The Proficiency Cohort: Shifting Teacher Beliefs through a Collaborative Curriculum Design Process

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a cohort model—a combination of a study group, with readings and discussion, and collaborative curriculum design as a professional development tool—as a context for investigating a group of middle and high school world language teachers' beliefs about effective curriculum. The study explores whether this model could shift teachers' beliefs positively regarding world language curriculum, moving from more traditional grammar-based curricular models toward a communicative approach. Previous research has documented the importance of teacher beliefs in education and how different professional development models impact them. However, this study is novel in using curriculum design as the focus of professional development within the context of world language education. Teachers' beliefs about communicative curriculum were surveyed before, during, and after participation in the cohort to ascertain if a

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shift in their beliefs occurred as a result of involvement in the study. Using a series of three surveys collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, results indicate a positive shift in teacher beliefs about the value of a communicative curriculum, their own abilities in implementing this type of curriculum, students' anticipated success with the curriculum, and the effectiveness of the cohort model. This model could be replicated in similar districts to effect change in teacher beliefs while developing the capacity for world language curricular revision.

Over the past four decades, the teaching of world languages has been undergoing a paradigm shift, in which emphasis has moved from traditional grammar-based instruction to a focus on developing communicative skills that enable meaningful language use (Duncan, 2014; Kissau, Algozzine, & Yon, 2013). Although research has supported the efficacy of this communicative approach for teaching languages over grammar-translation and drill-based learning (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Oxford, Lavine, & Crookall 1989; Toth, 2004; Wong & VanPatten, 2008), many teachers continue to rely on earlier methods of language instruction (Whitley, 1993; Wong & VanPatten, 2008). Wong and VanPatten (2008) pointed out that many teachers, "come to language teaching with common sense notions such as 'This is how I did it and it worked for me'" (p. 417).

Teacher beliefs—grounded in their own experiences with language learning—play an important role in instructional and curricular decisions (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Although studies have looked at the important role of world language teacher beliefs about instruction (Allen, 2002; Bell, 2005; Kissau et al., 2013), and many others have investigated effective models of teacher development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007), relatively few have looked at using a combination of a teacher study group and a collaborative teacher-driven curriculum design process as a professional development tool—referred to in this study as a cohort model—to shift world language teacher beliefs.

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Background

Teacher Beliefs

The important role that teacher beliefs play in language instruction has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Borg, 2003; Borg, 2011; Zheng & Borg, 2014). Therefore, research has investigated various models to effect change in teachers' beliefs, such as Vaino, Holbrook, and Rannikmäe (2013), who used a case study design to investigate changes in the beliefs of high school science teachers with regard to a new teaching approach through a collaborative action research project, with positive findings. Examining beliefs of secondary English as a foreign language teachers as part of an immersion program, Wong (2013) used semi-structured interviews to document changes in beliefs about teaching and the aspects of the experience that were most significant in effecting those changes. In a study by Jao (2017), pre-service upper elementary and lower

secondary mathematics teachers' beliefs were documented to have shifted due to their experiences in a methods course which included opportunities for practice and application of their learning. Using mixed methods, Miranda and Damico (2015) investigated whether a year-long professional development course followed by participation in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) would shift high school science teachers' beliefs about teacher-centered versus student-centered instruction, finding that half of the participants shifted their beliefs as a result. These studies suggest that various professional development experiences may be successful in shifting teacher beliefs.

Professional Development

An important concept in successful teacher professional development is collective participation, in which teachers work collaboratively with colleagues from their district to enact reform (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lun, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007). For teacher learning to occur, research suggests that professional development should be of long duration and offer means to support teachers working in communities (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012). Collaborative, teacher-centered professional development is widely supported in the research as being effective in implementing sustainable change efforts (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Fishman, Marx, Best, & Revital, 2003; Garet et al., 2001; Parke & Coble, 1997).

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Additionally, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2014) state that "large-scale teacher-driven changes in curriculum content, organization, and format will not take place unless teachers change their curriculum orientations and beliefs," but that these beliefs will not change "unless [teachers'] levels of understanding of and involvement in curriculum development gradually increase[s]" (p. 315). Teacher involvement in curriculum development is integral in amending teachers' beliefs (Desimone, 2009). A component of collective participation used in Desimone's study (2009) is a teacher study group, which Hung and Yeh (2013) define as "a professional learning community in which the teachers meet regularly for collaborative inquiry about their practice experiences to achieve their collective goal of group learning in a systematic and interactive way" (p. 153-154). Contrasting with traditional methods of teacher professional development in which there is a "presentation of information by experts to participants, this model is intended to provide a structure in which the teachers will experience the profound effect of teachers talking together to unpack teaching" (Stanley, 2011, p. 77). The cohort model employed in this study reflects theoretical understandings of communities of practice, in which learning is not an acquisition of knowledge but rather a social endeavor that involves being and becoming a member of a community (Lave, 1991; Wenger, 2000).

