prepositional phrases, adverbs, and subordinate clauses in correct word order. Punctuate and spell all material correctly.
3. Write summaries, under the guidance of the teacher, of selections that have been read as a group or as an individual student with teacher help.
4. Demonstrate the ability to transpose from English to the foreign language simple sentences and exercises designed to develop specific grammatical skills.

GRAMMAR:

Recognize and use correctly all basic grammatical patterns. A practical knowledge of all basic grammar is essential by the end of Level II. (See Appendix)

CULTURE:

1. Appreciate how the values in the foreign culture affect family, society, economy, politics, and education in the foreign country.
2. Demonstrate empathy with the value systems of the foreign society.
3. Show in classroom discussions and extra-curricular activities how these values affect family, society, politics, economy, etc.
4. Demonstrate the ability to react within authentic social conventions to common situations such as greetings, compliments, condolences, etc.

Level II (Con't.)

CULTURE:
(Con't.)

5. Express an awareness in written and oral work of the similarities and differences of each culture as these characteristics are made evident in travelogues, films, slides, speeches by foreign visitors, and Americans who have lived abroad.
6. Read independently foreign newspapers and magazines which have a vocabulary commensurate to the student's interest and level of learning.
7. Attend foreign films, plays, lectures, concerts and art exhibits whenever possible to appreciate the artistic accomplishments of the people.
8. Identify foreign influence on U. S. and world culture.

French - Level III

Basic Premises:

1. Continued practice in the basic skills -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing -- which now include study of subtle grammar concepts, is an essential feature of Level III programs.
2. Opportunities to expand individual interests are numerous in the developmental reading and individual study, which are important components of Level III programs.
3. Discussion of cultural items are all in the target language. Empathy for the way of life of the people being studied, and enthusiasm for diversity as it is encountered are important.

Desired Student Performance at Completion of Level III

LISTENING:

1. Understand all previously studied material when it is recombined.
2. Understand disconnected and sustained discourse.
3. Comprehend recordings of native voices recognizing standard speech and dialects.
4. Demonstrate the skill of auditory discrimination when listening to long and complex sentences.
5. Distinguish nuances of meaning with different stresses and intonations.
6. Demonstrate the ability to comprehend a large, passive vocabulary.

SPEAKING:

1. Use only the foreign language in the classroom.
2. Participate in spontaneous discussion of topics related to class reading, visual experiences, and extra-curricular activities with appropriate questions, answers, or rejoinders.
3. Demonstrate increased skill in using the subjunctive, and complex and compound sentences.
4. Show skill in integrating and recombining syntactical units on assigned topics.
5. Display agility in using correctly numerous idiomatic structures necessary to express the "flavor" of the language.
6. Prove in an oral-taped test the ability to express fluently, all sounds of the language using correct intonation, stress, and liaison when it applies.

Level III (Con't)

READING:

1. Read unedited literary readings, short stories, plays, essays, biographies, or poetry which will serve as a preparation to later formal in-depth study of literature in Level IV.
2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze in a general way the fundamental components instrumental in developing literary appreciation.
3. Indicate ability to derive meaning from what is read by skillful use of contextual clues and judicious use of the dictionary.
4. Demonstrate the ability to read and fully comprehend a short unfamiliar selection of material equal in difficulty to the materials previously assigned to the class.
5. Show the ability to read aloud with proper intonation demonstrating awareness of meaning through intonation and stress.
6. Derive genuine enjoyment from reading experiences.

WRITING:

1. Demonstrate ability to write easily basic grammatical forms.
2. Write topical paragraphs, dialogues, and compositions, both directed and original, that are logical and relatively error-free.
3. Employ note-taking as a learning device.
4. Demonstrate a writing vocabulary suitable for composing informal and formal letters, and summaries of material read.
5. Spell and punctuate accurately.

GRAMMAR:

New grammar details, representing the exceptions and subtleties of the language, must be learned by the student as these elements are encountered within the context of extensive reading and not as mere isolated manipulative skills. Students should also evaluate, review, and reinforce concepts previously learned in Levels I and II. (No Appendix included for Level III since all basic grammar items are included in Levels I and II.)

CULTURE:

1. Be cognizant of the varieties of ways in which the main themes of the culture are reflected in everyday cultural patterns.
2. Show an awareness of how age, sex, social class, and area of residence affect language use.
3. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate the authenticity of statements made regarding the foreign culture.
4. Assimilate the cultural values and contributions of the countries in which the language is spoken.
5. Develop, through reading selections that provide insights into the social, political, and economic structures of the country, a background sufficient to facilitate subsequent reading on Level IV.

Level III (Con't.)

