

Why your Child Should Study Foreign Languages

Language is at the core of human existence. Through language we express the hopes and dreams we hold for our families, our state and our nation. The ability to communicate in a second language enables us to know the hopes, dreams and visions of others around the world. The study of foreign languages prepares today's youth for tomorrow's opportunities by supporting basic skills instruction, developing cross cultural understanding and preparing our youth to enter the global marketplace. Sequential foreign language study yields many benefits:

Listening Skills: Foreign language study has been shown to enhance listening skills and memory, contributing a significant additional dimension to the concept of communication.

Reading Skills: In the area of language arts, students of second languages are thought to improve their reading comprehension in the native language and also score higher in reading achievement.

Higher Scores: During the past several years, data from the Admissions Testing Program of the College Board definitely shows a positive correlation between SAT scores and the study of foreign languages:

- Each year of study correlates to increasingly higher scores. No other subject area, when isolated, produced these results.
- English and mathematics performance levels of students who have studied a foreign language in high school are higher than those of students who have not.
- Detailed studies also suggest that the mental processing skills required to do mathematics problems are also developed by language processing, and vice versa.

Cultural Pluralism: Children who have studied a foreign language develop a sense of cultural pluralism, openness to and appreciation of other cultures.

Career Development: The Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks (1996) states that learning a foreign language provides a competitive edge in career choices in today's and tomorrow's world. This is substantiated by employers in New York State who, when interviewed by the New York State Department of Labor, expressed a desire for workers who can communicate in a second language.

Global Economy: The global economy is a fact of life in the 21st century. Some pertinent figures are listed below:

- One out of every six production jobs in the U.S. depends on foreign trade.
- One half of the top profit making companies on Fortune Magazines "500" list are foreign owned.
- Four out of five new jobs in the U.S. are created as a result of foreign trade.
- Twenty million foreigners travel annually to the U.S. and spend \$8 billion. They spend nearly \$1 billion in New York City alone.

The preceding information was obtained from a bulletin circulated by the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers. It was developed by the North Carolina State Education Department.

Suggestions for Parents to Support Second Language Learning

1. Inform yourself. Become knowledgeable about the program
2. Be supportive at all times. Your child's success in the program will be affected by your attitude.
3. Encourage your child to speak the Second Language at home if he/she wants to, but do not force him/her to do so.
4. Be supportive of the program and the teacher. Try to keep the lines of communication open.
5. Try to take advantage of situations that increase our child's exposure to the language and its culture.
6. Encourage your child to read in the second language.
7. Encourage your child to watch television programs and listen to radio programs in the Second Language.
8. Show your child how pleased you are with his/her progress. Be proud of our child's achievement.
9. Emphasize your child's successes.
10. Try to attend cultural events with your child.

The preceding was printed in a NYSAFL T bulletin and was obtained from the River East School Division, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

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