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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION**WORLD LANGUAGES: A Plan for Pennsylvania**

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I present herewith an analysis of the world languages issue and a plan of action for achieving world languages proficiency in Pennsylvania students.

**PREMISES**

The teaching of foreign languages, especially those languages deemed high priority for national security, is essential in our now increasingly global economy. The "flatness" of the world, and indeed creating the real possibility of world peace, require that young people today understand the cultures of other peoples and be able to communicate in their languages. Foreign language study must be made part of our schools' core curriculum.

The most successful (defined in terms of proficiency) foreign language study programs begin in the early grades, as an integral part of the regular school curriculum for all students. This ensures that students with an interest in pursuing language study will have gained some minimum proficiency in at least one language by the end of their high school careers. It also ensures the development of a cadre of students interested in pursuing foreign language study in college and in teaching languages after graduation. Clearly if we do not teach foreign languages we will never have enough teachers to teach foreign languages.

World language study enhances a student's overall achievement. Conversely, neglect of world language study, in schools that formerly offered it, has been shown to have a negative impact on students' overall academic performance. "One of the main benefits of the early study of foreign languages is the understanding it brings to the study of English." (NASBE Public Policy Position on School Improvement) PSSA scores for children attending schools where foreign languages are taught at least 10 hours weekly, grades K through

8, are among the highest in the state. FLES or immersion programs reinforce learning in all other content areas.

The need for foreign language study and the benefits of such study have been acknowledged by the federal government, by business leaders and by various education advocacy groups. Recently, the federal government has instituted several programs designed to increase the number of world languages students and teachers.

## PROBLEMS

Pennsylvania has not made foreign language study a priority. This was true even before NCLB. Indeed, education policy makers in the State have given more priority to subjects which, although important to a child's overall development, simply do not have the same importance personally, locally, nationally or internationally as foreign language study.

Pennsylvania does not have enough students studying foreign languages at any educational level to build the cadre of teachers necessary to teach foreign languages.

Pennsylvania does not have enough teachers certified in foreign languages to teach languages to all students.

Pennsylvania does not have enough foreign language certification programs in its institutions of higher education to fill the need for certified teachers in its public grade schools.

Pennsylvania does not have enough teachers of foreign languages to staff certification programs in its institutions of higher education.

## SOLUTIONS

To break this cycle of inevitability, Pennsylvania must address the need for both foreign language students and foreign language teachers. This will require the involvement and commitment of both the public elementary and high schools and institutions of higher education in both the public and private sectors. Pennsylvania must teach foreign languages to produce teachers of foreign languages; it must facilitate the hiring of foreign language teachers in higher education and the certification of foreign language teachers for K-12.

Pennsylvania must:

Initiate a campaign to stress the importance of foreign language study at all levels of a child's education. This campaign should include, at least, distribution of age-appropriate materials, including posters, booklets and computer programs to the public schools and to higher education institutions, a media blitz similar to that initiated by the TAP Program and a resuscitation of the foreign language academies mandated by Section 1522 of the Public School Code.

Adopt the world languages standards that have already been written and set phase-in goals, over a specified time-period, for the teaching of foreign languages to all students. By 2012, all high school graduates should have received foreign language instruction. By 2020, all high school graduates should have second language proficiency.

Amend the home education sections of the Public School Code to require the study of foreign languages.

Alter the priorities within school curricula to include language learning as well as broadened coverage of global history, culture and human geography. (Minnesota proposal)

Encourage the public schools to use some of their ABG monies to establish elementary language programs. The use of ABG monies for foreign language instruction should be well advertised, to businesses, parents, PTAs, and education advocacy groups. Some seven or eight schools are already ready to start programs. Although encouraging, this number must be increased.

Supplement school language learning with summer intensive learning experiences (already mandated), travel experiences (already developed), community-based events and popular media learning opportunities. (Minnesota proposal)

Develop literature for distribution to high school guidance counselors about the importance of foreign language study, which they can then use to encourage eligible dual enrollment students to use the funds for foreign language study. Set aside a portion of dual enrollment funding specifically for students interested in pursuing foreign language study.

Amend the EITC law to include foreign language study programs in the definition of "innovative educational programs." Develop literature, in conjunction with DCED, to encourage businesses to use the tax credit possibility to support such programs. This literature should include statements from national business leaders and federal government officials stressing the

importance of foreign language study. A synopsis of federal programs should be included.

Establish a loan forgiveness program for teachers of foreign languages. Gradate the loan forgiveness according to geographical area of need; forgiveness should be greater for those teachers accepting positions in urban or rural schools.

Encourage schools and universities in both the public and private sectors to emphasize the importance of language learning and cultural knowledge and skills to the success of, and to succeed in, our society. (Minnesota proposal)

Identify certain of the PASSHE schools, ensuring even geographical distribution, as locations for intensive language study and certification programs. Establish hiring and curriculum development goals for these schools to require them to have a specified number of foreign language courses and faculty by a specified time, no later than 2012. Ensure that guidance counselors and parents are aware of the existence of these programs. Pending the development of these programs, and even thereafter, encourage the use of articulation arrangements to permit all interested students to enroll in the courses they need to achieve certification in foreign languages. Award supplemental operating funds to and/or seek federal grant money for those schools initiating or expanding foreign language programs.

Enlarge the provisional college certificate program set forth in Section 1204 of the Public School Code to include foreign nationals who are graduates of an institution of higher learning in their home country and who seek employment as a language teacher in a Pennsylvania institution of higher education.

Employ the mandate of Section 1202 of the Public School Code to permit foreign nationals, who are not U.S. citizens, to receive certification to teach foreign languages in the public schools.

Establish a provisional certification program to permit foreign nationals to begin teaching in the public schools without a Pennsylvania certificate. The provisional program would include mandatory language testing and review (grammar and speaking) and training in pedagogy during the summer before any candidate enters the classroom and would require completion of all requirements for a full certification by a certain specified time. Credit for study in the candidate's native country should be liberally granted. The summer program should be offered at PASSHE, AICUP and/or state-related schools. The State Board of Education should be responsible for developing the elements of the provisional program, by a specified time period, no later than 2010.

Develop a library of materials/programs that schools can use to start foreign language study, even before the number of foreign language teachers begins to increase. This should include information on distance learning, shared/blended classrooms, dual enrollment (with the possibility of credit for summer classes), Language in Motion (like Science in Motion, with traveling instructors, materials), outreach materials for foreign nationals. Consult with organizations like CAPE that are already providing schools with the tools they need to institute foreign language study.

Develop and implement intensive training sessions for public school administrators concerning the establishment of high-quality, sustainable foreign language models, similar to advanced placement training programs. (Minnesota proposal)

## CONCLUSION

It is understood that to accomplish these goals, funds, legislation, cooperation among branches of government, cooperation among education sectors and cooperation between government and the public will all be required. In the first instance, however, the guiding spirit of an inspired leader committed to the importance of foreign language study is needed.