

Reading Reflection #1

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What struck me the most when reading this document were the dates; all of the dated references are from over ten years ago. I love the ideas presented in this document, so I wish they were all implemented already. For example, I like how they specifically clarified "develop and maintain proficiency" in a foreign language in the fourth paragraph of the Position Statement (p 1). By including *maintain* when speaking of foreign language proficiency, it implies that an ideal language program is not completed at the end of a term, but continues into higher levels. I think that maintaining proficiency is vital to truly learning a foreign language.

Continuity in language learning includes higher education as well. In the first paragraph of page two, this document presents the element included in all education reforms: preparation for higher education. Although algebra is considered the "gatekeeper" of preparation for higher education, foreign language education is an element required by many institutes of higher education as well. If foreign language was treated with the same significance and mathematics as a foundational skill, perhaps it would become part of the core curriculum as early as elementary school.

Personally, I cannot find a downside to foreign language education, even as early as elementary school. The quote by Richard Riley at the bottom of page one, "Our nation can only grow stronger if all of our children grow up learning two languages," highlights a very important point: There are no disadvantages in learning a foreign language. My question is why have foreign languages not been added to the core curriculum yet? The only factor I can think of aside from money and resources, is the "fear" that adding to the core curriculum will cause progression in other subjects to slow down. In my opinion, taking a bit of time away from other core subjects to add another *core subject* should not be considered an inconvenience.

Relating to our service at elementary schools in the community, I firmly believe that the small amount of Japanese language and culture provided to these children would make even more of an impact if it were part of their curriculum in school. At the very least, exposure to a culture beyond their friends' and families' is a very tangible avenue of connecting with the rest of the world, which perhaps they have not consciously become aware of yet.

I think we are also modelling the third bullet point at the top of page two, "Learn in a variety of ways and settings." Some days our lessons are in the classroom and very visual-based, but other days we are outside moving around. Providing an array of activities not only keeps the lessons fresh and exciting, but also introduces the diverse nature of language learning; there is no one path.