The Center for Urban Language Teaching and Research is a Title VI Language Resource Center of the US Department of Education, located at Georgia State University.

CULTR is a partnership of the Departments of Modern and Classical Languages and the Department of Applied Linguistics/ESL in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Division of Learning Technologies in the College of Education, in collaboration with the Center for Instructional Innovation.

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The Title VI Center for Urban Language Teaching and Research at Georgia State University was established in October 2014 to enhance the opportunities of urban and under-represented students to achieve the language proficiency and cultural competence required for success in the modern global marketplace.

Through a variety of initiatives that support research into world language teaching and learning, the development and dissemination of innovative language methodologies and technologies, and through the provision of professional support for language instructors, the mission of CULTR is to promote and improve access to language learning opportunities and global awareness for all learners, opening opportunities for urban students to explore and envision global careers in cultural diplomacy, national security, international business, public health or the sciences.

The Mission of CULTR

The Title VI Center for Urban Language Teaching and Research at Georgia State University endeavors to enhance the opportunities of urban and under-represented students to achieve the language proficiency and cultural competence required for success in the modern global marketplace.

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Located in the heart of Atlanta, a global center of international business and culture, CULTR is a National Language Resource Center focused on

• Professional development opportunities for teachers.
• Advocating for language opportunities for ALL learners.
• Creation and dissemination of innovative learning tools and methods.
• Research into retention of language teachers and development of targeted workshops.

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Expanding Student Awareness of Global Opportunities

Participation in the Global Marketplace begins at the local level. Starting in Year 2, CULTR will host an exploratory language conference and resource fair for urban 9-12th grade students in order to highlight the importance of foreign languages in their future. Students will have the opportunity to explore linguistic and international diversity present in our urban communities.

Resources for language study, including informational and motivational activities, and discovery stations, will highlight opportunities and professions with language expertise.

Students will have the opportunity to meet with leaders in international commerce, social services, NGOs and governmental agencies with international and global connections and learn how even local opportunities are globally engaged.

Advocating for Language Education Policy

CULTR is particularly well positioned to establish a wide spectrum of collaborations across education, business, and government that advocate a common goal to make language learning more accessible to all populations of learners.

In order to engage with policymakers and other stakeholders on language-related issues, CULTR will host an annual Global Languages Leadership Meeting. Invited attendees will include school leaders, legislators, government agencies and business and NGOs with international initiatives and concerns. These participants will meet together in order to discuss, advocate and promote language proficiency throughout the continuum of learning.

Why a National Urban LRC?

In the forward to the 2012 report on U.S. Education Reform and National Security from the Council on Foreign Relations, the authors assert a critical need for children who are prepared for a globalized world through a variety of skills, most importantly the acquisition of foreign languages.

While education offers individual opportunities alongside wider social benefits, access to education has become increasingly unequal, diverging along social class and, consequently racial, ethnic and gender lines. Schools in urban areas are frequently under-resourced and accountability concerns in areas such as reading and math sometimes lead to reductions in offerings of courses not deemed “essential,” including foreign languages.

These students, many already underrepresented, are further marginalized and barred from participation in the opportunities presented by globalization.

Addressing K-12 Language Teacher Retention

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future reports that almost a third of America’s teachers leave the field sometime during their first 3 years of teaching and almost half leave after five years. A critical need exists to stem the tide of trained teachers who are leaving language education, a field already experiencing teacher shortages.

A Language Teacher Retention Institute will be established to research and address the issues that lead to language teacher attrition and support teacher retention.

In Year 1, CULTR will host a roundtable meeting of researchers who focus on instructor burnout and self-exiting from the profession in order to identify strategies for effective language teacher support and retention, motivation, and coping strategies. This meeting will develop strategies and set agendas that will be incorporated into the Summer Retention Workshops for FL Teachers.

These weeklong summer workshops will establish the base of a multi-layered mentoring and enrichment program to reduce burnout and attrition in language teachers. Online synchronous mentoring, webinars and special interest groups will be hosted throughout the year to reach teachers in all geographic locations.

Supporting Language Teachers through Summer Workshops

Beginning in July 2015, CULTR will host three-day workshops for K-16 language teachers each summer. Workshop topics will include technology for language teaching, assessment in the language classroom, and teaching heritage language students.