

Governor's Weekly Message Transcript: World Languages for Worldwide Jobs

This week, I am at William Lewis Dual Language Elementary School in Wilmington. In just a few weeks, Delaware's first group of young students here and elsewhere will begin learning in Spanish and in Chinese, as kindergartners and first-graders become part of our inaugural World Language Immersion program. We have fifteen teachers from China and Spain helping our State Dept of Education get the program underway.

As I mentioned in my State of the State earlier this year, this program is a critical part of preparation for the future. We know when these students grow up, they will be competing for jobs in the global marketplace and when employers choose where to locate jobs, they will look at where employees have the skills to communicate across markets. That will mean fluency in not one, but two or three languages. And so, we begin four World Language Immersion programs this year, involving over 340 Delaware students.

As we add programs, we estimate we will reach more than 10-thousand students over the next ten years. What's great about the immersion model is that students acquire their second language through core subject areas: they learn math, science and social studies (as well as grammar) in their second or third language.

And, the caliber of professionals leading this work is outstanding. Some are seasoned Delaware educators and other have come from across the country and around the globe to take part in this exciting opportunity. All have stepped up to the challenge to rethink how we prepare Delaware students for jobs

of the future. I know this year will bring successes and challenges and will be critical to how we shape this initiative in the years ahead. By 9th grade, we expect every student in the program to be sufficiently proficient that they can take and pass Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese or Spanish, after which they can continue their language study in a Delaware higher education institution or begin study of a second world language.

The benefits will go beyond their mastery of a second language, and the advantage they will have in an increasingly global job market. Research has also shown that language study improves academic performance, builds socio-cultural awareness and enhances cognitive abilities. Ultimately, we know that to prepare our kids for the jobs of the future, we can't keep doing things the way they've always been done.

With this new initiative, coupled with our statewide efforts to increase instructional rigor, school support and educator accountability, we know our schools will serve students differently. So to the pioneer staff, teachers and students of our new World Language Immersion program, I say "*buena suerte*" and "*zhu ni haoyun*" – good luck – this school year as you help to keep Delaware moving forward.