

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT) is vehemently opposed to the proposed elimination of the 8th grade Second Language Proficiency and the Regents Exams for languages other than French and Spanish. The following points provide the basis for our opposition:

- NYSAFLT supports an early start to language learning and encourages continued language study beyond the minimum requirement in order to prepare our students to meet the challenges of today's global community. If the proficiency exams are eliminated, many schools have already indicated that they will go to a minimally compliant model, starting language in the 8th grade and delaying a student's opportunity to study language and to develop language proficiency.
- In regard to the elimination of Regents exams in German, Italian, Latin, and Hebrew, NYSAFLT supports the study of all languages. We do not want to see the study of the aforementioned languages devalued by the discontinuation of their exams.
- Our exams currently are proficiency-based, a departure from previous audio-lingual and grammar and translation models, our students must have the communicative skills necessary to meet our state and national needs. In order for our students to be successful in the 21st century and to be productive global citizens language education needs to be a priority.
- While there are complaints about the over-testing of students, there are only two exams for LOTE (Languages Other Than English) – the Second Language Proficiency and the Regents Comprehensive Examinations. These exams are benchmarks that are needed to measure our students individual progress with others across the state by the same criteria. They test the four skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and reflect the standards set forth in the New York State LOTE Syllabus which are communicative in nature.
- With the difficult economic climate we are experiencing today it is even more imperative that our students be prepared to compete in the global economy – language skills and cultural awareness provide a definite advantage.
- With the increased emphasis given to English / Language Arts and Math it is important to note that research shows that language study also reinforces reading, English language literacy, social studies and math skills.
- Language study needs to be available to all students in New York State – not only to those students in wealthy districts who can afford it.

For the above reasons, NYSAFLT urges the legislators to provide the funds necessary to continue the LOTE assessments and to make language study a priority in New York State.