



# **K - 12 SURVEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

**A Roadmap for Language Education Advocacy**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

→ Executive Summary	Page 2
→ Introduction	Page 3
→ Challenges Facing K-12 World Language Programs	Page 7
→ Innovative Approaches to Support Language Programs	Page 10
→ A Glimpse into Indigenous Languages	Page 13
→ Take Action	Page 14
→ What JNCL Will Do	Page 17

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose

This report is designed to provide a snapshot into the landscape of K–12 language education in the United States, informing language educators, language advocates, and policymakers alike of the critical challenges that K–12 programs are facing and sharing highlights on innovative practices. Ultimately, this report should serve as a guide for K–12 language education programs' advocacy efforts.

This report is based on an informal, volunteer-response survey conducted by JNCL–NCLIS. Because the sample is limited, it should not be interpreted as nationally representative. Instead, it captures a small but meaningful snapshot of conditions and innovations reported by educators on the ground.

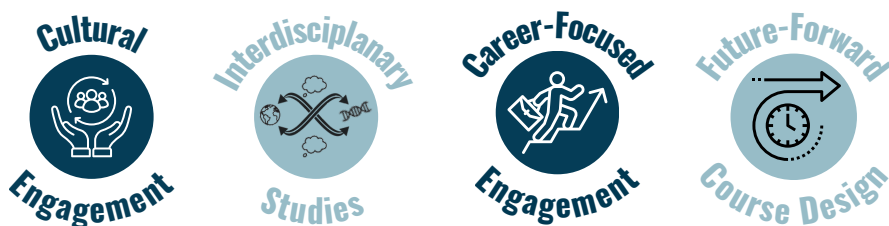
## Challenges

In the survey, we captured five main challenges to K-12 programs: low student enrollment, staffing limitations, graduation requirements, administration support, and budget constraints.



## Innovations

Despite these critical challenges, many K-12 world language programs have taken up innovative approaches to supporting their students and the future of their programs. Some common themes from survey respondents included:



## Next Steps - Take Action

To further support, advocate, and protect world language education at the K-12 level, we suggest the following:



# INTRODUCTION

As world language education as a whole faces cuts and barriers across our nation, K–12 programs have a critical role to play in revitalizing and protecting the role of languages in students’ educational journeys. According to ACTFL (2023), nearly one in five districts has reduced world language course offerings in the last five years, and many districts report difficulty filling certified world language positions. These trends mirror what respondents in our sample described.

Seeking to capture a snapshot of K–12 language learning across the country and focus our advocacy efforts, JNCL–NCLIS issued a survey to collect data on K–12 world language programs; this survey included quantitative data (number of languages offered, quantitative staffing shortages, etc.) and qualitative data (challenges, successes, and innovations) to capture a holistic image.

This report synthesizes these responses and provides critical qualitative and quantitative insights into the current landscape of K–12 world language education in the United States. It will serve as a tool to guide local, state, and national advocacy for the enrichment and protection of K–12 world language programs.

