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IRRC

From: Smith, James M.
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2006 7:54 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: FW: Education for Pa. Students

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-----Original Message-----

From: FrauBaird@aol.com [mailto:FrauBaird@aol.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 29, 2005 12:39 PM
To: Smith, James M.
Subject: Education for Pa. Students

211 Overlook Drive
 Pittsburgh, Pa. 15216
 Dec. 29, 2005

Dear Mr. Smith,

Why have academic standards for world languages not yet been adopted?? Because you are looking at these standards again, I am writing you with some of my concerns.

For Americans to succeed in the future, they must compete not only within our borders but beyond them. In order for our system of capitalism to thrive, it must seek and obtain **new markets**---many of these must be beyond our borders. Something that holds us back is our lack of language and cultural understanding, i.e., these skills must be equal to or better than those of our global competitors. Have you yet read the book THE WORLD IS FLAT by Thomas Friedman?

To thrive economically, Pennsylvania must also be able to **attract foreign businesses** to invest and to build here. Many other states are creating fertile fields for such investments by educating their citizens to be knowledgeable about world languages and cultures. International businesses feel more welcome in such states when the citizens know how to interact with them.

Our recent experiences in Iraq have shown the importance of cultural understanding and the problems that can arise when there is lack of knowledge or where there is misunderstanding of culture.

The minds of our students must be broadened to be able to deal with crosscultural issues in business, in politics, and in security interests. It is NOT a luxury, it is a **NECESSITY** because others in other states and in the rest of the world are doing a better job of it.

As I am sure you are know, 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 country/world and ensure that Pennsylvania can compete in the global marketplace.

I teach in a school with an international baccalaureate program. In that curriculum the subject **area of world languages is second in importance**, after world literature. It is not at the bottom of the pile of subjects. This curriculum is designed to be equal to that of what other countries offer their students.

I am also the president of the **Cultural Communications Alliance**, a group of business professionals, language teachers, and university leaders who promote the importance of world languages and cultures through the sponsorship of an international marketing competition for high school students. Our mentors are the Bayer and H.J. Heinz corporations. We also work with Seagate, Chorus Call/Compunetix, the University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University, and Pittsburgh's World Affairs Council. All of us volunteer our time because of our strong beliefs in the importance of world languages and cultures for the students of our region. Can Pennsylvania not also begin to recognize this importance by adopting standards for world languages, just as we have standards for gym, home ec, etc.?

1/3/2006

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. 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. How can one **compete in global businesses and cooperate in international initiatives** when others have more international skills?? Please ensure that the subject of world languages is a vital part of Pennsylvania's initiatives. Adoption of the Proposed Academic Standards for World Languages is an important first step in this process.

Respectfully,

Deanna Baird