



**PACCP**  
PORTUGUESE AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP PROJECT

**A NON-PARTISAN INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIC INVOLVEMENT**

**STARTING PORTUGUESE IN YOUR SCHOOL**  
**A MANUAL FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

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**A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
PORTUGUESE AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP PROJECT**

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project has a very successful ten-year history of promoting civic participation in many communities in five states throughout the United States. Originally funded by the Luso-American Foundation, the Project has recently received the support of the Autonomous Region of the Azores and numerous community organizations throughout the United States.

The main objectives of the Project during its 10 years of existence were to encourage Portuguese emigrants to become U.S. citizens, to register to vote and, last but not least, to exercise their right to vote. While these objectives continue to be its primary focus, the Project has taken on an additional objective – to promote the inclusion of the Portuguese language in the curricula of U.S. public schools.

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project has been very successful in increasing the percentage of registered voters who exercise their right to vote. The Board of Directors believes that the Project can effectively utilize its experience and influence to assist communities interested in promoting the teaching of the Portuguese in their schools.

While the Portuguese American Citizenship Project is committed to the inclusion of Portuguese in the curricula of U.S. public schools, its Directors understand that local communities have to be the main driving force for such an effort to succeed. Therefore, the Project's role is to support communities that are interested in promoting the teaching of the Portuguese in their schools. The Project is well aware that no effort will be successful without the work and commitment of the local community.

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project stands ready to be a partner with local communities interested having the Portuguese language taught at their local schools.

Dr. Elmano Costa, President

## **Executive Summary**

The main purpose of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project has been and continues to be to encourage Portuguese Americans to participate fully in the civic activities of their communities, become U.S. citizens, register to vote, and vote. During its meeting in November of 2010, the Board of Directors adopted, as an additional focus, the promotion of the inclusion of the Portuguese language in the curricula of U.S. public schools.

Portuguese is the sixth most widely spoken language in the world and is spoken by approximately 230 million people in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America. Yet, the Portuguese language is less common in the curricula of U.S. public schools than other languages with far fewer speakers.

This manual provides specific strategies that community leaders can utilize to advance the inclusion of the Portuguese language in the curricula of their public schools. Following proper protocol is essential to any effort that is likely to succeed. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that organizers begin their efforts with the school principal, followed by approaching the district superintendent and finally the board of education.

Preparation and persistence are essential to a successful effort. Individuals involved in the promotion of the Portuguese language must gather the necessary facts to make it evident to school authorities that it is in the best interest of the school district as well as the community to include Portuguese as part of the school curricula. However, having the necessary facts is not sufficient. The individuals involved in this effort must be persistent to achieve the desired results. If not successful with the school principal and school superintendent, an organized and persistent effort directed at the board of education, including active participation in school board elections, will most likely bring the desired results.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the main purpose of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project is to assist individuals to become American citizens, register to vote, and vote, one may ask why the Project is also focusing its efforts on the promotion of the teaching of Portuguese in U.S. public schools. There are several reasons for this effort.

First, as stated previously, the primary goal of the Project is to encourage Portuguese emigrants and Luso-descendants to exercise their right to have a voice in the decisions that affect their communities. The Board of Directors of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project believes that Portuguese is an important issue for many communities, particularly those with large numbers of Portuguese emigrants and Luso-descendants.

Second, the political system in the United States permits the direct election of school boards/committees, thereby offering unique opportunities for effective campaigns for the promotion of the teaching of Portuguese. Over the years, the Portuguese American Citizenship Project has gained much experience in increasing civic participation. If the inclusion of Portuguese in the curricula of their local schools is important to the community, the Project is uniquely positioned to offer technical support.

Third, in many instances, the decentralized character of the public school system in the United States leads to public schools reflecting the cultural diversity of their communities. Yet, a study conducted by the University of Dartmouth identified several school districts where more than 30% of the population was of Portuguese origin and Portuguese was not included in the school's curricula (Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, 2007). It appears that in these regions, the public schools are not reflecting the uniqueness of their community.