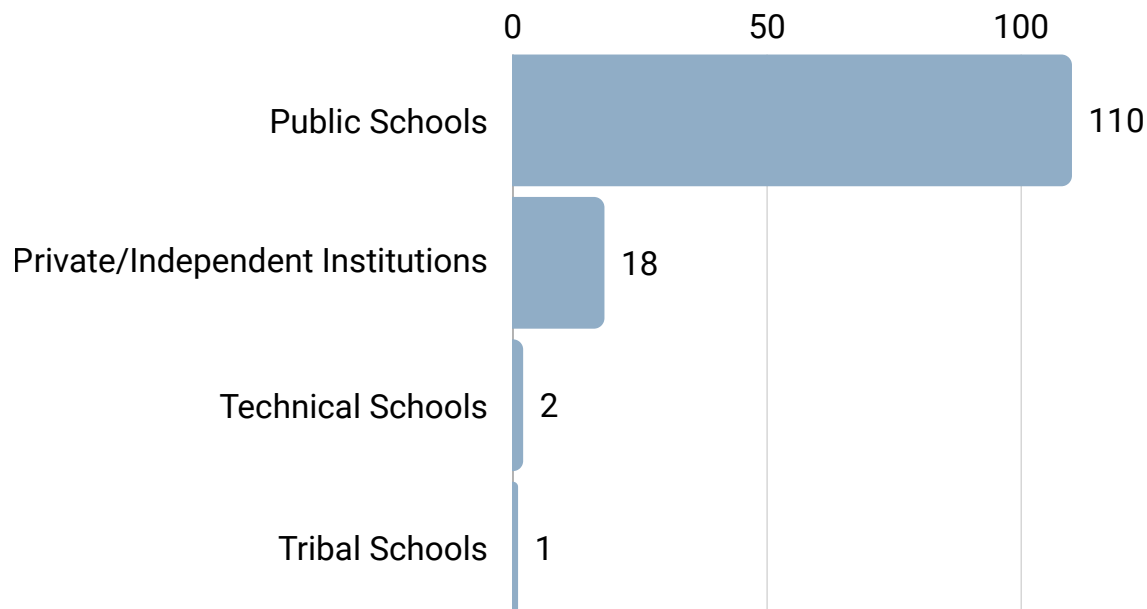
## Data Details

To obtain this data, JNCL–NCLIS conducted an informal, volunteer survey of K–12 language department leaders. The survey was disseminated to our members via JNCL–NCLIS’s internal networks and our member organizations. Data was collected from early May 2025 through the end of June 2025, representing a snapshot of program offerings for schools in the upcoming and previous academic years. Changes to funding or programs that may have occurred over the summer period are not reflected in this report.

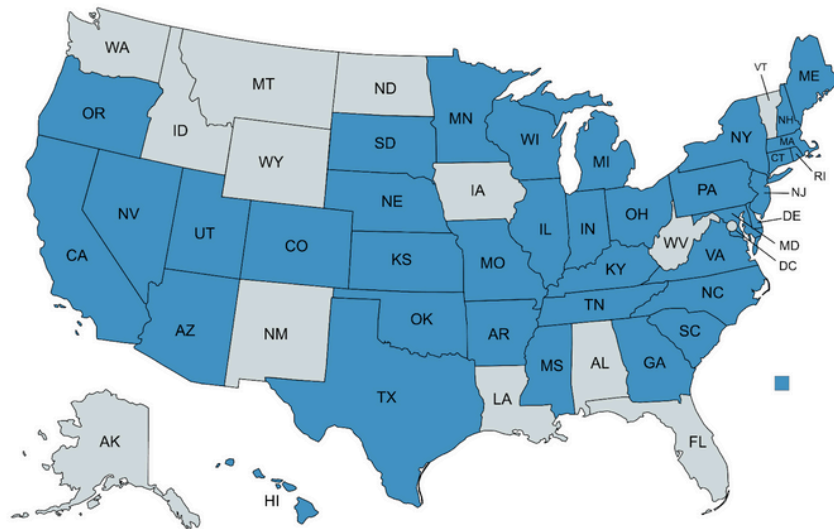
We collected a total of 131 responses from teachers representing schools and districts in 37 different states. Of these respondents, 53 represented whole districts, 74 represented individual schools, and four were ambiguous. Most respondents represented high schools or K–12 student districts. A detailed breakdown of these schools is seen in TABLE 1. As depicted in Figure 1, the vast majority of school respondents were public schools (110, or roughly 84%). In addition, there were 18 private or independent institutions, two technical schools, and one tribal school.

Table 1. Students Served by School

TYPES OF SCHOOLS/DISTRICTS REPRESENTED	NUMBER REPORTING	% REPORTING
Elementary School	5	3.82%
Middle School	3	2.29%
High School	57	43.51%
Middle School/High School Combined	7	5.34%
K-8	4	3.05%
K-12	55	41.98%



**Figure 1. Public, Private, Technical, and Tribal School Representation**



**Figure 2. States Represented**

## The Quantitative Data

Among our respondents, almost every school (95.42%) offered Spanish within its programs. Among those schools that did not offer Spanish, all of them offered Japanese, and one offered both Japanese and Vietnamese. The five most common languages were Spanish, French (75.57%), Japanese (34.35%), German (33.59%), and Mandarin Chinese (29.77%). These results align with national course-offering patterns reported by the Modern Language Association, which has consistently found that Spanish and French remain the most widely available languages in U.S. schools, while access to Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) such as Japanese, Mandarin, and heritage/community languages remains uneven.

