

ACTFL Panel
Modeling Representation of Foreign Language Education
at the Federal Level in the United States

Friday, November 16, 2007: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Henry B. Gonzalez Conference Center, Room 218. San Antonio, TX

Panelists

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Moderator

Heidi Byrnes, Georgetown University. byrnes@georgetown.edu

Session Schedule

3:00 – 3:15 Introduction of series of events and panelists

3:15 – 4:00 Presentation time for each panelist (15 minutes each)

4:00 – 4:30 Moderated discussion

4:30 – 5:00 Open forum

Outline of Proposals:

Robert Blake

- I. Two by Two: two goals, two methods
 - a. Goal #1: provide government personnel with advanced language proficiency (level 3+) in the an array of strategic languages
 - b. Goal #2: increase our students' multilingual/multicultural competence in K-16 and the overall acceptance of multilingualism as a societal norm
 - c. Method #1: top down, have the federal government direct the development of goals #1 and, if the money lasts, goal #2
 - d. Method #2: *federalist* approach where each state and local community take action to meet goals #2 and, indirectly, goal #1.
- II. Advanced Proficiency (level 3+, Goal #1)
 - a. Leveraging existing expertise of heritage learners
 - b. Pipeline Flagship grants (Chinese, Korean, Russian, Farsi)
 - c. Title VI center (National Academies report)
 - d. Up-to-date SLA research findings: joint UC Lang. Consortium/UCLA NLRC for Heritage Languages
- III. Increase multilinguistic/multicultural competence and acceptance of multilingualism as a norm (Goal #2)
 - a. Impact lives of our students so as to prepare them for a multilingual world
 - b. Reverse negative public attitudes (i.e. ENGLISH ONLY) about speaking other languages
 - c. Change our approach to dealing with the rest of the world
 - d. Change our approach to dealing with diversity within our own society

Stating the goals correctly (section ii and iii) allow us to determine what are the best means for reaching them (IV, V, and VI)

- IV. The centralist approach (method #1)
 - a. Do we need a central language figurehead? (conclusion of the 2005 Consortium Colloquium on U.S. Educational Language Policy: “It cuts both ways”)
 - b. Department of Education: NCLB but what else are they doing? FL testing was never mandated as part of the NCLB legislation and as a result many local districts devalued language study
 - c. DOD: Can they work with academia? Can we work with them?
- V. The *federalist* approach (method #2)
 - a. Top down
 - i. State level: department of education
 - ii. University level (MLA report; requirements): Can the faculty agree on the need to stimulate language study?
 - b. Bottom up
 - i. Student abroad programs (only 3% of the college population goes abroad)
 - ii. Unified districts (L.A. and S.F. examples)
 - iii. Local schools
 - iv. Community level
- VI. Interface between centralist and federalist approaches
 - a. Central government provides leadership toward a new internationalism (this leadership is not trivial by any means!), starting with valuing immigrant languages in this country (less immigrant bashing)
 - b. Central government can support more study abroad through increases to Title VI program (as called for by me in the National Academies report)
 - c. Heritage language instruction also a priority at the state and local levels; insights in training programs can flow up to the central government level
 - d. Increased FL requirement in an articulated state and local educational system will feed the needs of the central government in the long run
- VII. Conclusion
 - a. Goal #1 is problematic for academia: not our purview, not our area of expertise; best pursued by Method #1. Central government meets its own immediate needs.
 - b. Goal #2 is of concern to everyone but best carried out locally with a federalist approach.

June K. Phillips

Will there ever be a time when language learning will take center stage without an impetus related to war, or diplomatic failures, or being on the wrong side of a competitive battle? Some of us have lived through Sputnik and its impact on education, had our hopes raised with the Carter Commission Report and thought we might contribute to reducing the risk of a “nation at risk.” This time, it seems as all those factors contribute to renewed interest in the study of languages and cultures – or at least some languages and cultures. Being the eternal optimist, I want to believe that maybe the third time is the charm.

