



American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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School Board Members
Rock Hill School District
PO Drawer 10072
660 N. Anderson Road
Rock Hill, SC 29731

Dear Members of the Rock Hill School Board:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 12,000 members of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to express our concern about Rock Hill School District's proposal to significantly reduce the availability of elementary language programs for students in the Rock Hill District. The research is clear regarding the academic, social and economic benefits of language study at all levels. It is critical that school districts allow students to pursue learning a language from the earliest level possible.

Offering early language learning in a comprehensive way sends a clear message to students, parents and the community at large that such programs are critical to preparing students to live and work in an increasingly global economy. While some may not see the immediate use for languages within the Rock Hill community, the fact is that more than 12 German companies alone are based in the Rock Hill area. With President Obama calling for doubling U.S. exports over the next five years, our nation's language and cultural capabilities will be surely tested when we attempt to sell our goods abroad knowing only the English language.

Because our organization has the national pulse of language programs nationwide, I can tell you that offering early language study opportunities clearly will put your school district in a unique position among the United States school systems. Today's students will live in a world that is fundamentally different from the one in which we grew up. The federal government knows that our country is lacking in the language skills that are critical to national security. The business community also realizes that to sell our goods to other countries in this economically challenging era, we must be able to understand not only the language but also the culture of those to whom we are selling.

We urge you to reconsider the proposal to reduce the elementary program and continue to provide this option to students in the Rock Hill school district. It is time in our country to increase the language opportunities for students, not decrease them.

Sincerely,

Bret Lovejoy
Executive Director