

The Home/School Connection:
Collaborating to Promote Best Practice in World Language Education, K-8
Issue 16
Global Education

Now more than ever, education should prepare students for global civility and peace. So what in the world are we waiting for?

-Fernando Reimer (Preparing Students for the Flat World)

Dear Parents,

Global education is a term you will hear more and more from leaders in education, business and government. You may ask what this means and wonder if your child is receiving a global education. In this issue of Home/School Connection we will define global education and discuss how learning a second language is an important part of a global education.

Global Education

The Asia Society and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) define global education as:

- *knowledge* of other world regions, cultures, economies, and international issues;
- *skills* to communicate in languages other than English, to work in cross-cultural teams, and to assess information from different sources around the world; and
- *values* of respect for other cultures and of civic engagement.” (Asia Society)

Some people may ask why it is necessary to develop these skills, knowledge, and values in our children. The reality is that there are many challenges in the United States and the world today that *require* our children to have international knowledge and skills.

We live in an age where the economy is global and one in five U.S. jobs is tied to

international trade. There has been an increase in cultural diversity in the United States and solving international problems requires collaboration among governments and organizations. (Asia Society) There is a growing need for workers who are bilingual and bicultural. When our children begin working, they will compete with peers from around the world. “In a 21st-century world where jobs can be shipped wherever there's an Internet connection, where a child born in Dallas is now competing with a child in New Delhi, where your best job qualification is not what you do, but what you know -- education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it's a prerequisite for success.” (Obama).

The Role of World Languages

Leaders in business, government and education are beginning to see the value and need for the study of world languages. Those leaders are taking steps to ensure that world languages are an integral part of every child's education. The CCSSO states that “(a)s global society evolves, the need to have both the language skills and better cultural understanding of the peoples and places of the world will be critical for American students. It is imperative that the United States strengthen and increase the world language skills of its students; therefore, we are committed to ensuring that every student graduating from an American high school will be multi-lingual.” (CCSSO)

Children who have studied a world language develop a better understanding of other cultures because, as discussed in Issue 10 of *Home/School Connection*, another culture is best experienced and understood through the language.

“The study of another language enables students to understand a different culture on its own terms. The exquisite connections between the culture that is lived and the language that is spoken can only be realized by those who possess a knowledge of both” (Standards, 1999).

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).

Conclusion

Children who begin learning a world language at an early age will have the language skills and cultural understanding necessary to succeed in a global society. The study of world languages is a vital part of a global education. In order to close the

global competency gap, U.S. parents must insist on world language instruction as part of the overall curriculum. We are graduating students that are linguistically deprived and culturally disadvantaged. The U.S. can no longer afford to rely on everyone else learning English.

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century. 1999. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press, Inc.

Shrum & Glisan, 2005. *Teachers Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

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“Transcript of President Obama’s Remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.” NY Times 10 Mar. 2009. 25 Oct. 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com>

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This issue of Home/School Connection was written by Tammy Dann. It is full of tips and resources that can be found at www.nnell.org. Teachers may reproduce it and send it home in their students’ backpacks. Send suggestions/comments to Tammy Dann, NNELL’s Early Language Advocate: trdann@q.com