Fourth, Luso American Development Foundation has been a very generous supporter of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. In 2003, the Foundation launched the *Portuguese Language Initiative* and discovered two challenges:

1. The lack of reliable data about the teaching of Portuguese in the United States
2. The difficulty of having a distant organization act directly to promote the teaching of Portuguese in local schools

The Foundation effectively addressed the first challenge. It has gathered data that shows that the teaching of Portuguese is actually more prevalent than previously reported (Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, 2007).

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project is well positioned to assist the Foundation in addressing the second challenge. The Foundation recognizes that rather than acting directly, it must identify and finance projects that have the potential to influence indirectly the schools, the community, and the states in the inclusion of Portuguese in the curriculum of public schools, as stated in the Report of the November 5, 2005 meeting (Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, 2007).

Fifth, one of the challenges facing the education of ethnic minorities is the high drop-out rate of students. Arguably, one reason students drop out is because they do not experience success or are not able to make meaningful connections. For many students of Portuguese descent, having an opportunity to learn Portuguese or participate in a Portuguese club may be the “hook” they need to remain in school.

The Board of Directors of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project understands the challenges involved in promoting the inclusion of Portuguese in the curricula of American public schools. For this initiative to be successful, a united effort that includes different

organizations and Portuguese speakers from the various Portuguese-speaking countries represented in the community is essential. It is also critical that universities lend their support and credibility to this effort. After all, an increase in the teaching of Portuguese in public schools will require universities to prepare the teachers needed to fill this need.

## **WHAT IS THE PORTUGUESE AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP PROJECT?**

On February 1, 1999, as part of its continuing commitment to strengthening the Portuguese American community, the Luso-American Foundation initiated the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. The purpose of the Project was and continues to be to encourage Portuguese Americans to participate fully in civic activities of their communities, become U.S. citizens, register to vote, and vote. The Portuguese American Citizenship Project is non-partisan.

The Project is based on the assumption that community-based organizations are best able to determine the strategies to increase civic participation. These organizations understand the community's needs and can best judge how to mobilize their membership.

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project was funded exclusively by the Luso-American Foundation during its first 10 years. Recognizing the value of the Project to the Portuguese communities of the United States, the Government of the Autonomous Region of the Azores awarded the Project in 2009 a three-year grant. In March 2010, the Direcção-Geral dos Assuntos Consulares e Comunidades Portuguesas, a department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, added its support to this endeavor with a grant.

Portuguese American communities have a long history of fostering citizenship and civic participation. These efforts to promote responsible citizenship are marked by extraordinary personal commitment of concerned volunteers to improve the community. Nonetheless, the separate projects promoting civic participation are notable by the absence of shared strategies. Interaction among interested individuals and organizations within the local community has been limited. Cooperation between communities within a state has been rare. Cooperation among Portuguese American communities in neighboring states has not taken place. Therefore, the Project works diligently to foster collaboration among various individuals and organizations in different communities and states. It is this type of collaboration that the



Project's Board of Directors believes can be a tremendous resource to promote the inclusion of Portuguese language instruction in the curricula of U.S. public schools.

During its 11 years of existence, the Project has worked with 52 cultural, fraternal and religious organizations in 21 communities located in California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island. The Project works with and supports participating organizations by:

- promoting voter registration efforts;
- working with non-profit organizations to prepare and mail voter reminder cards to the organizations' members;
- supporting organizations interested in holding Candidates' Nights; and
- measuring the effectiveness of "get-out-the-vote" campaigns.

The Project has recently made the inclusion of the Portuguese language in the curricula of U.S. public schools one of its main goals. The Portuguese American Citizenship Project can provide guidance and strategies on effective ways to achieve this goal. This manual offers some specific ideas. Additionally, the Project has competent and experienced professionals who are willing to come to your community to offer their support and guidance.