By drawing on an understanding of effective models of professional development, this study attempts to shift world language teacher beliefs from traditional grammar-

based curricular models toward curriculum design that emphasizes a communicative approach to language learning.

Research Questions

This study examines changes in teachers' beliefs through the use of a cohort model endeavoring to investigate teacher beliefs about world language curriculum, teachers' and students' likely success with communicative curriculum, and the effectiveness of this model of professional development. A series of surveys was administered at strategic points of the implementation of the cohort model.

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The following research questions drove our inquiry:

1. Do changes in beliefs about effective world language curriculum occur as a result of participation in the cohort, and if so, how?
2. Do changes in beliefs about student success with a communicative world language curriculum occur as a result of participation in the cohort, and if so, how?
3. Do beliefs about the teachers' own abilities to implement a communicative world language curriculum occur as a result of participation in the cohort, and if so, how?
4. What are teachers' reactions to participating in the cohort model? How do teachers experience the cohort model?

Method

Participants

Seven teachers from a medium-sized USA suburban school district agreed to participate in what became referred to by the group as the "Proficiency Cohort" as a part of this study. The breakdown of participating teachers is as follows: three high school Spanish teachers, one middle school Spanish teacher, one high school Mandarin teacher, one middle school Mandarin teacher, and one high school Latin teacher. Teachers ranged in experience from a minimum of two years of classroom experience to approximately 15 years teaching experience and ranged in age from mid 20s to early 60s. Three of the teachers were native speakers of their language, and the remaining four were native speakers of English from the United States. Each teacher agreed to write new curricular units for one of his or her courses, with the following courses being selected: Spanish 2 Non-Honors (high school), Spanish 4 Non-Honors (high school), Spanish 3 Honors (high school), Spanish 1A (middle school), Mandarin 2 Non-Honors/Honors (high school), Mandarin 1A (middle school), and Latin 1 Non-Honors/Honors (high school).

Although Latin is a classical language and communication in the language may not often be viewed as the learning objective, the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) indicates the importance of communication and oral language use in the teaching and learning of classical languages. The ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners (2012a) make this clear, stating that

The proficiency cohort: Shifting teacher beliefs

"the importance of…communication as an applicable principle to the learning of the classical languages…[is] evident in the communication standards from the *Standards for Classical Languages*," and that "the oral use of the language [in classical languages] can also be employed to help students avoid reading or translating word-for-word as they must listen in 'chunks' (several words holding the meaning or phrases) and respond spontaneously during oral communication" (p. 11). For this reason, a Latin teacher was included as part of this study.

Procedures

The cohort was structured with two important components as noted in Table 1 on the next page. The first component was participation in a study group, which met approximately once per month over the course of six months of a school year. Meeting times were dedicated to discussing relevant readings; concerns with the existing, textbook-based curriculum; discussing the teachers' ideal curriculum; practicing using curriculum templates; developing assessments; and drafting a unit for the courses teachers would be revising. Teachers read two books as part of the study group: *The Keys to Planning for Learning: Effective Curriculum, Unit, and Lesson Design*, by Clementi and Terrill (2013) and *Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment,* by Adair-Hauck, Glisan, and Troyan (2013). Additional readings were the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2015) and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012b). A decision made collectively by the group was to use the curriculum template designed by Clementi and Terrill (2015) to write curricular units. This template was modified slightly to provide a space for a narrative of the unit's summative performance assessment. (See Appendix A for a sample unit created by one participant.) The purpose of the readings was to provide a framework for model world language curricular units and performance assessments. Participants were given the expectation that they would each write original units for their chosen course that: followed thematic planning guidelines outlined in Clementi and Terrill (2013); included a summative performance assessment following the format and guidelines outlined in Adair-Hauck, Glisan, and Troyan (2013); and incorporated original can-do learning objectives tailored for their units in the style of the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2015).

Identified needed supports emerged as teachers worked in the study group, such as visiting a school in which a communicative curriculum was being effectively implemented. Teachers were also given independent time beyond the group meetings to work on designing a unit. By the final study group meeting, all teachers had developed a working draft of one unit that would be used as a part of their revised curriculum.

The second component of the study was participation in a three-day collaborative curriculum writing process. Meeting time was split between independent work and group sessions in which curriculum were shared, questions were asked, and feedback was given. Table 1 outlines cohort meeting times and an overview of agendas for each meeting.