Some course offerings were more prominent in the responses. Spanish and French was the most common combination, while offering Spanish only is the second most common mode. Additional language offering combinations or models that appeared repeatedly are detailed in TABLE 2.

**Table 2. Language Course Offerings**

LANGUAGE COURSE OFFERINGS	% REPORTING
Spanish & French	12.21%
Spanish ONLY	7.63%
Spanish, French, & German	6.87%
Spanish, French, & Japanese	6.11%
Spanish, French, & Mandarin Chinese	3.82%
Japanese ONLY	3.05%

These results, though limited, do reflect the broader landscape of K–12 language programs across the United States. Notably, language learning seems to be dominated by a small group of languages, as evidenced in the chart above. Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) continue to be largely inaccessible to the vast majority of K–12 students across the country. The average language program in our survey offered three languages with some (?) variance in the number of students. Roughly a third of total programs offered more than three languages, while most schools offered three or fewer. Eleven percent of schools only offered a single language, most often Spanish.

This distribution reinforces a long-standing equity challenge: students' access to languages other than Spanish and French is often dependent on where they live, the size of their district, and local staffing capacity. That disparity was repeatedly described by respondents as both a recruitment challenge and a retention challenge.

### The Qualitative Data

The qualitative data revealed key trends in enrollment and staffing that underscore the decline of students taking world language courses. This raises particular concern for the future of K–12 language education programs and the capacity for staff vacancies to be filled by language-proficient teachers. Additionally, the respondents highlighted a lack of administrative support and budget constraints as critical gaps. These issues create a ripe environment for K–12 schools and districts to cut programs and not fill positions. Sustainability issues elucidated by the data reveal the struggle to prove the relevance of world languages to students, as well as administrators and policymakers.

These concerns align with national teacher shortage data: more than half of U.S. states continue to list world languages as an area of teacher shortage, and many districts struggle to hire or retain certified language educators. Respondents in this survey repeatedly described unfilled or eliminated positions as an immediate threat to their programs.

In addition, a number of respondents raised alarm bells on the perceptions of language education at the policy level. Without a unifying message of importance from policymakers, employers, government offices, and non-governmental organizations, many K–12 world language programs are forced to battle for funding and recognition to demonstrate their merit. Policymakers at all levels tend to perceive world languages as peripheral to a well-rounded education and are also affected by their own negative personal language learning experiences in American K–12 settings. This is precisely why support for and amplification of proficiency-driven, engaging instruction and the outcomes thereof are some of the most important advocacy data points to gather and highlight.

However, these challenges are not insurmountable. Many respondents also shared their innovative practices and successful efforts to revitalize or protect their programs. Some of these responses will be highlighted throughout the report and should serve as guides for program developers and language educators seeking to protect or expand their programs. These innovations explore themes such as cultural engagement, interpersonal connections, interdisciplinary lenses, and future-forward course design.

JNCL–NCLIS is actively advocating for restoration and expansion of federal support for K–12 language programs, including grants for teacher pipeline development, robust support for multilingual learners, and protection of world language programs in state graduation requirements and district budgets.



# CHALLENGES FACING THE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

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For much of the history of U.S. public education, world language instruction has occupied a marginal place in the curriculum—viewed as an elective enrichment rather than a core subject tied to academic success or civic readiness. Unlike many education systems around the world, the United States has never established bilingual proficiency as a national K–12 goal, and most states do not require world language study for graduation. As a result, generations of students have completed their schooling without the opportunity to develop advanced language skills or the intercultural competence increasingly essential in today’s global economy. Only in the past decade has this trajectory begun to shift, thanks in part to the rise of the Seal of Biliteracy, a growing state-led initiative that recognizes high school graduates who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one other language. The expansion of this recognition marks an important step toward valuing multilingualism as an attainable and desirable outcome for all students—yet the progress remains uneven and fragile, constrained by persistent underfunding, staffing shortages, and policy inconsistency across states.

