



The Polish Mission

Of The Orchard Lake Schools

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The Polish Mission establishes nation's first standardized Polish language test

Orchard Lake, MI -- The Polish Mission of the Orchard Lake Schools (TPM) has entered into an agreement with Avant Assessments LLC to establish and distribute a Polish language proficiency exam. The program was generously supported by the Polish Consulate in Chicago, the Polish Teachers' Association, and other organizations and individuals.

The test is a formal measure of language proficiency, allowing Polish language students to be formally recognized for their bi-literacy, in cooperation with the *Seal of Biliteracy*. The test will also give employers a means to expand and develop business ties with Poland.

"Polish is one of Europe's great languages, and Polish Americans are the fifth largest ancestry group that built America. Why wouldn't their kids have the opportunity to take Polish exams and earn credit for them at American schools?" said Konrad Zieliński, Vice Consul at the Polish Consulate in Chicago, who originally introduced the idea to the staff of The Polish Mission.

The test is a STAMP (**ST**A**nd**ards-based **M**easurement of **P**roficiency) format, designed for grade 7-to-adult speakers. Currently, STAMP tests are offered in 11 languages, and utilized around the world by schools, colleges and universities.

According to TPM Polish Language Coordinator Marzanna Owinski, "Even though there are some 9.5 million Polish-Americans, Polish speakers in the United States have never been acknowledged for language proficiency in their own schools, nor even by national language organizations." She continued: "It was quite surprising to learn there was no such test offered by any American test developers!" Owinski is a member of a Michigan Department of Education workgroup in Lansing assigned with implementation of the *Seal of Biliteracy* to Michigan schools, and teaches the only high-school Polish language program in Michigan at St. Mary's Preparatory.

Although the test will be offered across the country, it is expected that the three states with the largest Polish-American populations, New York, Illinois, and Michigan, will see the most usage. Each state has just under a million citizens of Polish descent, and there are about 30,000 students learning Polish in the U.S.

According to TPM Director Marcin Chumiecki, "We are proud to have undertaken this--it is a symbol of the vibrancy of Polish culture and heritage in the U.S., and it is part of the mission of our founder that goes all the way back to 1885." Fr. Józef Dąbrowski (1842-1903) founded the Orchard Lake Schools with a Catholic Seminary in Detroit in 1885. Still in operation today, the seminary was the first institute of formal higher education for Polish speakers in the U.S. Chumiecki continued: "The mission of our founder is alive and well; we do this in his honor, and in honor of all Polish-Americans across our great country. And, there is a special reason we do it on September 1st: It's the official first day of school in Poland. There was no better time to announce such a program." The exam will be ready in Spring 2018.

Please visit www.polishmission.com for more information

About the Polish Mission: The purpose of The Polish Mission of the Orchard Lake Schools, which were founded in 1885 by Polish immigrants, is to preserve and promote Polish and Polish-American culture, tradition, and history for present and future generations. The Polish Mission organizes programs, courses and events that highlight Polish and Polish-American culture and accomplishments, and ensures a repository for artifacts, archival materials, works of art, and publications. For more information, please visit www.polishmission.com