



## WHY FRENCH?

Resources for the Promotion of French Language Education in the United States

### Importance of the Question

When faced with the work of supporting and expanding high-quality French language education, one of the most important questions posed to teachers, school administrators, and parents is the question: **Why French?** In other words, why invest time and resources into this particular language? How is French proficiency useful in the academic world and later on in the professional world?

For many, the answers to these questions are obvious. However, it is essential that we provide information to those for whom the answers are not as obvious. A concrete response to the **Why French?** question is essential for gaining the support required to ensure the sustainability and success of French language instruction in the U.S., whether in regular classroom settings or in dual language and immersion program settings.

### The Resource Kit

The following toolkit of resources is designed for teachers, administrators, parents, students, or anyone interested in promoting French language education. The toolkit contains numerous sources which provide unique and important answers to the **Why French?** question.

### Target Audiences

School Boards, School Administrations, Superintendents' Offices, Parent-Teacher Associations/Organizations, Teachers (French or General Foreign Language), Students (in-class, as part of lesson plans, in extracurricular/after-school program settings).

## Advocacy Campaigns

The following two campaigns have been used locally and globally to highlight the professional and academic strengths provided by French language skills. The first is led by a French institute, and the second by an American association.

- **["Et en plus, je parle français!"](#)** is a global advocacy campaign promoting the diverse uses of the French language in everyday lives and careers all over the world. The campaign is co-sponsored by l'Institut Français and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy. The campaign video and other images can be used as an inspirational tool for students.

### [Campaign Video](#)

- **[Lead with Languages](#)** is a foreign language advocacy campaign led by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). **The Lead with French** page offers extensive evidence of the importance of French as a global language: including a list of responses to "Why Learn French?"; a comprehensive list of scholarships/grants to study, intern, or conduct research in France from the high school to post-grad level; and video testimonials from students and young professionals attesting to how they "lead with French" in their lives and careers.

### [Video: Lead with Languages](#)

### [Video: How Will You Lead with Languages?](#)

### [Top 10 Reasons to Learn Languages](#) (in general)

### [Language Advocacy Guidelines](#) (how to Start, Expand, or Save a Language Program)

## ***Fast Facts for Advocacy***

- **[The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)** presents numerous facts explaining why the worldwide promotion of French language is a **[key diplomatic priority](#)** for the French government.

[10 Good Reasons for Learning French](#)

[17 Good Reasons for Parents and Principals to Choose French](#)

[Infographic: French as a World Language](#)

[The French Language in Figures](#)

- **[Campus France](#)**, the French national agency for the promotion of higher education and international student services and mobility, offers another list of reasons to learn French. Their website also contains a number of links to online resources, agencies, and international education options for learning French, thus highlighting the abundance of continuing education and exchange opportunities that are open to students of French.

[Why Learn French? - Campus France](#)



## Research Publications

- [\*\*Not Lost in Translation: The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market\*\*](#)

*New American Economy, 2017*

The report discusses the reality that companies and organizations across the U.S. are increasingly demanding bilingual proficiency of employees. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of jobs requiring foreign language proficiency more than doubled. During that time, the number of online job postings **requiring French proficiency** increased by 134 percent. The **top employers recruiting French speakers** include international brokerage companies, healthcare companies, humanitarian and international development agencies, public health organizations, and software companies.

- [\*\*America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century\*\*](#)

*American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017*

The report calls for a robust paradigm shift in the U.S. education system's approach to foreign languages, offering arguments as to why language education should be valued "as a persistent national need similar to education in math or English." Cited arguments include: bilingual/multilingual ability is critical to success in business, research, and international relations in the 21st century; the U.S. needs more bilingual professionals in order to provide social and legal services for a changing population; the study of a second language improves learning outcomes in other subjects, in addition to communication and cognitive flexibility.

- [\*\*The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report\*\*](#)

*American Councils for International Education, 2017*

Between 2014-2015, the American Councils in collaboration with the Center for Applied Linguistics collected survey data on K-12 foreign language enrollments across the U.S. education system. The report includes useful statistics for administrators and educators about French program enrollments, course types, and recent and projected changes in enrollments, among other information. The enrollment survey data is also visualized in the [K-12 Foreign Language Education Map](#).



## ***In the News***

- **[France is the Idea](#)**

*The New York Times, 2017*

An article on the booming growth of French business innovation and creativity, both in France and around the world. French influence is discussed in a range of industries including technology, sustainable energy and transport, engineering, cinema, animation and other creative arts, and scientific research. This is a useful article to provide reasons for why French culture and language are increasingly important in a globalized economy.

- **[Which is the Best Language to Learn?](#)**

*The Economist, 2012*

Author Robert Greene argues that French is the best language to learn in our globalized world, both for personal and professional fulfillment. Greene points out that French has a powerful global influence based in La Francophonie, which includes all of the countries with a French-speaking heritage and comprises almost a third of the world's countries. Other global languages such as Spanish and Arabic are regionally concentrated, while French spans the globe with native speakers inhabiting every region on earth.

- **[The Future of French in the EU and Beyond](#)**

*Language Magazine, 2017*

Kathy Stein-Smith discusses the French language's role as a global language, with a focus on its influence in the European Union.

- **[Why French?](#)**

*Language Magazine, 2017*

French is a language that reflects both the rich cultural and historical heritage of France and also that of the worldwide Francophonie. It is a language of international diplomacy, a global business language, and a top internet language, which points to the growing importance of French.