



# Green Bay, Wisconsin: FLES Programs and the business community. Is there a connection?

❖ Ashley M. Butler and Pauline E. Basurto ❖ Department of Foreign Languages ❖ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Contact: butlerm@uwec.edu

## Introduction

- In Green Bay, Wisconsin, elementary schools offer foreign languages or FLES programs in French, German and Spanish. The school the student attends determines the language the student will learn in grades K-5.
- Early foreign language training (K-5) plays a vital role in student choice to continue foreign language study in middle school and beyond.
- An influx of Mexican and Central American immigrants to the Midwest has launched Spanish into common usage in the Green Bay business community.

## Questions

1. Should second language acquisition be mandated in K-5 schools in order to prepare students for the workplace?
2. Do FLES programs assist Spanish-speaking students in obtaining jobs in Green Bay, Wisconsin?

## Methods

- The study surveyed students and teachers of Spanish in grades 3-12 at public schools in Green Bay.
- Teachers were asked qualitative questions about second-language acquisition.
- Business professionals from the Green Bay area were interviewed to determine if bilingual applicants were viewed more favorably than monolingualists.



## Results

- Of sample size 590 students:
- 63% of seniors in high school who are still learning Spanish began in kindergarten – grade 5.
- Of those seniors, 72% plan on continuing Spanish-language acquisition beyond high school.
- Of those seniors, 84% attribute early Spanish-language acquisition (K-5) to their desire to continue the language.
- Results from business surveys were inconclusive.

## Conclusions

- Results suggest a link between Spanish-language acquisition in grades K-5 and continued foreign language study choices in middle school, high school, and college.
- The earlier the student starts to learn Spanish, the more likely they are to continue study the language.

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