



BUILDING A GLOBALLY COMPETENT AND COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW'S WORLD

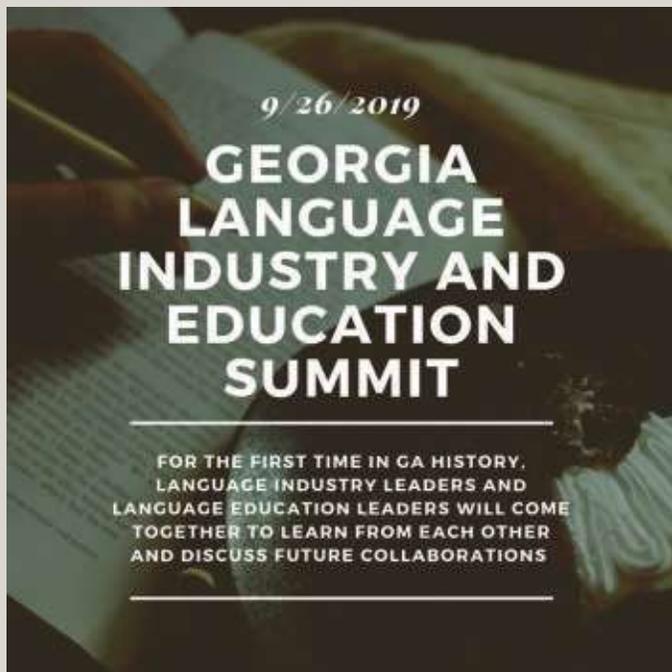
BY PATRICK WALLACE

Let me take a moment to tell you a bit about my home state. It is a place where partnerships, collaborations, and discussions are expanding around the topic of workforce development as it relates to building increased linguistic and intercultural competencies to meet rising demand and need; a place where students have the opportunity to use language skills in real ways to serve their communities and explore future career pathways using their language and intercultural skills, where K-12 language programs have seen continued growth; a place where Dual Language Immersion, International Baccalaureate, and online world language programs continue to thrive and expand; a place where two Seal programs aimed at recognizing and highlighting multilingual and intercultural competencies for the workforce have continued to grow in size.

Welcome to Georgia, home to the sixth largest school system in the nation.

As our economies and communities become more diverse and interconnected, like many states, Georgia is seeing an ever greater need to provide students with a base level of global awareness and competence. Global issues such as pollution and conservation, security and health, are increasingly manageable only through greater collaboration and cooperation with other communities, both domestic and abroad. This need was recently documented in the report, *Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers* (ACTFL, 2019).

"Employees who can speak multiple languages are an asset because they automatically open their organization to multiple markets due to their cultural adaptability. Such companies are more competitive than companies with employees who only speak one language," explains Alrene Barr,



TOP: Poster for the first meeting of the Georgia Language Industry and Education Summit in September 2019.

БОТТОМ: Attendees at the first meeting of the Georgia Language Industry and Education Summit in September 2019.



LEFT: Georgia Bilingual Seal



RIGHT: Georgia International Skills Diploma Seal

International Business director of Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, considered the world’s busiest airport. “The changing landscape of our interconnected global economy requires leaders who recognize the advantages that cultural diversity offers and seek to challenge their worldview,” adds Vanessa Ibarra, Director of the Mayor’s Office of International Affairs. “It is imperative that we support academic initiatives and workforce solutions that inspire students to build marketable global competencies and deepen their understanding of and ability to engage with people from other backgrounds. By adopting cultural competence and foreign language skills at various grade levels, students will further develop the tools needed to think independently, engage in global thinking, and be equipped to become agents of change.”

In 2015, the Academy of Arts and Sciences created a national commission to examine the current state of language education, project what the nation’s education needs will be in the future, and offer recommendations for ways to meet those needs. The resulting report, *America’s Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century* (2017) highlights the need to build global competence. As Georgia’s communities continue to grow and become more diverse, as the state’s international connections continue to expand, the need for individuals who can navigate and connect across cultures, languages, and communities also continues to grow.

