

[News](#) | [Schools](#)

High Tech Language Learning at Somerville High School

The school's new language lab features slick Apple computers and lets teachers monitor the progress of individual students.

Posted by [Chris Orchard](#) (Editor) , October 21, 2013 at 05:30 AM

[Comment](#)[Recommend](#)[Like](#)

11

[Tweet](#)

10



Somerville High School's new language lab lets students work individually or as groups. Credit: Chris Orchard

This isn't your father's language lab.

Beginning this school year, the approximately 750 Somerville High School students who study Mandarin, Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese have been taking lessons in a state-of-the-art interactive learning lab with slick Apple-computer work stations.

Created by [Swift Education Systems](#) out of Chicago, Somerville is one of only four public high school districts in the state to use the new language learning technology, according to Jim Nocito, supervisor for world languages at Somerville Public Schools. The other districts are Sharon, Lexington and Newton South, he said.

The new language lab lets students watch videos, have conversations with each other, interact with online material, record their voices, study for exams and do computer-based homework, among other things. It also lets teachers monitor how each student is progressing as an individual.

"This is very high tech," Nocito said.

During a recent visit to a Spanish 4 honors class, the highest level of Spanish at the high school, students listened to a conversation between native speakers about the Spanish national anthem, how lyrics associated with the dictatorship of Francisco Franco had been dropped, and what that meant for Spanish people. The lesson was from an online podcast produced by [Notes in Spanish](#).

Students answered questions about the conversation and made recordings of their responses.

During a recent Mandarin lesson, the teacher was able to show students a concert in Mandarin, streamed live over the Internet, Nocito said.

Susan Olsen, the Spanish 4 honors teacher, said, "This lab has increased student motivation to speak in the target language dramatically."

"Speaking is very hard to assess individually," she said about teaching second languages in a classroom, and the lab helps get students speaking.

Or, as 16-year-old Andrea Batista said, "I love it, oh my gosh it's so much fun. I actually enjoy using it."

The lab, including the computers, software and hardware, cost \$53,000, Nocito said.

John Oteri, headmaster of Somerville High School, said the lab "opens up a world of language options for our kids."

It will also help Somerville High School establish AP programs in Spanish, French and Italian. AP examinations have speaking and listening sections, so a language lab is a key tool for those studying for the test. Nocito said he's hoping to institute AP language curriculums within three years.

"Being bilingual as well as bi-cultural is a tremendous asset in today's global economy," he said.

Said Oteri, "I'm confident because of this lab we'll get more kids taking foreign language."

Comments

[+ Leave a Comment](#)

Leave a comment

Post comment

Find your Patch

Start a Blog

Somerville Patch Editor

Chris Orchard

chris.orchard@patch.com

Home

News

Blogs

Conversations

Events

Real Estate

Buy/Sell/Trade

Weekender

Business Listings

Connect with Patch

[Get the Patch Newsletter](#)

[Follow us on Twitter](#)

[Like us on Facebook](#)

Post Something

[Post on the Boards](#)

[Post an Event](#)

[Write a Review](#)

[Start a Blog](#)

Patch Info

[Your Account](#)

[Help](#)

[About Patch](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Advertise with Us!](#)

Copyright ©2013 Patch. All rights reserved.