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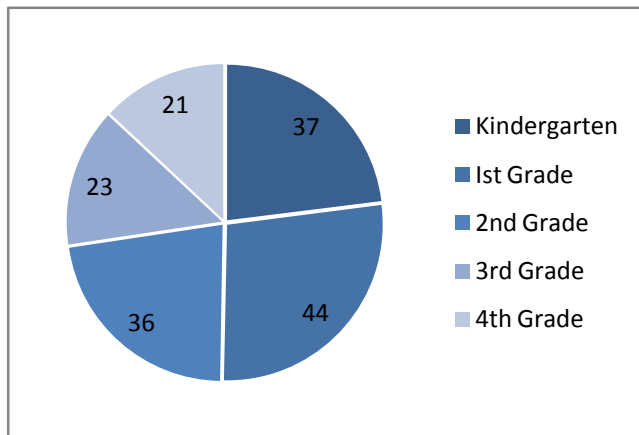
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2008-2009 Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by the Board of Directors
to the Minnesota Department of Education
and the Twin Cities German Immersion School Community

Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) added a second grade and a fourth grade class in 2008-2009 to grow 161 students for an ADM of 157.03 and a school wide attendance rate of 96.6%. The graph below shows that Kindergarten and 2nd grade were slightly under enrolled, while 1st, 3rd and 4th grades met or exceeded capacity slightly. Almost 75% of the school was enrolled in K-2nd grades, as the two leading grades continue to consist of one classroom per grade level. All school enrollment numbers are very close to what had been projected in both original start up planning and the 2008-2009 budget. TCGIS is on target for growing to a full K-8 configuration by the fall of 2012 and achieving a full complement of classes and 360 students by 2014.



The board approved class sizes for 2008-2009 were as follows:

K = 44; 1st = 44; 2nd = 40; 3rd = 20; 4th = 20.

The director has reasonable discretion in exceeding those limits. The two leading classes have had slightly more students since 2006.

Student attrition rates from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 were minimal and fell within expected parameters. Student attrition rates during the school year were very low. Kindergarten had the

highest attrition rate with 7 students (16%) leaving over the course of the school year. First grade lost one student and all the other grades remained the same from September to June.

The annual TCGIS survey shows that 94% of parents are somewhat or very satisfied with the school experience for their children. When parents were surveyed about why they were returning to TCGIS for the following year, 88% cited the German immersion aspect, 85% were also pleased with the teacher student ratio and 84% reported that their child/children like the school and are happy. Common reasons for not returning to TCGIS are a family move both within and out of state, choosing an alternate middle school experience for an older child, and, less frequently, dissatisfaction with some aspect of the program.

Commentary:

The challenge that faces Twin Cities German Immersion School is appealing to a wide spectrum of families and then serving them all well. As an immersion school, it is very difficult to add children after the first grade and expect the same level of academic achievement, as the first years of language acquisition are vital to achieving second language fluency. Filling the early grades to capacity and then maintaining those grades is critical to the overall mission of the school. To date, the success has been, that enrollment is steady and the classes are at near capacity. There has been attrition, but there have also been new families who come to the school with children who have some German or who are native speakers, who can, therefore, access the academic content of the upper grades relatively easily.

Management

Twin Cities German Immersion School is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by a School Director. The School Director for 2008-2009 was Judi Ingison, serving an interim term. The Board of Directors was headed by Michael Dorneich, in his second year as chair. The current board structure is a nine member board, elected each May by the parents, teachers and staff at the school. The board is on a three year rotation, with one third of the members rotating in each year and each member serving a three year term. While there has been one teacher on the board over the past three years, this is a parent majority board. The school has an active waiver from the Minnesota Department of Education. The board roster for 2008-2009 included:

