

Claire Darmstadter

Hey everybody, I am joined today by Faith Hoenecke, Madison West Spanish teacher who wears a lot of hats. So she teaches Spanish Language Arts, AP Spanish Language, is the DLI coordinator, and also the world language department chair. So I don't know how you had time to squeeze in a meeting with me today, but I'm so appreciative that you did. And thank you so much for giving a couple minutes to chat with me.

Faith Hoenecke

Absolutely. It's actually a winter break today.

Claire Darmstadter

Great. So it would be a great first, if you could just give us a broad overview of your educational and linguistic background and how you ended up teaching at West.

Faith Hoenecke

Sure. So I started with Spanish just because it was the only language that was offered in growing up. But I loved it. And so I continued studying at UW-Madison for my undergrad, got my degree in Spanish education. And through my studies at UW, I studied abroad in Spain in Seville, and then I actually had the opportunity to do my student teaching in Ecuador. So when people ask, like, where's your Spanish from, that's kind of what I say, because that's kind of really where I felt like I fell into my, like bilingual identity. And then I taught down there like, after student teaching, I went back and I taught English down there, and came home to teach at Middleton High School. And then I took some time off and went to Costa Rica and got my TEFL certification down there, and did some volunteering, came back, kept teaching at Middleton for a while got my master's in international and comparative education from Indiana University, where I had a great advisor who had spent a ton of time in Mexico working with the teachers' unions. And so I got to maintain that Spanish connection, even though the program wasn't Spanish-specific. And then came back and eventually ended up at West. And kind of the many hats that I wear now has just been a development of where, like my passions lie with teaching. And, and being willing to take some of these things on as well.

Claire Darmstadter

So as the department chair, I would imagine you have considerable flexibility, or at least input in guiding some of the decisions and pedagogical decisions, specifically, of the language department. So what are some philosophies or techniques that you guys have chosen to incorporate at West, and then maybe what are some things that you would like to do with your students, but you don't have quite enough oversight or time and resources in order to make those things happen?

Faith Hoenecke

So one of the things that I have really enjoyed about coming to work in MMSD, and at West is that we have a really strong district level, world language teacher leader Claudine Clark, and she and I have collaborated a lot and work together to push toward more proficiency-based instruction and assessment with our students across all languages and levels. And that wasn't

something that was necessarily happening before I came to West. It was definitely how I approached language instruction. I've always really been focused on what students can do with the language and like, that's how like, I just made the decisions as a teacher, like what am I covering and how am I covering it and how am I assessing them it's like, well, what do they need to be able to do? And can they actually do it? And that so that has been having her support at the district level and guidance as well, in terms of, you know, just kind of shifting towards, you know, these the types of rubrics that we should be looking at and now world language, at least at West, is really ahead as the district is moving towards standards-based grading and considering what that looks like and the equity benefits of standards based grading and assessment. World Languages already, you know, kind of two, three steps ahead of the district in that process, because we've already been thinking about evaluating students based on what they can do with the language. And yeah, and I think that has also helped me with the, like teaching Spanish language arts in the dual language immersion program. Because that's obviously there's a different approach there than there is to teaching Spanish as a second or third language to students who are just studying it in middle school and high school.

Claire Darmstadter

And I noticed that you use the term world language, and a lot more departments and schools are using the term world language to describe what formerly might have been called foreign language. So can you kind of explain why it's important that we make that distinction and how one may be more an additive view of languages and one may not see it in as positive of a light?

Faith Hoenecke

Yeah. I mean, for me, it's, it's never like, foreign to me has a negative connotation, and it means it's other, and it's not where we are. And that's just not accurate. Certainly not for Spanish. And we live in such a global society that, like, foreign to me is just more like indicates unknown. And that might be true. But world language to me just puts the emphasis on the fact that we do live in a global society. The new Wisconsin State Standards for World Languages really put an emphasis on those cultural connections and community connections and comparisons as well. So to me, it's just emphasizing the fact that these languages that we're studying are not something that's like *other*, especially in the United States, where we have such a diverse population.

Claire Darmstadter

And I believe that Madison West participates in the Seal of Biliteracy program. And this was something — and the Global Scholars — and Seal of Biliteracy was something that came out of California, but it has kind of made its way into other states, Wisconsin being one of them, although there's not tons of districts or schools that offer it. So can you kind of talk about the rationale behind why it's offered, the benefit it gives the students, and maybe just like the scope and size of the participation at West.