## Capacity for Self-Sustainability

For language programs to remain “self-sustaining,” they must have a consistent flow of students into their programs and attract students back into the profession of world language teaching. This cycle of students to teachers is critical, as world languages depend on high-fluency educators. However, several of the challenges our respondents identified suggest that current world language programs may struggle with future self-sustainability.

Almost half (**47.73%**) of respondents cited “**low enrollment**” as a struggle. Similarly, a significant portion (**41.67%**) of respondents cited “**staffing limitations**.” More than two-in-five (**42.42%**) respondents reported **at least one staffing position remaining unfilled** in the past three years, with roughly one-in-five (**18.94%**) indicating **two or more unfilled positions**. For many programs, **even one vacancy can represent a 30–40% reduction in teaching capacity**, which leads directly to course cuts. This report will treat “low enrollment” as a broad concept, whereby it alludes to a lack of students in world language classrooms.

This report will treat “low enrollment” as a broad concept, whereby it alludes to a lack of students in world language classrooms. This could include reduced enrollment over a period of time or consistently low class sizes. Of particular concern are the cases in which “low enrollment” may lead to classes or entire programs being cut. Courses and programs with consistently low enrollment may face these devastating outcomes that impact student opportunity in K–12 learning and admission to higher education.

Some respondents also indicated challenges that likely contribute to low enrollment figures. Four respondents (3.03%) suggested that scheduling difficulties create “competition” between languages, CTE coursework, and other elective options. Three (2.27%) respondents indicated that their programs struggled with planning the progression of their programs over many years, often due to enrollment fluctuations. Four respondents (3.03%) indicated that apathy among students and the national culture against language learning pose a significant barrier to capturing students. This perception of language as “optional” or “nice to have” was echoed across multiple states in our sample and reflects national rhetoric that positions world languages as expendable rather than essential.



# CHALLENGES FACING THE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS CONT'D

## Institutional Support

The second major thematic strand of challenges for K–12 world language programs is institutional support. This includes support for educators and students alike from administrators, board members, and policymakers.

Almost a third (30.30%) of respondents indicated a direct lack of support from administrators or board members. A similar proportion (36.36%) of respondents indicated budget cuts and struggles as well. Without a full picture of budgets overall, it is difficult to determine if these cuts reflect general climates or reduced prioritization of language programs. However, patterns have emerged that indicate that reduced funding may disproportionately impact world language programs around the country, especially as concerns arise over federal funding reliability. When in financial difficulty, districts and schools look to world languages (often branded as “electives” or “specials”) to cut costs. This pattern has clearly emerged in both institutions of higher education and in federal programs. For example, recent cuts to federal programs supporting language and international education—including National Professional Development grants for multilingual learner support and certain Department of Defense language initiatives—illustrate how instability at the federal level filters directly down to K–12 classrooms.

**30.03%**

**DIRECT LACK OF SUPPORT  
FROM ADMINISTRATORS  
OR BOARD MEMBER**

**36.36%**

**BUDGET CUTS AND  
STRUGGLES**

## Policy Support

The final central theme reported in the survey was a lack of political support from district, state, and federal policymakers. This primarily bears out in the influence of policy on the image of world language programs. For example, six respondents (4.55%) indicated that a lack of graduation requirements was a significant harm. This likely contributes to the enrollment crisis mentioned previously, but also indicates that policymakers do not place equal importance on world languages as other key subjects.

When language coursework is not tied to graduation pathways or career credentials, students receive the message that multilingualism is optional rather than strategic. This weakens enrollment, which in turn gives administrators justification to scale back offerings and leave vacancies unfilled.

# CHALLENGES FACING IHE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS CONT'D

## Other Emerging Challenges

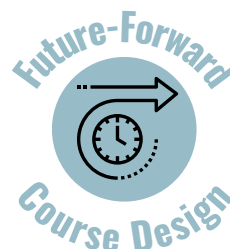
While only a small number of respondents mentioned the following issues directly, their perspectives reflect broader national conversations and challenges currently facing K–12 language education across the United States. These responses serve as early indicators of evolving pressures that warrant close attention from policymakers and program leaders alike.