## **SOME SUCCESS STORIES**

This section of the Handbook includes a few examples of communities that have been very effective in starting and maintaining Portuguese at their schools. Their experiences may be helpful to other communities that are interested in promoting of Portuguese at their schools.

### **THE PORTUGUESE PROGRAM AT SAN JOSE HIGH SCHOOL**

San Jose High School Portuguese program was started in the 1970s when language minority communities were asserting themselves at the school district level and taking advantage of the national and state movement towards bilingual education. Dr. Décio Oliveira, then President of the Portuguese Athletic Club of San Jose, and Mr. Joe Mattos, a well-known attorney in the city of San Jose who had great connections in local politics, approached the Superintendent of SJUSD to request that Portuguese be taught at all levels in the district. With an initial reticence of district officials, the pair threatened to sue the district if the language needs of the Portuguese students were not met. The district then changed its position and soon Portuguese bilingual programs were starting at Anne Darling Elementary, Peter Burnett Jr. High and San Jose High School. Teachers were identified and hired, parents were contacted, and the programs soon were implemented. At Burnett Jr. and San Jose High, the Portuguese program had two elements: bilingual program and Portuguese language classes for native speakers.

In 1986, San Jose Unified School District went through a court ordered desegregation plan relative to its Hispanic population. That plan affected especially the three schools mentioned before, since they had a large Spanish-speaking student body. As a result of that plan, San Jose High was officially closed in June and reopened with a new staff and new name, San Jose High Academy (recently the name was changed to its original). As part of its new status, in 1986 San Jose High started to implement the International Baccalaureate Program. That year, the school had three Portuguese classes for native speakers (the bilingual program had ended with the

new school status). The following year, a Portuguese International Baccalaureate class was started, raising the number of classes to four. Since then, the program has gone through several evolutions. As Portuguese immigrant students became very rare, the program became gradually a second language program with five classes.

The courses taught were:

Portuguese 1-2 (first year)

Portuguese 3-4 (second year)

Portuguese Pre IB 5-6 (third year)

Portuguese Pre-IB 7-8 (fourth year)

Portuguese IB 1-2 (third year)

Portuguese IB 3-4 (fourth year)

Since the IB program has two levels of testing (Standard and Higher levels) it was possible to combine the upper level courses, with the SL students testing at the end of one year of the course and the HL students testing at the end of two years. That means that the IB program alternates content every year so that students can take one or two year courses in the same class.

Even though it was considered a second language program, the Portuguese program at San Jose High School was mostly a heritage language program until the new millennium. Most of the students were of Portuguese background (most, second generation Portuguese-Americans), but there was a growing number of non-heritage language students in the program, some of whom took four years of Portuguese and tested in the IB program. With the demographic changes around the school, the Portuguese program had to adapt. The Portuguese community around San Jose High School and Five Wounds Church became older and/or more prosperous. Older households did not have youngsters and wealthier young people preferred to move to more affluent areas, particularly close to the hills of East San Jose. Since the city of San Jose is

composed of many school districts (East Side High School District, for example, comprises most of East San Jose) the children of these Portuguese-Americans lived in other school districts. For some time, many attended San Jose High as inter-district transfers, in order to take advantage of the Portuguese IB program. In part, in order to avoid losing the funds for these students (and others who were transferring for other reasons), East Side decided to create their own IB program and denied transfer to students from their area who wanted to attend San Jose High. Even though East Side was not offering a Portuguese program, the initial denial of transfer students became an obstacle to parents who were not familiar with the system. Because of that, the numbers in the Portuguese program at San Jose High started to decline, to the point that it reached the number of three classes. At this point, the program began a new approach: to continue to attract and maintain Portuguese background students while making a strong effort to bring in a significant number of Hispanic students. This was not easy in the beginning since the Spanish program was vast, offering a great number of second language and native speaker courses. With two thirds of the school population, Hispanic culture has been strongly influential in the school, with Cinco de Mayo activities, Latino Club, folklore group, mariachi band, etc. What the Portuguese program had to offer was a strong academic program focused on the Lusophone countries (but with a stronger concentration on European Portuguese), along with a very strong Portuguese Club with a long tradition in the school. The club has had its folklore group and has been the most active club in the school, with activities such as the Senior Scholarship Dinner, which has raised tens of thousands of dollars that are awarded to seniors every year. Club members were able to attract Hispanic friends who started dancing folklore and participating in other activities. Gradually the numbers of Hispanics in the program grew at a large rate. In June 2008, when the previous Portuguese teacher retired, he was able to leave a program with six classes of about 200 students, more than half of them Hispanic (in a school of about 1,200 students.)

