

## **Puget Sound Skills Center Translation and Interpretation Program**

The Puget Sound Skills Center (PSSC) is a school providing 19 career preparation and technical education programs to 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students in the Highline, Tukwila, Federal Way and Tahoma school districts. PSSC is located just south of SeaTac airport.

In the Translation & Interpretation program, bilingual students prepare for careers as interpreters, translators and other careers where the ability to speak English plus another language is important. The program focuses on oral interpreting but also introduces students to written translation. After thorough training, students apply their skills as Student Interpreters serving local schools and community organizations.

As a nation, we face the challenge of creating a pipeline of young people with sufficient language skills to serve the needs of government and industry. Heritage language speakers, those who have learned another language before coming to the United States or learned it at home from immigrant parents, represent a national linguistic resource. But typically, such students feel tremendous social pressure to fit in to an English-speaking environment and, as a result, their heritage language skills are never fully developed and weaken from lack of use.

In the PSSC program, students are offered a vision of future careers where language skills are important, are trained to use their language skills as interpreters, and have opportunities to use their language skills as interpreters for the benefit of their community. Our students learn many ways to continually improve their English and heritage language skills and, in a self-reinforcing process, as their skills improve, they see themselves becoming increasingly competent and useful, and they work to improve their language skills even more.

By design, speakers of multiple languages participate in the program. This makes the program available to students in critical and seldom-taught languages. Already, speakers of 20 languages have participated in the program: Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian, Cambodian (Khmer), Cantonese, Farsi, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Pashto, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Samoan, Somali, Spanish, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese.

The program encourages students to direct their energies towards a career utilizing their language ability and motivates them to continue their language studies beyond high school.

*For more information contact Dave Cotlove [cotlovdw@HSD401.org](mailto:cotlovdw@HSD401.org) or Courtney Searls-Ridge [Courtney.Searls-Ridge@gmail.com](mailto:Courtney.Searls-Ridge@gmail.com).*