

# Give your child the world: World Languages in Early Childhood and Elementary Education



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**NELL**



# LANGUAGE

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“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” -- Nelson Mandela

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible.” -- Mahatma Gandhi



# Why study a language????

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- Cultural understanding
  - Advanced Communication Skills
  - Problem solving enhancement
  - Academic achievement
  - Augmented Career Opportunities
  - Competitive Advantage
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- Personal Fulfillment
  - Greater Contribution as a Global and U.S. Citizen

# Common Misconceptions

- Although many parents believe that bilingualism results in language delay, research suggests that monolingual and bilingual children meet major language developmental milestones at similar times.
- Despite many parents' fear that using two languages will result in confusion for their children, there is no research evidence to support this. On the contrary, use of two languages in the same conversation has been found to be a sign of mastery of both languages.



Source: Kendall King and Lyn Fogle, Georgetown University, Raising Bilingual Children: Common Parental Concerns and Current Research. 2006

# Language learning...

- Parents can expect their bilingual children to gain specific advantages in targeted areas, such as greater understanding of language as an abstract system.
- Many parents rely heavily on television to teach the second language; yet this is best considered a fun source of secondary support for language learning. Human interaction is the best method for fostering language learning.



Source: Kendall King and Lyn Fogle, Georgetown University, Raising Bilingual Children: Common Parental Concerns and Current Research. 2006

# Why should language learning be an essential part of your child's early education?

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Human language is a remarkable way to communicate. No other form of communication in the natural world transfers so much information in such a short period of time. Dr. Bruce Perry



# When?

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Puberty may be the time of many new beginnings - independence, physical changes, social experimentation - but it also marks the end of a child's window of opportunity for easily acquiring additional languages.

2003 LINDA FOUST, PARENTS' PRESS



NNELL believes that all elementary school students should have access to high quality, ongoing and systematic world language instruction. Research indicates:

- The period of early childhood is considered an optimal time to begin learning a second language, as the methods and materials used in early childhood classes are multi-modal and may facilitate second language acquisition and learning (Bialystok, & Hakuta, 1994).
- Children in effective early second language programs show overall gains on standardized tests of basic skills, and derive additional cognitive, social, and affective benefits (Taylor-Ward, 2003).
- The integration of content and language learning and the development of positive attitudes towards people who speak other languages occur more easily when long, articulated sequences of second language instruction begin in early childhood and become an integral part of school learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2005).
- Early second language learning may result in improved phonological and phonemic awareness, two building blocks of literacy in one's native language (Bialystok, 2001).



# The Critical Period is Essential

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Almost invariably, growth and development has what's called a critical period. There's a particular period of maturation in which, with external stimulation of the appropriate kind, the capacity will pretty suddenly develop and mature. Before that and later than that, it's either harder or impossible.

Noam Chomsky, 2005



# WORLD LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Students participating in a world language program in the elementary schools have shown improvement in:

- ❖ **Pronunciation in the first and second languages**
- ❖ **Higher scores on standardized assessments**
- ❖ **Listening skills**
- ❖ **Basic skills—reading, writing, speaking and comprehension**
- ❖ **Cognitive development**
- ❖ **Multi-cultural understanding**
- ❖ **Self-concept**



# Program Models

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There are three major types of language study programs in primary schools.

- **FLES**
- **FLEX**
- **Immersion**



# FLES – Foreign Language in the Elementary School

**FLES is what comes to mind when you think of a traditional language class. Sometimes called "sequential," this method treats the foreign language as a separate subject, like math or reading, and meets for class from two to five days a week. Explanations may be in English, but the students hear, speak, and read the target language. Proficiency obviously depends to some extent on the frequency of classes, the opportunity to practice, and the teacher.**



# FLEX – Foreign Language Exploratory Program

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**FLEX teaches language and its accompanying culture as a concept. Rather than trying to produce proficiency, the teacher emphasizes the nature of language, and he or she may explore one or more languages as examples. You shouldn't expect a child in a FLEX situation to become fluent, but the program can provide a basis for later learning and for appreciating other cultures.**



# Immersion Programs

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**There are three kinds of Immersion programs: Partial, Dual, and Full.**

**Immersion produces the highest degree of second-language proficiency. All forms of immersion aim for “functional proficiency” in the target language. Students master content in the target language and learn to appreciate other cultures.**



# What is the status of foreign language instruction in our schools?

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**Fewer elementary schools** are teaching foreign languages than a decade ago: 25% vs. 31% of all elementary schools. This decline in language teaching has occurred mainly in public elementary schools; the percentage of private schools teaching languages has remained about the same. The number of **middle schools** offering languages has also decreased (58% vs. 75%).



Center for Applied Linguistics  
National K-12 Foreign Language Survey

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Why is it so important to include language learning in your child's early education and continue this learning towards bilingualism?



# What can we do as parents?

With the current K-8 mandate, New Jersey students are beginning to reach higher levels of proficiency-levels that they will need to compete on a world stage. It is imperative that we continue to establish and maintain world languages programs that provide long sequences of study with adequate time and intensity.

Urge the State Board of Education to ensure that New Jersey students graduate with the ability to function at a basic level in a language other than English and that they have interpersonal skills to interact appropriately with people of different cultures. This involves staffing programs with highly qualified language specialists who have the proficiency and deep cultural understanding to impart to students.

This is our opportunity to send the message that world languages are important, that elementary programs are needed, that the status quo is insufficient. NJ students deserve and require these 21st century skills.



Rosanne Zeppieri, President  
Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey

# As parents you can...

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- Be active
- Be aware
- Be advocates for your children's educational future

...and you will be amazed by the results!



# *Gracias, Danke, Merci, Arigatoo, Xiexie*

Thank you for your time and interest in World Language Instruction and Programs.

Your voice can make worlds of difference in the effort to build a brighter educational future for our children!