Term ending 2009	Term ending 2010	Term ending 2011
Michael Dorneich (Chair)	Gretchen Nessel	Andrew Oxenham
Stefan Knep (Parent Liaison)	Rebecca Haut-Schmid	Mary Zellmer-Bruhn
Scot Stephenson (Teacher)	Juergen Konczak (on sabbatical)	Doug Franzwa
	Ken Greener (appointed midyear to fill in for the planned sabbatical gap)	

Commentary: 2008-2009 was a year of transition for TCGIS. The founding Director of Operations left after five years of service to the school – two during the start-up phase and three during operation. TCGIS took this opportunity to move from a co-directorship (operations and curriculum) to a single directorship. A new director was hired in April of 2008. However, he resigned in June of 2008 due to personal reasons. The Board of Directors very quickly interviewed and hired an interim Director, Judi Ingison, but the planned transition was truncated, and the search committee was reinstated and directed to spend another year searching for a permanent candidate.

TCGIS was fortunate to find a licensed school administrator with two years experience as a charter school director as well as prior experience as a charter school consultant. Under the guidance of Judi Ingison, the school continued to grow as planned. Major administrative initiatives and accomplishments from 2008-2009 included:

- Facilitated a smooth and effective transition to a new building on University Avenue;
- Approved a middle school model and approved a 5th grade curriculum;
- Searched for and hired a new director while working with the interim director;
- Redesigned the school logo and website as a part of a larger rebranding effort;
- Moved from ½ day to full day kindergarten and incorporating the change into the budget;
- Added a lunch program midyear;
- Budgeted during very challenging financial times;
- Recruited sufficient teacher applicants to fill an unprecedented number of open positions.

Annual survey findings regarding Governance show that the parents had a generally high rate of satisfaction with the board leadership, but considerably less satisfaction with the administrative leadership. Given the interim nature of the directorship and the success of the search process over the past year, there is every reason to expect improvement under new leadership in 2009-2010.

Successful immersion education depends upon German speakers with near native ability who are also highly qualified teachers. In addition, maintaining a German language presence school wide requires that all staff have some proficiency in German, so that the bilingual communication with the children continues outside of the classrooms. Finding teachers and staff, who are proficient in German, are trained in their areas of specialty, are fully licensed or able to be licensed in Minnesota, and who are eligible to work in the United States is an ongoing challenge. This challenge has been met by hiring teachers locally and through a partnership with the STEP program at the Checkpoint Charlie Foundation which provides guest teachers for up to three years. In 2008-2009 TCGIS enjoyed the benefits of having most of the teaching staff continue from the 2007-2008 academic year. Additions to teaching staff, with the exception of music, were solely in the area of school growth.

Returning Teachers	File Folder Number	New Teachers	File Folder Number
John Gould - PE	285107	Claudia Herman – 4 th	998156
Susanne Grimm – 2nd	296968	Mary Beth Huttlin – Music	443757
Swantje Haeusler – 3rd	438586 – Amity guest	Frauke Vesper – 2 nd	443134 – STEP guest
Anne Kile - SPED	411821		
Amy Lenburg - Art	399046		
Jennifer Nieters – K	405382		
Michelle Nellis – English	357442		
Verena Rittstieg – 1 st	437583 – STEP guest		
Heidi Scholtz – ELL	341798		
Scott Stephenson – 1 st	397485		

Support school staffing increased significantly from the previous years in accordance with the growing needs of the school. Additional teaching assistants were hired mid-year along with lunch staff as the school added a lunch program in January.

Administration	Office Staff	Teaching Assistants	Lunch Room Staff
Judi Ingison - Director	Stefanie Berres	Elena Heindl	Margarita
Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh – Director of Curriculum	Kate Wagner	Kristina Jackson	Hunter Goetzman
	Sharon Willson	Sarah Monkey	Joel Willson
		Esther Perry	
		Margaret Sims	

Additional staffing comes in the form of teaching interns from Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Through a partnership with the Amity Institute, TCGIS contracts with university students who are studying to be teachers and are able to spend five months to a year in an overseas internship. In 2008-2009, TCGIS was fortunate to have fifteen different interns come and add their talents to the school. Interns are hosted by school families and contribute 25 hours weekly to the classrooms in addition to auditing classes at local universities.