There are a couple of lessons to be learned from the Portuguese program at San Jose High School. One is that, when attempting to start a program, one must know the political realities that he/she is going to face. No two situations are alike. If possible, one must use incisive tactics, maximizing the community resources at hand and using them in the most efficient way possible. In other words, sometimes a surgical operation may be more effective than a large campaign. Sometimes, one may have to use both approaches: building large community support while taking advantage of the "movers and shakers" in the area where one lives to move political mountains of resistance. The other lesson has to do with the adaptability of the program. Like San Jose, any Portuguese program must be willing to analyze carefully its realities and adapt to them, changing with times, always improving, enriching, enlarging the program. In order to survive and thrive, a Portuguese program at the high school level - with competition from other languages on campus - must offer something special, something exciting which will be very visible to all students. The program needs to offer opportunities that other kids will feel that they are missing out by not being involved in the Portuguese language and culture: enriching and enthusiastic classes, a very active Portuguese club, a folklore group, food sales, scholarships, involvement in the Portuguese community, field trips, participation in Summer camps, etc.

**Contact information:**

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### WHY STUDY PORTUGUESE?

Below are a few reasons why an individual may consider studying the Portuguese language.

- ✓ Portuguese is the sixth most widely spoken language in the world, ahead of German (10<sup>th</sup>), French (11<sup>th</sup>) and Italian (15<sup>th</sup>).
- ✓ For anyone who wants to be a part of a global economy, knowledge of Portuguese is a very marketable skill, especially in commerce and banking. Brazil is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world with the 8<sup>th</sup> largest economy. The United States has strong economic ties with Portugal, Brazil, and other Portuguese-speaking countries.
- ✓ Portuguese is spoken by approximately 230 million people all over the world: in Europe (Portugal, Madeira, and Azores), in Africa (Angola, Moçambique, Guiné-Bissau, and São Tomé e Príncipe), in Asia (East Timor, Macau, and Goa) and in South America (Brasil). Additionally, there are over 1.3 million native speakers of Portuguese living in the United States, making Portuguese a commonly spoken language in several areas of the United States.
- ✓ In general, Portuguese speakers understand and can communicate with Spanish speakers.
- ✓ An individual who speaks Portuguese, Spanish, and English is able to communicate with over half of the world's population.
- ✓ Portuguese was designated as a "critical language" in the National Security Act of 2003.

## GETTING STARTED

There are at least three different approaches you can use to promote the inclusion of Portuguese in the curricula of your local school. A brief description of these approaches is provided below:

1. Working with the School Principal – In some cases, the school principal will welcome the opportunity to offer another language at his/her school and all that is needed is a group of individuals who are interested in collaborating/supporting the principal to make this a reality.
2. Working with the Superintendent of Schools – In a few case where the school principal may not be interested, it may be sufficient (although not likely) to work with the district’s superintendent of schools.
3. Working with the School Board/Committee -- If the school principal and the superintendent of schools do not support the inclusion of Portuguese in the curricula of their schools, the final approach is to work with the school board/committee. It is suggested that you begin your efforts with the existing school board/committee. If this approach is not successful, the next step is to take an active role in the election process to assure the election of individuals who are supportive of the inclusion of Portuguese in the curricula of their school.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Whether you are going to meet with your school principal, superintendent of schools, or the school board/committee, there is some critical information you need to get started. The list that follows is not intended to be exhaustive. Individual communities may require additional or different information.