“The American market is very large, and to some perhaps, a bit overwhelming,” says Nico Wijnberg, Director of International Relations and Chief of Protocol with the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). “For someone to be able to express themselves in their mother tongue increases their comfort level tremendously as they evaluate opportunities in different states. And in economic development, everything evolves around relationships. I believe speaking one or more languages other than English is an incredibly enriching and rewarding skill, and very much worth the investment as you spend time learning.”

What skills are needed and how do we define cross cultural competence? It is more than being respectful and aware of cultural differences and having knowledge of cultural customs and values. It is, at its heart, the ability to not only understand but also to actively and appropriately communicate and interact with people from diverse backgrounds.

Certainly, the mechanical skills of speaking, reading, and writing in a variety of languages with high proficiency and the resulting metalinguistic awareness that is gained through advanced language training is a critical component of achieving greater cultural competence, but this is not the only piece of the puzzle. The skills needed also include the ability to understand the framework of one’s own world view within the context of the greater global community. They include the ability to connect and work with people at all levels and from various cultural backgrounds to accomplish common goals, which is in turn related to how well we understand and can interact with the people from those cultures. Team building across cultures, languages, nations, time frames, and continents is an increasing necessity in our globally connected digital and physical world.

“In my opinion, language skills and intercultural competence are equally advantageous skills for an employee to have, but they express themselves differently,” reflects Michael Theisen-Jones, Senior Manager for Global Business with the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. “Hiring employees who speak multiple languages is a concrete benefit for organizations that engage in international business. The benefits of intercultural competence are more subtle and harder to define. Intercultural competence defines the way an employee operates. It improves the ability to think outside the box by understanding and respecting how others operate and think. It might even make it easier for an employee to adapt to changing environments, both within and outside an organization. Intercultural competence also goes hand in hand with skills commonly required by employers such as critical thinking, creativity, and open communication.”

Josip Tomasevic, Senior Vice President of AGCO Corporation (a global agricultural equipment manufacturer headquartered in the Atlanta area) provides further insight into the advantages that multilingual employees bring to a company. “We have much experience in this area and thus have reason to believe that employees who are able to speak at least one additional language fluently tend to be more open-minded, more interculturally savvy, and therefore perform better on internationally diverse teams. This significantly improves the outcomes of these projects and the overall results. Not only does an additional language help generate more job offerings and opportunities, it also helps them advance faster and climb up the career ladder faster.”

An increasing number of Georgia business ventures are operating internationally, dependent upon international trade and/or direct foreign investment, and are serving an increasingly international and multilingual domestic population. The *2019 Georgia Annual Trade Report* highlights Georgia’s continued growth in global connectivity. “International trade is vital to the resilience and competitiveness of Georgia’s economy, and it involves businesses in every corner of the state,” states the Deputy Commissioner for Trade at GDEC. “In fact, companies in 95% of Georgia counties are active in international trade. This diversity is reflected in the state’s annual export numbers and shows that companies across Georgia are involved. Last year, a significant percentage of the dollar value of Georgia exports came from companies located outside of the metro Atlanta region. This includes the state’s agricultural exports, which account for more than \$4 billion per year. The benefits of exporting are not limited to companies located in a major metro area. Companies that export are able to diversify risk, expand revenue, and typically grow faster than companies solely focused on the U.S. market.”

International Skills Diploma Seal

Georgia’s International Skills Diploma Seal, first established in 2015, was created in response to this need. The program has continued to succeed and grow. The number of high schools participating is now 106, and nearly 1,000 seniors graduated with this important and unique seal on their diploma in 2019.

The International Skills Diploma Seal is awarded to graduating high school students who complete an international education curriculum and engage in extracurricular activities and experiences that foster the achievement of global competencies. It is a signal to employers and higher education institutions that a student is prepared to participate in the global economy.

