

DATE:	October 9, 2008
TITLE:	Presentation by Cheryl Bennett, French teacher at Corydon Central High School, and Ryan Burton, president of the high school's French Club.
ABSTRACT:	A French teacher and a student give their compelling and surprising reasons for studying foreign languages.

Fun Fact Question:

On standardized tests (SATs), compared to students who do not study a foreign language, students who do study a foreign language (choose one)

- a. Score 25 points worse on math SATs*
- b. Score 200 points better on English SATs*
- c. Score 150 points better on math SATs*

You can choose which statistic makes you want to study a foreign language – 1. A study of 270 US dating agencies showed that people were more attractive to the opposite sex if they could speak a foreign language; or 2. a study in Britain showed that people who were bilingual were paid 12-20% more. These were just two of the statistics that Cheryl Bennett, French teacher at Corydon Central High School (CCHS), Corydon, IN, cited to show that students who study foreign languages outperform their peers.

Bennett was speaking at Community Unity's October meeting along with CCHS French Club student president Ryan Burton. Both he and Bennett talked about how studying French helps improve English. Burton said that some aspects of English grammar are clearer to him from studying French, for example direct and indirect objects. Even some English vocabulary is clearer to him, now that he knows the French counterpart. Burton also talked about how learning French, the second most spoken language in the world, has made him aware of foreign cultures (music, literature, etc.) "Reading a French author in French (such as Voltaire) is a whole new experience," he said. Learning French also has made Burton more compassionate to people who don't speak English and more aware of better enunciating his own English.

Both Bennett and Burton agreed that the biggest hindrance in learning a foreign language is fear. They noted the higher expectations in Europe of learning other languages. Bennett said that children who start learning a foreign language in kindergarten or first grade will do better than most students in all subjects by fifth grade. Though learning a language before adolescence has benefits, she encouraged everyone at any age to make the attempt to study another language – especially French!

Fun Fact Answer:

c. On standardized tests (SATs), students who study a foreign language on average score 150 points better on math SATs.

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