- **Artificial Intelligence in Classrooms** – Although only a few respondents referenced artificial intelligence, their views mirror national trends in education. Some expressed concern about the misuse of AI tools by students, while others saw great promise in using AI to personalize instruction and increase access to authentic language materials. This tension – between opportunity and risk – highlights a growing need for professional development that equips world language educators to integrate emerging technologies effectively and ethically into their classrooms.
- **Myth of Low Expectations for Multilingual Learners** – Respondents noted that some administrators and colleagues continue to hold low expectations for multilingual learners, despite clear evidence that bilingualism and biliteracy support higher academic performance and cognitive flexibility. This mindset contributes to systemic inequities and underscores the importance of training and accountability measures that promote high expectations for all learners, regardless of linguistic background.
- **Limited Resources for Less Commonly Taught Languages** – One respondent cited a lack of institutional support for Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). While only a single response, it reflects a nationwide pattern: limited funding, inconsistent staffing, and lack of access to languages beyond Spanish and French. Many educators emphasized that community-based programs, tribal schools, and heritage language initiatives are essential to sustaining these languages where districts cannot or will not offer them. Supporting these grassroots efforts through stable funding and partnerships remains critical to maintaining linguistic diversity in U.S. schools.



# INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

In the face of these significant challenges, many respondents indicated that they have implemented innovative practices to support student learning and ensure strong access to world languages. Among the common themes identified within these innovative practices are:



Cultural engagement practices involve the use of culture-based activities to inspire dedication in a language. Respondents often cited these practices as useful for community-building within the classroom and developing strong cultural knowledge. Examples included taco-truck nights in the community, music events, and calligraphy lessons. As a practice, cultural engagement deepens the connection between a student and the broader cultural dimensions of a language.

## World Language Career Symposium

*A yearly event that brings together cultural understanding, language education, and the workplace. Professionals from across numerous career fields spend the day speaking to students on various panels, giving students an opportunity to explore their future career options. The symposium directly connects students and professionals who use language in their careers, emphasizing their interconnected nature.*

*"The Career Symposium opens the students' eyes to the need for language skills and cultural awareness in the workplace. Every year, students comment that they never realized how many jobs in their own community needed multilingual employees."*

Teacher: Cherie Garrett

Dallastown Area High School (PA)

## Japanese Pen Pal Program

*Students in Japanese language classes participate in an innovative pen pal exchange with peers in Japan. This initiative not only strengthens their interpersonal writing and communication skills but also provides authentic opportunities to use the language in meaningful cultural contexts. By engaging directly with native speakers, students gain access to cultural perspectives that extend beyond the classroom, deepening their commitment to language fluency. In doing so, this culturally-engaging practice reinforces the value of language learning for students.*

Teacher: Chie Fujie

Glendale Unified (CA)





Interdisciplinary lessons integrate language learning with other courses to highlight the role of language in a broad swath of fields. Many respondents stated that they were integrating STEM work into their language classrooms, while others reported integrating history lessons into their curricula.

These initiatives can help strengthen language education's relevance to external decision-makers. Tying language learning to what are regarded as core subjects allows program leaders to highlight external applications of language fluency. This framing is especially effective with school boards, superintendents, and parents who are focused on workforce readiness.

### STEM Interdisciplinary Coursework

*Students participate in a world language curriculum that integrates STEM concepts alongside Spanish and Arabic instruction. This interdisciplinary approach allows students to apply language skills in scientific and technical contexts, enhancing both linguistic proficiency and STEM understanding. By connecting language learning with hands-on STEM activities, students engage with interdisciplinary applications of their language studies. The program emphasizes how interdisciplinary course design can create a learning environment where language and content knowledge mutually reinforce each other.*

Teacher: Vilo Westwood

Thurgood Marshall STEM High School



Career-focused course design allows for world language programs to establish external career relevance, staving off claims that language fluency is only for academic enhancement. Of particular interest is a program in Connecticut, where students are able to enroll in Spanish-language EMT certification courses. This program not only has significant practical workforce value for those intending to go into health or medicine, but also highlights the critical need for language competencies in the health and medical fields.

