



American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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November 14, 2008

Mr. Allan B. Taylor, Chairperson
Connecticut State Board of Education
165 Capitol Avenue—Room 301
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Mr. Taylor:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 11,500 members of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to express our strong support for the requirement of foreign language education in the state of Connecticut. The research is clear regarding the academic, social and economic benefits of language study at all levels. It is critical that the state of Connecticut encourage students to pursue learning a language from the earliest level possible.

Requiring language study sends a clear message to students, parents and the community at large that such programs are critical to preparing students to live and work in an increasingly global economy. This is one important way that Connecticut can set itself apart from other states around the country by demonstrating a commitment to providing excellent opportunities for growing a multilingual citizenry and realizing the vision of language education for all students.

Because our organization has the national pulse of language programs nationwide, I can tell you that offering a broad menu of language study opportunities clearly will put the state in a leadership position among the United States school systems. In most other states, foreign language is still viewed as a non-core luxury option. An aggressive approach to foreign language programs will demonstrate that Connecticut is committed to the belief that ALL students need to develop language skills. Today's students will live in a world that is fundamentally different from the one in which we grew up. The federal government knows that our country is lacking in the language skills that are critical to national security. The business community also realizes that to sell our goods to other countries in this economically challenging era, we must be able to understand not only the language but also the culture of those to whom we are selling.

We urge you not to look into the future of the students of Connecticut through the lens of your own experience, where language learning in America was deemed an academic pursuit for only the college-bound. We all have an obligation to provide the learning opportunities that best meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's students. That means preparing them to live and to work in a linguistically and culturally diverse world.

Sincerely,

Bret Lovejoy
Executive Director

cc: Members of the State Board of Education
Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner
Jaya Vijayasekar, President CT Council of Language Teachers
Rita Oleksak, Director of Foreign Languages, Glastonbury Public Schools