



ACTFL STATE ADVOCACY TEAMS

NEWSLETTER – FALL 2015

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STATE LEVEL UPDATE

Florida's Proposal to Substitute World Language Credit with Computer Coding Classes

- Linda Markley (FL)

[Senate Bill 0468](#) is a STATE initiative –not a federal one– currently being considered in Florida's Senate. **Senate Bill 0468 would essentially allow students to take computer coding classes to fill world language requirements.** While advocates of this initiative tout it as necessary for local and global competitiveness, many in Florida are pushing back, including coders likes [Code.org's state policy and advocacy manager, Amy Hirotaka](#):

"Although we use the term "programming language" to refer to C++, Java, Python...these aren't natural languages. Spanish has a vocabulary of 10,000 words...[while] a typical computing language has a vocabulary of about 100 words, and the real work is learning how to put these words together to build a complex program."

Opponents of SB 0468 acknowledge that coding is an important skill, but one which should be incorporated into a holistic math and science education, not a replacement for foreign language and culture.

Similar legislation has been floated in Kentucky, New Mexico and Texas, and was [first reported in 2014](#), but has not gained a lot of traction. The education community as well as the coding community is categorically against the measure, but it is still very important to understand the debate in case your state finds itself considering similar legislation. Here are a few editorials on the topic:

- [Huffington Post – Computer Science is Not a Foreign Language](#)
- [Miami Herald - Don't make students choose between computer coding and foreign languages](#)
- [Tampa Bay Times - Don't sacrifice foreign languages for computer coding](#)
- Florida Foreign Language Association (FFLA) members may use [CapWiz on ACTFL's Advocacy page](#) to voice their opposition to the bill.

Linda also emphasizes how critical it is to **have a designated advocacy person** who works with your state organization and attends JNCL and the Delegates Assembly to stay informed and connected. –[Sign Up to Attend 2016 Language Advocacy Day](#) – [Read about JNCL-NCLS’s 2015 Language Advocacy Day](#).

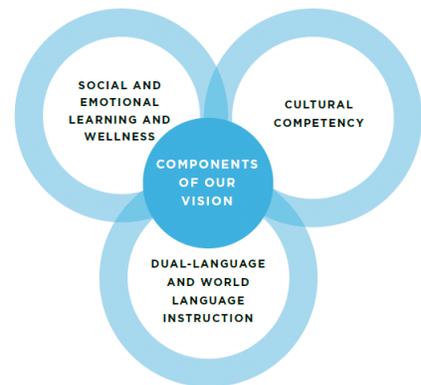
Follow-Up from New Mexico on Coding and Biliteracy Seal

- *Nancy Oakes (NM)*

- “[Coding for WL in New Mexico](#) [was an issue in early 2014]. I think the NM Legislature dumped this effort rather quickly.”
 - [On how NM will work in tribal languages for Seal](#). “See this site for Indian Education info. Basically it’s completely left to the people of the tribe. Options 2, 3, 4 are for all other LOTE’s: http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/Bilingual_Seal.html”
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Rhode Island Team Advocates for State Language Supervisor In Front of RI Board of Education

Team leader in Rhode Island, **Erin Papa**, is determined to bring a State Supervisor for Languages position to her state. During the final Board of Education meeting this month, Papa and Margarita Dempsey spoke directly to both the Elementary and Secondary-Postsecondary Education Councils about Rhode Island’s need for a State Supervisor for Languages. She and Dempsey had previously attended other council meetings, praising RI’s professed commitment to expanding foreign language education, specifically their commitment to fostering “globally competent citizens.” ([RIDE 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for Education](#)).



(Photo Credit | RIDE 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, 2015)

“This expansion is already happening,” Papa wrote in a follow-up email to the Board, “but what we lack is state-level coordination.”

In her letter to the board ([Read the entire letter here](#)), she cites RI’s new DLI programs state-wide and burgeoning English Language Learners as the primary reason why state coordination is necessary.

“RIDE (Rhode Island Department of Education) has only 1.5 position supporting 10,000 ELLs

state-wide, and 36,000 WL language learners with no state-level support and no state standards for world language education,” writes Papa.