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relative stability in terms of teacher turnover. Given the and the move to a new building, the cohesive group of teachers made the year significantly more successful.

Challenges remain in finding sufficient time for staff development, maintaining a work load that is not too overwhelming for staff at all levels, making sure that Minnesota Department of Education licensing proceeds smoothly for guest teachers from Germany and making sure that all staff have sufficient supervision and feedback.

TCGIS is also committed to finding a good balance between local teachers who can provide continuity to the teaching staff and guest teachers who bring authenticity to the German curriculum. In 2008-2009, three teachers were here as guest teachers on J-1 visas, and ten were hired locally.

Results from the annual parent survey indicate that parents generally agree that TCGIS teachers are accomplished and well qualified for their jobs. Although survey results were generally positive, an area for future improvement would be in classroom management.

Table 1
Summary of Net Assets
as of June 30, 2009 and 2008

	2009	2008
Assets		
Current and other assets	\$ 391,038	\$ 200,963
Capital assets, net of depreciation	45,044	48,772
Total assets	\$ 436,082	\$ 249,735
Liabilities		
Current and other liabilities	\$ 174,578	\$ 86,457
Net assets		
Invested in capital assets	\$ 45,044	\$ 48,772
Unrestricted	216,460	114,506
Total net assets	\$ 261,504	\$ 163,278

Commentary: 2008-2009 was a year of financial strength for Twin Cities German Immersion School. Several grants continued to fund special activities, including science enrichment, Amity interns, curriculum coordination, German language instructional specialists and materials for the language classroom. The continued focus on conservative planning and execution throughout all years of operations, and the strength of three significant grants allowed the school to build up the amount of unrestricted assets for future years equal to 13.7% of budget.

Challenges continue to be planning for the future – past the years of the grants. With the economic reality of 2009, state funds will be curtailed and schools will be facing larger state holdbacks. It has been a source of pride that TCGIS has not needed a line of credit, but the school has put one in place anticipating the need in upcoming years. A future goal is to increase the fund balance to between 18% and 30% in order to accommodate state holdbacks. Additional challenges highlighted by the annual audit include working towards ever increasing compliance with standard auditing procedures, particularly in the area of segregation of duties.

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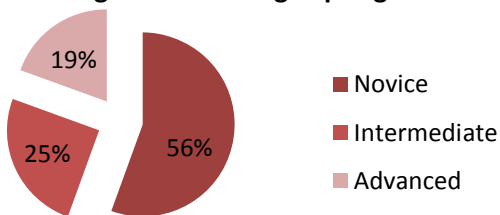
Academic performance begins with assessment for language proficiency at all grade levels. Without sufficient German language, the children cannot access the core curriculum over the next few years. Language proficiency is tested locally and at all grade levels using the **Student Oral Proficiency Assessments (SOPA's)**. While this test is conducted locally, the assessors are hired consultants who come in to conduct interviews with the children. All children new to the school are tested in September, while all children who are continuing at TCGIS are tested in May.

German reading and math proficiency is assessed locally prior to third grade. Comparative proficiency in third grade and beyond is assessed in English reading and math by administering the **Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA's)**. Science proficiency will be added in 2010. The MCA's are administered in April of each year.

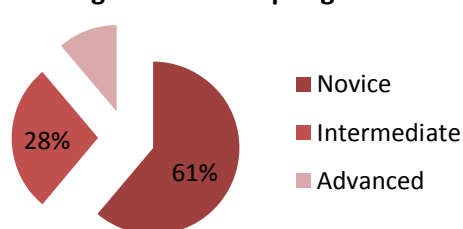
SOPA's measure oral language for foreign language learners. This is the primary test used at TCGIS to assess the success of the language immersion component of the program. SOPA test results show that steady improvement is being made in German oral language school wide. The charts below show results at all grade levels for the 2008-2009 academic year. The numbers are shown in percent of class.

