



Green Bay, Wisconsin: FLES Programs and the business community. Is there a connection?

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Introduction

- In Green Bay, Wisconsin, elementary schools offer foreign languages or FLES programs in French, German and Spanish. The school the student attends determines the language the student will learn in grades K-5.
- Early foreign language training (K-5) plays a vital role in student choice to continue foreign language study in middle school and beyond.
- An influx of Mexican and Central American immigrants to the Midwest has launched Spanish into common usage in the Green Bay business community.

Questions

1. Should second language acquisition be mandated in K-5 schools in order to prepare students for the workplace?
2. Do FLES programs assist Spanish-speaking students in obtaining jobs in Green Bay, Wisconsin?

Methods

- The study surveyed students and teachers of Spanish in grades 3-12 at public schools in Green Bay.
- Teachers were asked qualitative questions about second-language acquisition.
- Business professionals from the Green Bay area were interviewed to determine if bilingual applicants were viewed more favorably than monolingualists.



Results

- Of sample size 590 students:
- 63% of seniors in high school who are still learning Spanish began in kindergarten – grade 5.
- Of those seniors, 72% plan on continuing Spanish-language acquisition beyond high school.
- Of those seniors, 84% attribute early Spanish-language acquisition (K-5) to their desire to continue the language.
- Results from business surveys were inconclusive.

Conclusions

- Results suggest a link between Spanish-language acquisition in grades K-5 and continued foreign language study choices in middle school, high school, and college.
- The earlier the student starts to learn Spanish, the more likely they are to continue study the language.

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