- ✓ Don't try to make this a "one-man/woman show." Make sure you have a strong group of individuals/organizations who are committed to assuring the teaching of Portuguese at your local school. This will give credibility to your efforts and allow you and your group to assign tasks so that no one individual is excessively burdened.
- ✓ Although it is recommended that you do not attempt to conduct a student interest survey at the school before meeting with the school principal, you may be able to determine parent and student interest by conducting an informal survey at a local church(es) and/or organization(s). This will provide you with important information about student interest when you meet with the school principal.
- ✓ Start a media campaign by making yourself or others available for interviews with local television or radio stations and other media outlets that are popular in your community. Consider publishing information in print media that is read by those you want to reach. Your main purpose is to let the community know there is a group of individuals who are trying to start Portuguese at their local school and that a survey will be conducted to determine student interest. Emphasize to the community that it is critical students take the survey and show an interest in taking Portuguese. Additionally, it is also important to ask students to encourage their friends to show an interest in taking Portuguese.
- ✓ Find out about the number of Portuguese-speakers in the community.
- ✓ Develop a fact sheet that includes some good reasons for taking Portuguese (see information provided in this manual).
- ✓ Find out what languages are being taught at school and if possible the student enrollment in each class.



- ✓ Develop a list of teachers who would be qualified and available to teach Portuguese.

### **MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

Ideally, you have been thinking about starting Portuguese at your school for some time and you or someone in your group has been able to establish a positive working relationship with the school principal. Many times school principals are members of service groups in the community. Find out if the principal is a member of such group and consider joining the service group.

After you have gathered the necessary information, schedule a meeting with your school principal. Your goal is to present the advantages of starting Portuguese at his/her school. It is suggested that three individuals meet with the school principal. One individual must be the spokesperson, but the other individuals can add information the spokesperson may overlook. Additionally, these individuals can observe the principal's body language, take notes, and help respond to any objections offered by the school principal. Make sure that any statements made are supported with data and be prepared to answer the principal's questions about finances, student enrollment, finding a teacher, and scheduling classes either during or before/after school.

Below are some additional suggestions for your meeting with the school principal:

- ✓ Be sure to use a positive approach.
- ✓ Be concise and get to the point. School principals are normally very busy and do not appreciate having someone waste their time.
- ✓ State your purpose upfront -- your desire to start Portuguese at his/her school.
- ✓ Request his/her support.
- ✓ Share pertinent information you have gathered.
- ✓ Let the school principal know what kind of support (financial or other) you are able to offer.
- ✓ If possible, offer to fund partially the teacher for the first year.
- ✓ Request permission to administer a language survey in his/her school to determine student interest in studying Portuguese. (*See Appendix A – Language Survey*)

- ✓ Be creative and persistent! Let the school principal know that you understand it may take a year or more to start Portuguese at the school. If Portuguese cannot be taught during school hours, suggest including Portuguese in before/after school programs.
- ✓ If the school principal's initial response is negative, ask what it would take to introduce Portuguese at his/her school. Listen carefully to the objections and develop a plan to address these objections.
- ✓ If your principal's response is negative and you cannot change his/her mind, consider making an appointment with the superintendent of schools.

#### **AFTER THE MEETING**

- ✓ Follow-up with a thank you note to the school principal.
- ✓ Determine the main objections/concerns.
- ✓ Brainstorm with your groups ideas to overcome the principal's objections/concerns.
- ✓ If you come up with additional information, schedule a follow-up meeting with the principal to address his/her objections/concerns.

#### **THINGS NOT TO DO**

- ✓ Do not position the argument so that it appears that only Portuguese-American students would want to learn Portuguese. Stress instead that it is useful to *all* students.
- ✓ Do not come to the meeting with the school principal unprepared or with inaccurate information.
- ✓ Do not be argumentative with the principal, even if he or she is not in immediate agreement with your proposal. Eventually, you will succeed. It just takes time!