The strongest language progression comes in the early grades of the immersion program. In part, this is due to the rapid rate of language acquisition, from no language to some language. The progression also reflects the increased intellectual capacity of the children as their second language learning begins to match their storytelling abilities. Third grade shows the most consistently strong language acquisition, and it is worthy to note that all children who came into this class with no German started in kindergarten, and have had four years of uninterrupted language immersion. Fourth grade, in contrast, has several students who entered after first grade with no or little German. These results support the premise that extended years of language learning lead to greater fluency.

Kindergarten Listening - Spring 2009

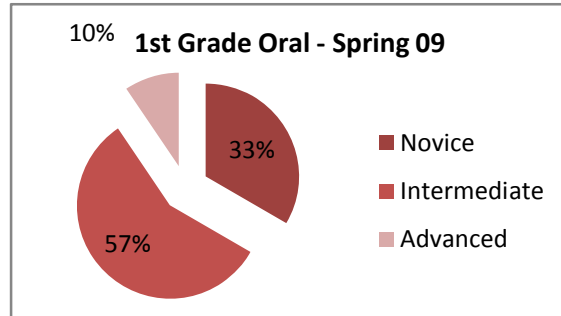
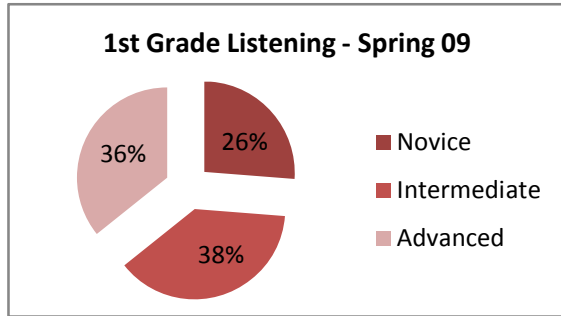


Kindergarten Oral - Spring 09

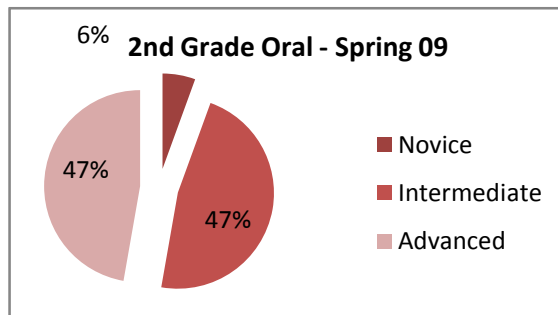
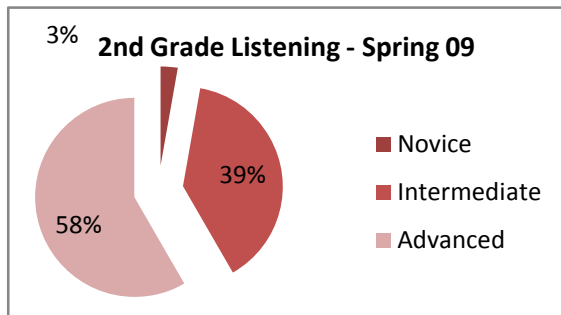


Kindergarten is used to establish a baseline in the fall and then show progress in the spring. The chart below shows the accomplishments of the kindergarten class over the course of nine months. Almost half of the kindergarten class falls solidly into the novice mid to novice high range for listening comprehension after nine months of instruction. As expected, oral production lags behind with most children testing at novice low and novice mid. The addition of children who are German speakers at home and test into the advanced level adds depth and variety to the language experience for all children.

