

UW-Madison: Paving the way to a world-ready Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Language Roadmap

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Madison – With over 70 percent of the world’s purchasing power outside of the United States, an increasing number of Wisconsin businesses are expanding internationally.

To ensure a world-ready workforce for businesses throughout the state, Wisconsin schools and postsecondary institutions must provide opportunities for students to develop advanced language and literacy skills in one or more languages in addition to English.

A new report, The Wisconsin Language Roadmap: Investing in Language Education for a World-Ready Wisconsin, provides strategic recommendations and concrete action items for strengthening world language education in the state.

Hundreds of Wisconsinites from across business, government, public health, community and education sectors contributed to the development of The Wisconsin Language Roadmap, which is published by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

In the report, Mark Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, points to the importance of a culturally competent and multilingual workforce for Wisconsin businesses to succeed internationally.

“Participation in the global market is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for

Wisconsin companies to remain competitive and grow,” said Hogan. “This is due to the tremendous shifts in middleclass growth outside of the United States.”

The core recommendations of the Wisconsin Language Roadmap aim to ensure Wisconsin’s future workforce and citizens are prepared to effectively compete in interconnected global markets, engage with diverse local communities and participate in professional and personal networks that cross linguistic, cultural and national boundaries.

“The most successful Wisconsin exporters have teams with effective language skills coupled with strong cultural competencies enabling more nuanced communications to facilitate better business interactions,” Hogan said.

The Wisconsin Language Roadmap also emphasizes the importance of providing language learning opportunities for all Wisconsin students to develop skills needed to succeed around the world.

Tony Evers, Governor-elect and Wisconsin State Superintendent for Public Instruction, notes in the report that “all students deserve equity in access to learning the languages of our local communities and the world. The world today is interconnected, interdependent and fiercely competitive. The best education prepares students for college and careers within our global community. Language and cultural learning are critical components of that preparation.”

Specific recommendations in the report are in three broad goal areas: leadership and advocacy for world language education, sustained development of language teacher talent, and equitable access to effective language education for all students. Next steps in the Wisconsin Language Roadmap project are to establish a Wisconsin Coalition to Advance Language Learning, to develop a plan to expand access to Dual Language Immersion programs in Wisconsin’s schools and to revise the state’s academic standards for world language learning.

The Wisconsin Language Roadmap Initiative is sponsored by The Language Flagship of the National Security Education Program in the U.S. Department of Defense, with substantial support from the University of Wisconsin-Madison International Division and the College of Letters & Science, and in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.



For more information on the Wisconsin Language Roadmap Initiative and for access to future resources for regional and local implementation, visit www.wisconsinlanguageroadmap.wisc.edu