Programs like these also help counter the narrative that language programs are 'extras.' When language skills are visibly tied to employability, public support for maintaining those programs tends to increase.

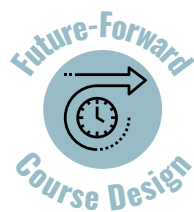
### Medical Spanish EMT Course

*Students engage in a Medical Spanish unit integrated with an EMT course, providing real-world context for language learning. This program highlights the immense value of bilingualism in healthcare, equipping students with the ability to communicate effectively with diverse patient populations and respond to critical medical situations. By combining language proficiency with practical medical training, students gain both professional skills and cultural competence, preparing them for future careers in healthcare where bilingual abilities can improve patient outcomes, enhance community trust, and expand career opportunities. The program demonstrates how language learning can directly intersect with high-impact, real-world applications, underscoring the relevance of multilingualism in essential professions.*

Teacher: Jessica Garcia

East Lyme Public Schools (CT)





Future-forward course design, in this report, refers to the evolving nature of teaching in world language classrooms. Many respondents indicated that shifting to project-based learning or performance-based assessments, has resulted in positive outcomes in their classrooms. These course designs help protect against language anxiety, a well-documented phenomenon in the field, which often contributes to reduced enrollment and high turnover in low-level courses. Uniquely, one program chose to focus on building the student-teacher pipeline within the world language classroom.

### Intermediate World Language Program

*High school students mentor students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade in world language-related lessons. These lessons equip the mentors with hands on experience in leadership and connects their language classrooms to the real world. For the mentees, it reinforces language learning as engaging and introduces them to the programs before they enter high school.*

*"The elementary students are excited about studying a new culture and speaking a new language while the high schoolers get to share their love of language and try to hand at teaching. Over the years, 15 of the high school 'teachers' have gone on to become world language teachers!"*

Teacher: Cherie Garrett

Dallastown Area High School (PA)



## A GLIMPSE INTO INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

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Among the responses to the survey, one particular strength stood out: Indigenous languages. Given the United States' complex history with Indigenous peoples and languages, the strength of Indigenous language programs reflects successful efforts by communities, especially Indigenous nations across the country.

While only six respondents indicated that their institution taught an Indigenous language, these reported programs were described as deeply intentional and community-rooted.

A Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school in Minnesota is engaged in innovative preservation efforts for Ojibwe and Dakota, creating a model for how tribal schools can reclaim and sustain Indigenous languages. By combining federal grant support with tribal resources and community engagement, the school is able to elevate these languages both on tribal lands and in surrounding communities with significant Indigenous populations. These programs stand at the forefront of language protection, demonstrating how sovereignty and education intersect to create lasting impact.

Another school in Minnesota also added Ojibwe to its language offerings recently. This school is a K–12 public school, which stands as a strong testament to providing language access, even in less commonly taught languages, to all.

Finally, a private school in Hawaii focuses on using language to discover culture. Encompassing Hawaiian as well as Japanese and Mandarin programs, this school's language program focuses on developing cultural insights through language, especially in regards to food systems and ways of life. It is a powerful example of Indigenous language programs being used to revitalize both language and culture.

Central to this work is the Native American Languages Act (NALA), passed in 1990, which affirms the right of tribes to use their languages publicly and as a medium of instruction. NALA represented a historic reversal of federal policy that had long suppressed Indigenous linguistic expression. With this legislation, and through subsequent initiatives such as the federal 10-Year Plan on Indigenous Language Revitalization, tribal schools are not only preserving languages but also creating spaces where education becomes a tool for cultural continuity, identity, and self-determination.

Recent budget cuts and reduced federal support for Indigenous language programs pose a direct threat to this progress. If funding declines, the capacity of schools and communities to sustain language revitalization efforts will erode. This underscores the need for continued federal accountability and support to ensure that Indigenous languages thrive for future generations.





# TAKE ACTION

In accordance with the information garnered from our survey and from the current issues facing K-12 language education, to further support, advocate, and protect world language education at the K-12 level, JNCL-NCLIS urges advocates to take action using the steps outlined below.