Faith Hoenecke

Yeah, so the Seal of Biliteracy and our Global Scholars Program are kind of spearheaded by actually the Department of Public Instruction in the state of Wisconsin, and the Seal of Biliteracy

— I wasn't at West when it kind of initially was introduced, and I wasn't even in the district. But I know from talking with other teachers, and Dena Zarco is our like, lead coordinator for those two programs at West. But as the DLI coordinator, I like, work with her a lot on those things, because the Seal of Biliteracy was introduced to MMSD, around the same time that the dual language immersion program was being developed for Spanish because MMSD also is working on a Hmong DLI trajectory. But the Seal of Biliteracy, the idea is that students can demonstrate if they can demonstrate that they are proficient in both comprehension and production, both spoken and written in English and another language, then they receive this basically certification, walking out of high school that says, certified, you know, we've confirmed this this student is biliterate, which you know, that's just walking into any job, or, any school or whatever post secondary situations a student finds themselves in, they have this like certification that says, I'm extra skilled in languages. And not only that, but the Global Scholars Program puts an extra — that when it has more of a twist of I have proficiency and a lot of knowledge about global cultures, and how to respectfully interact with different cultures. There's less emphasis on the language piece for the Global Scholars Program. Whereas the Seal of Biliteracy is much more emphasizing the language skills. So it's kind of a distinction between the two. But a lot of our students who are pursuing one or the other end up doing both, because they do overlap so much.

Claire Darmstadter

And is that something that's advertised to students? Or how do they kind of find out about it? And how many decide to actually go through and do all the steps and requirements that are, you know, part of the program?

Faith Hoenecke

Yeah, so at West, we actually have, I think the last time I checked the Google Classroom, there were over 200 students that were enrolled in the Google Classroom. So at West we really promoted heavily in all of our world language classes, and it's not just world language classes that qualify students for the Global Scholars achievement, itself, they also need to take you know, social studies classes that are focused on global issues, music classes often qualify, depending on the type of music that they're studying and using. So it's really, you know, art classes. A lot of things qualify under that umbrella, but we really promote it because it's coordinated by a world language teacher, we promote it heavily in the world language classes. And because DLI students and families when they enroll in the dual language program in kindergarten, are kind of told, you know, like, this trajectory is going to make getting the Seal of Biliteracy much more attainable. Which with slightly less effort, to be quite honest, right? Like it's because I mean, not really though, because they're spending 13 years studying Spanish. So there's that like long-term effort, it just looks different. While we have — and the 200 students is 200, across all four years of high school. This year, I think we only have a handful of students that are on track to achieve the Seal of Biliteracy, a lot of that has to do with the pandemic. And just students getting overwhelmed with just handling their coursework. We work hard, within the dual language classes to embed a lot of supports for the students. So both of these, the Seal of Biliteracy, and the Global Scholars Program, both are something extra. It's an extracurricular accomplishment or achievement. And so we don't facilitate achieving the Seal of Biliteracy

completely within the curriculum, but we do facilitate opportunities that the students can use from class assignments to then complete reflections, because really, a lot of what the requirements are for Seal of Biliteracy and Global Scholars are that students have engaged with texts, media, cultural experiences, and then reflect on what they've learned from engaging with those things. And so they just have to write, you know, brief reflections on what they did and what they learned from it and the connections that they have found. So we do a lot of like, obviously, we read in our classes, and any of those books that we read, they could use as a reflection. They might even be able to tweak an assignment that we did to like, turn it into a reflection. But nothing that we do is explicitly write a reflection based on this book that answers these questions that happen to also be the Seal of Biliteracy or Global Scholars questions like we don't line it up exactly, because it is something that we expect them to kind of organize outside of class time on their own. We do hold monthly meetings at lunch to help students stay organized and on top of things, sometimes bringing in guest speakers so that they can connect that way within school as well.

Claire Darmstadter

You started to briefly mention the impacts of COVID. Understatement of the century, online school has been hard. But for many kids, these language classrooms are where kids really build community and they're put in vulnerable positions speaking a language that they're not super comfortable with always. And that's really where trust and community I feel like comes from in our classes. So how have you kind of balanced the social and emotional needs of your students, while also recognizing that in order to become more proficient at a language you need that practice? And I don't know, do you balance speaking in English versus Spanish versus other techniques? Or how's that kind of worked in your classes during COVID?

