

SHOULD YOUR STUDENT TAKE 4 YEARS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

by Brannon Lloyd | Dec 6, 2014

A few days ago, I was talking with one of our clients about their daughter's Spanish classes. She is struggling (a little... she currently has a "B") with the class and they wanted to know if she should drop the class and take a different elective, perhaps one in which she could easily get an "A". Many students (and parents!) struggle with this question. They often wonder if taking two years of one language in high school is enough. Here's the thing – it's not just about the grade; it's about what your transcript is telling the admissions office. It's about the message you're sending; the message beyond what any transcript will ever show.



I was on the Texas Classical Society's website and came across a number of quotes from admissions personnel that specifically address this issue. Any time you can get inside the head of an admissions officer it's a valuable exercise. Remember, scholarships and grants are greatly influenced by how much interest the college or university has in your son or daughter. Any time you can give yourself a leg up over the competition you not only increase the likelihood of admission, you also increase the likelihood of receiving free money for college. I can't emphasize this point enough. Financial aid is often used as **MARKETING**.

So... having said that, here's what college admissions personnel are saying when they look at the language section of an applicant's high school transcript.

"[. . .] the student studying for four years has a genuine interest in knowledge and education, not just in fulfilling minimum foreign language requirements." – Matthew Potts, Admissions Counselor, University of Notre Dame

"We give the most consideration to students who have taken the highest level language available at their school." – Robert Killion, Office of Admissions, Haverford College

"Our recommendation is that, in terms of high school preparation, students take 4 years of a single language, believing that achieving proficiency in a language is preferable to not quite achieving proficiency in two." – Steve LeMenager, Director of Admissions, Princeton University

"[. . .] the more years of a language, the better—it shows that the student has gone beyond the minimum requirement." – Lia Brassord, Assistant Director of Admissions, Smith College

"While most colleges do not require four years of a language or a science for admission, dropping a discipline can be detrimental to a student's chances of being admitted. Admission Officers are looking for students who have challenged themselves in many areas. At the most competitive colleges in the country, Admission Officers are making distinctions between thousands of overly qualified applicants. In speaking with students about senior year course selection, we encourage students to think carefully before dropping a language." – Andrea Thomas, Assistant Dean of Admission, Hamilton College

“[. . .] depth and mastery are important in the serious study of any discipline. The student who is willing to do more than the minimum is always more appealing.” – Ray Brown, Dean of Admissions, Texas Christian University

“We look for at least three years of study of the same language for many of our programs. If not completed before admission, it must be made up with a year of college-level study.” – B.J. Ore, Sr. Associate Director of Admissions, University of Pittsburgh

“Ideally a student will present at least 4 years of the same language (classical or modern) if the curriculum allows.” – Terry Cowdrey, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, St. Lawrence University

“The more years in one language the better it shows commitment and desire for proficiency.” – Dennis O’Driscoll, Director of Admissions, Creighton University

“Three to four years of a language shows follow-through and a deeper level of interest.” – Michael C. Behnke, Vice President for Enrollment, University of Chicago

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<http://www.thecollegemoneyguys.com/should-you-or-your-student-take-4-years-of-foreign-language/>