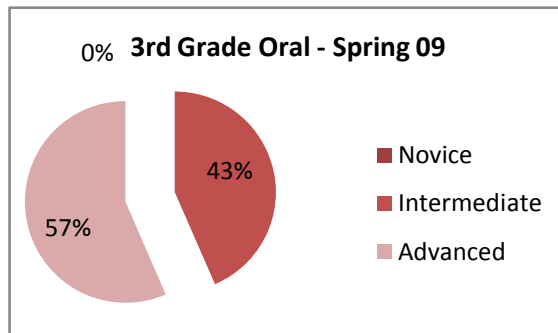
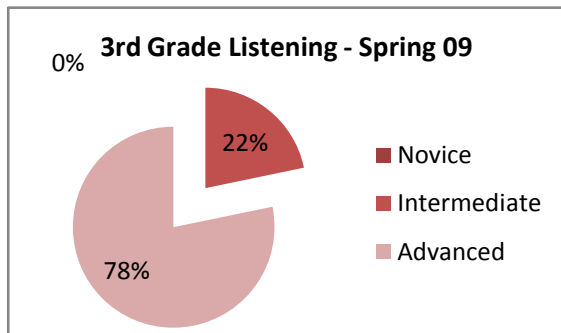
with listening and oral production in German language. The percentage of students at the novice level decreases while the majority of the class moves into intermediate and advanced ranges.



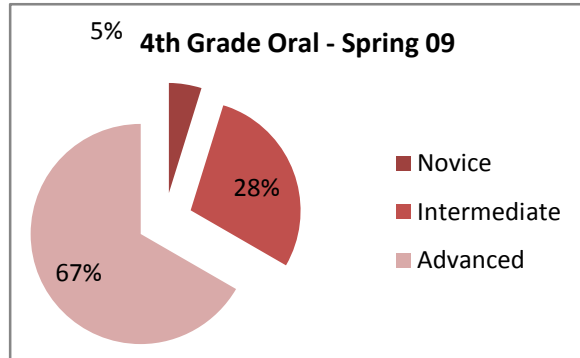
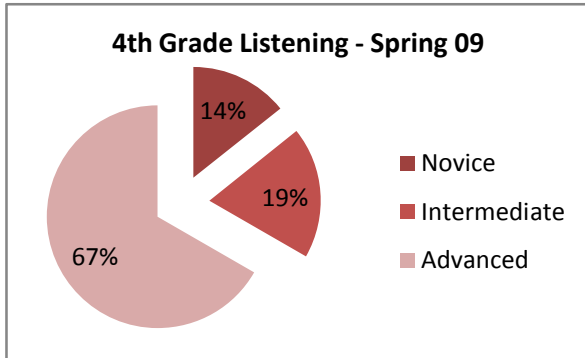
Second grade, again, shows significant improvement. None of the students remain in the lower novice levels and most of the group now understands German at an advanced level. While oral production still lags a little bit, speaking is beginning to match comprehension skills.



