



How Rural Schools are Connecting Students to Global Experiences

Technology helps school districts expand foreign language offerings despite time, resource and funding challenges.

Like many small, rural schools, Colorado's Aspen Academy struggled to provide foreign language learning. With just one Spanish teacher for approximately 400 students and limited time for foreign language study, the school had a hard time delivering a structured and consistent approach that's vital to student success.

"Our school is focused primarily on core subjects, so there wasn't a lot of time dedicated to foreign language in the classroom," says Aspen Academy teacher Sydney Harper. "It became really difficult for students to retain anything, or to come back after the summer and build on what they had learned the year before."

Rural Challenges

According to national education nonprofit group Project Tomorrow, bilingualism and multiculturalism are now considered assets, even requirements, to successfully participate in academic and business discourse in the global economy. In other words, the expansion of the global economy will require students to communicate and collaborate with people from all over the world. Educating students to be proficient in these global competencies is crucial. But doing so requires a shift from traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Among those shifts: increased access to foreign language learning opportunities at all levels of education.

However, school districts often face challenges expanding language education, including a national teacher shortage, time limitations and

budget restrictions. For rural districts, these challenges can be even more pronounced.

Rural communities and school districts typically have fewer higher education institutions. This results in a smaller pool of teachers and reduced availability of subject matter experts.

In addition, the low-density and large geographic areas that characterize rural school systems tend to reduce program offerings and resource management.

"Options such as concentrating resources, utilizing economies of scale and program placement in alternative locations are not logistically or financially feasible," according to *Preparing for Tomorrow, Everywhere*, a paper produced jointly by Project Tomorrow and Rosetta Stone Education.

The lack of social, economic and academic diversity makes it more difficult for rural school systems to meet the demands for global education.

Technology can offer a viable solution to these challenges by increasing access to content, providing instantaneous translation and enabling videoconferencing capabilities. With these resources, rural schools can provide more robust foreign language learning and better prepare to meet the demands of 21st-century globalization.

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HOW ROSETTA STONE SOLUTIONS HELP SCHOOLS OVERCOME COMMON FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING BARRIERS

TIME:

Rosetta Stone® programs can be implemented standalone during class or lab time, or fully blended into classroom instruction. For example, students can work as a group using software in the classroom and then log in from a mobile device to continue learning after class. This allows them to progress in a more steady, structured manner because they can dedicate more time to foreign language learning.

LACK OF RESOURCES:

Rosetta Stone programs don't replace teachers, but they can be integrated into existing curriculum or used as a supplement. Or, they can be served to students online with a proctor. Because the programs include training, implementation and support services for teachers and administrators, teachers can guide students through foreign

language learning — even if they aren't qualified to teach the language.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING:

Rosetta Stone programs provide quantitative data to enable a more personalized learning experience and allow teachers to monitor student progress. Teachers can produce reports showing how many hours a student focused on language during a particular week, the student's learning goals and week-to-week progress. That data can also be shared with parents.

For instance, access to data allowed Aspen Academy to offer more personalized learning. The school previously offered only fifth- and sixth-grade Spanish. Now the school offers eight Spanish classes for four different grade levels.

“The data we were able to collect so easily and seamlessly opened up a whole new world of language levels that we've never been able to offer before,” says Aspen Academy's Harper. “It separates the outliers and tells me immediately which students are ready for the next level and which students need to spend more time practicing before they move on.”

PROCUREMENT:

Rosetta Stone works with schools on strategies to streamline procurement and align key product features to district and Department of Education priorities. Rosetta Stone also offers different levels of purchasing. A school or district can purchase licenses to implement a Rosetta Stone program in just one school or district-wide.

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“It is difficult to find enough time for students to practice their speech in a traditional class,” Harper says. “The Rosetta Stone program gives them that additional time in a personalized manner. Students can practice and receive feedback on their speech. It expands the possibilities without the need to extend the school day.”

Aspen's experience shows the power of using innovative digital content to supplement foreign language curriculum. As foreign language skills become crucial to success in a global economy, this approach can help improve learning and level the playing field for rural schools and districts.

Using computer-based foreign language instruction, such as the Rosetta Stone Language Learning Suite,

rural districts can expand world language opportunities for students despite limited resources and staff.

Technology-Based Language Learning in Action: Gateway Academy

At Gateway Academy, a private K-12 school outside Scottsdale, Ariz., learning a second language is requirement.

Gateway, which serves students with high-functioning autism, implemented Rosetta Stone digital language learning programs in 2016 to make more languages available to students. Students in grades K-5 learn Spanish, while students in middle school can choose among French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese or Russian. Students in grades 9 through 12 can study Japanese, Russian, Korean, Hebrew or any of the other more than 21 languages Rosetta Stone offers.

WHY FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS KEY TO FUTURE SUCCESS

Researchers have shown that the bilingual brain can have better attention and task-switching capacities than the monolingual brain, thanks to its developed ability to inhibit one language while using another.¹

Therese Sullivan Caccavale, president of the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), says foreign language learning is much more a cognitive problem-solving activity than a linguistic activity.

“Studies have shown repeatedly that foreign language learning increases

critical thinking skills, creativity and flexibility of mind in young children,” says Caccavale. “Students who are learning a foreign language out-score their non-foreign language learning peers in the verbal and, surprisingly to some, the math sections of standardized tests.”

Beyond the cognitive benefits, learning a foreign language is also an important factor for working in an increasingly diverse, global economy.

According to Project Tomorrow’s Speak Up Research Project for Digital Learning released in September 2017,

many parents already understand, at least to some degree, the importance of including foreign language in education today.²

Fifty-one percent of parents said the ability to communicate in more than one language is an important skill for children to be successful in college and the workplace.

The Speak Up data came from more than 500,000 surveys taken by K-12 students, educators and parents across the country from October 2016 through January 2017.

“We are a small school, with 95 students,” says Gateway Academy teacher Jessica Ahl. “Rosetta Stone allows kids to try out all these different languages. There’s no way we’d be able to hire and pay a teacher to teach each of these languages.”

Gateway students spend 40 minutes a day, up to five days a week, in an interactive world language lab where they use the digital program and receive supplemental instruction from a world language teacher.

Using a balance of in-person and online instruction, the Gateway world language program enables self-paced instruction to complement each student’s strengths and supports them in learning how to complete tasks. For students with high-functioning autism, customization is especially important, because they can become frustrated quickly, according to Ahl.

Expanding Student Opportunities

Students that master more than one language have been shown to improve problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. But given the growing emphasis on STEM, as well as challenges around funding, time and teacher resources, foreign language classes in some schools have been reduced or eliminated altogether.

For rural schools, the problem can be even more significant. Fortunately, Rosetta Stone provides schools an opportunity to enhance their foreign language offerings and better prepare students for the challenges of living and working in the global economy.

ENDNOTES

1. The Dana Foundation, “The Cognitive Benefits of Being Bilingual,” http://dana.org/Cerebrum/2012/The_Cognitive_Benefits_of_Being_Bilingual/
2. Speak Up Research Project for Digital Learning, Project Tomorrow, <http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/>

For 25 years Rosetta Stone has provided K-12 educators with language-learning solutions that change their students’ lives. Our interactive programs help develop a learner’s natural ability to read, write, and speak with confidence in a new language. Learn how combining Rosetta Stone® Foundations with traditional language instruction complements any curriculum at <http://www.rosettastone.com/K12>.

