



FACT SHEET

Second Language Education in BC

- < Heritage / International languages are languages other than English or French that are taught by non-profit schools/programs outside of the provincial curriculum. Heritage / International languages can also be referred to as second or additional languages.
- < A typical school will hold its classes on weekends or after-school or evenings during the week, and is run by volunteer administrators and instructors. After-school, weekday evening and Saturday language programs not only have the positive benefit of language acquisition and/or retention, but also provide for a safe and constructive activity outside of school hours for children and youth.
- < The Society for the Advancement of International Languages (SAIL BC) advocates as a voice for linguistic communities and language programs across the province.
- < SAIL BC was established to meet the expressed needs of the various language communities in our province, while at the same time, striving for the recognition of linguistic diversity for the social and economic well-being of the province.
- < BC has approximately **250 +** after-school, evening, and weekend community-based programs involved in the teaching of second languages.
- < In addition, there are approximately **35,000+** second language learners in supplementary schools/programs with **over 1,000** instructors and volunteers involved in the delivery of these language programs across the province.
- < Parents enroll their children in language classes for a variety of reasons: for family continuity of communication with relatives, for positive self-identity and self-confidence, academic enrichment, cultural enhancement, and active participation within their communities.
- < Second languages offered within the public school setting include: Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese), German, Italian, Japanese, Punjabi, Russian, and Spanish. BCHLA works closely with various school districts across the province to ensure that a choice of languages is offered within the public school system.

- < Languages and linguistic communities that are offered in heritage/international language programs (outside the public school setting) include: Arabic, Amharic, Armenian, Burmese, Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Dari and Pashtu, Farsi, Finnish, German, Greek, Gujerati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Kurdish, Nepali, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Sinhala, Somalian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Trigrigna, Twi, Fanti, Ewe, Ga, Akwapim, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Benefits of Second Language Education

Second language education is a vital component of, in the Minister of Educations words, 'ensuring that every graduate has a solid foundation of core studies under their belt when they graduate and better preparing students for employment and post-secondary options.'

Intellectual Benefits of Second Language Education

- Provides individuals with opportunity to communicate effectively in more than one language. (CLA)
- Learning a second language extends skills, knowledge, processes and concepts previously learned. (BCATML, 2002)
- Acquiring a second language develops methods of inquiry associated with knowledge of formal disciplines. (Ibid)
- Acquiring a second language extends an individual's capacity for creative/critical thought within the context of language literature. (Mollica, 1996)
- Learning a second language develops a lifelong appreciation and curiosity about the world. (Ibid)
- Learning more than one language heightens the learner's ability to call into play a variety of learning configurations which would otherwise be limited. (Ibid)
- Second language training shows bilingual education leads to enhanced learning outcomes in both the dominant language and related areas of cognitive development/knowledge acquisition. (Danesi, 1996)
- Academic performance will improve for any child who studies another language in elementary school because language lies at the base of cognition. (Ibid)

Social Benefits of Second Language Education

- In an increasingly interdependent world the skills of bilingual or multilingual individuals will be in demand and can greatly benefit society. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1994)

- Second language education gives one an insight into different cultures and ways of organizing knowledge. (Cummins, 1996)
- The self concept of a second language student is significantly higher than non-second language students. (Mollica, 1998)
- Students with no prior knowledge of a particular language who wish to study it for enrichment purposes can benefit from the program by increasing their linguistic repertoire and greatly extending their awareness, understanding and appreciation of communities and cultures beyond their immediate environment. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1994)

Economic Benefits of Second Language Education

- Mastering a second language allows individuals to have more flexibility when dealing with change in the workplace. (CLA)
- Knowing a second language provides for greater educational and career opportunities. (Southern Alberta Heritage Language Association, 1999)
- If BC is to continue to capitalize on its location on the Pacific Rim for the purposes of developing international trade, success depends largely on the ability of individuals to communicate with and understand the culture of the countries with which they are dealing. (David Kilgour, M.P., 2001)
- A diverse workforce capable of delivering products and services to a global consumer group is also important in attracting investment and tourism to the province. (Alberta 1994 Report Plan)

In summary, there can be no question as to the intrinsic educational value of second language education in the overall growth and development of our youth both in BC and across the country.