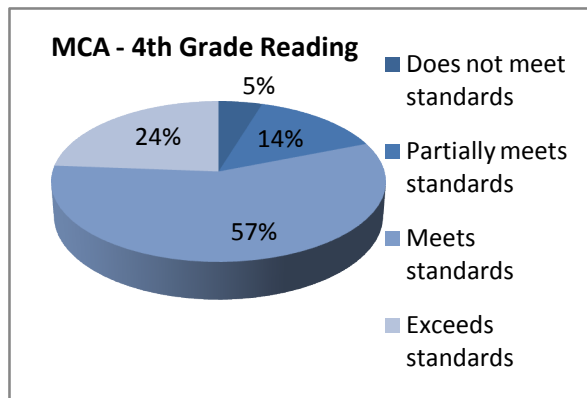
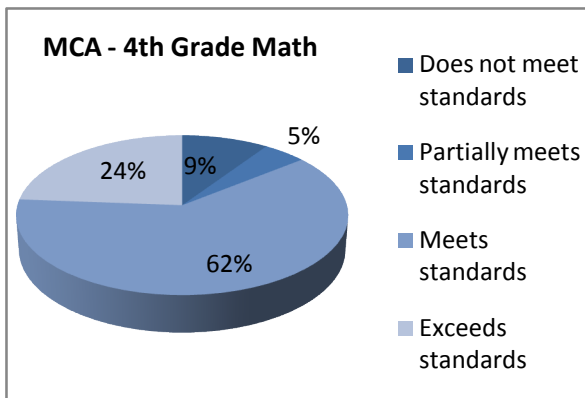
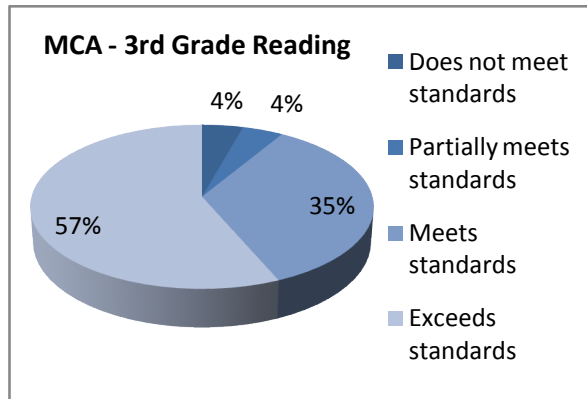
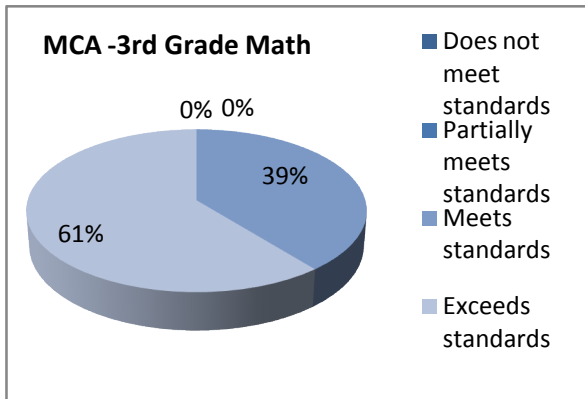
Third grade shows a leveling off of German language skills as most of the class achieves solidly in the advanced range for listening comprehension. Oral comprehension also shows improvement as 100% of the class moves beyond the novice level and most are speaking in the advanced range.



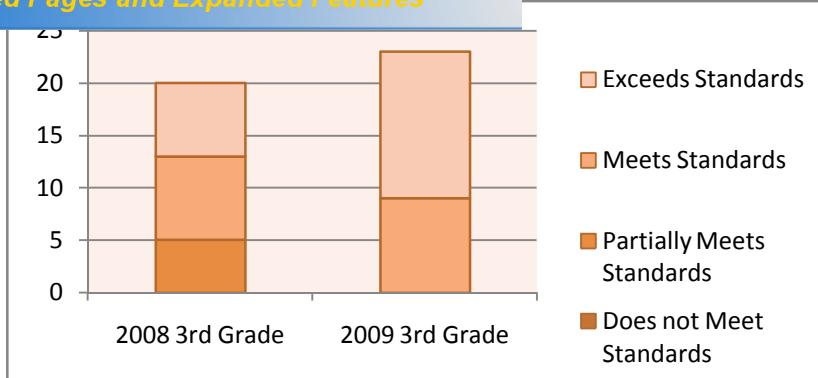
ool and, as such, has students who did not start the program and some students come into the class with no German after 1st grade and the lag in both listening comprehension and oral production is somewhat noticeable.



Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments begin in third grade across the state. This is the same year that TCGIS students begin to receive instruction in English reading and language arts in addition to German instruction. The first TCGIS class to test was in the spring of 2008 and in 2009 two classes, third and fourth grades, tested in math and reading. The results reveal that most TCGIS students are reading and doing math at or above grade levels.



