



## High School language lab opens thanks to CEF

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Cohasset — In November, the Cohasset Education Foundation announced their biggest project yet: funding two new language labs at the Middle-High School.

Flash forward six months later and foreign language students are now experiencing the seemingly endless digital capabilities of the new language lab. A second language lab for the middle school is in the final stages of fundraising; \$40,000 more is needed to reach the \$220,000 fundraising goal.

"An extraordinary show of support from the community has gotten us this far," Mary McGoldrick, CEF Vice President, said. The goal is to have the middle school lab installed and operational by September.

The CEF is a non-profit dedicated to raising funds to support the Cohasset Public Schools. This is the first time in CEF history where the organization has agreed to raise money for a specific project and part of the reason is the significant cost.

This week, the students and teachers were still getting a feel for the new lab. In a class on Tuesday morning, students were wearing headsets as they listened to current popular Spanish music and filling in the missing words on an accompanying worksheet.

The introduction of more multi-media components is just one of the many advantages of the new language lab, teachers said this week. In a later class, Spanish teacher Peg Jordan put a video of something that can only be appropriately described through video — La Tomatina in Valencia, Spain. Thousands come to participate in a giant food fight involving thousands of pound of tomatoes.

"We can use the lab for more than just speaking and listening. It can be a window into another culture," said Beth Marat, a Spanish and French teacher at the high school.

The language lab, which is currently being shared between the high school and the middle school students, is light years ahead of what it replaced. The old lab, which was built with funds from the CEF 16 years ago, still used cassette tapes.

"There are 30 stations now and they all work," Marat said. Right now, the language teacher split up their 90-minute blocks to allow equal opportunity for all the classes. The teachers said the increased time in the language lab should yield a more well-rounded foreign language student.

"It's going to improve listening, speaking and comprehension dramatically. The students are going to have a lot more time in the labs than they ever had before," Marat said.

The lab opens up more opportunity for conversation between students, to interact with native speakers through software programs, or even Skype (video phone conversations) with international friends.

Teachers can place students in small groups to have conversations and then listen in. The conversations can even be recorded and reviewed digitally with teacher comments. Different groups can work on different projects.

Students can also review the material or exercise at their own pace. They can play an audio recording back several times to gain understanding, whereas before that capability was not there.

"It allows for more differentiated instruction," Marat said. "Students can go back over it, break it down and understand it."

McGoldrick said one of the key considerations before the CEF agrees to fund a project is how many students will it impact.

"With this project we are affecting every student at the middle-high school," McGoldrick said.

During the 2008-2009 school year the foreign language program was expanded to the sixth grade. At the high school graduation requirements call for three semesters of foreign language.

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