6. Exhibit the ability to speak intelligently and correctly, expressing empathy for the social customs of the people, and knowledge of the history and geography of the land, of selected classical and contemporary literature, and of the present-day role of religious and political groups, ethnic minorities, and education in the social life of the country.
7. Relate the foreign culture, in oral and written work, to our own society and to other disciplines, especially the humanities.
8. Sense and begin to appreciate the great contributions of the people in literature, art, music, philosophy religion, science, and education.
9. Have a legitimate concern for the popular culture of the people as expressed in movies, art, popular and folk music, sports and recreation, journalism, and dance.
10. Be able, in the final analysis, to imaginatively share the foreign culture as an active participant of that community.

APPENDIX
French-Level I

Suggested Basic Grammatical Items:

1. Articles
 - a. Definite
 - b. Indefinite
2. Pronouns
 - a. Subject
 - b. Direct object
 - c. Indirect object
 - d. Interrogative
 - e. Relative
 - f. Demonstrative
 - g. Prepositional
 - h. Possessive
 - i. Partitive
3. Nouns
 - a. Gender
 - b. Number
4. Adjectives
 - a. Number
 - b. Gender
 - c. Position
 - d. Common irregulars
 - e. Comparison
 - f. Interrogative
 - g. Possessive
5. Numbers
 - a. Cardinal
 - b. Ordinal
6. Common negatives
 - a. ne...pas
 - b. ne...jamais
 - c. ne...rien
 - d. ne...plus
7. Adverbs
 - a. Position
 - b. Formation
 - c. Common irregulars
8. Formation of questions
 - a. Inversion
 - b. est-ce que
 - c. n'est-ce pas
9. Common interrogative adverbs
 - a. comment
 - b. quand
 - c. où
 - d. combien
 - e. pourquoi
10. Common conjunctions
 - a. et
 - b. mais
 - c. car
11. Contractions (with de and à)
12. Impersonal expressions
 - a. il y a
 - b. il faut
 - c. voici
 - d. voilà
13. Ici, là
14. Verbs
 - a. Infinitives - regular and common irregular
 - b. Present tense - regular, common irregular
 - c. Passé composé - avoir, être
 - d. Futur proche
 - e. Imperfect
 - f. Imperative
 - g. Future
15. Common idiomatic expressions (with avoir, être, etc.) and special vocabulary, depending upon text being used.

APPENDIX
French-Level II

Suggested Basic Grammatical Items:

1. Verbs
 - a. Present subjunctive (regular, irregular and reflexive)
 - b. Perfect subjunctive of avoir and être (passive recognition)
 - c. Uses of the subjunctive
 - d. Imperfect
 - e. Conditional
 - f. Pluperfect
 - g. Future perfect (passive recognition)
 - h. Conditional perfect (passive recognition)
 - i. Passé Simple (passive recognition)
2. Uses of devoir
3. Depuis and il y a with present and imperfect
4. Passive voice and substitutes for passive voice
5. Agreement of past participle
 - a. Verbs taking avoir with preceding direct object
 - b. Reflexive verbs
6. Verbal constructions following prepositions
7. Être à to show possession
8. Adjectives
 - a. Comparison
 - b. Indefinite
 - c. Irregular
9. Uses of partitive expressions not taught in Level I
10. Pronouns
 - a. Demonstrative
 - b. Relative
 - c. Interrogative
 - d. Possessive
 - e. Disjunctive
 - f. Double pronoun objects
 - g. Indefinites (chacun, aucun)
 - h. Use of y and en
11. Difference between il est and c'est
12. Causative construction with faire
13. Verbs of perception (voir, entendre, regarder, chercher)
14. Prepositions and articles with geographical names
15. Negatives
 - a. ne...personne
 - b. ne...aucun
 - c. ne...ni...ni
 - d. ne...nul
 - e. ne...guère
 - f. ne with infinitive

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Dr. Paul Woods, Director
Title III, NDEA
Mr. Derald Merriman, Assistant Director

Foreign Language Supervisors
Mrs. Pat Castle
Mr. Charles D. Jay
Mr. H. Ned Seelye

Mr. Don Anderson
Main East High School
Park Ridge, Illinois 60068

Dr. Vernon Anderson
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Mr. Robert Andreoli
Hononegah High School
Rockton, Illinois 61072

Mr. Thomas Battaglia
Downers Grove High School
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515

Mrs. Mary Lu Beagle
Palatine Junior High School
Palatine, Illinois 60067

Mrs. Dorothy Bishop
Des Plaines Junior High School
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018

