



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

February 1, 2013

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Discover Languages Month and National Foreign Language Week**

The Virginia Department of Education is pleased to announce that February has been designated as Discover Languages month by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Discover Languages is a national public awareness campaign that began in 2005: The Year of Languages. The Discover Languages Web site at <http://www.discoverlanguages.org> offers a variety of activities and contests that teachers may use to highlight and encourage language learning in their local schools and communities.

The week of March 4-10, 2013, has been designated as National Foreign Language Week. Alpha Mu Gamma foreign language honor society has sponsored National Foreign Language Week since 1957, and the theme for 2013 is "Foreign Languages: They Nourish the Brain!" For general information about the event and the annual poster, please visit their Web site at <http://www.lacitycollege.edu/academic/honor/amg/nflw.html>.

We encourage schools to use these opportunities to highlight the value of learning world languages and learning about other cultures, and to celebrate the successes of world language students and teachers. Many schools organize annual schoolwide activities during National Foreign Language Week, such as holding a parents' night with skits, songs, or other cultural student performances in various languages; providing international food tastings; sponsoring a poster contest based on the theme for the year; or designating language tables during lunch where only a target language may be spoken.

In today's increasingly interconnected world, Virginia's students must become informed global participants. Technological advances in communication within the last few years have brought the world into our homes. Combined with a renewed emphasis on international cooperation, it has never been more important for our students to learn additional languages. The benefits of proficiency in other languages range from the practicality of being able to communicate and efficiently conduct international business to supporting academic achievement and other cognitive benefits. Individuals who are proficient in other languages can better understand the world around them and their place in it. The Discover Languages Web page above maintains information about these and other benefits of language learning.

Virginia students have myriad opportunities to increase their proficiency in world languages. In addition to local course offerings, the Department of Education provides a variety of online language courses through Virtual Virginia at <http://www.virtualvirginia.org>, including Arabic, Chinese, French, Latin, and Spanish. The Governor's Foreign Language Academies have served over 7,500 talented high school students through intensive summer programs since their inception in 1987. For information about the Governor's Academies for French, German, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish, please visit the Department's Web site at [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/foreign\\_language/language\\_academies/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/foreign_language/language_academies/index.shtml). Additional

announcements related to foreign language initiatives are posted on the Teacher Direct Web site at:  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/teacher\\_direct/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/teacher_direct/index.shtml).

For further information, please contact Dr. Lisa Harris, specialist for foreign languages, Office of Humanities and Early Childhood, by e-mail at [Lisa.Harris@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Lisa.Harris@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at (804) 225-3666.

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