

What research is available about the effectiveness of the Kindergarten Spanish program?

Second language study benefits understanding and security in community and society

- Research suggests that attitudes about other groups and peoples are formed by the age of ten and are often shaped between the ages of four and eight. Learning a language at a young age helps connect a child with another culture while they are still open-minded and have not yet begun to restrict their views of others whom they perceive to be different. (Curtain & Pesola 1988)
- The benefits of foreign language study last throughout one's lifetime. Recent research indicates that knowing two languages may help stave off age-related mental decline. Researchers compared monolingual to bilingual adults in a test of cognitive function, and bilingualism seemed to offer a protective benefit. (Bialystok 2004)
- The benefits to society are many. Americans fluent in other languages improve global communication, enhance our economic competitiveness abroad, and maintain our political and security interests. (Center for Applied Linguistics 2004)

Second language study enhances career opportunities

- Studying a foreign language helps students understand English grammar better and improves their overall communication and problem-solving skills. Beyond the intellectual benefits, knowledge of a foreign language facilitates travel, enhances career opportunities, and enables one to learn more about different peoples and cultures. (National Research Council 2007)
- In a survey of 581 alumni of The American Graduate School of International Management in Glendale, Arizona, most respondents said they had gained a competitive advantage from their knowledge of foreign languages and other cultures. They said that not only was language study often a critical factor in hiring decisions and in enhancing their career paths, it also provided personal fulfillment, mental discipline, and cultural enlightenment. (Grosse 2004)
- In recent years, the U.S. government has expressed a need for fluent speakers of languages other than English, particularly in less commonly taught languages such as Arabic and Chinese (U.S. General Accounting Office 2002).
- Students of foreign languages may have better career opportunities. (Carreira & Armengol 2001)

Second language study found to improve chances of college acceptance, achievement and attainment

- Students who were in "rigorous" programs in high school—that included three years of foreign language study—were likely to earn better grades in college and less likely to drop out. (Horn & Kojaku 2001)
- Graduating high school seniors with two or more years of foreign language study showed significant superiority in performance on achievement tests in English when compared with nonforeign language students. (Bastian 1980)

Second language study promotes cultural awareness and competency

- In an age of global interdependence and an increasingly multicultural and multiethnic society, early foreign language study gives children unique insight into other cultures and builds their cultural competency skills in a way that no other discipline is able to do. “The age of ten is a crucial time in the development of attitudes toward nations and groups perceived as ‘other’ according to the research of Piaget, Lambert and others. At age 10, children are in the process of moving from egocentricity to reciprocity and information received before age 10 is eagerly received.” (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004)
- “...(E)xposure to a foreign language serves as a means of helping children to intercultural competence. The awareness of a global community can be enhanced when children have the opportunity to experience involvement with another culture through a foreign language.” (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004)
- “The positive impact of cultural information is significantly enhanced when that information is experienced through foreign language and accompanied by experiences in culturally authentic situations.” (Curtain & Dahlberg 2004)
- Experiences in learning a second language and learning another culture will facilitate teachers' interactions with their students' learning experience. Competent teachers understand that positive self-concept and positive identification with one's culture is the basis for academic success. (Lemberger 1990)
- Foreign language learners are more tolerant of the differences among people. (Carpenter & Torney 1974)