Dr. Erika Blaas
Rockford College
Rockford, Illinois 61100

Mr. John Blomberg
Rock Island Senior High School
Rock Island, Illinois 61201

Mr. Ralph Boersma
Naperville High School
Naperville, Illinois 60540

Mrs. June Brand
Jacksonville High School
Jacksonville, Illinois

Mr. Jack Clinton
Limestone High School
Bartonville, Illinois 61609

Mrs. Mary Collins
Freeport High School
Freeport, Illinois 61032

Mr. Richard Crome
Lawrenceville High School
Lawrenceville, Illinois 62439

Mr. Jean Devaud
Chicago City Junior College
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dr. Dorothy Donald
Monmouth College
Monmouth, Illinois 61462

Dr. Henry Gerlach
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Mr. Frank Gunderson
Bloomington High School
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

Mrs. Mabel Hake
Centralia High School
Centralia, Illinois 62801

Mrs. Olive Hewett
Stephen Decatur High School
Decatur, Illinois 62523

Mrs. Gail Hopkins
Farmington High School
Farmington, Illinois 61531

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS (Con't.)

Mr. John Huber
North Chicago High School
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

Mrs. Valencia Huson
Springfield High School
Springfield, Illinois 62704

Father Dennis Juaire
Quincy College
Quincy, Illinois 62301

Miss Kimiyo Kawasaki
Mather High School
Chicago, Illinois 60645

Dr. Leo Kelly
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 61920

Dr. Gilbert Kettelkamp
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Mrs. Lenore Kimbrough
Warsaw High School
Warsaw, Illinois 62379

Mr. Richard Klauss
East High School
Belleville, Illinois 62221

Mr. Joseph Koncius
Riverside-Brookfield High School
Riverside, Illinois 60546

Dr. Brigitta Kuhn
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois 61761

Mr. Philip Laesch
Princeton High School
Princeton, Illinois 61356

Mrs. Marion Laskos
Forreston High School
Forreston, Illinois 61030

Mrs. Kathryn Lillyman
Sauk Valley Junior College
Sterling, Illinois 61081

Mr. Robert Lucas
Mt. Carmel High School
Mt. Carmel, Illinois 62863

Mrs. Marianne McCall
Hillsboro High School
Hillsboro, Illinois 62049

Mrs. Mary Lois McCarnes
Monmouth Junior High School
Monmouth, Illinois 61462

Miss Judy McDonald
Lincoln High School
Lincoln, Illinois 62656

Mr. Robert McKenzie
Ashton High School
Ashton, Illinois 61006

Dr. James McKinney
Western Illinois University
Macomb, Illinois 61455

Mr. Frank Mander
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61820

Mr. John Martin
Canton Senior High School
Canton, Illinois 61520

Mr. Dieter Michel
Illinois Wesleyan University
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

Dr. Jay Paul Minn
Knox College
Galesburg, Illinois 61401

Mrs. Helen Moore
Saunemin High School
Saunemin, Illinois 61769

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS (Con't.)

Mrs. Rosalyn O'Cherony
Northeastern Illinois State College
Chicago, Illinois 60625

Mr. Wolfgang Pfabel
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois 61761

Miss Gertrude Pfeil
Ottawa High School
Ottawa, Illinois 61350

Mrs. Helen Piehl
Moline High School
Moline, Illinois

Mrs. Ann Pike
Monticello High School
Monticello, Illinois 61856

Mr. Travis Poole
Edison Junior High School
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Mr. Howard Reuter
Galesburg High School
Galesburg, Illinois 61401

Mrs. Irene Sanderson
Harper Junior College
Palatine, Illinois 60067

Mr. Art Schwartz
Phillips High School
Chicago, Illinois 60653

Dr. James R. Shawl
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

Miss Mary Sponseler
LaSalle-Peru High School
LaSalle, Illinois 61301

Miss Sylvia Staley
Harlem High School
Rockford, Illinois 61111

Mrs. Sofia Stanford
Collinsville High School
Collinsville, Illinois 62234

Dr. Florence Steiner
Glenbrook High Schools
Glenview, Illinois 60025

Mrs. Margaret Stewart
Streator High School
Streator, Illinois 61364

Mr. Farren Stover
Belleville West High School
Belleville, Illinois 62223

Miss Ingrid Stuemmer
Mt. Morris High School
Mt. Morris, Illinois 61054

Mr. David Teske
East Senior High School
Rockford, Illinois 61108

Sister Sheila Treston
Rosary College
River Forest, Illinois 60305

Miss Jean Trogdon
Roxana High School
Roxana, Illinois 62084

Mr. Albert Turner
Evanston High School
Evanston, Illinois 60204

Mr. John Westoff
Quincy Junior High School
Quincy, Illinois 62301

Mr. Richard White
Rich Central High School
Olympia Fields, Illinois 60461