

The Texas Foreign Language Association

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The mission of the TFLA is to advance the study of languages other than English and their literatures and cultures through dissemination and publication of information and data; recognition of excellence in study and teaching; encouragement of program development; promotion of state organizations; and cooperation with regional, national, and international organizations also dedicated to the advancement of the study of languages other than English.

Secretary Arne Duncan
Office of the Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

March 8, 2010

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA) is the state professional organization for teachers of Languages Other Than English Pre-K through University. The 2500 members of TFLA are very concerned about the future of the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP). At conferences TFLA members have signed many letters to Senators Hutchison and Cornyn and their representatives in support of FLAP because it has provided seed money to expand opportunities for students to learn languages in Texas.

We agree that in order to “race to the top” globally, students need language and cultural skills in addition to English. We agree that students should have access to long sequences of articulated foreign language instruction in both the commonly taught and the less commonly taught languages. We must note that FLAP grants help school districts realize these goals.

The proposed FY 2011 Budget consolidates “narrowly target programs that focus on specific subject areas.” Eliminating dedicated funding for current language-related programs would have a very negative impact on efforts to expand opportunities in languages. It would inevitably reduce the funding that goes to foreign languages. Dedicated funding is critical to help districts to include foreign languages in their curriculum and to introduce less commonly taught languages in their curriculum and to introduce this language study in elementary programs. Without dedicated funding, there is no guarantee that grants will be awarded to language

programs. Without dedicated funding, fewer districts would take the time to apply for grants for foreign languages.

What does FLAP do for students? The grants FLAP provides are valuable resources for schools across the country. They help to fund innovative high-quality foreign language programs in districts that might not otherwise be able to provide them. Texas districts which have recently received funding through the FLAP program are Dallas ISD (Japanese & Russian), Spring Branch (Houston) ISD (Spanish), Houston ISD (Chinese, Japanese), Midland ISD (elementary school languages), and Katy ISD (Japanese, Spanish). In 2006 Texas schools had \$1,309,212 in FLAP monies, in 2007 \$805,973, and in 2008 \$1,439,597. The FLAP program has had a significant positive impact on curriculum and instruction in Texas.

FLAP has contributed to increasing the numbers of multilingual and culturally competent Americans. The few language-related programs that exist help realize this goal. We urge you to reinstate the programs specifically regarding foreign languages that are slated for consolidation and elimination.

Very truly yours,

Phyllis B. Thompson, Ph.D.
Director, Public Outreach and Advocacy
Texas Foreign Language Association

cc: Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
cc: Senator John Cornyn