

Press Releases

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Group: *Foreign Language Education for Early Ages*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPEECH HIGHLIGHTING CLEAR VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S FOREIGN
LANGUAGES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (FLES) PROGRAM

Clear Valley's Superintendent Speaks on Successes of Elementary Schools' Foreign Language Program

Pittsburgh, PA --- Mar. 2, 2008 --- Ten years ago, the Clear Valley School District of Alexandria, VA set out on a venture to incorporate foreign language education as part of their elementary schools' curricula. The district's superintendent, James Marshall, proposed the idea. He realized the importance of students becoming bilingual and knew that this goal could be only be achieved by starting foreign language education early at the elementary school level. Since few schools in the Alexandria area or in the entire nation had taken the initiative to tackle the problem of the nation's lack of a prominent bilingual population, Marshall felt the urgency to act. His determined effort resulted in a highly successful Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) program in the Clear Valley School District which is now recognized nationwide for its progress.

This coming Friday, March 7, 2008, Marshall will speak in David Lawrence Hall, on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at 9:00am. The speech is open to members of the University of Pittsburgh's Education Department, public school districts, and anyone interested from the general public. The speech will focus on how the FLES program got up and running, the considerations that were involved, the difficulties that were faced, and the successfulness of the outcome.

Marshall's aim in sharing his knowledge and experience is to help other elementary schools establish their own foreign language programs. By speaking at the University of Pittsburgh campus, Marshall hopes to spread the word to educators at Pitt as well as in the local school districts in order to extend the desire and concern for creating foreign language elementary school programs. As Marshall sees it, "The U.S. has spent too much time disregarding the importance of foreign language education in its schools. It is time the nation fully recognizes the need for bilingual citizens and takes effective steps to achieve this goal. This all starts with foreign language programs in elementary schools."

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For more information on this upcoming event, as well as information on the Clear Valley School District's FLES program, please contact Judy Sanders at 762-813-2726 or direct your emails to jsanders@clearvalley.edu.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM IN GREEN ACRES SCHOOLS

Green Acres School District's Plans Set for Implementing Foreign Language Immersion Program in Elementary Schools

Pittsburgh, PA --- Jan. 14, 2008 --- On Tuesday evening, January 8, 2008, the school board meeting, held at Green Acres High School, came to a satisfying close. After three months of deliberation, the Green Acres School Board finally approved all program plans for incorporating a foreign language immersion program into the curriculums of each of the district's three elementary schools.

Green Acres is a fairly large school district, located approximately 2 hours north-west of Pittsburgh. The district has been highly concerned with foreign language matters for a number of years. The newly approved foreign language immersion program, which had been discussed within the district for the past five years, will start with the 2008-2009 school year. An immersion program is a type of language program in which the foreign language is used as the medium through which other subjects are taught. This type of program differs from the more commonly used Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) program in which classes are taught in English with the foreign language being taught for a certain amount of time each day. Partial immersion programs fall in between these previously mentioned types. With a partial immersion program, roughly half of a school's curriculum is taught in the foreign language while the other half is composed of formal language instruction.

The idea for a foreign language program in the elementary school developed as increasing numbers of Green Acres' educators and parents expressed their concern that students were not having success with language acquisition when they started at the middle school level. By citing current knowledge and studies, both groups convinced the school board that kindergarten was the best time for students to begin foreign language studies.

During the planning phase, several key issues were discussed. These issues included which language would be incorporated in the program, what type of program it would be—an immersion, Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES), or partial immersion program)—how funding would be obtained for the program, and if local support was present for the program. Spanish and French were chosen for the program since both languages were already being taught at the secondary level.

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In regards to which type of program, an immersion program was decided upon, because studies have shown that this is the most successful type of program when the goal is to acquire language proficiency in speech and comprehension. Funding was covered mainly through government aid and generous local donors. Finally, from the results of public surveys, the majority of the local population was enthusiastically in favor of the new program.

The program will be the first of its kinds in north-western Pennsylvania. Neighboring school districts have directed their attention to Green Acres' plan, and many express desires of following Green Acres' lead.

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For more information on developments of the program contact Jane Withers at 412-882-4762 or direct emails to janewithers@gmail.com.

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LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES FROM KINDERGARTEN ON TO BE RELEASED THIS SUMMER

Joanne Wilson's New Book on Foreign Language Education in Elementary Schools Set for Release on Jun. 5, 2008

San Francisco, CA ---Feb. 12, 2008--- Joanne Wilson, author of *Language Learning Spans a Lifetime* and recognized scholar on second language learning, will have her second book released to the public in June. In her new book, *Learning Foreign Languages From Kindergarten On*, Wilson supports and promotes the introduction of foreign language programs into the curriculums of more U.S. primary schools. As Wilson sees it, the biggest reason that the U.S. is not a strongly bilingual country is that foreign language education is introduced too late in students' schooling experience. By the time foreign languages are introduced in most U.S. schools, that is, when students are approximately fourteen years of age, students are too old to acquire language skills effectively.

