

Compelling reasons to go into language teaching

ACTFL website <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/Index.cfm?pageID=4498>

Discover Language Teaching!

We all can remember a teacher who made a difference in our lives! And chances are that current language teachers were inspired by one of their own language teachers. With our vision to make language learning opportunities available to all children in U.S. schools comes an obligation to make sure that the language classrooms they will enter are staffed with highly qualified language professionals! As part of the celebration of February as **Discover Languages** month, language educators at all levels of instruction are asked to set aside a few minutes to talk to their language students, either as a group, or as individuals, about the benefits of following a career path into teaching languages. Here are some talking points that may help you with this discussion!

Language Teaching as an Intrinsically Rewarding Career

Language teachers not only contribute to their students' intellectual development but they also contribute to broadening their views about the world by

- Encouraging respect for people from other cultures
- Developing cultural literacy about other cultures as well as their students' own culture
- Expanding students' knowledge about the target language as well as their native language
- Furthering the notion that their students are ambassadors of U.S. culture when interacting with people from other countries

Tangible Benefits of a Career in Language Teaching

Although teaching situations may vary widely, in general many language teachers

- Enjoy a substantial degree of job security with tenure or continuing contracts
- Accrue work benefits packages that include health insurance, retirement programs, increased salaries for advanced degrees, seniority or national board certification
- Receive professional development on a regular basis and other "on the job training" such as technology applications
- Develop sought-after skills such as clear communication, strong interpersonal skills, and language proficiency
- Benefit from a career that provides opportunities for summer travel/work abroad or other personal pursuits during academic recess

Unique benefits of a career in language teaching include

- Language-related travel with or without students, sometimes leading community groups abroad
- Invitations to host foreign dignitaries, sports figures, and other academics visiting their local communities
- Involvement in community projects related to other cultures, such as consulting on interpreting and translating, media, health, and legal issues.
- Sense of satisfaction that teaching languages to students increases the U.S. economic, security, political, and social capabilities worldwide

And, finally, the best benefit of all—seeing the eyes of students light up as they understand, sense, realize, believe, the power of language learning and cultural understanding! It's the greatest feeling in the world!

Adapted with permission from an article written by Sheri Spaine Long, University of Alabama Birmingham, entitled "Visions' of K-12 Foreign Language Teacher Recruitment in Higher Education" as part of the New Visions Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force project.