### **MEETING WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

If you and your group have exhausted all possibilities with your school principal, consider scheduling a meeting with the superintendent of schools. Expect a challenging meeting because most superintendents of schools will likely follow the recommendation of their principals. If the superintendent of schools does not want to meet with you, be persistent. You may have to let him/her know that if he/she does not meet with you and your group, you will have no alternative but to take your issue directly to the school board/committee. Make sure this is not presented as a threat, but simply as an alternate course of action.

As with the meeting with the school principal, you must support each fact with data, and be prepared to answer the superintendent's questions. Some of the suggestions below are very similar to the suggestions offered for the meeting with the principal.

- ✓ Let the school superintendent know that you have already met with the school principal.
- ✓ Be sure to use a positive approach! Do not make negative comments about the school principal.
- ✓ Be concise and get to the point. Superintendents of schools are normally very busy and do not like having others waste their time.
- ✓ State your purpose upfront -- your desire to start Portuguese in his/her school district.
- ✓ Request his/her support
- ✓ Share pertinent information you have gathered.
- ✓ Let the superintendent of schools know what kind of support (financial or other) you are able to offer.
- ✓ If possible, offer to fund partially the teacher for the first year.
- ✓ Be creative and persistent! Let the superintendent of schools know that you understand that it may take some time to start Portuguese in his/her school district. If it cannot be taught during school hours, suggest introducing Portuguese in before/after-school

programs.

- ✓ If the superintendent of schools' initial response is negative, ask what it would take to change his/her mind.
- ✓ If the superintendent of schools' response is negative and you cannot change his/her mind, let him/her know that you plan to approach the school board/committee. This must be presented not as threat, but simply as information that he/she should have. School administrators do not like to be blindsided.
- ✓ Follow-up with a thank you note.

### **APPROACHING THE SCHOOL BOARD/COMMITTEE**

If you and your group have not been successful in convincing the school principal and/or the school superintendent to have Portuguese taught at their school, your next step is to contact the school board/committee. There is not one right way of doing this. Much depends on the board/school committee members and on your relationship or lack of with them. Ideally, you have established some contact/relationship with one or more members, whom you can approach on an informal basis, explain your goal and determine the member's reaction and even his/her understanding of other board/school committee members' position on this issue. If the board/school committee member believes you may be successful in convincing the board of education/school committee that Portuguese should be offered at the district schools, your next step is to contact the District Office, ask for the Office of the Superintendent of Schools and request to be placed on the next board/school committee agenda. Normally, the district will have a form that you will have to complete to inform the individual responsible for developing the agenda about your topic. Find out how much time you are allocated and prepare a presentation accordingly. You may want to include the following information in your presentation:

- ✓ Your purpose
- ✓ Reasons for studying Portuguese
- ✓ Number of Portuguese-speakers in the community
- ✓ Although you will likely not have yet conducted a Student Language Survey at the school, include information you may have already gathered about student interest in taking Portuguese
- ✓ If you and your group are prepared to offer financial support, include this information in your presentation
- ✓ Be positive
- ✓ Be prepared to respond to questions
- ✓ Thank the board/school committee for its consideration

- ✓ The board/school committee will not take action on your proposal, but will likely take it into consideration and instruct the superintendent of schools to respond to your request
- ✓ Follow-up with a thank you note to the board/school committee president

### **WORKING WITH SCHOOL BOARD/COMMITTEE CANDIDATES**

If you are not successful in convincing the school board/committee to implement your proposal, your next step is to conduct a political campaign. Below are some suggestions. Again, there is not one right way to do this and much depends on the individual community.