Curriculum Requirements to Earn the Georgia International Skills Diploma Seal

World Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three credits in the same world language and/or ESOL (Language Pathway Completer)
International Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least four credits for courses determined to have an international focus, such as international economics, world/non-U.S. history, world geography, etc. • At least four extracurricular activities and experiences with global themes and/or in global contexts (i.e., exchange programs, international and language clubs, travel abroad) • Twenty hours of community service involving a global/cross-cultural public service project • Capstone presentation on the knowledge gained in the courses and activities listed above

As one recent graduate explained, “Earning the ISDS is something I have worked towards since the 10th grade. Going through the process of earning the seal allowed me to delve deeper into my own culture and really connect with my heritage. International skills are of great importance for not just any career, but also to better understand the world around us.” Additional comments by other recent ISDS graduates are posted at tinyurl.com/y8tj5ncg.

Seal of Biliteracy

Georgia’s Seal of Biliteracy program, established by law in 2016, has also grown in both the number of districts participating (41 at the completion of the 2018 academic year) and the number of students awarded this recognition (more than 2,265 to date). In Georgia, the proficiency target required to earn the Seal has been set at Intermediate-High on the ACTFL scale and last year a record number of students received this seal in a record number of languages. This year, Georgia will award its first Seal of Biliteracy in Turkish. Nationally, 40 states now have laws establishing similar Seals of Biliteracy to recognize students who achieve high levels of proficiency in a wide variety of languages.



TOP: Poster for *The Future of Atlanta's Global Workforce* conference in February 2020.

БОТТОМ: Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and State School Superintendent Richard Woods at *The Future of Atlanta's Global Workforce* conference in February 2020.

Georgia Department of Education World Languages and Global Workforce Resources

- Georgia Seal of Biliteracy (tinyurl.com/ybf37syx)
- Georgia International Skills Diploma Seal (tinyurl.com/jongnoc)
- Georgia Dual Language Immersion Initiative (tinyurl.com/jcsoocm)
- GaDOE World Languages Professional Development (tinyurl.com/y8y2hmr3)
- Georgia Global Workforce and International Education Resources (tinyurl.com/ybfa3lf5)

Atlanta Global Studies Center (AGSC)

Through our work with the Atlanta Global Studies Center (atlantaglobalstudies.gatech.edu), a U.S. Department of Education Title VI Center, we have engaged in numerous initiatives to support and promote increased linguistic and intercultural education for Georgia students.

One such initiative, the Greater Atlanta Coalition for Global Education and Research known as GAcGEAR (atlantaglobalstudies.gatech.edu/GAcGEAR) mobilizes federally and state-supported entities that promote linguistic and global competence in an ambitious, collaborative effort to expand capacity for global and intercultural engagement throughout the Greater Atlanta region. It seeks to align K–20 global educational programs in the region with the greater international economic efforts currently underway by numerous state and local agencies by fostering a dialogue to create a unified education and economic vision for workforce development in the area of language education and global competencies.

“The Greater Atlanta region provides one of the richest ecosystems in the country to build impactful work on developing the skills our students across the K–20 spectrum need to be socially responsible global citizens who can navigate various contexts and cultures while pursuing a variety of successful careers,” says Sebnem Ozkan, AGSC Associate Director. “Our work through GAcGEAR reaffirms that investment in advanced language training and global competence is a winning strategy in workforce development that responds to a critical industry demand, now more than ever.”

Other initiatives between the Georgia Department of Education World Languages and Global Workforce Initiatives and the AGSC include the development of course projects and lessons in less commonly taught languages; a K–12 workshop day at the annual Atlanta Global Studies Center Symposium; and hosting an International Skills Diploma Seal Awards Ceremony to honor STAR ISDS students and participating systems. A more complete list of partner initiatives and more detailed explanations of them are posted at atlantaglobalstudies.gatech.edu/gadoc.

