

IRRC

From: Smith, James M.
Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2006 7:35 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: FW: state standards for world languages

#2499

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From: nsmith@allegheny.edu [mailto:nsmith@allegheny.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, January 04, 2006 10:10 PM
To: Smith, James M.
Subject: state standards for world languages

Dear Mr. Smith,

The Academic Standards for World Languages for all students have not yet been approved. World Languages is the only core content area that still has not approved mandated academic standards. I request that you add your voice to the voices of Pennsylvania educators, students, business leaders and parents who understand that world language study is an essential component of the skills all PA children need to function in our multicultural-multilingual environments and ensure that Pennsylvania can compete in the global marketplace

Recent misunderstandings surrounding the adoption of the world language standards have been expressed by some in Harrisburg. These points have been addressed by world language professional organizations and individuals throughout the state:

1) There is a lack of qualified teachers to teach world languages. The adoption of academic standards for world languages will encourage our young people to enter into world language teacher training programs. There is an increased awareness in Washington D.C. of the need for language specialists due to current world affairs. Academic standards will communicate the equity and worthiness of world language teaching as a viable profession.

2) Intellectually challenged students cannot learn a world language. All other countries with similar challenges have special needs students who leave school knowing multiple languages. We have many models of how to meet all students' needs through the inclusion model, differentiation in instruction and assessment, accommodations and adaptations- which are already in place for other content areas and are currently alive in many world language classrooms. These best practice models simply require continued replication in all world language classrooms.

3) The proficiency levels for world languages are defined as advanced, proficient, basic and below basic. The world language proficiency levels are not patterned after the proficiency levels for language arts. Proficiency in a world language follows the national standards for world languages and the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (actfl.org). Proficiency in a world language is defined as attaining survival skills in an authentic setting. A student can achieve proficiency in one or more of the standards and move through stages of increasing levels of achievement over time in a program of study.

Our state continues to move forward to reform all levels of our schools to ensure that we are teaching our students the skills they

will need to compete globally for high skilled jobs and to be life long learners in a diverse world community. Please ensure that world language education be a vital part of these initiatives. Adoption of the Proposed Academic Standards for World Languages is an important first step in this process.

Respectfully,

Nancy Smith