

Friis, John

From: Kevin Carey [KCarey@sjcadets.org]
Sent: Monday, February 23, 2009 3:46 PM
To: Friis, John
Cc: 'jvijayasekar@hotmail.com'
Subject: RE: bill 945

Education Committee Clerk, John Friis at: john.friis@cga.ct.gov.

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Kevin Carey and I am the Department Chairman of the World Language Department at Saint Joseph High School in Trumbull, CT. I have also taught as an Adjunct at UCONN, Torrington and Sacred Heart University. From 2004-2007 I was privileged to work with our state's official language organization, the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers, which has served Connecticut educators since 1968. I have also served as the representative for CT AATSP to COLT. I write to support the proposed bill 945: a World Language high school graduation requirement. Such a requirement directly affects those of us in the private sector of education in Connecticut as it does the public school systems.

The study of World Language is no longer an extra-curricular or elective desire it is an absolute necessity. It is intrinsically tied to the success of this nation in the world. In this time of globalization and with the advent of global technologies our students and our population need to have a working knowledge of other languages in order to communicate effectively. We are one of the few monolingual modern developed nations. When there are more citizens of China learning to speak English than there are English speakers in North America that is a telling prognostication for future hegemony, for future sphere of influence in business, and in world politics. Quite bluntly it puts the security and well-being of our nation at a disadvantage. When other nation's business entities can speak our language and we cannot speak theirs we are at a disadvantage. When those same entities can speak the language of other nations in this world, we are at a disadvantage. When other nation's representatives and populace have a greater knowledge of our culture we are at a disadvantage. The National and State Standards in World Language push us to build communication, cultural understanding through comparison in order to strengthen both our national community as well as that of the world. Such communicative skills give students and future adults an advantage in the world. Learning another language is not solely the skill of oral, written communication. It is also the knowledge of culture. Not understanding other cultures leads us to miscommunication, misunderstanding and possible chaos or worse. How a particular culture says things also indicates why that culture thinks a particular way. I do not want any young person to suffer the embarrassment of saying "*Je suis pleine*. (I am pregnant-full)" at a dinner table in a French home instead of "*J'ai bien mangé* (I have eaten well-I am full)". Nor would I want my students to state "*Yo soy enfermo*, rather than *Estoy enfermo*. I am mentally ill instead of I am not feeling well. The simplest statement can make for havoc. After 30 years of teaching my alumni have increasingly found the need for speaking other languages. They return with examples as mundane as being able to ask for directions while traveling or as important as where is exit in the Madrid metro. Just the use of the social amenities while visiting another nation helps to break down the stereotype of the ugly American.

How can we say that we offer our students in the state of Connecticut a quality education if we are not able to offer them the opportunity to study World Language?

Most sincerely,

Mr. Kevin Carey, Chairman: World Language

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