



New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers, Inc.

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Dear Commissioner Steiner:

After reading Monday's report on the recommended changes for graduation requirements, the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYS AFLT) has some serious concerns that we are hoping you will address. Our greatest concern is the exclusion of wording about the required one unit of study of LOTE prior to the end of the ninth grade. Elimination of this mandate will have a negative impact on language programs throughout the state, and will inevitably lead to inequality of access to language programs.

Our second concern involves the listing of equivalent alternatives (such as the SAT II) to the Regents Comprehensive Examinations in LOTE, or the locally developed equivalents. The main reason we have been fighting against the elimination of our exams (including our former Second Language Proficiency Exams in LOTE) is because our exams have historically been proficiency-based, skills-based, and performance-based. Second language education is developed from a student-centered, performance-based, measurable communicative approach that reflects best practices. At a time when the Regents stress the value of this style of assessment, it would be devastating to our programs to regress to a lower standard.

The New York Regents have listed as their first goal to "adopt internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace." If that's true, shouldn't we be considering that most international benchmarks include the study of foreign languages? As the Regents are referring to the fact that the United States is behind many of the European and Asian educational systems in math and science, please note that we are also behind them in the study of languages, which in most cases begins at age 5. Discussions concerning college and career readiness regularly refer to the 21st Century skills. The "Partnership for 21st Century Skills" at <http://www.p21.org> indicates clearly that the study of foreign languages is second on their list of subjects to study, and that global awareness (which comes from language classes as well as social studies) is also a top priority.

Please also consider the Committee for Economic Development's article "Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security", created by a committee headed by former N.Y. Regent John Brademus, among many other LOTE supportive articles at <http://www.ced.org>.

As New York is seeking a model state-wide curriculum to provide the best possible education to prepare our students for college and career readiness as global citizens with 21st century skills and perspectives, please don't relegate the study of second languages to a mere option whose status will be inequitably decided throughout the state, further widening the achievement gap.

When can we meet to discuss these issues?

Sincerely,
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