Math – 2008 to 2009



In addition, the inclusion of MCA specific review to the math curriculum resulted in improved results from 2008 to 2009 when comparing third grade results.

In comparison to statewide MCA results, the children at TCGIS perform well. Statewide 82.1% of third graders meet or exceed the math standards, whereas 100% of the 2009 TCGIS third graders achieved the same result. In fourth grade, 74.8% of students meet or exceed the math standards statewide, while 86% of the 2009 TCGIS fourth graders achieved the same result.

In reading, 78.4% of third graders meet or exceed the standards statewide, while 82% of TCGIS graders meet or exceed the standards for reading in English. Fourth grade is 74.5% of fourth graders statewide proficient or better readers while 81% of TCGIS fourth graders are proficient or better readers. In addition, all TCGIS students are reading in a second language as well as in English.

The overall caution with all of these comparisons is that the sample size is very small and one or two children per grade level can change the overall percentages significantly.



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rmance

The move into new building on University Avenue was a huge operational success for the school. The larger classrooms, increased daylight, room for music and art in more conventional spaces, and a set of rooms dedicated to special education, made this a much more pleasant and practical facility for both teachers and students. In addition, there is room for expansion over the next four years of the lease. This will allow TCGIS to grow into its full K-8 configurations.

There were challenges to the new facility: the location on University Avenue is not appealing to some families and some attrition from the previous year can be attributed to this move. The outdoor play space, shared use of Dickerman Park, is not particularly attractive and has security as the building is located on a busy street without contiguous fencing around the park area. The school is actively working with the City of Saint Paul to improve the park both in terms of security and attractiveness. The lack of a physical education facility has led to a partnership with the Midway YMCA – a boon in terms of potential physical education options, but a drain on instructional time as the transitions between the facilities are time consuming, particularly in the winter.

Additional growth for TCGIS came in the form of an organized Parent Teacher Organization. Parents have always been active school volunteers, with the most dedicated serving on the board or a myriad of committees. The critical mass and parental energy was finally enough for a more formal organization. The PTO took over most of the school fundraising and community building for the school. In addition to the PTO, parents are a frequent presence in classrooms as volunteers, cheerleaders, spectators, and guests. Volunteerism remains high at TCGIS with 79% of families reporting volunteer hours through the parent survey. Volunteering also brings in community members who have an interest in German and are not parents at the school. The school is greatly enriched by the presence of these dedicated volunteers.

The 2009 parent survey shows that personal communication either in person or via email is still the most effective means for most parents. This is, however, a highly variable means of communication and favors those who are proactive and present. The more formalized forms of school communication reach more families more regularly, but are seen as less effective. As the school grows in size and adds more families, communication becomes more challenging.



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ces and implementation

Twin Cities German Immersion School has now fully implemented immersion practices in K-4th grade and is piloting the immersion middle school program. This is the first German immersion program in Minnesota and one of the few programs nationwide to use textbooks and other materials from the target culture. Many immersion schools rely on translated materials that mirror the American curriculum. TCGIS supplements these materials with locally created units and materials purchased in the United States. In addition, TCGIS has piloted a program that focuses very strongly on teachers who demonstrate excellence in German language ability and provides a native speaking intern for each classroom. These innovative practices, outlined in the original charter application, have been supported over the years by four significant grants, three of which had a significant impact on the 2008-2009 school year.

The STEM grant and the World Language Pilot Project grants originated in the Minnesota Department of Education and have provided support for German language acquisition and for additional teacher training and student opportunities in science and math. Activities that have been supported by this grant opportunity have included additional foreign language assistants who created language rich learning units and demonstrated them in individual classrooms, individual classroom field trips focusing on environmental science, cultural activities several times annually focusing on world cultures, and access to additional math and science materials to enrich the existing curriculum.

The Foreign Language Acquisition Program grant was in its second year during the 2008-2009 school year and it continues to support significant curriculum development for both the elementary and middle school programs, programming in arts, and classroom interns through the Amity program, among other activities.

