



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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Elementary World Language (FLES): Rosetta Stone Update Board Report April 23, 2015

Rosetta Stone: Background Information

Oak Park Elementary School District 97 is committed to providing our students with access and opportunities to develop and enhance their learning in various languages. From his arrival in Oak Park, Superintendent Roberts expressed this as his goal as well and helped secure additional instructional time for our youngest students, grades K-2. However, acknowledging staffing and fiscal limitations in providing additional language instruction for other elementary students (imperative for advancing the district goal of greater communicative competence), Dr. Roberts urged the D97 language community to explore possible technology options. The Elementary World Language (FLES) team, together with the broad-based World Language Advisory Committee (WLAC), researched such options.

After reviewing products available at the time and evaluating financial and technology resources, the language team recommended the adoption of the internationally known resource, Rosetta Stone, as a good fit for our students in grades 3-5, who would be able to use it through an app on their district-issued iPads. In addition to offering extra contact to students studying Spanish, the D97 Administration and language team also advocated using Rosetta Stone to provide additional support for our English Language Learners (ELLs), as well as to give teachers and staff the opportunity to pursue their own language learning. Upon Board approval in September 2014, the district entered into a three-year agreement with Rosetta Stone.

Initial Implementation in District 97

As Dr. Roberts stated early on in this process, our goal for implementing Rosetta Stone is to “do things right, slowly if necessary, but do them right.” The primary goal for this first year of implementation is that D97 students, teachers, and families become more familiar and comfortable with the Rosetta Stone program.

Currently, approximately 2,022 students are using Rosetta Stone in class and at home. Rosetta Stone was first introduced in the World Language FLES classrooms, in grades 3-5, during the second trimester of this school year. Student devices were fitted with the iPad app around Thanksgiving, and all accounts were up and running by winter break.

Students in grades 3-5 are using Rosetta Stone to enhance their Spanish language learning during the school day, such as during Spanish class time, choice time (outside of language class), club activities during lunch, and learning activities when a substitute teacher is present. In the third trimester, they

are now expected to use Rosetta Stone outside of school for 30-50 minutes per week, depending on grade level.

Our ELL students, as well as middle school students requiring additional support in French or Spanish, are also using the program, both in and outside of the school day. We continue to expand the list of middle school students using Rosetta Stone, as the number of our licenses will allow us. We currently hold a total of 2,999 licenses.

D97 staff members have also had the opportunity to use Rosetta Stone for their own learning. Currently, 336 staff members are using the program to learn or enhance their skills in the language of their choice. These include Italian, Portuguese, Spanish (Latin America), Spanish (Spain), French, Hebrew, Japanese, Swahili, Arabic, Russian, Chinese (Mandarin), German, Polish, Greek, Latin, Tagalog (Filipino), Hindi, Swedish, and Korean--a total of 20 different languages so far! These individuals include district and building administrators, teachers, related services providers, teaching assistants, office assistants, lunch supervisors, and Buildings and Grounds staff--the broad spectrum of the D97 "team."

Benefits of Rosetta Stone Implementation

We have observed a positive impact on language learning in the district thus far. Because Rosetta Stone provides an individualized, independent learning experience, students progress at their own rate. The program monitors how much time they are spending in the program, as well as areas of strength and challenge. Rosetta Stone focuses on the primary skills of reading, listening, speaking, and pronunciation. Through its voice recognition capability, it can "hear" a student speaking in the language and assess accuracy. Even students who come from Spanish speaking backgrounds benefit from this program because it also addresses reading and writing. Students have shown much engagement around the Rosetta Stone program and are able to quickly understand how to use the program. Current 3-5 students will also be able to access their accounts during the summer, to maintain and continue to progress their Spanish language learning.

Many D97 families have responded positively to the implementation of the program, with some requesting access for students outside grades 3-5 or for other languages. We view this as excitement and support for language learning and will continue to explore ways to continue to broaden family access to this resource.

Staff members have shown much appreciation over the opportunity to use Rosetta Stone for their own learning, not only as demonstrated by the high number and diversity of employees across the district who are using the program, but also in their thankful notes and comments.

Challenges for Rosetta Stone Implementation

As we conclude our first sixth months of the implementation of Rosetta Stone in our district, we continue to address the following issues: 1) resolving technological issues to ensure smooth operation of the program both in district and at home, in collaboration with the Rosetta Stone team, 2) educating families to the importance of the out-of-class time and enlisting their support in providing this additional time, as FLES Spanish homework is something new, and 3) identifying how the district can more fully support the World Language FLES teachers in monitoring student use and progress, in light of their full teaching loads and other instructional responsibilities.

First, some minor system and app glitches have arisen, such as receiving error messages or firewall issues. Our technology department has been working closely with Rosetta Stone to fix these technical glitches, and most issues have been resolved.

Second, we will continue to work with families to help them provide support at home for use outside of school. We plan to survey families about Rosetta Stone home use to learn how the district can better promote the program and engage families in language learning. In addition to helping families learn how to use the program, we hope to cultivate a deeper understanding of the relationship between frequency of contact and time spent in the language and stronger outcomes, as well as that mastering the skills and concepts is important, not simply completing activities. A major asset of Rosetta Stone's design is that it includes built-in review, as well as enables students to re-do sections that need further work for mastering the skills and concepts.

Third, we will investigate how the district can further support World Language FLES teachers in implementing Rosetta Stone, recognizing their full teaching load and understanding that quality implementation is a time-consuming process, especially in the area of monitoring student use and progress. Additionally, we will continue to work with the Rosetta Stone team to provide continued professional development to meet our teachers' needs.

Next Steps for Rosetta Stone Implementation

As we conclude our first academic year, we recognize the great benefits that the Rosetta Stone program has brought to our district in language learning for both students and staff. As we move forward, we continue to address the challenges that have arisen. Our next steps to continue effective use of the program include:

1. Determining how best for Rosetta Stone to complement in-class instruction, now that we have more experience with the program
2. Gathering data on program effectiveness and student learning as we continue to assess how the program is working to support our primary learning goal of providing greater exposure to Spanish in grades 3-5 and for our ELLs
3. Working with the Middle School World Language team on how best to use Rosetta Stone to support and enhance their instruction in French and Spanish
4. Defining how the district can continue to support teachers in the use of this valuable resource
5. Evaluating the need for additional licenses for incoming third graders, so that current fifth graders may carry their licenses to sixth grade for the 2015-2016 school year (we may have the current capacity to do so, without adding more licenses)
6. Surveying staff and families on use of Rosetta Stone in school and at home, to better understand how we can support and promote effective use of the program

We appreciate the opportunities that Dr. Roberts and the Board members have granted us to enhance language learning in Oak Park Elementary District 97, for both students and staff members, through the implementation of Rosetta Stone. We have learned much in our first six months and it has been a time of great excitement. We look forward to taking things to the next level next year.