Middlebury Interactive, a joint venture between Middlebury College and K12 Inc., is a leader in world language instruction for K-12 students. The partnership will serve about 200,000 K-12 students this year in more than 1,200 traditional and virtual schools. The most frequent application is in a blended learning environment.

"Middlebury had a great reputation for language instruction but did not have the online learning option; K12 was known for experience with online learning but was not known for languages so the partnership was formed to bring each parties expertise together," said Former Massachusetts Governor Jane Swift who joined Middlebury Interactive as CEO in 2011.

Language courses are offered in Chinese, Spanish, French, German, and Latin. Elementary courses build a solid language foundation. Middle and high school courses focus on development of the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Middlebury also offers customizable Fluency Courses that can be structured for a fully online, blended or traditional classroom implementation.

Dr. Aline Germain-Rutherford, Chief Learning Officer, said, "We created summer Residential Academies featuring Middlebury's immersive approach as an option for students to extend their learning. She added, "Rather than just teaching the rules, we help students learn a language by fully becoming embedded in the culture--they learn the language by using it."

The platform blends immersive gaming, social networking and multimedia interactive learning. Videos have been shot around the world--the French courses were shot in France, Canada, Senegal and Guadeloupe taping real people interacting in a real cultural environment. Task based activities use authentic documents and encourage students to make hypotheses about how the language works. In Middlebury courses, language acquisition is immersed in cultural discovery.

"Opportunities to learn the rules of the language at strategic moments in progression of the course present students with pieces of the language, where students observe grammatical patterns, intonation patters and thematic types of vocabulary," said Germain-Rutherford.

Supporting Teachers. Assessment includes pre- and post-tests. Teachers record progress in projects and performance tasks measuring cultural and language development. Students record their own growth and develop a portfolio. Middlebury can track use and results across a huge database of students and use the analysis to make course improvements.

Because some teachers feel uncomfortable with the use of authentic documents and a task-based approach, Middlebury provides online and onsite professional development to help teachers understand the Middlebury immersive philosophy and pedagogy.

State leadership. Delaware governor Markell realized that "Compared to their Asian and European peers who begin learning additional languages as early as 5 years old, Delaware students lag considerably behind." He launched a World Language Expansion Initiative, an aggressive plan to "prepare generations of Delaware students with the language skills to compete in an ever changing global economy at home and around the world."

The initiative seeks to "graduate globally competitive students with advanced level proficiency in languages, giving them an economic edge in the multilingual and multicultural workforce of the 21st century." Eight districts are implementing blended middle grade courses for Spanish and Mandarin.

Vermont, where Middlebury is located, has subsidized access to the world language courses and 29 schools have taken advantage.