

New Haven Public Schools



March 6, 2009

Dear Members of the Education Committee;

The change in Bill 944, which is before you today, calls for the implementation of The Connecticut Plan; the final version of which dropped an earlier requirement for foreign language study. Under the Connecticut Plan, the study of foreign language is considered an elective competing for only one available required humanities credit. Students will need to choose between a desire for additional English courses, Social Sciences, Fine Arts other humanities offerings and foreign language for this credit.

With a growing globalized economy, knowledge of a foreign language is becoming necessary for an increasing number of careers. It is imperative that we provide foreign language education for our students who will live and work in a world where multilingual societies have a competitive advantage over monolingual societies. Knowledge of a second language will enhance job mobility and advancement for our students when they join the workforce.

Research has demonstrated that learning a foreign language develops thinking skills and cognitive processing abilities which are exactly the stated objectives in the "Acquisition of 21st Century Skills" section of the Connecticut Plan, page 8. Critical thinking, creativity, memory and listening all improve through the study of a foreign language. High school foreign language study enhances academic preparation for college and improves overall student performance in school. In addition, a correlation has been demonstrated between the study of a foreign language in high school and higher SAT and ACT scores.

As the Supervisor of World Languages for the New Haven Public Schools and as a strong supporter of a balanced and complete education for the children of Connecticut, I strongly urge the inclusion of a foreign language requirement in The Connecticut Plan as part of Bill 944. It is our responsibility to ensure that our children receive the foreign language study they need to be active, participating members of the 21st century.

Sincerely yours,

Karen de Fur

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