Learning Foreign Languages From Kindergarten On deals with the issue of foreign language instruction in elementary schools in the U.S. After observing the methods and perspectives regarding language learning in other countries, such as those in Europe, as compared to current practices in the U.S., Wilson was compelled to bring to the nation's attention the need for foreign language instruction at the primary level. "The U.S. lags far behind other countries in regards to bilingual capacities," states Wilson. "In many other countries, especially those in Europe, a majority of the population is bilingual. In the U.S. the bilingual population is the minority. To put it frankly, over half of citizens in the European Union report that they are bilingual, whereas in the U.S. only a mere 9% make this claim. With these embarrassing discrepancies in mind, I feel that it is time that the U.S. put more emphasis towards foreign language education than it has in the past."

Throughout the 30 chapters of her book, Wilson emphasizes the need for U.S. schools to incorporate foreign language learning into elementary school curricula. She explains the importance of starting children with learning a second language beginning in kindergarten and then sustaining second language instruction throughout students' time in school. She explains the benefits of this approach as well as gives examples of European schools which adhere to this method.

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Wilson's purpose in writing this book is to motivate members of the U.S. public and educational professionals to take action in the effort to establish strong foreign language programs in U.S. schools. The goal is to direct people's attention to the need for bilingualism in U.S. society and how it can be achieved.

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For more information about Joanne Wilson's book, *Learning Foreign Languages From Kindergarten On*, contact Susan Giles at 732-527-8220 or via email, sgiles@languagelearning.org, or find information on the web at www.languagelearninginprimaryschool.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPEAKER ON ISSUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

Westchester University will Host Speaker on the Importance of Learning Foreign Languages Early in School

Dayton, OH --- Dec. 12, 2007 --- Today's question for foreign language programs is: Does age play a significant role in the manner and/or success of second language acquisition? Dr. Steven Glower strongly believes that the answer is yes. Dr. Steven Glower is a graduate and employee of the University of Pittsburgh. He works both as a professor and a head of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's research department on neuroscience and linguistic development. With a masters degree in both linguistics and neuroscience, Dr. Glower comes with a wealth of knowledge on the issue of foreign language learning among children.

This Thursday at 10 am, Dr. Glower will share his insight on this issue by giving a lecture, which is open to the public, at Westchester University. Highlights of this presentation will include the reasoning behind why Dr. Glower sees early language instruction as essential to effective acquisition of a language. He will be discussing the lateralization that occurs in the developing brain, finishing around the age of fourteen, as well as brain plasticity, both of which play an important role in the developing of language skills.

With the fact that the U.S. is at the fore-front of such medical knowledge and research, it is astounding that the practice of introducing foreign languages at the elementary level has not been aggressively pursued. Dr. Glower hopes that by tailoring his message to a non-medical audience he will better succeed at passing on the importance of this data and the impact it could have on educating the nation's youths. His presentation is especially directed at educational professionals and those in government positions that could have an active hand in promoting the development of foreign language education programs in elementary schools. "It would be wonderful to see, within the upcoming years, a move towards starting children with foreign language studies during the years when they can benefit the most," Glower says. "In this way, our nation has hopes of increasing its bilingual population." When speaking about the bilingual population, Dr. Glower is referring to members of the population who are fluent in a second language. Dr. Glower goes on to say that with all the researching efforts that have been done, he hopes to see the results translate over into public usage.

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For more information regarding Dr. Glower's guest appearance, please contact Dave Owens at 527-476-9543 or by sending emails to the address of daveowens@westchester.edu.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Foreign Language Educators and Authorities From Across the Globe Will Meet to Speak about Foreign Language Education at the Primary Levels

Pittsburgh, PA---Mar. 17, 2008--- The importance of acquiring competence in a second language has continued to exert itself over the past years and is expected to dramatically increase in the upcoming years. With the state of today's global society, it will be essential for today's youths to master a language other than their native language. However, the U.S. as a nation has been slow to appreciate this urgency.

On Monday, April 7, 2008, authorities on teaching foreign languages, from the U.S. and abroad, will be present at the Convention Center in Downtown Pittsburgh to discuss foreign language education in elementary schools to those interested in seeing this become a reality for schools in Western Pennsylvania. Currently, the majority of schools in Western Pennsylvania follow curricula in which foreign language education is set to begin at the secondary level, that is, during middle. Research and studies on second language learning have proven this method to be ineffective when compared to second language introduction at the primary level, that is, in elementary school.

At the conference, various representatives from elementary schools, including those from California, England, Italy, Germany, India, Japan, and China, will speak on the success achieved through their elementary school's foreign language programs. Also present at the conference will be scholars from top universities, such as Stanford, Princeton, Yale, Oxford, UCLA, the University of Georgetown, and the University of Pittsburgh, who will present the most recent theories on foreign language education and the development of second languages in individuals.

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For more information on this event, please contact Elizabeth Barsotti at 412-882-7652 or direct emails to ebarsotti@gmail.com. In addition, you may find more information on the web at www.internationallanguageconference.org.

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