

FINGERTIP FACTS

National K-12 Foreign Language Survey

Trends Over a Decade: 2008 vs. 1997

NATIONAL K-12
FOREIGN
LANGUAGE
SURVEY
CAL
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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Amount of Instruction

Fewer elementary schools are teaching foreign languages than a decade ago: 25% vs. 31% of all elementary schools. This decline in language teaching has occurred mainly in public elementary schools; the percentage of private schools teaching languages has remained about the same. The number of **middle schools** offering languages has also decreased (58% vs. 75%). The number of **high schools** teaching foreign languages has stayed steady over the past decade (about 91%).

Languages of Choice

Spanish continues to be the favorite in elementary and secondary schools, taught at 88% and 92% of schools, respectively, that offer languages. **Chinese and Arabic** are offered at more elementary and secondary schools than a decade ago. Traditional favorites, French and German, are offered at fewer schools than a decade ago. Latin is down at the secondary level but up at the elementary level.

Use of Foreign Language in the Classroom

Teachers use **more of the foreign language** for instruction in the classroom than a decade ago. About one third of elementary and secondary schools say that their teachers use the language 75% or more of the class time. In 1997, only 22% of secondary schools reported using the foreign language 75% or more of the time. (Elementary schools were not asked the question previously.)

No Child Left Behind

One third of public elementary and secondary schools with language programs say that **foreign language instruction has been affected by NCLB legislation**. Schools cite mostly negative influences that affect the quantity and quality of language instruction: intense focus on tested subjects (mathematics and reading) to the detriment of other subjects, and shortage of highly qualified language teachers.

Integration of Standards

Language teachers use the **National Standards for Foreign Language Learning** and/or state standards in their teaching more than they did a decade ago. Standards use has increased from 58% to 76% in public elementary schools and from 58% to 89% in public secondary schools.

Data were collected for the National K-12 Foreign Language Survey during the 2007-2008 school year. Replicating previous CAL language surveys (1987 and 1997), the survey was sent to a nationally representative sample of over 5,000 public and private elementary and secondary schools. Principals and language teachers were asked to respond to a 4-page questionnaire. A response rate of 76% was obtained. Margin of sampling error is +/- 5%. Funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Education, Title VI, International Research and Studies Program.

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