Instrumentation

A series of three surveys were designed to gather information throughout the study: (1) prior to the study (Appendix B), (2) at the conclusion of the study

Table 1. Proficiency Cohort Schedule of Activities

Date and Length of Meeting (hours)	Proficiency Cohort Activities
January 21, 2015 (1.5 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #1:* Review and discussion of existing curriculum: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current curriculum from teachers' perspectives? What is their ideal curriculum? Planning the collaborative work: Discussion of group needs, goals, and expectations.
March 2, 2015 (1.5 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #2:* Discussion of group readings: chapters 1-2 of Clementi & Terrill (2013) and NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2015). Planning a site visit to a local school. Discussion of themes and essential questions in communicative curriculum design. Discussion of developing world language performance assessments.
March 19, 2015 (6 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #3:* Site visit to local high school and middle school to observe communicative language teaching in practice. Discussion with teachers in those schools on their approaches to curriculum design and implementation.
March 25, 2015 (1.5 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #4:* Debrief on site visit. Share sample performance assessments; partner and group feedback. Discussion of group readings: chapters 3-5 of Clementi & Terrill (2013) and ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012). Discussion of unit plan templates.
May 11, 2015 (1.5 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #5:* Discussion of group readings: chapters 1-4 of Adair-Hauck, Glisan, & Troyan (2013) Critique of unit templates and decision on which to adopt. Group discussion and feedback on outlines for draft units. Planning for a guest speaker: What does the group hope to learn through her visit?
May 27, 2015 (1.5 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #6:* Discussion of group readings: chapters 5-6 of Adair-Hauck, Glisan, & Troyan (2013) Discussion of summative assessments for units Guest Speaker: Teacher from site visit. Open questions and discussions on putting theoretical discussion into practice.

June 10, 2015 (1.5 hours)	*Study Group Meeting #7:* Presentation of practice units and group feedback. Critique of the sample units, and goals for revision.
June 26, 2015 (6 hours)	*Collaborative Curriculum Writing Session #1:* Group check-in, discussion of objectives for the day. Independent work time. Closing of the day check-in: Questions, feedback on units, open questions.
June 27, 2015 (6 hours)	*Collaborative Curriculum Writing Session #2:* Group check-in, discussion of objectives for the day. Independent work time. Closing of the day check-in: Questions, feedback on units, open questions.
June 30, 2015 (6 hours)	*Collaborative Curriculum Writing Session #3:* Group check-in, discussion of objectives for the day. Independent work time. Closing of the day check-in: Questions, feedback on units, open questions.

group (Appendix C), and (3) at the conclusion of the collaborative curriculum writing (Appendix D). A combination of Likert scale statements and open-ended responses were included. The Likert scale statements were structured so that similar statements were included on each survey to collect any changes in participant beliefs. The statements were designed to capture teacher beliefs in four categories: belief about self, belief about curriculum, belief in students, and cohort model effectiveness. The open-ended questions were designed to give participants an opportunity to elaborate on these four categories and to elicit any relevant information to help inform the Likert scale statements.

Analyses

Likert scale statements in the survey were analyzed through descriptive statistics by comparing data points to determine any changes in teachers' beliefs for each statement. Since identical or similar statements were used across surveys, these statements were then analyzed to look for changes in teachers' beliefs as the study progressed. The statements were grouped into the four categories outlined above, to further look at overall characteristics in the data at each collection point in relation to each of the research questions. Six of the participants completed survey 1 (with one participant neglecting to complete the survey), and all seven participants completed surveys 2 and 3. Qualitative data underwent an initial coding to look for commonalities across each question and within each survey. Coded data were then categorized in relation to each of the research questions and reviewed in sequential order to look for emerging patterns. As themes emerged, significant statements were identified that were representative of each theme.

Results

The results of the Likert scale statements are organized in Table 2 by overarching categories (beliefs about curriculum, beliefs about students, beliefs about self, and cohort effectiveness), survey number, and percentages of agreements and disagreements with each statement. The responses from survey 1—which establish a baseline of teacher beliefs for designing a teacher-made communicative curriculum—indicated that participants were unsure of their comfort level, expertise, and they anticipated student achievement when planning and using a curriculum they designed. All participating teacher beliefs began to shift at the mid-point of data collection. When comparing the participants' responses from survey 1 to survey 2, the percentages indicated that teachers had in general increased their beliefs in their own abilities as well as their beliefs in their students' abilities to be successful with the teacher-made curriculum. Based on the results from the survey at the conclusion of the cohort study, a further shift in teachers' beliefs in each of these categories was identified. The findings will be discussed as they relate to each of the research questions.

