



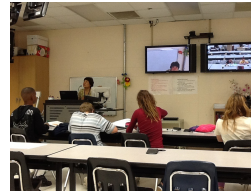
## IMPACT OF THE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING PROJECT

# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

## A CASE STUDY: VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (Grant Evaluation)

### About Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Virginia Beach City Public Schools is the fourth largest in Virginia, and among the 50 largest school systems in the United States. The district is home to over 160 world language teachers in nine languages and is guided by the K-12 World Languages Coordinator, Jennifer Carson.



### WHY THE TELL PROJECT?

Since the inception of the TELL Project, I have been using the framework and related documents to coach world language teachers in my capacity as K-12 World Languages Coordinator in a large public school division. Two years ago, our division was invited to apply for an S-FLEP grant from the Department of Defense. I chose to propose expansion of our STARTALK Summer Program to a full-fledged year-round program, and sought the assistance of a consultant with a Ph.D. in Education Policy, Planning and Leadership to assist in developing the proposal. Upon receiving the three-year grant, we began to expand our Mandarin Chinese instruction into several of the district middle schools with a high military population. We retained the services of the same consultant (Patricia Moore Shaffer of Shaffer Evaluation Group) to evaluate the program periodically to ensure fidelity of administration, as required by the grant. One of the external evaluator's tasks is to observe the S-FLEP teacher in the classroom, and to determine whether the training I am providing results in instructional improvements and student growth. The external evaluator did not have much experience in world language pedagogy, so I recommended she examine the TELL documents to familiarize herself.

### THE PROCESS

The teacher I hired had a valid state teaching license with endorsements in Chinese, ESL, and Elementary Education and had worked for several summers in our STARTALK program. However, she had no experience as a Chinese teacher per se, having taught eighteen years in a regular elementary classroom in the division. Dr. Shaffer decided to have the S-FLEP Chinese teacher complete the **TELL Self-Assessment Tools** for each domain as a baseline, and assigned a number value to each response. When Dr. Shaffer conducted her annual observation, she used the **Whole Class Observation Tool** and correlated responses with number values. She then used this data to determine whether the teacher was developing professionally. In the second year of the program, the teacher once again completed the **TELL Self-Assessment Tools** and the external evaluator observed using the **Whole Class Observation Tool**.

A comparison of these responses with the previous year's responses assured me, as Program Director, as well as the granting authority, that the teacher was benefiting from the extensive professional development and growth opportunities provided. Data from common performance-based assessments were collected to establish that this growth was leading to gains in student proficiency.

### REFLECTION

I did not hesitate to direct the consultant to the suite of TELL products to educate her about my expectations for quality world language teaching. After she familiarized herself with the criteria, we were able to have a discussion about best practices and look-fors. The **TELL Framework** gave us a common language to assess the success of the S-FLEP program from an instructional standpoint. Dr. Schaffer has extensive experience with other disciplines such as literacy and STEM, but did not know of any framework that was as easy to use and understand as TELL. In her estimation and mine, TELL simplified her job of assessing the teacher's knowledge base and classroom success, while also signaling to the teacher my expectations. Not having classroom experience in second language instruction, the S-FLEP teacher learned about best practices in world language teaching as she completed the **Self-Assessment Tools**, which reinforced the training I provided.

Think outside the box! Maybe the TELL Project was not created with grant evaluation in mind, but it has served as a powerful tool in this context. The TELL Project swiftly conveyed to both a novice teacher and an outside consultant those research-backed strategies that improve student learning. And that made my job easier!

– JENNIFER CARSON  
K-12 World Languages Coordinator  
Virginia Beach City Public Schools

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