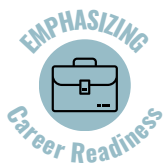


## Educating Key K-12 Personnel and Decision-Makers

The first step in establishing strong and resilient K-12 world language programs is to ensure their institutional support from within. This involves educating key K-12 personnel and decision-makers, such as school counselors, principals, superintendents, local elected officials (such as school board members), and the local PTA. All of these individuals play an important role in establishing the direction of school interest and policy.

In particular, there is a need to inform school counselors on the value of multilingualism for students. As a primary guiding force in student decisions, school counselors play a critical role in establishing the legitimacy of world language education. With reports of a declining emphasis on world languages and scheduling conflicts, it is more important than ever to ensure that students not only want to take languages, but that they are prioritizing these courses. School counselors play a unique role in advising student priorities, and by educating them on the positive impacts of language education, program leaders and educators may open the door to boosted enrollment and increased student enthusiasm.

Additionally, administrators (principals and superintendents) must also understand the value of advocating for language programs in their schools. While budget and staffing priorities are under strain nationwide, educating administrators, district leaders, and school board members on the vital nature of language education will help them make informed recommendations and decisions on investing in language education programs.



## Emphasizing Career Readiness

After ensuring strong foundations in key personnel, attention must turn to articulating the value of language education to the public. It is increasingly important that advocates demonstrate the Return on Investment (ROI) of language education investments, framing fluency in a language other than English as essential preparation for a modern workforce, especially in social service sectors like healthcare, customer service, international business, and academia. With language fluency, students will make stronger employees who can communicate effectively with a broader audience. According to Language Testing International, "90% of employers rely on workers with skills in languages other than English". ACTFL's 2019 "Making Languages Our Business" report highlighted that these demands are only growing, especially in key sectors. In addition, language learning supports cultural competence and global awareness, which can be key in the modern workplace. These must become critical focuses of language education advocacy moving forward.







### Emphasizing Career Readiness Cont.

To build this connection, advocacy efforts must commit to an intentional message that links world languages to career pathways in these critical sectors. State Seal of Biliteracy programs have laid important groundwork for getting students recognition for their efforts. Looking forward, credentials like the Seal of Biliteracy should be expanded to create tangible benefits from language fluency. Additionally, the Global Seal of Biliteracy also encourages students and career professionals to 'level up' their fluency to higher levels. According to 2025 data from the Global Seal of Biliteracy, 11% of students who earned the seal had achieved increased proficiency compared to their State Seal test. These credentials will directly tie students to career opportunities and increase their employability. By promoting these, language advocates can reinforce the career-value of languages to students, administrators, communities, and policymakers alike.

Once career readiness is embedded within world language programs, they can facilitate community partnerships, which will serve to further embed career readiness and support the expansion of strong programs.



### Integrating Community Partnerships

The next critical step in supporting the continued success of K–12 world language programs is community partnership and engagement. When communities can visualize and interact with language learning opportunities, it opens expansion opportunities. Schools should look toward leveraging relationships with local cultural organizations, businesses, and nonprofits, especially those that support multilingual learners and communities.

These partnerships will serve two purposes. First, they engage the community in language learning and reinforce its necessity when budget cuts arise; with increased visibility, world language programs may not be the first to get cut. Second, these partnerships will also serve to reinforce that language fluency as a workplace skill. When students can employ their learning in concrete scenarios, the classroom becomes a hub for real-world language development.

An outstanding example of fostering community ownership of language education is the innovative practice in Dallastown Area High School (Pennsylvania), where high school students teach middle school students a world language course. This serves to integrate the practice of world language education as a community-building exercise. In doing so, world language programs are able to cement their role in the broader world, which may provide critical space for developing “roots” in schools, districts, and communities.