- ✓ Work with other organizations in your community and schedule a Candidates' Night for the school board/committee candidates. The Portuguese American Citizenship Project has a kit on how to conduct a Candidates' Night.
- ✓ During the Candidates' Night, ask questions that force the candidates to state their positions about teaching Portuguese at their schools. One such question might be, *"Considering that Portuguese is the sixth most spoken language in the world and considering that our area has a large Portuguese-American community, what is your position on offering Portuguese at the district schools? How would you go about developing a plan to make it a reality?"*
- ✓ Utilizing the local media let the community know the candidates' position on this issue.
- ✓ Once the candidates are elected, follow up with them about their position/promises.
- ✓ This process may take several years, but in the end it is likely to succeed.



## OTHER HELPFUL STEPS

### SEEK THE SUPPORT OF YOUR PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a powerful volunteer organization that can play an important role in helping you start Portuguese at your local school. Usually, the PTA holds general meetings several times a year, but of even greater importance is the influential PTA Executive Board, which determines the priorities and goals for the PTA.

All parents are welcome to attend the PTA Executive Board meetings. If a parent has an item of business or expenditure that he or she wishes to have discussed, the usual procedure is to call one of the PTA officers -- President, Vice-President or Secretary and ask to have the item placed on the next meeting's agenda. The individual initiating the agenda item will be expected to attend the meeting and explain the item to the entire board. Below are some steps to follow as you approach the PTA's Executive Board:

- ✓ Call the school's main office or consult the school directory for the name and telephone number of the PTA President, Vice-President, or Secretary.
- ✓ Contact the individual by telephone (if possible, meet with him or her in person) to place your item on the next PTA Executive Board's meeting's agenda.
- ✓ Prepare a presentation that includes some of the information listed below:
  - ✓ Your purpose
  - ✓ Reasons for studying Portuguese
  - ✓ Number of Portuguese-speakers in the community
  - ✓ Although you will likely not have yet conducted a Student Language Survey at the school, include information you may have already gathered about student interest in taking Portuguese
  - ✓ Thank the PTA Executive Board for allowing you to make a presentation to them
  - ✓ Ask for their support

- ✓ Follow-up with a thank you note to the PTA Executive Board President

### **SEEK THE SUPPORT OF OTHER STAFF MEMBERS**

Each school has staff members who are quite influential in determining the direction of the school and what programs are included in the curriculum. Therefore, it is important to determine who those individuals are and find ways to provide them with information that may help you and your group succeed in starting Portuguese at your school. Here are some suggestions:

- ✓ Find out who the key staff members are at your school
- ✓ Find out if these staff members are interested in starting Portuguese at their school
  - ✓ A good place to start is to find out if your school includes staff members who are from a Portuguese-speaking background
- ✓ Ask to meet with these staff members
- ✓ Provide them with some of the same information you have prepared for the school principal and/or superintendent.
- ✓ Find out if they are willing to be supportive
- ✓ Ask for their advice and support
- ✓ Follow-up with a thank you note

### **HOW TO APPROACH YOUR LOCAL MEDIA**

Getting your message to the local media could be helpful in at least two different ways. First, it is a great way to get the attention of your school board/committee and school administrators. School districts, like other organizations, like positive stories. Therefore, it is important for you and your group to do everything possible to make sure the school district is viewed in a positive note. If this approach does not work, then you may have to take a more aggressive approach.

The second way in which approaching the local media may be helpful to your cause is that you must let the community, particularly the parents, know what you are trying to do. Therefore, when you administer the Student Language Survey to determine student interest in taking Portuguese, parents have heard about the efforts to start Portuguese at the local school and are encouraging their children to respond positively. Additionally, your campaign should also encourage students to persuade some of their friends to want to learn Portuguese. Below are some specific suggestions for your media campaign:

- ✓ Decide which media outlets will be most effective in carrying your message. You definitely want to approach radio and T.V. stations that have Portuguese language programs and are listened to in your community. Do not overlook the print media.
- ✓ Contact the appropriate media and offer to be interviewed or write articles to be published.
- ✓ Find out if they will broadcast a Public Service Announcement (PSA). If so, prepare PSAs to be broadcast by local media.
- ✓ Repeat your message in as many different ways as possible as many different times as possible! Doing it once will not work!