Table 2. Summary of responses to Likert Scale statements across surveys 1, 2, and 3

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Beliefs About Curriculum					
Even within thematic units, grammar explanations and drilling are still an important piece of curriculum. *From Surveys 1 & 2*	33.33% (1)	66.67% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	28.57% (2)	42.86% (2)	14.29% (2)	14.29% (2)	0% (2)
The textbook will still be an important part of my curriculum next year. *From Surveys 1 & 2*	0% (1)	33.33% (1)	66.67% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	14.29% (2)	57.14% (2)	14.29% (2)	0% (2)	14.29% (2)
I plan on using/I used can-do statements to set goals for each unit. *From Surveys 1,2, & 3*	0% (1)	50% (1)	50% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	57.14% (2)	28.57% (2)	14.29% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
	71.43% (3)	28.57% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)

Beliefs About Students				
I believe my students will be successful using a thematic-based curricular model. *From Surveys 1, 2, & 3*	0% (1)	33.33% (1)	66.67% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	0% (2)	85.71% (2)	14.29% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
	42.86% (3)	57.14% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)
Using thematic units rather than traditional methods will result in more student learning and engagement. *From Surveys 1 & 2*	0% (1)	33.33% (1)	66.67% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	28.57% (2)	42.86% (2)	28.57% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
Beliefs About Self					
I am comfortable designing my own curriculum using thematic-based units. *From Surveys 1, 2, & 3*	0% (1)	0% (1)	50% (1)	50% (1)	0% (1)
	0% (2)	71.43% (2)	28.57% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
	14.29% (3)	85.71% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)
I am ready to shift the use of the textbook to that of a resource, rather than the driving force behind curriculum planning. *From Surveys 1 & 2*	0% (1)	50% (1)	50% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	42.86% (2)	57.14% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
I have a clear goal for what my curriculum should look like next year. *From Surveys 1, 2, & 3*	0% (1)	0% (1)	16.67% (1)	83.33% (1)	0% (1)
	14.29% (2)	42.86% (2)	42.86% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
	0% (3)	71.43% (3)	28.57% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)
I am nervous about implementing a new curriculum next year. *From Surveys 1, 2, & 3*	0% (1)	83.33% (1)	0% (1)	16.67% (1)	0% (1)
	0% (2)	42.86% (2)	28.57% (2)	28.57% (2)	0% (2)
	14.29% (3)	0% (3)	42.86% (3)	42.86% (3)	0% (3)

I am clear on how to incorporate proficiency targets into my curriculum and assessments. *From Surveys 1 & 2*	0% (1)	0% (1)	16.67% (1)	50% (1)	33.33% (3)
	14.29% (2)	28.57% (2)	57.14% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
Using thematic units rather than traditional methods will be more work for me as a teacher. *From Surveys 1 & 2*	16.67% (1)	50% (1)	33.33% (1)	0% (1)	0% (1)
	14.29% (2)	28.57% (2)	57.14% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
Effectiveness of Cohort					
The work we've done in the Study Group has helped me in rethinking what my curriculum could look like. *From Survey 2*	28.57% (2)	57.14% (2)	14.29% (2)	0% (2)	0% (2)
The work we've done in the Collaborative Curriculum Writing has helped develop strong units for next year. *From Survey 3*	57.14% (3)	42.86% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)
It was helpful to have the group to share concerns and challenges with as we worked. *From Survey 3*	71.43% (3)	28.57% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)	0% (3)

RQ #1: Do beliefs about effective world language curriculum occur as a result of participation in the cohort, and if so, how?

Teachers reported that their understanding of a communicative curriculum became clearer deepened through the course of this study, based on their descriptions of their curriculum from each survey, which became increasingly more specific and reflected learnings from the study group reading materials. By building teachers' knowledge base around curriculum design, teachers reported more clarity in their goals for the curriculum, shifting from 83% disagreeing that they had a clear goal for their curriculum in survey 1, to 71% agreeing that they had a clear goal in survey 3. In survey 1, teachers reported having a vision for an "engaging, entertaining, and productive class" where students would "become

more proficient in the target language." These statements—while laudable—lacked specificity in terms of how the curriculum would be designed to make their vision a reality. Teachers responded to questions about what their final curriculum would look like in increasingly concrete terms as the study progressed, demonstrating their broadening knowledge base around communicative curriculum design. In survey 2, one teacher commented, "The final product will have at least these elements: a clearly defined unit goal at the beginning for students; a task overview on the unit; lesson content, procedure, content; a can-do statement for students to check of [sic] which echoes the unit goal." This was echoed by more of the teachers, three of whom also cited can-do goals as important components of their units. Teachers also reported more clarity on the use of can-do statements (only 50% agreed that they would use can-do statements in survey 1, but 100% agreed or strongly agreed that they had in fact used them in survey 3) and targets for student proficiency levels (83% of teachers reported disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they were clear on how to use proficiency targets with curriculum in survey 1, and 43% agreed or strongly agreed that they were clear in survey 3).

