

## DID YOU KNOW...?

- Less than 9% of the world's population speaks English as a first language (The journal *Science*, February 2004).
- More than 20 million students in Japan study English while less than 51 thousand high school students in the US study Japanese (Digest of Education Statistics, 2002).
- 60% of all English words (90% of those two syllables or more) and 80% of Spanish words come from Latin. (Committee for the Promotion of Latin)
- 85% of the public feels that the ability to speak another language is very or somewhat important to competing successfully in a global economy (American Council on Education, 2001).
- South Carolina exported goods to 188 nations in 2003, generating more than \$11.8 billion for South Carolina's economy (South Carolina Department of Commerce).
- Over 39 languages other than English are spoken by residents of our state, according to the most recent census results ([www.mla.org/census\\_main](http://www.mla.org/census_main)).
- South Carolina has the second highest percentage of citizens working for internationally owned companies, second only to Hawaii (South Carolina Department of Commerce).
- More than 25% of international companies operating in our state are based in Germany (South Carolina Department of Commerce).



## Business Leaders say...

"Understanding foreign cultures and languages puts you in a position of prompt decision making when representing a company, and whether you sell services or goods, your market is bigger when you can transact in and outside of the U.S."

Martin Bjontegard, Cost and Contract Manager  
Faithful and Gould Worldwide Consultants

"Studying a second language is a prerequisite to working effectively in business. As manufacturing becomes more interconnected, language skills are critical in being able to understand, communicate, and get ideas across effectively. I would even say that language skills trump technical skills in this area."

Pat Browne, Technical Specialist  
Ciba Specialty Chemicals

"Without knowledge of German, I would be completely disadvantaged in working with clients like BMW and Bosch. I can't express enough how important it is to young Americans, particularly South Carolinians, to start early with the foreign language experience."

Sam Moses, Director  
State of South Carolina European Office

"As the world continues to "shrink" through communications and access, the need for knowing other languages is essential. As a business professional, if I didn't know the native language of the countries in which I do business, the opportunities for me to succeed would surely be limited. I cannot emphasize the impression it makes to communicate with a foreign business partner in his or her native language."

Amy Thomson, International Trade Manager  
South Carolina Department of Commerce



For more information about world language instruction in South Carolina, visit the **South Carolina Foreign Language Teachers' Association** Web site:

[www.scflta.org](http://www.scflta.org)

# WORLD LANGUAGES: EVERY CHILD'S PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE



How knowledge of other languages  
benefits children in our community



Presented by the South Carolina Foreign  
Language Teachers' Association

## I have an elementary-aged child. What do I need to know?

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According to Dr. Susan Curtiss, Professor of Linguistics at UCLA, "...the power to learn language is so great in the young child that it doesn't seem to matter how many languages you seem to throw their way...They can learn as many spoken languages as you can allow them to hear systematically and regularly at the same time. Children just have this capacity. Their brain is just ripe to do this...there doesn't seem to be any detriment to...develop(ing) several languages at the same time" (*Learning Languages*, Winter 1996)

In light of that information, beginning language instruction in the elementary school can benefit students in a variety of ways. Children who begin studying other languages in elementary school

- develop creative inquiry and critical thinking skills (Curtain and Pesola, 1994).
- are more creative and better at solving complex problems (Cummins, 1992).
- show improvement in the verbal and non-verbal skills that enhance overall school performance (Brown University, 2000).
- are more likely to develop native-like pronunciation (Strozer, 1994).
- gain an enriched cultural understanding and a broader perspective of the world (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004).
- take advantage of their brain's natural ability to learn languages "before age 10" (Begley, 1996).
- create a stable foundation on which to build further skills in their native and second language (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004).

## What about languages and middle school students?

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You wouldn't expect a student to be "proficient" in playing the piano after only two years of lessons and students with only two years of language instruction are like musicians in that they are still "basic" learners. Since learning a language takes time, beginning language study during elementary or middle school and continuing all the way through high school just makes sense!

Studying languages in middle school prepares a student to

- function in a multicultural society.
- adapt to the influx of non-English speaking groups.
- interact and work with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- achieve higher proficiency than by limiting their study of a foreign language to only the high school years.
- earn high school credit while still in middle school in some cases.
- develop some degree of language proficiency prior to entering high school, possibly affording them the opportunity to begin learning a third language prior to graduation.



## How do languages help students in high school and beyond?

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In addition to "looking good on a high school transcript", studying a foreign language during high school has many benefits to students. Children who know more than one language

- have high cognitive and academic skills (Armstrong & Rogers, 1997)
- achieve higher scores in all subject areas tested (The College Board, 2002)
- gain a competitive advantage in career opportunities (Carriera & Armengol, 2001)

Studying foreign language in high school and beyond is not just for students seeking positions requiring a college degree.

Everyone entering the workforce needs knowledge of other languages because

- one out of every six production jobs in the U.S. depends on foreign trade.
- four out of five new jobs in the United States are created as a result of foreign trade.
- in South Carolina alone, there are over 500 internationally-based businesses employing more than 85,000 people. Germany, Japan, France and Switzerland have the largest number of firms operating in the Palmetto State ([www.teamsc.com](http://www.teamsc.com)).
- knowledge of other languages and cultures ensures that Palmetto State businesses can earn confidence and develop relationships with foreign markets (FLANC Conference 2002).
- each year 200,000 Americans lose out on jobs with business because they do not know another language (*The Tongue Tied American*).