Papa rounded off her letter with three specific and precise requests from the Board: 1) that a State Supervisor for Languages position be created in RIDE; 2) that more collaboration occur between post-secondary institutions and K-12 schools to better prepare teachers of foreign languages; and 3) that the state adopt ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for PK-16.

This is a great step forward for Rhode Island! Many thanks to the efforts for their advocacy team (**Erin Papa, Vanessa Del Giudice, Margarita Dempsey, Dana Ramey and Sarah Steverman**). ACTFL encourages other state teams to reach out through committee meetings or personal connections to expand state-level coordination of foreign language education nationwide.

FEDERAL UPDATE

Update from Senior Policy Associate with The Sheridan Group, Liz Murphy:

“We are happy to report that last week **both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015**, which was signed into law by President Obama yesterday. This is the first step in setting funding levels for the federal government for FY16. As you may remember, back in September Congress passed a short term continuing resolution or CR to keep the government open under FY15 funding levels until December 11. With the topline spending level set in the Bipartisan Budget Act, appropriators are now deciding how much each of the twelve subcommittees should be allocated for FY16.

Given that this process is moving quickly, we are reaching out to LHHS Subcommittee staff this week and asking them to prioritize Title VI/Fulbright Hays International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs in the FY16 LHHS appropriations bill in the upcoming appropriations negotiations.



On the authorizing front, we are hearing that ESEA negotiations are nearing the finish line. The tentative plan is for the completed bill to go to the House floor the week of November 16 and the Senate floor (assuming it passes the House) the week of November 30. Both the House and Senate are out the week of November 23 for Thanksgiving. If this is correct, both houses will have to appoint conferees fairly soon for what will likely be just one conference committee meeting.”

Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act

[A Senate bill](#) to promote the academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children is being “considered further” in committee. It would establish a national grant program for Native American language immersion programs PK-16, totaling \$5 million.

Jon Tester (D-MO) is sponsoring Senate Bill 1419 along with 4 co-sponsors: Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), Brian Schatz (D-HI), and Tom Udall (D-NM). The bill still needs to pass several key hurdles to be signed into law.

GENERAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Where are we as far as using the OPI to document language proficiency for students who are native speakers?

- *Caroline Kelly (NC)*

A: ACTFL administers [Oral Proficiency Interview \(OPI\) tests](#) in +100 languages to speakers of all proficiency levels. ACTFL can administer OPIs to anyone wanting to gauge their proficiency level –native speakers as well as second language learners.

- ACTFL

Q: Can you comment on ACTFL's role in the [1 Million Strong initiative](#)?

- *Margaret “Peggy” Sharkey (NY)*

A: Yes, ACTFL will be involved in the teacher recruitment and retention process for the 1 Million Strong initiative. To learn more about this initiative, visit

100kstrong.org

- ACTFL

Q: I would like to know if in other states languages are electives or requirements in high school to send this info to the Indiana Department of Education?

- Indiana is going through a change in high school diplomas and it seems foreign languages would be affected since they would be electives instead of requirements in some tracks like the honor one (despite the recent Seal of Biliteracy and Dual Language Immersion programs bills in Indiana).

- *Israel Herrera (IN)*

A: Unfortunately, world languages are listed as an "option" for graduation in California: students choose VAPA or World Language.

- *Nicole Naditz (CA)*

A: Illinois has no language requirement, but individual school districts (i.e., Chicago) have adopted district graduation requirements that require world language.

- *Linda Egnatz (IL)*

A: MI has clarified the state standards (summer of 2014) to allow school districts to offer the opportunity to allow students to elect out of the second year of World Languages. Here is the state law:

- New Legislation HB 4465. 2014 legislation (HB 4465) has modified the original MMC world language requirement by adding flexibility for students to meet the requirement. Students must complete one (1) credit of world language and then may partially or fully fulfill 1 credit of this requirement by completing a department-approved formal career and technical education program or may partially or fully fulfill 1 credit visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the existing visual or performing arts requirement.

- *Thomas Lietz (MI)*

ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Become an Advocacy Wiz with [CapWiz!](#)

[CapWiz](#) is ACTFL's way of directly connecting you with members of Congress about issues that matter to you. Take action, stay informed and spread the word with this online resource every Ad Team should be taking advantage of. [Click here learn more.](#)