



PROJECT DATA

Note: This form is for **APPROVED GRANTS** only! A Project Data form is a requirement for the grants. The information provided will be posted on the Learning College website.

Directions: Fill out the form and email it to anne.holte@montgomerycollege.edu.

Project Name: Heritage Language

Project Director: Eileen Cotter

Project Starting and Ending Date: January 2007 – June 2007

Brief description of the project:

There would be two parts of this project, both of which would develop a foundation for discussion at both MC and MCPS about the topic of heritage languages.

Part I: A presentation on the topic of “heritage language learning” for MC and MCPS faculty and staff members. This presentation by a well-known expert on the topic would have two goals. To raise awareness of the issue of academic language skills in second-language speakers and the need for encouraging enrollment in native language courses in both institutions and, perhaps even more importantly, to establish connections between the faculty and staff in both institutions to work on the issue of academic literacy in mainstreamed second-language students.

Part II: Focus group discussions at MC bringing together second-language students to elicit their perspective of the issue of first-language academic literacy and how they would envision any programs that dealt with the topic.

State fundamental need or concern addressed in this project.

MC has increasing numbers of MCPS graduates who are second-language students. Many of the second-language students who have been mainstreamed at MCPS by the time they are in high school have significant deficits in academic English when they enter MC. A primary reason for this is that their education in their native languages was interrupted when

they arrived in the US – they stopped learning their native language on an academic level. During the time they were in the local public school system, they acquired oral, conversational, idiomatic English (known as BICS, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) but were not in the school system long enough to acquire academic language fluency (known as CALPS, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiencies) since the length of time seen as necessary to acquire such skills has been found to be up to 9 years.

As reported in “*Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth*”, “Oral proficiency and literacy in the first language can be used to facilitate literacy development in English. Language-minority students are not blank slates. They enter classrooms with varying degrees of oral proficiency and literacy in their first language. There is clear evidence that tapping into first-language literacy can confer advantages to English-language learners.”

As a community and as a nation, we are squandering the resource of our bilingual youth when we do not promote their development of their native languages on a collegiate level. Truly bilingual adults, proficient in both English and their native language, would supply a wealth of ability to our businesses, government and communities.

As a college, we are struggling to teach students proficiency in English so that they can comprehend and express abstract thoughts, hypothetical situations, nuances of ideas and analysis of data when they lack an understanding of these critical language skills in any language. Giving students these tools in their native language will help their general academic level while also providing them with the basis to acquire these language skills in English.

List the project's core goals and/or objectives.

- Promote an awareness among faculty and staff at both MC and MCPS of the need to promote native language academic literacy.
- Include second-language students in the dialog.
- Increase and maintain communication between MC and MCPS on this topic.

Who will benefit from this project?

- Second-language students at both MC and MCPS
- Faculty and staff at MC and MCPS who deal with second-language students