Teachers reported some shift in beliefs about the importance of grammar in their curriculum, shifting from viewing it as more centrally important to their teaching to becoming a tool for students in working toward the larger goal of teaching for communication. All teachers responded in survey 1 that the teaching of grammar and the use of drills would remain an important part of their teacher-made curriculum. In survey 2, 71.43% of teachers still agreed or strongly agreed that grammar and drills would remain an important piece of the curriculum, however 14.29% reported not being sure and another 14.29% reported their disagreement. A larger shift was evident in the statement regarding the use of the textbook as an important component of the curriculum. In looking at both the statement, "The textbook will still be an important part of my curriculum next year," and, "I am ready to shift the use of the textbook to that of a resource, rather than the [textbook being the] driving force behind curriculum planning," a change is evident in their beliefs. Although the majority of teachers (71.43%) reported in survey 3 that the textbook would still be an important part of their curriculum, the results indicate that they now viewed the textbook as a resource (100%) to support the curriculum rather than the driving force. This was supported by teacher comments in the open-ended questions on survey 2, in which one teacher noted, "I still want to use the textbook as a support, but I can see that it shouldn't drive the curriculum as it has in the past," and another commented on disliking being "tied down to the textbook" in the previous curriculum.

RQ #2: Do beliefs about student success with a communicative world language curriculum occur as a result of participation in the cohort, and if so, how?

Teachers' beliefs about student success shifted as a result of participation in the cohort, with all teachers believing their students would be successful with the new curriculum at the end of the study (67% of teachers reported being not sure that students would be successful with the new curriculum in survey 1, but 100% reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that students would be successful

in survey 3). In the open-ended questions, teachers stressed the importance of student engagement. This appeared to be a strong motivational factor for teachers in wanting to revise their curriculum, as it was repeatedly referenced in surveys 1, 2 and 3, with one teacher commenting, "I envision a more fun curriculum where students are more engage [sic] and able to compare and contrast their own culture and the Hispanic one while learning the target language."

Student motivation was another theme that emerged through the open-ended questions, with teachers noting that they believed that their new curriculum would help motivate students both to be active in the lesson and to continue with their language studies. "It is a lot of work," one teacher commented in survey 3, "but when you get into it you start getting engaged on the idea of having students motivated and active in the classroom and the learning process."

RQ #3: Do beliefs about the teachers' own abilities to implement a communicative world language curriculum occur as a result of participation in the cohort, and if so, how?

Teachers reported increasing levels of comfort in designing thematic units with a focus on communication, with 100% of teachers initially disagreeing or not being sure that they were comfortable in survey 1, compared to 100% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement in survey 3. Teachers also reported more readiness to make the shift away from having the textbook drive the curriculum, shifting from only 50% agreeing that they were ready in survey 1, to almost 60% agreeing and over 40% strongly agreeing that they were ready in survey 3. Likewise, levels of nervousness about implementing the new curriculum decreased as the group worked together, with 83% reporting that they were nervous at the outset of the study and 85% reporting that they were either not sure or disagreed that they were nervous about implementing the new curriculum at the end. The increased sense of their own competence to teach the communicative curriculum was captured in one teacher's comments in survey 2, "My vision has changed in a way that I feel as a teacher, we are empowered through the training, to redesign our curriculum based on theme, to focus on student performance assessments while still adopting and incorporating textbook [sic] as one of the resources." The sense of growing empowerment is an important theme that emerged throughout the study.

RQ #4: What are teachers' reactions to participating in the cohort model?

One of the most positive elements reported by teachers in the study was the collaborative nature of the cohort model. All teachers reported that it was helpful to work with a group of teachers to share concerns and challenges, with over 70% stating that they strongly agreed with that statement. "I loved talking through our concerns as a group," one teacher commented in survey 3, "It is nice to have time to work together and feel like we're planning together, instead of doing all the planning by ourselves. I would have gotten stuck on curriculum pretty quickly without the rest of the group, and to be honest, I think I would have given up." Furthermore, there was a sense of egalitarianism in the group, with one participant stating that

The proficiency cohort: Shifting teacher beliefs

the cohort "felt like a collaborative process where everyone was equal" and that "we came to decisions together and worked through our challenges as a group."

Despite this overall positive experience, two challenges presented themselves. First, the challenge of finding time to continue the work came out as a strong concern by many teachers in the study. During the study group time, teachers suggested that the cohort members continue working together during future district professional learning community (PLC) time. A number of teachers also asked if the group could continue to meet after school once a month because they were worried they would not have enough time to get support from each other during the regularly scheduled PLC time. As one teacher commented in survey 3, "What is in need has been pretty much provided. The rest will be lots, lots of brain work and time," a sentiment echoed by many others as well.

Second, the cohort was composed of mostly Spanish teachers, with two Mandarin teachers, and only one Latin teacher. The Latin teacher reported a sense of isolation in the group, noting, "Being the only non-modern language person often makes me feel left out because I can't organize my curriculum (nor would I want to) like modern languages get to." The materials reviewed in the study group did not include sufficient guidelines for classical languages, in the opinion of the participating Latin teacher.

