

Governor Andrew Cuomo
State of New York
Office of the Governor
Albany, New York

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to encourage continued support for the expansion of foreign language education throughout the state's elementary, middle, and high schools. Today's children are growing up in an increasingly connected world and their opportunity to communicate with diverse world citizens has never been greater. Acquiring proficiency in at least one world language is an essential skill for our twenty-first century learners.

I am sure you are aware of the numerous studies showing how second language acquisition improves students' overall academic achievement in all subject areas, leading to increased SAT scores and a greater understanding of their native language. Using the latest technologies, researchers today are continuing to explore how learning a second language positively impacts brain development, particularly in children. The results show a greater ability to differentiate between information, tune out distractions, and focus on details-- skills that reflect the overarching benefits of language learning that are best achieved when instruction begins at a young age. As a member of both NYSAFLT (New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers) and NNELL (National Network for Early Language Learning), I feel strongly about the importance of beginning language instruction early so students can gain real proficiency through extended periods of study during their school careers.

An increasing number of citizens support foreign language education. A 2007 Gallup poll reports that 85% of Americans believe children should be learning a second language, yet only 25% of our elementary schools offer such instruction, with numbers declining throughout middle and high schools as well. As states begin working towards the adoption of Common Core Standards in math and reading, I encourage you to work with legislators to ensure that world language education does not get cast aside. Rather, it is of utmost importance to develop language skills in conjunction with the math and reading skills that our students need to communicate and succeed as global citizens.

Thank you for your role in helping to improve the global education of New York's children.

Sincerely,