

September 2011

Languages in the News

Being Bilingual: Beneficial Workout for the Brain

The Chronicle of Higher Education published findings from current research presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science focused on benefits of bilingualism for the brain. The research shows that bilingual adults have an ability to consciously switch between languages, are skilled at blocking out unimportant information, are better able to focus on what is relevant, have the ability to quickly and efficiently switch between tasks and have an improved spatial memory. The research also shows a delay of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in bilingual adults. Research targeting bilingual children found that babies used facial expressions to determine whether the language being used was familiar to them or not.

Implications for learning languages in the classroom are that cognitive abilities can be increased by improving short-term memory through memorization of long sequences of letters and learning how to use the less common meanings of words. Conclusions highlight the mental advantages gained from learning languages.

Click here to read [Being Bilingual: Beneficial Workout for the Brain](#).

Sweetwater's Biliteracy Effort is Growing

The Sweetwater district is one of thirty three districts in California to offer qualifying students the seal of biliteracy on their diploma, a way of showing mastery in more than one language. Students must achieve benchmarks in a second language, earn a minimum 2.5 grade point average and take the courses that meet the University of California and California State University admission requirements.

Participants and supporters of the program believe students in a bilingual program are more tolerant, socialized and better prepared to live in a multilingual society.

Californians Together, a statewide coalition of parents, teacher, and others, is working to expand the biliteracy seal program statewide.

Click here to read [Sweetwater's Biliteracy Effort is Growing](#).

This issue of *Newsworthy* was compiled by Tammy Dann. Send any comments, questions, or information for future issues of *Newsworthy* to Tammy Dann at trdann@q.com.

Thank you to Heather Hendry, Shanon Shreffler, Andrea Suarez and Josh Hemlee for providing the links used in *Newsworthy*.

Thank you to Kennedy Schultz, Veronica Guevara, Shanon Shreffler and Sally Hood for their work writing summaries.

Tips and Tools for Early Language Learning

Edmodo

Edmodo is a secure social learning network for K-12 education that is set up similar to Facebook, but is completely secure. It is created for educators to use with students. Teachers create a profile, upload assignments and poll students for answers and information. Teachers are in charge of creating student profiles to view the educator's page. Educators can also join interest groups and discuss ideas with other teachers.

Click here to access [Edmodo](#).

Hispanic Population of the United States Pop Quiz

This website has information about Hispanic demographics: population, high school completion rate and earnings. It includes a short interactive quiz about Hispanics in the U.S. After answering each question, visitors can access more information related to the topic addressed in the question.

Once the quiz is completed, more can be learned by clicking the links listed: US census bureau, U.S. Census Bureau Hispanic Population, and Hispanic Population of the U.S. 2000 report.

Click here to access the [Hispanic Population of the United States Pop Quiz](#).

Choose My Plate

The food pyramid that teachers have used for 20 years has now been replaced with the food plate. The United States Department of Agriculture announced this change in June. It has four colored sections representing fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins. Next to the plate is a smaller circle representing dairy products. This site emphasizes several important nutrition messages that language teachers can help support: eat smaller portions, make at least half the plate fruits and vegetables and avoid sugary drinks. There are currently no resources available in languages other than English on this site.

Click here to access [Choose My Plate](#).

Glogster

Glogster, with its many bells and whistles, is a green alternative to posters. Click the education link and then take a tour which walks visitors through the site. The online posters, or glogs, can include embedded pictures, photos, video, and clip art.

The site does not seem to have filters on the content posted, so preview posters from other users before sharing with students. Teachers can have a single user account for free or purchase accounts for their students. Children under the age of 13 are not allowed to have accounts with Glogster.

Click here to access [Glogster](#).