



Why learn a foreign language in elementary school?

Current brain research shows that the age of 10 represents a closing of one of the “windows of opportunity” for learning languages. After that, the brain begins to destroy its neural connectors that are not being used. Children who learn any second language before the age of 10 exercise and use the “bilingual” portion of their brains. These children should do better in any language that they study in the future. In addition, students develop the cultural knowledge and excitement about language learning that is at the heart of global awareness and future language class success. Research strongly indicates that younger learners have the best chance of attaining native-like pronunciation. Finally, they gain strong communication skills that can be transferred to any situation, such as “looking for clues” in context, listening skills, and existing in “foreign” situations with ease and calmness. Therefore, whether or not your child is able to continue Japanese after Maloney, their time learning a language will not be wasted. We do have a middle school/high school after-school program in place for those who wish to continue.

Why learn Japanese?

The Japanese language is spoken by more than 125 million people worldwide. It is a language that has been labeled as “Critical” to economic and national interests by the U.S. Secretary of Education. Speakers of Japanese are needed for careers in business, travel, finance, interpreting, teaching, and the military. Those who study Japanese (especially in elementary school) have a unique experience that helps them stand out during college applications. The study of Japanese helps children to be aware of and appreciate a very different language and culture. Japanese has only a few words that sound like English and none that look like English! Therefore, students develop strong listening, decoding, and observation skills in a Japanese classroom.

How was Japanese chosen?

When Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School was originally created, a group of teachers and administrators knew that a foreign language component would compliment the multicultural curriculum. At the time, grant funding was needed to start a new program. Funding was only available for “Critical” Languages (those of national security and economic importance rarely being taught) as determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education. Those were Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Korean and Russian languages. Of those, Japanese seemed the best in terms of being able to find a teacher and materials. A model Japanese program already existed in the East Hartford-Glastonbury Magnet School. The committee chose Japanese, hired a teacher (Jessica-sensei) and designed the program. The JLC Program began officially at Maloney on February 3, 1994. It was funded by the federal Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), with matching funds provided by the City of Waterbury.

Who takes Japanese?

Currently, all students receive Japanese language instruction. Kindergarteners have class 3 times per week for 20 minutes. First through third graders have class three times per week for 25 minutes. Fourth and fifth grades have two 20 minute and one 25 minute class per week. Kindergarteners begin in October each year. There are two full-time Japanese teachers, Kazumi Yamashita (K,1, and 2) and Jessica Haxhi (3, 4, 5 and Pre-K). We will continue our Pre-kindergarten introduction to Japanese again this year in February, once per week for 25 minutes.

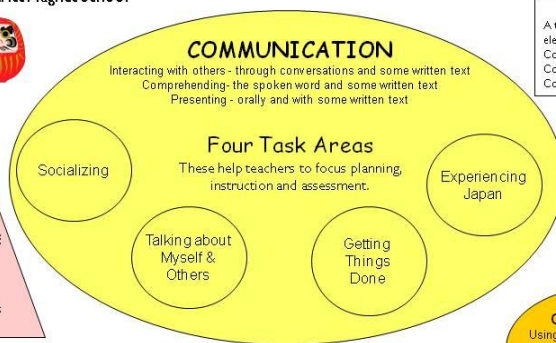
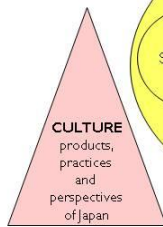
For general program information and links, go to:
<http://teacherweb.com/CT/MaloneyMagnetSchool/Japanese/>

For information about what students are learning right now, go to: <http://maloneyjapanese.wikispaces.com/>

What do students learn?

The JLC Curriculum is based on the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. There are five main goals (the five "Cs"): *Communication, Culture, Connections* (to other subjects), *Comparisons* (to their own language and culture) and *Communities* (using the language in and out of school). Keeping in mind all of these large goals, we determined the type of tasks that students should be able to do in the language, and combined that with some of the concepts they are learning in their regular classrooms. We try to "recycle" vocabulary and concepts often, adding new material each year. The best way to deliver these concepts is through thematic, story-like or project-based units that incorporate a variety of vocabulary, grammar, and subject area content. By the end of fifth grade, we expect students to be able to carry out a variety of tasks in the language, such as introducing themselves, asking for directions, shopping, ordering food, and talking about their interests.

Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School
Japanese Language & Culture Curriculum



The 5 C's!
A typical unit will combine elements from each goal area: Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

COMPARISONS
Of Japanese Language and Culture to Our Native Languages and Cultures

COMMUNITIES
Using Japanese with native speakers, outside of class, in the community, and just for fun!

Language Arts
Using and reinforcing language arts skills while talking about stories, listening for a purpose, comparing languages, finding meaning in context, and reading in Japanese and English.

Social Studies & Multicultural Curriculum
Talking about ourselves, our families, our homes, and communities in Japanese and comparing them to those in Japan. Talking about countries and languages of our heritage and the world; finding them on a map and globe.

CONNECTIONS to other subject areas

Math
Using math facts, measuring, and conversions to get things done in Japanese.

Science
Using predicting, experimenting and charting to discuss concepts in Japanese.

Music
Using music, rhythm, and patterns to access Japanese language and culture.

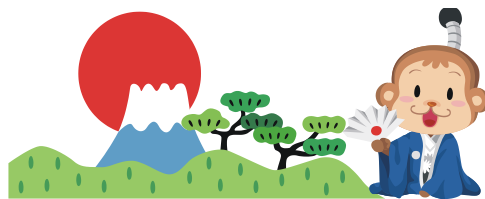
Art
Using drawing, color, impact and creativity as an aid to expression in Japanese.

Physical Education
Using dance, movement, games, and rules to access language and culture.

Technology
Using iPads, voice recorders, Powerpoint, digital storytelling and other technology to learn and demonstrate Japanese Skills.

The above graphic and full curriculum is available online at <http://teacherweb.com/CT/MaloneyMagnetSchool/Japanese/photo2.aspx>. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Japanese Language and Culture Program Philosophy



We want our students to:

- 1) love studying a foreign language.
- 2) love learning Japanese.
- 3) develop a range of skills necessary for becoming proficient in any foreign language, such as using learning strategies and dealing with "foreign" situations.
- 4) develop good communication skills for any situation, such as interpreting words in context, and using communication strategies.
- 5) feel comfortable speaking in Japanese, to native speakers, non-native speakers, and their friends.
- 6) have a sense of the concept of culture in general and the Japanese culture in particular. They should know the products, practices, and some of the perspectives of the people of Japan.
- 7) develop their knowledge of their own culture and language through learning about another language.
- 8) want to learn more about Japan and its language, culture, and people.

We have to remember:

- 1) that our students are young children.
- 2) that our students only learn Japanese three times a week for 25 minutes.
- 3) that any activity we create must be interesting and comprehensible for our students.

Therefore, we:

- 1) speak Japanese about 95% of the class time.
- 2) establish a friendly, low-stress, yet disciplined classroom so that everyone has a safe environment in which to learn.
- 3) encourage students to use Japanese whenever possible.
- 4) give our students "hints" if they have trouble remembering a word.
- 5) create units that are age-appropriate and **fun**, with a strong beginning, middle, and end (like a story!).
- 6) create lessons that incorporate language, culture, comparisons, and subject area content.
- 7) introduce students to a variety of cultural games, items, crafts, songs, holidays, and customs.
- 8) Give students opportunities to use what they learn outside the classroom, through homework challenges, take-home projects and a comprehensive website.