Discussion

The findings in this study point speak to the need for engaging teachers in collaborative discussions in which they review and discuss materials in a study group format, as well as the curriculum design process as a powerful means for effecting change in their beliefs. Through the course of the study, the participating teachers grew their knowledge base around communicative world language curricular models, can-do learning goals, and assessments, supporting their shift away from grammar-based curriculum. Top-down curriculum changes can result in discrepancies between the "written" and the "taught" curriculum, with teachers making judgments about the effectiveness of a written curriculum and perhaps choosing not to follow it, believing that it will be ineffective (Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, & Boschee, 2012). The cohort model used in this study positions teachers as curriculum designers and acknowledges the important role that beliefs play in adopting curricular change (Glickman et al., 2014). Teachers are engaged and empowered as they gain knowledge about effective curricular models and begin designing their own materials.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the cohort model gave teachers an opportunity to discuss questions as they developed their knowledge base and worked on their curriculum. The sense of collective participation maintained throughout the cohort helped teachers take ownership not only of the curriculum they were developing, but also of the process itself. By working collaboratively, the

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teachers provided support to each other and held each other accountable for their work—what Wenger calls a "sense of joint enterprise" (2000, p. 229). Teachers repeatedly cited collaboration as one of the elements of the cohort they most appreciated. Providing a space for a community in which the curriculum work took place and in which teachers could discuss their learning was an important aspect of the cohort.

It became clear through the course of the study that a motivating factor for participating teachers was their students. As evidenced in the results, teachers grew to believe that their students would be successful with the type of curriculum they were developing. Perhaps more importantly, teachers revealed that part of their motivation for undertaking the work of rewriting their curriculum and participating in this study was a belief that their students would be more engaged and achieve higher learning outcomes with the new curriculum. These findings speak to the need for documenting student learning outcomes and engagement under different curricular models to encourage other teachers to shift their practices.

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The overall effect of participating in the study was a positive one, providing encouraging results for this type of professional development. Teachers of different language backgrounds were able to work collaboratively, addressing a common concern of language teachers who are often the sole teacher of their language in the school in which they work. Despite this opportunity for collaboration across languages, the one participating Latin teacher expressed a sense of isolation.

Limitations

This model could be implemented in other similar districts with the following recommended changes: (1) Provide more time for the study group to meet prior to curriculum writing. The study group began at the start of the second semester. If the model were to be repeated, a full school year would be given for meetings to provide teachers with more time to investigate national research and develop model units. Teachers in the survey also strongly expressed the need for additional time. (2) Incorporate better resources for teachers of classical languages. Additionally, identifying other classical language teachers in the region who may want to participate or including at least two teachers of a classical language in the group, if possible, could also help mitigate the feeling of isolation that the Latin teacher in this study experienced.

This study could be improved in a number of ways. More time could have been spent during the initial study group to provide teachers with more support and more fully build their knowledge base around curriculum. Additionally, three days to work collaboratively on writing curriculum was insufficient. The teachers would have benefited from an extended period of time to write their curriculum with the support of the group, as evidenced by teacher feedback from the surveys. Furthermore, the study limited its scope to focusing on teachers' beliefs and did

not investigate changes in teaching practices. This is an important avenue of future research to determine whether changes in beliefs through this model result in changes to practice. Additional research is also needed to better understand classical language education in a communicative curriculum, following studies such as one by Overland, Fields, and Noonan (2011) who looked at whether communicative models would enhance the teaching of biblical Hebrew. Further, the scope of data collection was limited in that study group and curriculum writing conversations could have been recorded for more detailed analysis and to better capture the collaborative nature of the teachers' work, and discussion of the selected readings.

Conclusion

The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) tell us that "languages are not 'acquired' when students learn an ordered set of facts about the language (e.g., grammar facts, vocabulary) … [but that] students need to be able to use the…language for real communication" (p. 26). Traditional, grammar-based curricular models continue to present language learning in an "ordered set" fashion, and teachers who have been successful learners under such models hold beliefs about language acquisition that may be contrary to the research and the World Readiness Standards. Engaging teachers in the curriculum design process through the use of a collaborative cohort model, such as the one presented in this study, acknowledges the important role that beliefs play in teaching, and provides a collaborative forum in which beliefs about effective curriculum may begin to shift. The findings in this study indicate that using a cohort model in which teachers collaboratively discuss various aspects of curriculum and selected readings through a study group, and collaborate in the development of curriculum was successful overall in shifting teachers' beliefs about world language curriculum, their own abilities in implementing teacher-made curriculum, and anticipated student success with a communicative curriculum.

