

A Case in Point: Preserving an Elementary School Foreign Language Program

Recently, two of the three teachers in our elementary foreign language program resigned for unrelated personal reasons. Because of budget concerns, our Board of Education routinely reviews programs if teachers resign. Following the resignation of the second teacher, approximately two weeks time was given to collect information and ask classroom teachers for their input regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the early language learning program within the district.

The timing was difficult for this two week review due to the fact that school had ended one week prior to this request for feedback. Consequently, contacting teachers and parents was done with limited success.

The evening of the board meeting, it was evident that the members had little information about the elementary school foreign language program. I contacted the NNELL Political Action and Advocacy Committee about my concerns. Letters from national leaders in the field of foreign language education were faxed within two days and were very helpful in getting the attention of the district administration as well as the

board members. Signed petitions, as well as phone calls made by parents, were necessary in demonstrating support for the program to the board and administration.

Two additional elements convinced the board that the district should continue the program. Board members were impressed with the support of the elementary school staff for the program. Teachers emphasized the effectiveness of the program's reinforcement of content-basic concepts that are taught in math, science, social studies, health, art, P.E., and music. At this time, my position as elementary school foreign language teacher has been verified and I am hopeful that the two teachers who resigned will be replaced.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the letters of support from the members of the Executive Board of NNELL. Obviously, your acts of advocacy have made a positive impression! I urge any NNELL members who need similar support for their early language learning programs to contact Kay Hewitt, National Political Action and Advocacy Chair for NNELL, whose address and e-mail are listed on the back cover of this journal.

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