

Policy Memo

I. Research Question

- How improving World Language programs in public schools within the United States would benefit students.

II. Executive Summary

- Throughout my research I have discovered that learning a world language helps students in numerous ways. Students are put at an educational advantage when they learn a world language (D'Amico, 2010). Not only would students have the opportunity to learn a world language but become exceedingly proficient in it allowing them to have greater job opportunities in the future. And non-Native English speakers in public schools would be allowed the same opportunities as native English speakers. Better world language education can lead students to become global citizens aware of the world around them (Xu, 2015). In a world where technology is leading people to become more globalized, the gifts of learning a second language are immense. Improving the quality of language education in public schools can lead students to also communicate better with those and the world around them (Christofferson, 2017). As the world becomes increasingly interconnected it is important that we give that ability to students who will later on be able to use and benefit from the skills of a second language.

III. Background

- World language programs within public schools are not proficient enough to offer students a quality education. It is important for students to be given all the assets necessary so that they can have the opportunity to succeed. One of those critical

needs is proficient world language programs to give students the ability of communication with those outside of their native language. Students need to be given the opportunity to achieve a greater understanding of world language and become proficient in it. It is vital in an increasingly globalized world for students to have the ability to communicate in another language.

- Studies have shown that students who speak multiple languages have more opportunities in the future for success and it allows them to embrace their full potential (Xu, 2015). Students who speak multiple languages are even proven to have advanced cognitive functions and are better equipped mentally throughout life. It is vital for students in the United States to be on the same educational level as other students living in developed, wealthier countries.
- After speaking with American University's Professor Tabitha Kidwell, it was discovered that there is a disproportionate gap between different public schools within the United States. Students in a lower socioeconomic status receive a lesser quality of education, particularly world language education. This has a major impact on students learning and over success rate for their futures. The education disparity in the United States is negatively affecting students in many ways but especially when it comes to world language.

IV. Key Stakeholders

- Tabitha Kidwell, Professorial Lecturer & Department Associate Chair, World Languages & Cultures.
 - Tabitha Kidwell is a language teacher who is interested in the intersectionality of culture in language teaching, how students can be more

interculturally competent, and how teachers can be prepared to teach about culture.

- Department of Education
 - The United States Government Department of Education. The Department of Education plays a significant role in funding for public schools and their specific programs.
- DC State Board of Education
 - The DC State Board of Education plays a critical role in determining funding and curriculums that DC students will receive.
- Teachers in Washington, DC
 - Teachers within Washington, DC know plenty about language education in public schools, the problems they now have, and how to improve them.

V. **Opposing Views**

- There are some people that think that it is not necessary to improve world language public education and some even question its importance and necessity as a whole. These people have a very domestic view of the world and tend not to realize how necessary it is to be aware of the world around them. Some argue that world languages don't help students when it comes to getting jobs. A majority of the opposing views also stem from people who don't want to allocate more money to world language at the federal, state, or local levels. These opposing views do nothing but hinder students from potential future opportunities in their lives and their careers.

VI. **Appraisal of Past Solutions**

- The people most concerned with this issue are teachers and educators who see their students struggling and not being given the proper opportunities they deserve in their public schools. Any teacher I have ever had a discussion with has always said that schools need more funding all around the country. In 2009 under the No Child Left Behind Act, the study of world languages was included in the list of core subjects. In Washington, DC in 2008 there were many new requirements made for world language programs that benefited students. Students began world language learning in the 4th grade and a new standard called the Learning Standards for world languages was approved in Washington, DC. Modern languages, classical languages, and American Sign Language was included in the curriculum. All students, regardless of language spoken in their home were encouraged in their world language classrooms. Only recently

VII. Project Plan

- My current plan is to run a fundraiser of some sort for either an organization that supports the learning of world languages or for a school that needs money for its world language program in Washington, DC. For an organization I am looking at the ACTFL which is an individual membership organization of language educators and administrators that advocates for world language around the globe. This organization specifically, I would be doing work with them and not fundraising. An organization I could fundraise for could be the Joint National Committee for Languages-National Council for Languages and International Studies which strives to form a network of language professionals to raise awareness for the benefits of multilingualism. Then the JNCL-NCLIS lobbies Congress on recommendations

and budget appropriations. For fundraising for a specific public school in the Washington, DC area I would first contact a couple of schools and then go from there. I don't have a plan for how I would fundraise, but each specific school would probably know the best way to fundraise for their own school. This one seems the most feasible because fundraising for a good cause was a large part of my project last year and my social action group raised a decent amount of money for the Environmental Working Group. I would like to do fundraising also because I would be able to spread information about language programs within public schools in the United States and show how they are severely lacking and failing eager students. I could help fund supplies, workbooks, and extra needs of students that sometimes come out of teachers own pockets.

VIII. Conclusion

- World language programs within public schools in the United States are greatly lacking and not providing students with equal opportunities especially when it comes to non-native English speakers. Through background research I have found that students who attend public school within the United States are behind other students who attend public schools in other developed and wealthy nations. Students should be able to learn a world language not only to be able to communicate effectively with a broader range of people and nations but also to achieve the greater success that is seen in students who know how to communicate in a second language. As the world becomes increasingly more interconnected, world language is becoming more essential.

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