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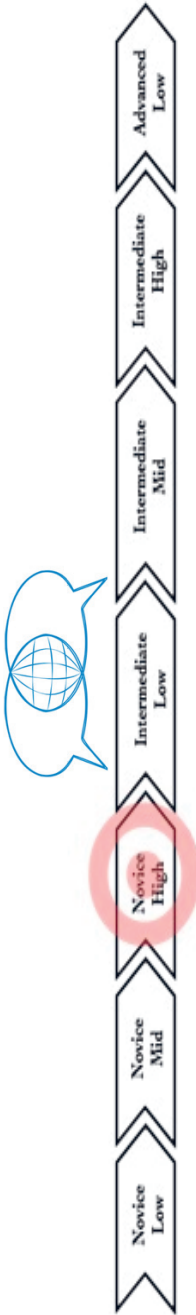
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Appendix A

Sample Unit

| Novice Low | Novice Mid | **Novice High** | Intermediate Low | Intermediate Mid | Intermediate High | Advanced Low |

Language and Level / Grade	Spanish 1 Novice Low → Novice High	Approximate Length of Unit — 6 weeks Approximate Number of Minutes Weekly — 55 mins, 4-5 times per week
Theme/Topic	Well-Being: Food & Nutrition	
Essential Question	What do people here (and in Spanish-speaking countries) consider to be nutritious eating habits?	
Goals *What should learners know and be able to do by the end of the unit?*	• I can describe different meals of the day and typical meals served at home and at school • I can compare meals served at schools in the U.S. and different countries • I can explain customs and rituals associated with meals • I can ask and answer questions about food and meals • I can say what people need to do to eat healthfully • I can state opinions about food served in cafeterias and at home • I can make suggestions about ways to eat healthfully in the school cafeteria • I can describe the U.S. and other nutritional guidelines	
Task Overview	A group of students will be travelling to our school for a year-long exchange. As a member of the exchange committee, you are responsible for preparing a flyer and a short video with information on eating healthfully in the school cafeteria and finding foods that appeal to the students while they are here. In order to prepare this brochure and video, you must first gather information about what cafeterias serve in the students' home countries and research healthy eating guidelines both in the U.S. and in the students' home countries. You will then discuss with a classmate to find out how they eat healthfully in the cafeteria and what foods they think the students will like. Finally, you will create the flyer and short video.	

Summative Performance Assessment

Interpretive Mode

- Students read school menus from various Spanish-speaking high schools and complete the comprehension guides.
- Students watch/listen to videos in which Spanish-speaking students talk about what they eat at school and at home and complete the comprehension guides.
- Students read nutritional guides from the U.S. and various Spanish-speaking countries and complete the comprehension guides.

Interpersonal Mode

- Interview a classmate on how they eat healthfully in the cafeteria and at home, and what kinds of food they think the exchange students will like the best.

Presentational Mode

- Prepare a flyer and a short video presentation with tips on eating healthfully and finding foods that will appeal to the exchange students in the high school cafeteria and in American homes.

Cultures

- **Product:** Food
- **Practice:** Eating food
- **Perspective:** Importance of food

- **Product:** School lunch
- **Practice:** Eating in a school cafeteria
- **Perspective:** Importance of nutrition in a school cafeteria

Connections

Making Connections

Health & Wellness:
- Compare nutritional guidelines for healthy eating.

Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives

Differences in school meals
Differences in nutritional guidelines

Comparisons

Language Comparisons

tomar algo (to order something)
tener hambre/sed (to be hungry/thirsty)

Cultural Comparisons

- Mealtime with/without family
- Meals at school
- Nutritional guidelines

Communities	School and Global Communities	Lifelong Learning
	Share information on nutrition with the community.	Examine nutritional choices and make adjustments as needed.
Connections to Common Core	**Reading 1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	
	Writing 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	
	Writing 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.	
	Writing 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	
	Speaking and Listening 1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas, and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	
	Speaking and Listening 2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	
	Language 1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard [Spanish] grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	
	Language 2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard [Spanish] capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	
	Language 4. Determine or clarify the meaning or unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.	

Toolbox			
Language Functions	Related Structures / Patterns	Vocabulary Expansion — Tier 1	Tier 2
Describe meals served at school and at home	*ser* vs. *estar* (verbs meaning to be) to describe food	• food, food groups, meals • adjectives describing food • common verbs used with food • times	• different words for the same food item in different countries (i.e. *un melocotón* and *un durazno, los huevos* and *un blanquillo,* etc.) • "Mi plato" - *proteína, lácteos, granos, calcio* ("My Plate" - protein, dairy, grain, calcium) • *grupos de alimentos* (food groups)
Compare meals served at schools in the U.S. and different countries	*más que, menos que, tan como,* etc. (more than, less than, as much as)		
Explain customs and rituals associated with meals	*durar* (to last); *porque* (because)		
Ask and answer questions about food and meals	interrogative pronouns		
Express needs, saying what you need to do to eat healthfully	*es necesario, es importante,* etc. (it's necessary, it's important)		
Express opinions about food served in cafeterias and at home	*preferir, pedir, servir,* etc. (to prefer, to ask for, to serve)		
Make suggestions about ways to eat healthfully in the school cafeteria	informal commands		