Faith Hoenecke

So in general, I think that teaching world languages, it just lends itself to some social emotional learning at any level, because you can use the language, the target language, to do some really basic things, but still be building community, right? So if you're at a level one, students can just be sharing adjectives that describe themselves or they're learning the basic family members. But by sharing that kind of thing, or just likes and dislikes, I like this, I like to do this, I don't like this, whatever that's still community building, right? Because you're there working through these language things, while also learning about each other and sharing them of themselves in a very basic way. But it's still sharing, right? And quite honestly, when you walk into a classroom at the beginning of the school year, you don't really want to get all personal with everyone that you don't know. So, you know, just talking about *Yes, I like soccer. I don't like volleyball*, that's kind of enough. So you know. And then I am fortunate to teach students that have intermediate low to advanced language proficiency. And so again, it stays in Spanish. But we, you know, we journal we do during COVID we've done video journaling, as well. So we can kind of alternate between doing some oral like video journaling through Flipgrid and then doing written journaling. And they you know, it's once a week, and sometimes it's reflecting on things from class, but sometimes it's just like, *Hey, listen to this song and tell me what you think of it and like any connections that you make with it*. And students sometimes like you just never know what's going to connect with a student. So I try and keep it varied. The nice thing too, is that in our

aligned curriculum for like, language levels, 1,2,3 and four, actually, we're working on four, the first unit is focused on self and others, right. So that's how you start the year every year. For Spanish language arts classes within the DLI program, we start with narrative writing and focusing on some aspect of identity. Right? So just like built into the curriculum, there's a lot of space for students to connect and share.

Claire Darmstadter

And one more program that I love to learn about is facilitated languages. And if people want to learn more about this, I have an interview with Kristen Dalby that I'll leave in the show notes. But it's not super popular across the state. So can you kind of talk about how it became a program that West offers and what it kind of entails and what it's about?

Faith Hoenecke

Yeah, and I'll so facilitated language study is, again, brainchild of or, at least, was introduced to MMSD by our teacher leader Claudine Clark, when she was still teaching French at East High School. And the idea is that there are so many languages out there. And for some students, they would much rather study a less-commonly-taught language, or just a language that we don't have full classes for within the district or within our schools. And so the teacher just needs to be a world language teacher, but they don't need to, like teach any of the -- in fact, they most likely don't speak or teach the languages that are being studied in the class. And the idea is that that teacher is literally just providing materials. So at West, we offer Japanese, Korean, and Italian and we're adding Ho Chunk. And so our facilitated language studies teachers make sure that our students have access to textbooks in, you know, whatever language and at West, FLS came out of the closure, or the collapsing of our Japanese program. So we used to have a full Japanese program. And when that teacher retired, we decided to transition into this FLS program. And so the other piece is not only just not only providing materials, but also connecting students with tutors. So when we're in person, the tutors actually come into school, if that's possible. We have done Skype, you know, before Zoom was on everyone's computer. There were some tutors that came in via Skype. And, but now everything is via Zoom. And, honestly, I think that may continue in certain aspects just because it's a little bit more convenient for some of the tutors to not have to, well parking is terrible at West, so to have to come and navigate parking. But so that's the other piece like there's the materials piece. And then there's the coordinating connecting tutors and students. And then also just, you know you're a world language teacher, so you talk to the students about like, what you need to be doing to be learning a language, even though I can't tell you whether you're structuring your sentences correctly, I can tell you that the more you read, the better you're going to understand how the language is supposed to be structured, right?

Claire Darmstadter

Yeah, it sounds like an amazing program. And I'll leave another link for people to learn more about that one, because I think it's an incredible opportunity. Just to finish this up in celebration of multilingualism, can you boil it down to one reason why you think we should celebrate and we should be speaking more than one language as a superpower? You can answer English and Spanish however you want.

Faith Hoenecke

Oh, wow. I just think there's nothing more beautiful than connecting with other people on different levels and language as a way that you can do that. So to me multilingualism is just promoting more connection and more understanding, which I think we can always use more of.

Claire Darmstadter

Well, thank you so much for your time. I so appreciate all the perspectives that you had to share. And I think other people will too. So I hope the rest of the year is at least manageable. I hope it goes as well as possible. But thank you so much.

Faith Hoenecke

Yeah, you're welcome. Thanks Claire!