## FUNDING

Numbers, numbers, numbers... To survive economically, schools must have a certain number of students in each class. Therefore, if you want your school to offer Portuguese, you have to make sure there are enough students interested in enrolling in the classes. In most cases, the number of students required per class is somewhere between 25 and 30 students. If you can show the school principal that you have a significant number of students who are committed to taking Portuguese, you have won half of the battle.

There are various opportunities for the community to show its support for the teaching of Portuguese at their school. Below are a few suggestions:

- ✓ Contact Portuguese organizations in the community and ask them to donate funds to pay for part of the teacher's salary.
- ✓ Conduct fundraising activities to provide funds to purchase Portuguese materials.
- ✓ Investigate the possibility of grants to support the teaching of Portuguese.
- ✓ Consider asking Portuguese-American clubs and organizations to adopt a local school, and make their members available as tutors, mentors, or guest speakers.

Although the above may not seem like much, it demonstrates to the school officials that the community is serious about its support for the teaching of Portuguese at their local schools.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

As we conclude this manual, it is critical to emphasize the importance of persistence. Although the process described previously may not yield the desired results every time, it is much more likely to succeed when the individuals promoting the inclusion of Portuguese in the school curricula are persistent. School officials are very busy individuals and have a myriad of challenges facing them every day. Starting a new program brings new challenges and more work. Therefore, even well-intentioned school officials are likely to put such an item on the “To Do List,” but not get to it. Therefore, it is critical that the individuals promoting this cause not give up and follow-up regularly. It is a fine balance between being persistent and being a “pest.” As an example, if a school official says, we will consider it and get back to you. It is important to ask, “When can we expect you to get back to us?” As soon as you have a specific date, make sure to follow-up soon after that date. This sends a clear message to the individual that you will not give up on the issue.

**BOA SORTE!**

## REFERENCES

Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento (2007). *Promoção da Língua Portuguesa no Mundo*. Retrieved February 2011, from <http://www.flad.pt/documentos/1216226048S9qMG0he4Yh87DC6.pdf>

**APPENDIX A**  
**STUDENT SURVEY**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you aware that you must study a foreign language in high school and college?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What languages are you currently or have you studied in the past? Please list them below:

\_\_\_\_\_

If your school taught Portuguese, would you take it?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If Portuguese were not offered during school hours, would you

Come to school early to learn it? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Stay after school to learn it? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to learn Portuguese because:

(Circle as many answers as you wish.)

- A. I am of Portuguese descent
- B. I want to visit a Portuguese-speaking country someday
- C. Portuguese is necessary for my future studies
- D. Portuguese will help me in my career
- E. I am interested in Portuguese culture
- E. Other \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX B**  
**SAMPLE COVER LETTER INSTRUCTIONS**

INCLUDE THE SAMPLE LETTER (APPENDIX C) WITH THE LANGUAGE SURVEY

After obtaining permission from your school principal, include the Sample Letter (Appendix C) with the Student Language Survey. Your school principal should provide you guidance on the best way to survey all the students. Usually, it is best to distribute the survey during the “home room,” which in most cases is the first period of the day. Make arrangements with the principal or the teachers to pick up the surveys at the school.

**APPENDIX C**  
**SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (Teacher's name):

There is strong interest in the community to have Portuguese offered at \_\_\_\_\_ School. I have met with Principal \_\_\_\_\_ and he/she has given permission to have students complete the attached survey to determine student interest. The survey is short and should not take more than five (5) minutes to administer.

If this survey reveals a strong student interest in learning Portuguese, we will work with the school to develop a plan to include Portuguese as one of the languages offered to students.

Once the surveys are completed, please place them in the large envelope provided and return them to the front office, where I will pick them up.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. My telephone number is: \_\_\_\_\_ and my e-mail address is \_\_\_\_\_.

I appreciate your assistance with this project. The results of the survey will provide important information that may provide additional opportunities for your students.

Sincerely,

Your name and contact information