If change is to occur in the standing of foreign language learning in this country, it will require strategic planning to replace tactical steps. It will require long term commitment and not sporadic efforts; it will require support from multiple entities, from those who understand

teaching and learning as well as from those who want special skills. I hesitate to define what the organizational chart might look like, but I will posit some thoughts as to the mission and tasks that must be undertaken.

- Language and cultural learning in schools, colleges, and universities is an academic and humanistic enterprise. To that end, responsibility must be assumed at the federal level by a department, unit, foundation, or center charged with assuring systemic continuity in programs for learners. It should have a strong leader who can develop credibility and influence among government, business, community leaders and other educators. Representatives of groups with special interests in having linguistics in career fields should interact regularly, but the first and key role must be to have U.S. students learn other languages and gain knowledge of their cultures. The goal is to have language learning be a common academic undertaking for all learners. That is the premise upon which one builds capacity so that as students mature and consider careers, they have the ability to continue with a language begun early or to switch or layer a new one. They will do that successfully because they understand how to learn a new language and have ideas of how to connect that learning with their preferred disciplines.
- The mission of this federal department would consist of at least three major thrusts: Coordination, Collaboration, Communication.

Coordination:

- ✓ With states and local districts, with higher education, and with other government departments (e.g., defense, state) so that education solutions proposed for critical needs are educationally sound, appropriate to the age of students, and taught by professional teachers
- ✓ With funded programs to assure that proposed outcomes are assessed
- ✓ With funding agencies both public and private for research in high priority areas

Collaboration:

- ✓ To assure that language learning is a part of every child's educational experience
- ✓ To gather information on successful curricular models that address the demographics of different types of local schools (e.g., size, number of languages that can be offered and sustained, community interests).
- ✓ To work with higher education to develop a competent professional teaching force for those who are certified through comprehensive university programs or by alternate routes. As more potential teachers make career changes or come to teach in the U.S. from abroad, the quality of preparation should not be less although the path followed may be different.
- ✓ To support research in teaching, learning, and assessment that is longitudinal and to work with language educators on an agenda that can be systematically pursued

Communication:

- ✓ Through its established standing, the office needs to be a source of information on the importance of the study of languages and cultures
- ✓ Respond with collaborators to disinformation promulgated by partisan and bickering masses (need for at least a "truthiness" squad). The schizophrenia that occurs with issues such as:
 - English only, anti-immigrant, no taxes spent on dual immersion schools

- Politicians bemoaning a lack of students’ studying languages spoken in countries they label as evil, enemies, and fascists
- ✓ Be a source of review, feedback, and monitoring for legislative proposals that have impact on international education and language learning.

Paul Sandrock

1. Where does the message come from that students and citizens need more than one language?
2. Each sector has its own funnel for funding – to further its own “ends”
3. What is missing? Funding world language education up front
 - Emphasize K-8, K-10 programs
 - World languages are alone among the core subject areas of the No Child Left Behind Act left behind without a place in elementary grades and middle schools.
4. Consider a decision model based on potential impact and feasibility
 - Presentation by Andreas Schleicher, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), head of the Education Indicators and Analysis Division, at Partnership for 21st Century Skills (Washington, DC, November 7)
 - Useful model for this panel to examine the value of various proposals

	High Potential Policy Impact		
Low Feasibility	Must Haves	Quick Wins	High Feasibility
	Money Pits	Low Hanging Fruit	
	Low Potential Policy Impact		

5. Proposal with both high policy impact and high feasibility: US Department of Education World Languages Coordinator
 - To develop coordination across levels; provide oversight to a variety of program supports; be the insider to emphasize and advocate world language programming and support
 - Facilitate communication (2-way, 3-way, 4-way; LEA-SEA-National)
 - Parallel to what works in other arenas:
 - Local: LEA – District Supervisor
 - State: SEA – State Supervisor
 - National: USDOE – National World Languages Coordinator
6. What needs to be represented; areas for influence in federal government?
 - A. Systems – interagency mechanism
 - B. Assessment – identify “markers of readiness” for various applications of language skill
 - C. Broader representation is required: a federal World Languages Oversight Board