

Original: 2499

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Senate of Pennsylvania

March 8, 2006

COMMITTEES
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
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URBAN AFFAIRS & HOUSING

Mr. Karl R. Girton, Chair
Pennsylvania Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Chairman Girton:

Please consider this letter as my formal request that the Board of Education adopt Academic Standards for World Languages. It appears to be the only core content area that still does not have mandated academic standards, yet is clearly an integral part of the education that we should be providing to the Commonwealth's students.

As you are aware, I serve with you on the Governor's Commission on College and Career Success. Although much of the discussion has centered around how we ensure that our students are academically prepared for post-secondary education, the role of the Commission is also to address how to ensure a student is career-ready. To me, that term reflects a student who is well-educated, skilled, and capable of functioning in a multi-cultural/multi-lingual society. The study of world languages is an essential component of the skills that Pennsylvania children need to function and compete in the global marketplace.

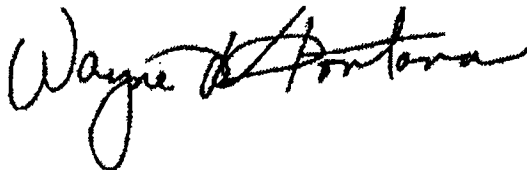
I recognize that there are concerns regarding this particular issue such as whether there are enough qualified teachers to teach world languages, whether intellectually-challenged students can learn another language, and whether the "traditional" world languages are sufficient to meet the challenges of today's global economy. I believe that each of these items can be addressed through an interactive process that involves Pennsylvania's educators, students, business leaders, and parents. Working together, we can ensure that our students have the skills they need to compete globally for high skilled jobs and to be life-long learners in a diverse world community.

The work of the Commission is very broad and a discussion on world languages is probably appropriate based on our responsibilities. That being said, it does not require

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the recommendation of a Commission or any other body for the Board of Education to consider this particular issue and to take steps to ensure that Pennsylvania's students can compete in a new, diverse, global economy. I thank you in advance for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you regarding this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne D. Fontana". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'W' and 'F'.

Wayne D. Fontana
State Senator, 42nd Senatorial District

cc: Mr. Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
Mr. John McGinley, Jr., Esq., Independent Regulatory Review Commission Chair

WDF/amd