

Arkansas Foreign Language Teachers Association



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Why is foreign language an essential component of a rigorous high school curriculum for college-bound students?

1. **Academic:** Research links **foreign language** study to higher performance on standardized tests and in college.

State Scholars Initiative: Why Foreign Language?

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2008

Terminology:

What is meant by "college-preparatory" curriculum and "college readiness?"

A "college-preparatory" curriculum implies four years of English, three and preferably four years of math, three years each of social science and laboratory science, and two years of a **second language**. "College readiness" implies that all entering freshmen should be able to enroll in college-level courses without first requiring remedial coursework.

"Frequently Asked Questions about College Access and Success"

Pathways to College Network, national alliance directed by The Education Resources Institute, Inc., 2007

Significance:

Ensuring that high school students take a college preparatory curriculum and increasing the rigor of the high school curriculum will significantly improve postsecondary readiness and success.

ACT's Recommendation:

Increase postsecondary readiness by requiring that all students take specific college preparatory course sequences in English, mathematics, science, and **foreign language**.

At the state and/or district level, graduation criteria should be defined by specific courses and course sequences and should require that students take, at a minimum:

One to two years of a **foreign language**.

Courses Count: Preparing Students for Postsecondary Success

ACT Policy Report, 2005

AFLTA's Position:

Amend the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship to include two years of **foreign language** for traditional students.

Important Message to Students:

Remember that just meeting your high school's graduation requirements might not be enough to prepare you for the rigors of college. Choose challenging courses for a better chance of success in college classes...Solid **foreign language** study shows colleges you're willing to stretch beyond the basics. Many colleges require at least two years of study in the same foreign language, and some prefer more.

"Are Remedial Courses in Your Future?"

The College Board, 2011

Supporting Evidence:

Research links **foreign language** with higher academic performance:

Students who take foreign languages also achieve higher scores on the ACT in both reading and math.

"The Relation Between High School Study of Foreign Languages and ACT English and Mathematics Performance," ADFL Bulletin 23, no. 3 (1992), S.A. Olsen and L.K. Brown

Other ACT Research:

Current ACT research shows that students' academic preparedness for college, as measured by their ACT scores, is the result of the specific courses they take....

Across racial/ethnic and gender groups the results follow similar trends: Taking one or more **foreign languages**, upper-level mathematics courses, or upper-level science courses is associated with substantial increases in average ACT English, Mathematics, and Science scores.

Issues in College Readiness: The Sensitivity of the ACT to Instruction
ACT, 2005

Additional Research:

- a. Regardless of economic background, students who study a **foreign language** perform better on the verbal section of the SAT than those who don't; and the longer they study, the better they perform.

"Foreign Language Study and SAT-Verbal Scores," Modern Language Journal 71, no. 4 (1987), T.C. Cooper

- b. "High School Foreign Language Study and College Academic Performance" examined the correlation between high school **foreign language** study and success in college; the study found that those who studied Latin, French, German, or Spanish in high school may be expected to perform better academically in college than students of equal academic ability who do not take a foreign language.

"High School Foreign Language Study and College Academic Performance," Classical Outlook, 62, no. 2 (1985), P.D. Wiley

2. **Economic:** **Foreign language** skills are now, more than ever, essential for American workers, if they are to compete in the global marketplace.
3. **National security:** **Foreign language** skills have been identified by leaders at the highest levels of government as essential to U.S. national security.

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Interest in and support for language study has been strengthened in the United States in recent years by the growing recognition that proficiency in more than one language benefits both individual learners and society. For the individual language learner, research has found a positive link between second language proficiency and cognitive and academic ability.

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.

"Why, How, and When Should My Child Learn a Second Language?"
Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004