More significantly, Twin Cities German Immersion School continues to be seen as a model example of how immersion education can be done well. There are increasing requests for visits from other immersion schools for tours and conversation about the ins and outs of starting an immersion school. TCGIS staff have presented at national conferences including the American Council on the Teaching of Languages and at the Immersion Conference 2008 sponsored by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition at the University of Minnesota.



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Twin Cities German School has many strengths. It has a talented staff, a committed board, a strong track record with student achievement and much infrastructure of systems in place. Nonetheless the school is young and contains much potential for stabilizing over the next few years.

Broadly outlined, the goals for the future fall into five categories:

1. To leverage the initial success of the elementary German immersion program and lessons learned to improve on the current model and create a stable and long lasting school.

- a. Integrate a unified system of conflict resolution within the school through training of staff, creating time and space within the schedule for conflict resolution with students and creating a culture of identifying conflict and strategies to address it.
- b. Deepen our understanding and implementation of Responsive Classroom and expand an understanding of how this program changes from Elementary to Middle School.
- c. Identify and implement a system of student assessment that is unified throughout the school, developmentally appropriate to each level of student, and builds in consistent, accurate evaluation of growth and how to communicate individual goals and successes to both students, and parents and group successes to the wider community.
- d. Formalizing the documentation of curriculum to provide teachers access to expectations, resources and assessments appropriate to the grade level that live on beyond the tenure of individual teachers.
- e. Maintain access to ongoing external professional development for teachers. Develop an internal culture of continuous professional development within the staff.
- f. Improving teacher retention through recruiting and training qualified local teachers with a long term commitment to the area and the school.
- g. Identifying a long term facility

2. To implement a strong middle school program. (Many of the subgoals mirror those for the elementary program)

- a. Continue to invest time and resources into research and curriculum writing for upcoming grade levels.
- b. Deepen our understanding and implementation of Responsive Classroom and expand an understanding of how this program changes from Elementary to Middle School
- c. Identify and implement a system of student assessment that is unified throughout the school, developmentally appropriate to each level of student, and builds in consistent, accurate evaluation of growth and how to communicate individual goals and successes to both students, and parents and group successes to the wider community.

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- e. Maintain access to ongoing external professional development for teachers. Develop an internal culture of continuous professional development within the staff.
 - f. Stabilize staffing, scheduling and curriculum within the newly developed middle school.
 - g. Establishing a stable transition for students to high school when they leave our middle school
- 3. To continue and build on a culture of sound fiscal management.**
- a. Stabilizing funding, a situation exacerbated by the lack of grant funding, the current 27% holdback of state funds and the uncertainty of future state funding.
 - b. Formalize, stabilize and grow our annual appeal fundraising strategies through choosing a donor data base management system, expanding our list of donors and ensuring that we maintain and document connection, relationship and communication with these donors
 - c. Work with the External Relations Committee to stabilize access to alternative funding sources
 - d. Identify a strategy to maintain a strong fund balance in challenging economic climate
- 4. To maintain the community atmosphere that has developed along with the growing school.**
- a. Maintain a culture of consistent, predictable, clear and transparent communication between the school and parent community at the classroom and school level about our philosophy of education, our expectations and our plans.
 - b. Make sure avenues to be involved in supporting the school are open and available to all parents interested in supporting the school through clear publicity of needs and regular communication methods about ways to be involved.
 - c. Increase the range of economic and cultural diversity within the student body.
- 5. To empower strong leadership in community, education and immersion.**
- a. Identify and implement an administrative team whose skills and job responsibilities address all key areas of responsibility for stabilizing office, resources, curriculum, teacher support and student support.
 - b. Developing a personnel manual for staff outlining expectations
 - c. Systematize and make integral to our curriculum and our modes of operating efforts to make our own uses of energy and resources in line with values of sustainability.