

**Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Panel
Modeling Representation of Foreign Language Education
at the Federal/National Level in the United States**

Friday, March 28, 2008: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Marriott Marquis, New York City

Panelists

Helene Zimmer-Loew, Executive Director, American Association of Teachers of German

helene@aatg.org

Ron Woo, Director of the Teaching Fellows Program, Hunter College, NY City

Former Director of LOTE, NY City Department of Education

ron_woo@hotmail.com

Christine Brown, Assistant Superintendent, Glastonbury Public Schools, Glastonbury, CT

brownc@glastonburyus.org

Moderator

Heidi Byrnes, Georgetown University. byrnesh@georgetown.edu

Session Schedule

2:00 – 2:15 Introduction of series of events and panelists

2:15 – 3:00 Presentation time for each panelist (15 minutes each)

3:00 – 3:30 Moderated discussion

3:30 – 4:00 Open forum

Outline of Proposals:

❖ **HELENE ZIMMER-LOEW**

Goal

The establishment of a coordinated federal language presence/department

Achievements

Foreign Language Standards Collaborative (since 1993)

Growing use of the Standards developed by the Collaborative

Joint National Committee on Language/National Council for Languages and

International Studies (since 1976)

Many strong language programs at all levels of instruction

Growing numbers of Advanced Placements exams and students

Growth in study abroad/internship programs

Positive public opinion about the importance of language study (especially in the earliest grades)

Recent interest in language study for a range of uses

Established and evolving assessment strategies

Challenges

Low percentage of students studying languages at all
Even lower percentage of students continuing to an advanced level of proficiency
Special interest groups especially within the education community
Cost-cutting/accountability-oriented legislatures, school boards, boards of trustees
Economic conditions at all levels of government
Federal government imposed and unfunded mandates
Inability of government agencies/departments to work together
Lack of consistency of the status of language learning at state and local levels
Lack of language coordinators at the state and local levels

Approaches to Meeting the Challenge

Establishment of a policy-focused taskforce from within the profession
Strategic plan to accomplish goal
Work on establishing mandates at local and state levels
Advocacy at all levels of instructions and government with every language instructor involved
Identification of model programs at all levels of instruction
Coordination of K-12 with college/university programs
Research on the benefits of learning languages
Outreach to all decision-making constituencies (administrators, policy makers etc.)
Involvement with ASCD, NASSP, NAESP, PTA, ACE, etc.

❖ **RON WOO**

- NCLB – Is foreign language a core curricular area or not?
- Federal framework - What is the national focus?
 - Informed by research - learning a second language increases cognitive and reasoning skills aiding in academic achievement
 - Is it the Five C's (Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, Communities) as proffered in *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (1999)? Is it solely about grammar and vocabulary, or reading and writing, or social oral language, etc.?
 - When should foreign language instruction start – elementary school, middle school, or high school?
 - How much? What is the intensity?
 - Looking to other states for models
- Measuring what's important – High stakes testing in foreign language
 - Implementing a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for foreign language - In 2000, the National Assessment Governing Board adopted the *Framework for the 2004 Foreign Language National Assessment of Educational Progress*.
- Federal assistance
 - Program development and implementation

- Teacher development
- Enforcement and consequences???

❖ **CHRISTINE BROWN**

Representing Language Education at the Federal Level in the United States: A Focus on Well Defined Engagement

Assumption 1: Present federal language initiatives are not sufficient to ensure long term changes in language education in the United States.

Assumption 2: A greater language education presence at the federal level of education could jumpstart a new era of support for language education.

Assumption 3: A greater language education presence at the federal level would help to unify the language and international studies fields at all levels.

Reality 1: There is no other viable choice given the pressures on local districts and states to meet ever increasing expectations in Math, Science, and Literacy.

Reality 2: Students in grades K-8 know frighteningly less today about international issues than in decades past due to the narrowing of the curriculum.

Reality 3: This lack of knowledge of the world and inability to speak other languages is intersecting with world events and failures of economies that are of crisis proportion for humanity.

Recommendation 1: Establish a position at the highest level of government that would oversee a new, coordinated federal campaign to improve language and international education. This could take the form of an Office of Language and International Outreach (OLIO).

Recommendation 2: All educational sectors (Elementary and Secondary, Higher Education, Defense, Intelligence, and State) would serve or be represented under the leadership of the Director of the OLIO.

Recommendation 3: The first charge of OLIO would be to create a strategic plan for revolutionizing the teaching and learning of languages and cultures in the United States.

Recommendation 4: The Director of OLIO would work with national and international experts in the field to redefine the content of language and culture education to include all aspects of international awareness and intercultural competence. All languages would be represented in this effort.

Recommendation 5: Aspects of the “Five V’s” that follow would have to become parts of the strategic plan and initiatives undertaken by the new Office of Language and International Outreach.

THE FIVE V’S:

View

- ❖ Americans have differing views about language learning that would need to be revealed and addressed.
- ❖ A view of the past times when multilingualism was valued in the United States (the first one hundred years) should be capitalized on in order to move the rhetoric beyond the English centered and sometimes xenophobic feeling about language learning today.
- ❖ The needs of the PreK-12 educational system are different from the needs of higher and adult education.
- ❖ All levels of instruction have very different contexts in which they operate and view language education.

Vision

- ❖ The spokesperson(s) at the federal level would need to be visionary.
- ❖ The vision of the life that Americans could lead if there was far greater language and culture competence from PreK -12 through adulthood would need to be crafted and marketed in the same way as has been done in other critical, federal campaigns.
- ❖ The federal leadership for language learning, cultural competence and international education would need to be supported by a “delta- force back office.”

Value

- ❖ Ongoing research into the cognitive, general linguistic, affective and other benefits of learning multiple languages would be raised to a level of national importance.
- ❖ Annual data about language programs would be collected.
- ❖ The impact of learning multiple languages on English language competence would be researched.
- ❖ An instrumental, federal role would need to provide ongoing and sustained funding for establishing, supporting, evaluating, and revising educational approaches that lead to language and culture competence.
- ❖ Multiple pathways to voters for funding language education at all levels would need to be established.

Visibility

- ❖ The federal lead for language education would elevate what are now ad hoc, profession-based advocacy campaigns to systematic and ongoing, national awareness campaigns.
- ❖ A federal initiative could showcase Americans who are already multilingual and, as a result, reap the benefits in jobs and opportunities.
- ❖ Federal initiatives would include many training opportunities for school administrators and elected officials who have no experience in language learning.
- ❖ A sustained and funded federal initiative would provide nation wide curriculum development institutes, materials development, teacher recruitment, teacher training and web based courseware.

Victory

- ❖ Americans would become proud to be multilingual.
- ❖ Americans would understand the general cognitive and affective value of knowing other languages.

- ❖ Americans would understand complex world problems from multiple perspectives and vantage points.
- ❖ There would be a system in place to ensure the opportunity for all American students to study languages in addition to English in an articulated fashion from Pre-K to old age.
- ❖ Technology would greatly enhance local language offerings.
- ❖ All American teachers and educational administrators, regardless of the discipline they teach or the level they oversee would have studied additional languages from elementary school through the college level.