In addition, schools should consider safeguarding their existence against local, state, and federal attacks on fiscal strength. Small-scale grants focused on multilingual and multicultural communities offered through philanthropic organizations, advocacy groups, or national associations may allow K–12 world language programs to sustain programming despite fiscal climates. Furthermore, emphasis on the economic benefits (both individual and community-wide) of language fluency could qualify these programs for economic development grants. Innovative practices and community integration will support the goal of diversifying the fiscal dependence of these programs.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.languagepolicy.org/career-technical-education>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/MakingLanguagesOurBusiness\\_FullReport.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/MakingLanguagesOurBusiness_FullReport.pdf)



### Growing Outreach

The final recommendation to promote and grow world language programs is marketing and rhetoric. As mentioned in the challenges, many respondents cited concerns over the national climate toward language learning as well as the lack of support from local and state policymakers. Efforts to reverse the narrative and establish world languages as vibrant, critical programs will require intentional effort, especially in regards to media outreach.

Media outreach, especially to local and state news organizations, allows the programs to promote their positive accomplishments. While this report intends to highlight innovations to encourage other educators, leaders, and advocates, it also serves as a chance to get positive rhetoric on language education into the mainstream. At the individual school- or district-level, educators and advocates can run articles in school newspapers or local outlets on positive accomplishments (i.e., Seal of Biliteracy winners, anecdotes from trips abroad, stories from community events, etc.). This attention will get positive rhetoric into the media and thereby create shifts in the culture surrounding language education.

In addition, program leaders should emphasize getting attention for innovative practices and successes in front of decision makers. This could include school boards or local and state-level leaders. Talking at board meetings or legislative sessions (if possible) and communicating with receptive leaders will maintain a positive, active image for you and your program. By acting as the primary information source to these decision makers, your successes will be front-of-mind during discussions on your programs.

Furthermore, this outreach work could be embedded into the curriculum. For example, if students participate in an innovative lesson, they could be tasked with sharing the impacts of this in both the target language and English. By doing this, you emphasize the student-focused nature of world language programs and bring positive student stories to the limelight, something that district leaders are keen to capitalize on. Establishing a simple yet effective media outreach strategy has the potential to protect world language programs in the public eye, which may in turn alleviate some struggles.

Overall, the most critical forward step in K–12 language program safeguarding is reinforced messaging. While advocates have long recognized and will continue to recognize the civil rights and cultural value of multilingual students and communities, structural emphasis on economic development and workplace relevance will allow advocates increased flexibility and receptiveness. In short, multilingualism is not just enrichment. It is workforce preparation, community connection, and national capacity.

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### Local Media Attention

*Students in the world language program have the opportunity to share their achievements through local media outlets, showcasing projects and accomplishments to the wider community. This approach gives student achievement increased visibility and impact, thereby reinforcing the positive outcomes of the program itself. Through newspapers, television, and online platforms, students gain recognition, while the language programs receive critical promotion to the broader public. The initiative exemplifies the unique capacity of local media to elevate student achievement and celebrate the real-world impact of multilingual education.*

Teacher: Elena Kamenetzky

Fairdale High School (KY)



# WHAT WILL JNCL–NCLIS DO?

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In addition to disseminating this report, JNCL–NCLIS will continue to build advocacy tools and movements specifically tailored to K–12 programs, educators, administrators, and policymakers.

## **JNCL–NCLIS will:**

- Amplify impact stories across the nation
- Empower educators as advocates through experiential training
- Develop toolkits and support the creation of advocacy resources on a state-by-state basis
- Support organization of advocacy efforts for local, state and federal issues
- Educate administrators, guidance counselors, school personnel, and board members on the value and relevance of language education
- Engage student voices in active multimodal advocacy
- Expand our America’s Languages Caucus
- Advocate for federal policy on Capitol Hill

## **Important Resources:**

- [JNCL-NCLIS Advocacy Resources](#)
- [Federal Funding Impact Survey](#)
- [JNCL-NCLIS Legislative Action Center](#)
- [Student Advocacy Blog](#)
- [America’s Languages Caucus](#)
- [Language Advocacy Day 2026](#)





JOINT NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR LANGUAGES  
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# K - 12 SURVEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION

## A Roadmap for Language Education Advocacy



[WWW.LANGUAGEPOLICY.ORG](http://WWW.LANGUAGEPOLICY.ORG)



202-580-8684



[INFO@LANGUAGEPOLICY.ORG](mailto:INFO@LANGUAGEPOLICY.ORG)