



# Nebraska Department of Education

301 Centennial Mall South ♦ Lincoln, Nebraska ♦ 68509

## World Language Review

May 2018



### The Value of World Language

Middlebury Interactive Language's free poster download illustrates five reasons to learn another language. It's time to think more about "the why" of language learning. If your "why" explanation has centered only around college

admittance requirements, you may be inadvertently advocating for your students to think in the short term and to treat language learning as a chore or necessary evil. In this issue, explore more about "the why" and the value of languages.

<http://www.middleburyinteractive.com/digital-courses/world-language-learning/school-solutions/classroom-resources/classroom-poster-why>

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## Charlamos: *Why Learn A Second Language?*



I was inspired to learn languages when my cousin Gina spent her junior year of high school in France. I loved hearing her stories about exploring Vierzon. Travel became my “why” to learning languages. Recently that same cousin asked how we address the justification and the promotion of world languages. Too often, she noted, languages are a requirement to knock out of the way in order to be admitted to college. This idea was confirmed at the World Language Colloquium in February. I asked world language leaders from around the state to answer the question ‘Why learn another language?’ as if they were high school students. The responses fell into three basic categories: job fun, and for college. I know that all of my Back to School presentations and parent materials emphasized that my class would satisfy a college requirement and save families money. We short change ourselves though in doing this. Why do we learn world languages? Language gives us the power to do everything else with exponential power because we have greater access to resources, an expanded vision, and a larger audience.

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## Why Not Celebrate Heritage?

### *Second Language Learning Connects Us to Our Past*

World language teaching was [criminalized](#) in Nebraska in 1919 as a response to World War I. One country schoolteacher went so far as to tie a naughty Swedish-speaking boy to his chair until he spoke English. [Newspaper articles](#) recorded that German speakers were tarred and feathered.

With this kind of past, it is difficult to think that one might be able to appeal to language as a heritage skill. However, [genetic kit testing](#) companies are reporting record sales of \$99 million dollars this year. [Babel Magazine](#) noted that Americans cited the importance of learning their heritage language.

Wherever the district and whatever the language, creatively think of a heritage connection. Read Willa Cather’s *The Song of the Lark* to learn about Nebraska’s Mexican Town. Research Dawes County to find the site of the [work camp](#) where 3000 German prisoners-of-war were held in 1943. Review that La Louisiane was a French territory until sold in 1803 and that long after [French trappers](#) settled throughout Nebraska. While many Chinese arrived to the U.S. to build the transcontinental railroad, [Omaha's experience](#) with Chinese shows a variety of Chinese professionals including nationally famous doctors, restaurateurs, and religious leaders.

Heritage does not have to be constrained to the ancestry of the students in your classroom. It can be viewed as a communal gift. By doing so, it allows students to find identity through commonalities and to build a stronger sense of community through a shared past and language.



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## Why Not Be a Superhero?

### *Second Language Learning Makes Us Smarter*

Language learning does make us super smart. Think about some of the commonalities of language teachers. Language teachers always teach other teacher's content, reference other languages than the one they are teaching, and change like chameleons to blend from one surrounding to another. These are actually signs of enhanced mental ability.

Regardless of which language system is currently in use, [both language systems stay active](#) at all times in a bilingual brain. This allows us quicker access to a greater array of options in problem solving. Monolinguals are usually constrained to an established pattern of thinking. Bilinguals have the ability to transition into multiple, and at times, conflicting patterns of thinking.

Bilinguals are often more adept at [noticing details](#). This Sherlock-like ability comes from the constant practice of having to track the languages used for meaning and content in order to respond appropriately in the right language at the right time.

Language learning should really be considered the equivalent of power training for the brain. Increasing brainpower enhances decision-making, critical thinking, and mental agility in all areas of life.

## Learn a Language: Beat the Machine

### *Second Language Learning v. Google*

[Google reported](#) that their most sought characteristics in employees are soft skills such as communicating and listening well, having empathy, and being a critical thinker. Although most of the world has come to rely on instant, online translation for easy answers, there are some important ways in which the human brain continues to beat the machine.

Translation programs [will never be able to negotiate](#) for meaning. Think of how often we negotiate in conversation. "Do you mean to say, 'Give the book to Paul?' or 'Give the pen to Paul?'?". Perhaps we mean to give the pen to Pauline. Translation programs can't distinguish the nuances that we mean but don't say and lack the ability to ask for clarification.

