

The SIU Public Policy Institute thanks those who came together to help develop these recommendations. The working group included:



September 11th should teach us one important lesson: the United States must become more sensitive to the rest of the world.

One way of building greater understanding is through foreign language education, where we learn to communicate more effectively with others, and also come to appreciate other cultures. Our insensitivity comes across to people in many other nations as arrogance. We do not intend to convey that impression, but that is the reality, as anyone who travels extensively in other nations will tell you.

We are the only nation in the world in which you can go through grade school and not learn another language. That should change, both for our security, as well as for economic reasons and for cultural enrichment.

I am grateful to the people who gathered in Carbondale at Southern Illinois University and hammered out some practical steps to move our nation in a more sensible direction.

I hope those of you who read this folder will not only agree, but do something about it – even if it is no more than a letter to your policy makers at the local, state and national level that this nation can and should do better.

Your action – or inaction – will make a difference.

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Foreign Language in Elementary Schools

Working group recommendations from a symposium held on March 3–4, 2002

Sponsored by the SIU Public Policy Institute



Recommendations

- ▶ **We recommend** that a letter be sent to key members of Congress and the Administration urging:
 - A. A grant of \$200,000 from the Department of Education to four states to develop within one year a comprehensive plan to encourage the development of students in K-12 schools who will excel in another language, with special attention to less commonly taught languages.
 - B. Creation of a one-year commission to work with the Defense Department, Education Department, and other agencies of the federal government to look at our future needs and to make recommendations. The commission should report to Congress and the President one year after its creation. It should be composed of two members of the House, one from each political party; two members of the Senate, one from each political party; and five members appointed by the President, not more than two from any political party, the President designating the chair of the commission.
 - C. \$15 per capita beginning in Fiscal Year 2004 for each elementary school student who receives at least 30 minutes a day of instruction in foreign languages for the school year, and \$30 per capita to schools with more than 40 percent Title I students, doubling these subsidies for the harder to learn languages.
- ▶ **Universities are urged** to create two or three-week summer programs with language immersion for teachers. The federal government should encourage this development with a modest subsidy.
- ▶ **A letter should be sent** to all the Governors requesting that they send a letter to all public and private schools stressing the importance of foreign language education for the state and nation and for the future of the students. Commendation will be given to all schools that provide the opportunity for foreign language instruction that begins in the early grades and builds level upon level through secondary schools resulting in high levels of competence in a foreign language.
- ▶ **Request the National PTA** to take on as a special one-year emphasis enlarging the opportunity for foreign language education.
- ▶ **Send similar letters** to the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the National



School Board Association, and the various national organizations of supervisory personnel. Send letters to all foundations with an interest in language, culture and/or global issues requesting them to take on a special emphasis enlarging opportunities for pre-college foreign language study.

- ▶ **We request** national, state and regional language organizations to:
 - A. Urge local foreign language teachers in each community to meet with a small group—eight to ten people—to brainstorm on how to stress the importance of foreign languages in presentations to civic groups (Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Women’s Clubs, etc.) and to other organizations, and to send letters to the editor stressing the importance of understanding other cultures in a post-September 11th world.
 - B. Urge their members to get letters to members of Congress, asking for attention to this important issue.
 - C. Find one state legislator in each state who is willing to lead on this issue, and then get letters of support to other legislators and to the Governor of each state.
- ▶ **All state boards of education** should also provide immersion academy experiences for juniors and seniors in high school who show unusual talent. These should be coordinated with a university in each state, providing college credit in addition to the prestige of the invitation. These boards should be eligible to compete for one of five annual awards from the Department of Education: “The President’s Award for Excellence in the Promotion of Foreign Language Proficiency.”
- ▶ **All state boards of education** should each designate a staff member charged with coordinating K-12 foreign language education. This professional should be a highly-qualified foreign language educator recognized as a state and national leader in the field, with a high level of proficiency in at least one language other than English, in addition to in-depth knowledge of current foreign language teaching methods and issues.
- ▶ **We encourage a poll** showing the income level of native English speakers who have studied another language compared to those who have not studied another language.
- ▶ **We urge** the passage of Senate Resolutions 1799 and 1800 sponsored by Senator Dick Durbin.
- ▶ **We urge the federal Blue Ribbon schools program** to include among its criteria that elementary schools develop high levels of competence in English and at least one additional language.



- ▶ **We urge that the Congress** declare that 2004 be a one-year period of focus on the study of the languages of the world in the United States, similar to that done by the European Union, the purpose of which is to draw attention of policymakers and ordinary citizens on the need for language as well as to provide the means to engender, strengthen and coordinate efforts on behalf of foreign languages in the United States.
- ▶ **Within six years**, at least 80 percent of the service academy appointments should preferably be given to students who demonstrate a proficiency in a second language.
- ▶ **Within two years**, special appointments to service academies should be available to students demonstrating fluency in targeted not commonly taught languages.
- ▶ **The National Assessment of Educational Progress** for language in the United States should be regularly administered, extended to the K-8 level, and incorporate other languages in addition to Spanish.
- ▶ **We urge that an office be established** in the United States Department of Education that has responsibility for foreign languages at the K-12 level.
- ▶ **State boards of education** should
 - a. Require every secondary school to offer the study of at least one foreign language at every grade level in a continuous sequence.
 - b. Encourage schools in their state to promote opportunities for international study and exchanges (study-abroad) as well as award credit for such study.
 - c. Establish licensure for foreign language education for both elementary school (K-6) and secondary school (7-12).
- ▶ **Provide at least \$6 million** to develop assessments that measure the foreign language proficiency gained by students in K-8 instructional programs.
- ▶ **Provide at least \$8 million** to develop a technologically delivered program in several languages to assist in providing consecutive years of instruction in each language in grades K-5.
- ▶ **We urge that the National Science Foundation** fund micro-and macro-economic studies of the advantages and disadvantages of current and projected language capacity in native English speakers.

