

A Publication for

LISHA KILL &
SAND CREEK

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
PARENTS

CLASSROOM



Opening the doors of diversity- The many benefits of MS foreign language study

As our world — and neighborhoods — become more interconnected and culturally diverse, knowing how to communicate in a language other than English is something that all students will need.

Children's brains are ripe for learning languages. In fact, the earlier they are exposed to languages other than their native one, the more likely they will be to absorb what they hear and become fluent.

Research shows that learning a second language at an early age...

- has a positive effect on intellectual growth.
- enriches and enhances children's mental development.
- gives students more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language and a better ear for listening.
- improves children's understanding of their native language.
- gives them practice with important skills, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- helps children communicate with people they might not otherwise have the chance to know.
- opens doors to other cultures.
- helps children understand and appreciate people from other countries and cultural backgrounds.

- gives students a head start toward high school and college language requirements.
- expands job opportunities — in many careers knowing another language is a real plus.

Studies also show that learning in a foreign language can improve students overall school performance and help them develop greater problem-solving skills. They are also more likely to score higher on tests given in English.

Families going global

Even if your own knowledge of foreign language is limited, there are many ways that you can help motivate your children to tackle language learning. In fact, being an "expert" in something as unique as a foreign language might provide a boost to self-confidence, something that middle schoolers often can use. Positive responses from parents also let children know that you value what they know and can inspire them to continue the sometimes difficult task of learning a new language.

Some other ideas for inspiring language learning include:

Have a fiesta. Though your own Spanish may be limited to "Burrito, por favor," you can still learn a lot about other cultures by sampling new foods. The produce and international aisle of most supermarkets are loaded with foods from around



LANGUAGE LEARNING IN NYS

New York State requires that students pass one proficiency level exam in a language other than English in order to graduate. In general, most formal foreign language instruction begins during the middle school years. Second Language Proficiency Examinations in six (French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin and Spanish*) are offered to students in grades 7, 8 and 9. A passing score on one of these exams counts as credit toward the foreign language requirement for graduation with a New York State Regents diploma.

**not all languages are offered in all school districts.*

the world. **The International Cookbook for Kids** by Matthew Locricchio and **Kids Around the World Cook!: The Best Foods and Recipes from Many Lands** by Arlette N. Braman are two collections of recipes and related cultural facts to look to for inspiration. Ask friends for recommendations or check the phone book or Internet for local restaurants that specialize in Asian, Mediterranean, Mexican, Italian and other global kid-friendly cuisines.

Look for language in our world. Examples of culture and language are readily available in most communities. Check the listings in the newspaper for cultural festivals where you can see ethnic dances and art, hear music from another country and taste new foods.

Libros, livres, boeken.

Translations of books, from familiar bedtime stories such as *Goodnight Moon* (**Buenas Noches, Luna** in Spanish) to the Harry Potter series (**Harry Potter et la chambre des secrets** in French), are available for your kids to read themselves or to younger siblings. Choosing stories that are familiar to your children make it easier for them to pick up the meaning of the foreign words. Books in many languages are available from local and online booksellers. Similarly, some video stores and the local library offer foreign-language editions of children's movies and others. DVDs often include Spanish or French versions of a film as well as English.

Foreign Language study in the South Colonie School District

What parents need to know as they look to high school

(This information was given in a report to the Board of Education in 2005)

SOUTH COLONIE'S FOREIGN LANGUAGE STANDARD

Each student will demonstrate the use of a second language. What this means is that students will demonstrate an understanding of the culture and a level of proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, understanding and communicating in a language other than English such as Spanish, French, Japanese or Russian.



FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT'S PHILOSOPHY

As a department, we believe that all students who are proficient in a language other than English will gain essential skills to prepare them for the 21st century. Studies suggest that those who study a foreign language attain higher achievement in school and are better prepared to seek opportunities in our global community.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

All students, in the graduating class of 2002 and thereafter, scoring 65% or above on the New York State Proficiency Exam, are required to continue in foreign language study through grade 11 and pass, prior to graduation, a minimum of French IV, Spanish IV or the New York State Regents exam in a Foreign Language.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING STAFF

The South Colonie Foreign Language Department consists of 32 teachers district-wide; 17 in the middle schools and 15 in Colonie Central High School. Three teaching assistants also supervise and monitor each of the three Foreign Language computer labs.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE REGENTS (1989-2004)

3,917 of 3,936 students passed the Foreign Language Regents exam for a 99.5% passing rate.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE REGENTS (2004-05)

330 of 332 students who took the Foreign Language Regents exam in 2004 passed that exam. 65% scored above 90, 80% scored above 85, 90% scored above 80.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (JUNE, 2004)

454 grade 8 students earned high school credit by passing the June 2004 Foreign Language Proficiency Exam. 28% scored 90 or above, 45% scored 85 or above, 65% scored 80 or above.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENROLLMENT IN GRADE 12

45% of the senior class is enrolled in a Foreign Language class.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES

113 students are registered for Foreign Language courses that grant college credit during the 2004-05 school year.

STUDENT ENROLLED IN THE STUDY OF A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

82 students are enrolled in the study of a second Foreign Language — 55 in Italian and 27 in Japanese.

EACH ONE, TEACH ONE PROGRAM

24 high school Foreign Language students travel to district elementary schools to teach beginning French and Spanish.

Did you know?

When asked what advantages students with advanced Foreign Language study bring, these colleges responded:

- **Alfred University** - "Students with an enriched student in Foreign Language typically are better prepared academically and therefore do better in college."
- **University of Rochester** - "Foreign Language study leads to cross-cultural understanding that is critical in the worlds of science, technology and business. While the English language is prevalent, it is by no means a universal language."
- **Johnson & Wales** - "From an employment standpoint, a second language is a decided advantage."
- **Skidmore College** - "Knowing a second/third language is an integral part of an interdisciplinary approach to learning."

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