1. **History and background**

Marcia Pantic is a foreign language and ESL teacher with many years of experience teaching adults.  From research data and her experience, people who begin studying as young children are more successful in learning a language compared to those that begin as an adult.  Her passion for teaching, foreign languages, and people inspired her to start a nonprofit organization called Parlamerica which addresses the language learning gap by teaching children in elementary school rather than later in high school. At the elementary school level, the number of language schools available for students is very limited and fee based. Foreign language programs offered in elementary schools are mainly before or after school programs along with a few bilingual and immersion schools in a few school districts. Most elementary age children have very limited opportunities to learn a foreign language because of the lack of foreign language instruction for children at that age or the lack of funds.

1. **Mission**

Our organization’s mission is to provide the opportunityfor all children enrolled in public elementary schools to study foreign languages as part of the in-school curriculum.

Parlamerica’s number one objective is to make foreign language study a part of the in-school curriculum for all elementary age children. The mission is to make language study as commonplace as studying other subjects like English, math, science, reading, and writing.

1. **Guiding principles**
2. Public education: We believe in public education because it provides free education to all children, regardless of race, class, or economic level.
3. Foreign language education: An important element missing in the US public education system is foreign language study at the elementary school level which is typical for many other developed countries around the world. Parlamerica aims to change this situation in Washington state by providing a high quality foreign language program that will allow children to have one more tool to succeed in the future.
4. Children: Our program will be offered cost-free to all elementary age children in public schools. There will be equal opportunities for all children to learn a foreign language but also to become more culturally aware and competent in our multicultural society and to compete and succeed worldwide.
5. **Why study languages**?

A. Cognitive benefits

1. Foreign language study benefits academic progress in other studies. Foreign language learners consistently do better in core subject areas of reading, English language literacy, social studies, and math regardless of race, gender, or academic level.
2. Early language learning enriches and enhances cognitive development and benefits basic skills development such as improved reading skills. Children exposed to foreign languages at an early age achieve higher levels of cognitive development earlier.
3. It benefits higher order, abstract and creative thinking. Foreign language learners are more creative, better at solving complex problems, show greater cognitive flexibility, and higher order thinking skills.
4. Foreign language students score higher on standardized tests.

a. Results from the SAT show that students who studied a foreign language for 4 or more years outscored other students on the verbal and math portions of the test.

b. Foreign language learners consistently outperform control groups in core subject areas on standardized tests.

1. It narrows achievement gaps. Children of color, from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and English language learners make the greatest proportionate achievement gains from foreign language study.

B. Socio-cultural benefits

1. It enhances a student’s sense of achievement, self-image, and self-esteem. English language learners can be successful in front of peers because bilingual children learn additional languages more quickly and efficiently than monolingual children.

2. Foreign language study promotes cultural awareness and competency. Early foreign language learning gives children unique insights into other cultures, builds their cultural competency skills, and allows them to be more tolerant of differences amongst people.

3. Foreign language study enhances career opportunities. Knowledge of a foreign language is often an important factor in hiring decisions and in enhancing career paths.

4. Foreign language study benefits society. Foreign language speakers improve global communication, enhance our economic competitiveness abroad, and maintain our political and security interests.

5. Research indicates that knowing two languages may help stave off age-related mental decline.

1. **Operation/Program**

Parlamerica will pilot and run its foreign language program in collaboration with a targeted school district. The program will be located in the individual elementary schools of that school district. Parlamerica will raise the funds to hire the foreign language teachers, create the curriculum for the program, and provide all the technical equipment and supplies required for the successful implementation of the program.

The foreign language program is considered a FLES program: Foreign Language in Elementary School.

Students study a foreign language during the school day as part of the in-school curriculum.

The lower amount of time for study per week is 90 minutes per week:

1. 3 times/week, 30 minutes/lesson
2. 5 times/week, 15 minutes/lesson

The higher amount of time for study per week is 150 minutes per week:

1. 3 times/week, 50 minutes/lesson
2. 5 times/week, 30 minutes/lesson

1. **Contact Information**

Marcia Pantic

21529 4th Ave. W. C34

Bothell, WA 98021

425-622-8731

marciapantic@parlamerica.org