Key Learning Activities/Formative Assessments

Key Learning Activity/Formative Assessment (*representative samples from beginning to end of unit*)	How does this activity support the unit goals or performance tasks?
Read school lunch menus from the U.S. and other Spanish-speaking countries. Create a Venn diagram comparing offerings.	Introduce food offerings in different schools
Read nutritional guidelines from the U.S. and other Spanish-speaking countries. Discuss in groups how they are similar/different.	Introduce food groups and nutritional information; Compare food habits
Students talk in small groups about what they eat every day at home and at school.	Practice talking about food and eating habits
Make small posters telling others what to eat and what not to eat in the cafeteria	Make suggestions about how to eat healthfully
Prepare written questions about food/meal habits to email to a correspondent in a Spanish-speaking country	Ask and answer questions about meals

Resources

Authentic Resources for Interpretive Tasks:

http://www.choosemyplate.gov/en-espanol.html
http://www.vrg.org/images/miplatovegano.jpg
www.miescuelasaludable.org
https://consejonutricion.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/mexico-y-su-guia-de-alimentacion/
ftp://ftp2.minsa.gob.pe//descargas/ogc/especiales/2007/nutricion/publicaciones/dipticonutri2.pdf
http://zachary-jones.com/zambombazo/food-restaurants/
http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/foodserv/menus/5.15%20secondary%20poster.SPANISH_color.pdf
http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/foodserv/menus/2.15_SECONDARY%20BREAKFAST.SPANISH.pdf
http://www.sancristobalsl.com/upload/documentos/20150529084200.menu_junio_escuela_infantil_2anos.pdf
http://www.madrid.org/dat_capital/deinteres/impresos_pdf/GuiaMenuEscolar.pdf

APPENDIX B

SURVEY 1

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am comfortable designing my own curriculum using thematic-based units.					
I am ready to shift the use of the textbook to that of a resource, rather than the driving force behind curriculum planning.					
I have a clear goal for what my curriculum should look like next year.					
I am nervous about implementing a new curriculum next year.					
Even within thematic units, grammar explanations and drilling is still an important piece of curriculum.					
I believe my students will be successful using a thematic-based curricular model.					
The textbook will still be an important part of my curriculum next year.					
I am clear on how to incorporate proficiency targets into my curriculum and assessments.					
I plan on using can-do statements to set goals for each unit.					
Using thematic units rather than traditional methods will be more work for me as a teacher.					
Using thematic units rather than traditional methods will result in more student learning and engagement.					

1. What do you see as the major problems with the current curriculum you are planning to revise?
2. What do you see as the strengths of the current curriculum you are planning to revise?
3. What do you feel is essential in a good world language curriculum?
4. Briefly describe the ideal curriculum for the course you are planning to revise?
5. As a result of this curriculum study group and collaborative curriculum writing, what do you envision as a final product? (Give some examples of how you expect your curriculum will change as a result of the work we do together.)

APPENDIX C
SURVEY 2

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am comfortable designing my own curriculum using thematic-based units.					
I am ready to shift the use of the textbook to that of a resource, rather than the driving force behind curriculum planning.					
I have a clear goal for what my curriculum should look like next year.					
I am nervous about implementing a new curriculum next year.					
Even within thematic units, grammar explanations and drilling is still an important piece of curriculum.					
I believe my students will be successful using a thematic-based curricular model.					
The textbook will still be an important part of my curriculum next year.					
I am clear on how to incorporate proficiency targets into my curriculum and assessments.					
I plan on using can-do statements to set goals for each unit.					
Using thematic units rather than traditional methods will be more work for me as a teacher.					
Using thematic units rather than traditional methods will result in more student learning and engagement.					
The work we've done in the Study Group has helped me in rethinking what my curriculum could look like.					

The proficiency cohort: Shifting teacher beliefs

1. After participating in the study group, what do you now feel is essential in a good world language curriculum?
2. Has your vision for the "ideal" curriculum for the course you are planning to revise changed as a result of our work? If so, how?
3. As a result of this curriculum study group and collaborative curriculum writing, what do you envision as a final product? (Give some examples of how you expect your curriculum will change as a result of the work we have done together.)
4. What do you still need in order to be successful in making changes to your curriculum?
5. What did you find to be the most valuable part of participating in the study group?
6. What did you find to be the least valuable part of participating in the study group?
7. Please share any other feedback you have on the curriculum study group.