

BRIGHTON — Muscogee Creek is now recognized by the Florida Department of Education and fulfills the high school requirement as a foreign language for Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School students in Brighton.

In July, the school requested the language be added to the Florida Course Code Directory (CCD), the state's list of approved courses, so students could earn foreign language credit toward high school graduation and college admission. The Florida Department of Education approved the request Oct. 24.

"The students already think learning their language is very important," said PECS principal Brian Greseth. "Allowing them to earn high school credit will encourage them to take the Creek language classes even more seriously."

PECS began language classes for all students about two years ago. Daily culture classes include at least 30 minutes of Creek language instruction, and the rest of the 75-minute class includes conversational use of the language.

"The state is recognizing our language with all other languages," said Jade Braswell Osceola, PECS Creek teacher. "It's a chance for kids to go to any college in the state. They aren't limited, which is what we want."

According to state statute, two credits of foreign language instruction at the secondary level are required for admission to Florida state colleges and universities. Creek 1 and Creek 2, which are included in the CCD as foreign language credits along with Spanish, French, German, Italian and Mandarin Chinese, fulfill that requirement.

PECS' charter mission is to develop students' abilities in Creek language and Seminole culture. Creek is woven through the culture curriculum, including Florida Seminole history and arts and crafts classes. The language is used in daily morning announcements, and each week a common phrase, such as "are you hungry" or "how are you feeling today," is used throughout the school.

PECS offers Creek classes to academic teachers and aides, who then use Creek commands in the classroom.

Muscogee Creek is spoken by about 5,000 people, a majority of whom live in Oklahoma.

About 200 people speak Creek in Florida.

In PECS' request for recognition of Creek as a foreign language, the application noted that because no Muscogee Creek course exists in the CCD, the need to develop a new course code is both critical and urgent.

A letter from Chairman James E. Billie urging the state to approve the language course was sent with the school's application.

He wrote: "As a parent of a student at the school I have witnessed the importance of language acquisition in the educational development of students attending the Charter School."

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