

Celebrating Discover Languages® Month—

It's time once again to celebrate language learning, since February is designated as *Discover Languages* Month. The entire month is dedicated to the national public awareness campaign *Discover Languages... Discover the World!* Many language educators and their students have found ways to express the joys of learning another language during this event, but for those of you who haven't yet joined in the celebration, perhaps it is time to discover something else—how smooth and effortless it can actually be.

The first thing you need to know is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel, since so many ideas and resources are already available. You can create your own activities, or just put your personal spin on ones that have already been created by your fellow language educators. So get on board the *Discover Languages* Month bandwagon—first stops: the ACTFL and *Discover Language* websites. That's where you'll find that it is as easy as A, B, C.



www.DiscoverLanguages.org

A is for Advocacy

In these tough times, advocacy needs to be a year-round effort, but *Discover Languages* Month provides the perfect opportunity to step up the effort. A visit to the Advocacy section of the ACTFL website (www.actfl.org)—under “Membership”—will arm you with the techniques, research, and other resources you need. There are messages about the value of language education for

students and for the community, and you can select the ones that best meet your needs, since they are organized into categories such as Pre-K and elementary, middle school, high school, and college.

It is advocacy made easy, because you can select the appropriate message for the audience you are trying to reach (students, parents, business leaders, policy makers). You

can also build a powerful case for language education using the research in the Advocacy section under “Resources.” There is even more to be found on the *Discover Languages* website (www.DiscoverLanguages.org)—including sections on “What the Research Shows” and “Information for Parents.”

Our students are our most powerful advocacy tools, and many of them are communicating a message about the importance of language learning in their lives in the 21st century through the ACTFL National Student Video Podcast. This year's winners will be announced as part of the *Discover Languages* Month activities; look for follow-up information in a future issue of *The Language Educator*.

B is for Branding

It all starts with a great product, and we have one of the best around—world-class world language education. When public relations experts talk about branding, among the first things they mention are message and logo. When the *Discover Languages... Discover the World!* initiative began in 2005, both were created, and language educators across the country have been helping to build the brand ever since. They have been using the logo and the message it incorporates as part of the e-mail signature on their correspondence, and giving it visibility on bulletin boards and on handouts at back-to-school nights for parents. The logo is easy to obtain, since it can be downloaded from the website. (Note: ACTFL requires that you read the detailed guidelines for its use that are also on the website).

It's As Easy As



There are four easy ways to display the logo with the important message of *Discover Languages* Month:

Wear It!

Buttons
 Lapel Pins
 Caps
 Wristbands



Carry It!

Tote Bags
 Plastic Bags
 Organizers



Write It!

Pencils
 Ballpoint Pens
 Padfolio Writing Pad



Display It!

Posters
 Bumper Stickers
 Balloons



C is for Communication

ACTFL has already done much of the “heavy lifting” by creating a number of products and resources language educators can use in spreading the word about the benefits of learning a foreign language. There are three different print public service announcements (PSAs) available on the *Discover Languages* website. They are ready and waiting for you to download and use in newsletters and other publications that reach parents, school board members, policy makers, and others who are potential stakeholders in the education of children and in the economic future of the community. In 2008, in one state, these PSAs were downloaded, affixed to postcards, and mailed to state legislators to help get a bill passed that would benefit language education in the state.

There is also a video PSA available for download, and it features some very young children talking about how fun it is to learn another language. One boy even says, “It makes me confident,” and another notes the obvious but often overlooked point that, “Everybody in the world doesn’t speak English.” The voices are small but make a large and powerful advocacy tool for us to use in our efforts to promote language learning.

Suited to a T

The ways that language educators and their students mark *Discover Languages* Month are quite varied. Language pop quizzes have been done in past years by some schools and communities, and the *Discover Languages* website offers a comprehensive guide to accomplishing these, which is called *How to Stage a Discover Languages “Pop Quiz” in Your Community: A Handbook for Successful Media Events*. The very practical advice offered by the guide could be useful in other media events you might be interested in staging, so it is well worth checking out.

Some of the events held in previous years have been quite ambitious. For example, last year Nicole Naditz and her French students hosted a 24-hour streaming television broadcast from her classroom at Bella Vista High School in Fair Oaks, CA. While for some that may sound like a great idea to replicate, for others it may be a bit intimidating. There are many teachers who do less high-tech projects, such as decorating the hallways or even just creating a

bulletin board highlighting the importance of languages. Others have their students perform songs, dances, or poetry as a way of sharing with the school or the community what they have learned. The bulletin board, picture gallery, highlights, and featured websites sections that can be accessed from the *Discover Languages* home page have information about what other language educators have done as part of the celebration. Previous issues of *The Language Educator* have also detailed some of the events held around the country.

As we reported in the April 2008 issue, Kentucky’s Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) not only held events to promote world language education, but all of its schools were encouraged to highlight the benefits of language learning through activities such as making a school announcement in a language other than English and participating in the ACTFL Video Podcast Contest. There was also a World Languages in the Elementary Schools Showcase & Exposition, which demonstrated the students’ success, educated the parents about what it means to learn a foreign language in elementary school, and served as an advocacy tool for world language programs. Thomas Sauer, district world language specialist with JCPS, says, “These events are really not that much work and are easier to organize than you think—and the payoff is big. It’s an investment worth making.”

Sometimes creating a small project means developing something that can be built upon and expanded in future years. The important thing is to get started. With the resources and ideas already available, you can find something that will “suit you to a T” and will help you and your students celebrate the joys of learning another language while encouraging others to *Discover Languages... Discover the World!*