When you consider further that elements of humor, feeling, intuition and non-verbal response are not mechanical concepts, you can clearly see that the value of language to be immersed in meaning.

### Calendar

◆  
La Veinticuatro-South  
24<sup>th</sup> Walking Tour  
May 19 and June 16  
11:00-12:30  
Starts at 24<sup>th</sup> and N St.  
\$10/person, \$15/couple

◆  
Oakland Swedish  
Festival  
Oakland  
June 25-30

◆  
Children's China:  
Celebrating Culture,  
Character and  
Confucius  
May 26-June 30  
Omaha Children's  
Museum

◆  
Desir de Lire  
Book Club  
Alliance Francaise  
Omaha  
June 3  
4:00 pm-5:30 pm

◆  
Highlights of the  
European Collection  
Joslyn Art Museum  
June 7  
6:30 pm-7:30 pm

◆  
Santa Lucia Italian  
Festival  
Omaha  
June 7-10

◆  
International Thespian  
Festival  
UNL  
June 25-30

◆  
Please email event  
information to  
stephanie.call@nebraska.gov



## News From Nebraska

Updates from Around the State and Our Collaborative Partner Organizations

### Alliance Française Announces Summer Courses

The Alliance Française d'Omaha has announced Summer French courses open to beginner through advanced. Contact [bonjour@afomaha.org](mailto:bonjour@afomaha.org) directly for information. Summer courses include Visits Le Louvre, Chateaux, Eglises, Et Cathedrals, Conversation, and Pronunciation Courses.

### Mexican Consulate of Omaha Celebrates Binational Week

The Mexican Consulate is celebrating Binational Education Week May 9-11. Consul Guadalupe Sanchez Salazar invited representatives from educational institutions around Nebraska to celebrate and commemorate the week. Honorable Mention was given to a 12-year-old Omaha student who entered the art contest sponsored by Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Relations. Two scholarship funds were granted in partnership with Nebraska Universities.

### Nebraska International Language Association (NILA)

If you are interested in attending NILA's fall conference or presenting a breakout session, visit the NILA website at: <http://www.nebraskalanguages.com/>. NILA continues to accept proposals for 50-minute sessions on topics related to "Coming Together: Collaborating to Improve Outcomes" and other areas related to language learning. Proposals will be accepted until June 1<sup>st</sup>. Notifications will be made by June 15. All presenters must still register for the NILA conference.

## Alphabet Soup

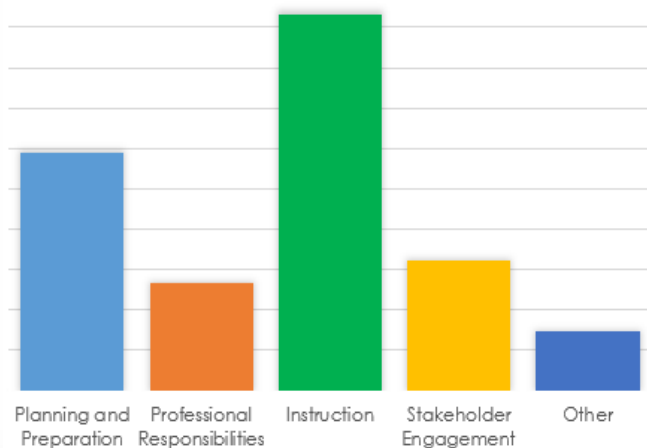
Acronyms to Know: Organizations

- AATG-N: Nebraska Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German  
<http://aatgnebraska.weebly.com/>
- AATSP: Nebraska Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese  
<https://neaatsp.wordpress.com/>
- ACTFL: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages  
<https://www.actfl.org/>
- CSCTFL: "Central States" or Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages  
<https://csctfl.wildapricot.org/>
- NATF: Nebraska Association of Teachers of French  
[Facebook groups: NATF](#)

## World Language Survey

Q. 28 What topics of professional development would most benefit your program?

WHAT TOPICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WOULD MOST BENEFIT YOUR PROGRAM?



World Language Survey completed January 2018 by Nebraska Department of Education World Language Specialist



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