CULTR

Ongoing collaboration with the Center for Urban Language Teaching and Research, or CULTR (cultr.gsu.edu), the first Language Resource Center in the southeastern United States, has allowed us to support a number of their initiatives that directly address questions of employability, language skills, and cultural competence in the state of Georgia and beyond.

These include the annual World Languages Day, which is regularly attended by more than 1,000 area world language students. This event includes an innovative career fair that is attended and supported by companies such as Mercedes Benz, UPS, and Delta Airlines, as well as a host of nonprofit and governmental agencies. Participating organizations connect with high school and college students with the message that employees who are globally competent and proficient in languages other than English help them further their business goals, reach international markets, and make a difference in an increasingly interconnected world.

CULTR also hosts teacher workshops, the innovative THRIVE video series (cultr.gsu.edu/thrive-videos) aimed at promoting teacher retention on a national level, and many other collaborative opportunities. In the words of Director Dr. Bill Nichols, “CULTR is committed to the ideal that students with language ability and cultural competence make our economy stronger, our nation safer, and our communities more welcoming.”

Language Industry and Education Summits

Over the past year, GaDOE World Languages (gadoe.org) has also initiated a series of language industry and education summits that seek to foster dialogue between the language service and education communities. These have led to increased collaboration with Georgia language service providers: the ASL interpreting community, the Office of Court Professionals (tinyurl.com/ybfmkn7e), the Medical Interpreters Network of Georgia (mingweb.org), and the Atlanta Association of Interpreters and Translators (aait.org), as well as the world language educational community. Lindsey Cambardella, CEO of Translation Station, explains, “As a language service provider (interpretation and translation), we support many critical industries—medical, legal, and education, to name a few. Our linguists provide the necessary language and culture bridges for people when they are in important and often vulnerable situations.”

The need for highly trained and proficient bilingual talent also extends to the court system. “States like Georgia, where we don’t have enough licensed interpreters, would dramatically benefit by creating a partnership with different school districts to create curricula that would prepare students to become court interpreters, a career that is essential for the courts’ function of equal access to justice,” says John Botero, Programs Manager for the Georgia Office of Court Professionals.

Workplace Spanish

Georgia also offers courses called **Workplace Spanish** and **Advanced Workplace Spanish**. Students learn specific, level-appropriate vocabulary and phrases related to the work environment associated with work safety and security, and simple directions needed to communicate with employees whose first language is Spanish. In both classes, emphasis is placed on oral and listening applications of the language in the workplace, especially as a means of achieving more functional cross-communication between English and Spanish speakers.

While the standards for these courses have yet to be defined, having the course codes provides the curricular freedom for area districts to explore opportunities to recruit talented bilingual students in their communities to provide much-needed services and respond to the organic needs of their communities.

These opportunities range from the establishment of language academies that allow native and non-native speakers to use language in authentic situations while filling needs in the community, to a high school program that is certified as a training program by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (cchcertification.org).

The structure and framework of these courses vary among school systems and can be designed for a mixture of heritage Spanish speakers as well as Spanish language learners. As these courses lack specific standards, program administrators have great flexibility in how they are structured and implemented across the state, and local educational agencies (districts/schools) can adapt the structure of these programs to best meet the needs of the community.

Some programs provide an opportunity for even beginning learners to engage with language in a more career-oriented, thematic fashion, such as learning the basic skills needed to communicate in Spanish with patients, clients, or employees in a variety of workplace settings. Other programs provide Advanced-level heritage speakers with the opportunity to explore career options and certifications using their language ability in a wide variety of career contexts.

GaDOE World Languages is dedicated to expanding opportunities for all students in the state of Georgia. We know that our state is a key player in the global economy, and that it benefits from a diverse population of residents who speak nearly every language heard on the planet. As the world becomes more interconnected, world language proficiency and intercultural competencies become more important than ever. These skills equip students with a broad perspective that nourishes innovation and adaptability in all fields and impacts Georgia’s global reach and connections.

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