



Why Learn a World Language?

Government and Business Perspectives

"Americans have been the world's most successful students and entrepreneurs for the past century. We have to envision a new set of global skills that include *understanding world languages and cultures* to retain our edge in an increasingly interconnected economy." (Gaston Caperton, President, College Board)

"The most important thing that schools can do is to make people aware that *understanding the world* is very much part of the requirement of being an educated person. There should be some shame attached to not being more aware of the world, not having some *mastery of foreign language*." (Fareed Zakaria, Editor, *Newsweek*)

"Study of a foreign language introduces students to non-English-speaking cultures, heightens awareness and comprehension of one's native tongue, and serves the nation's needs in commerce, diplomacy, defense, and education." (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)

"The U.S. government has a shortage of employees with foreign language skills – such as Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Russian, Farsi, and Pashto – that are critical to the government's ability to operate effectively in today's global environment." (Partnership for Public Service, May 2006)

"It is not only for reasons of national security that we must learn more about countries and cultures other than our own," said Brademus (John Brademus, former U.S. congressman from Indiana and president emeritus of New York University) at a press briefing. "Such knowledge is also indispensable to America's economic strength and competitive position in the world. The marketplace has now become global." (ASCD Educational Update, May 2006)

Education Perspectives

In "Foreign Language Study and SAT-Verbal Scores," the authors found that learners who study a foreign language improve their scores on the verbal sections of the standardized exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) and that scores continue to climb with each additional year of language study. (College Entrance Examination Board, 1992)

"The Partnership has identified six key elements of 21st Century Learning: Core Subjects, identified by NCLB as English, reading or language arts; mathematics, science; foreign languages; civics; government; economics; arts; history; and geography. (Results That Matter, 21st Century Skills and High School Reform, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, March 2006)

Why World Language Education at the Elementary Level?

"Ideally, the age for beginning the learning of a second language is at birth. But when considering language learning in relation to schooling, the optimum age for beginning the continuous learning of a second language seems to fall within the span of ages four through eight...In this span of ages, the brain apparently has the greatest placticity and specialized capacity for acquiring speech. This capacity includes the ability to mimic properly all the speech sounds, intonations, and stresses and learn readily all language patterns." (Donoghue, 1968)

"One of the most important factors influencing the development of language proficiency is the amount of time spent in working with the language. When language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness." (Curtain and Dahlberg, 2004)

"Third graders who were taught Spanish for thirty minutes three times per week showed statistically significant gains on their Metropolitan Achievement Test scores on the areas of math and language after only one semester of study." (Armstrong and Rogers, 1997)