

ADVOCATE VIA STUDENT TRAVEL



One of the most moving experiences we provide our LOTE students is the opportunity to actually use their newly acquired second language skills and to experience another culture first-hand. For many of us, such an experience was the first step toward our current LOTE position. Without a doubt, the experience you provide for your students is life changing.

The current budget crisis in our state and nation has placed our LOTE programs in a particularly dangerous position. Despite the research showing that LOTE is needed for national security, economic growth and brain development, LOTE is still viewed as easily expendable – an “extra frill.” We have been calling, writing and visiting our legislators, but have slowly been losing ground as seen with our state examinations and cuts to many local language programs. Our legislators tell us that they need to hear from folks outside of the LOTE profession. We all know the powerful impact that parents’ voices have with our administrators and boards of education.

Here’s a great way to get those other voices heard.

When you have returned from your student travel experience, have all participants (chaperones as well) complete a written reflection. Be sure you add questions that will encourage responses that support our LOTE programs and the need for LOTE in our world.

You may want to ask in advance if the names of the participants can be used.

Suggested Questions:

- Why did you decide to participate in this trip?
- Do you feel you obtained your goal? Why or why not?
- What was your favorite part of the trip, and why?
- What was your biggest "surprise" (new knowledge, cultural experience, etc.)?
- Why was this trip important to you?
- How do you think this experience will impact your future?

(You may add your own questions to create a survey for future travel. If you get any positive unsolicited feedback from parents or students – via email, for example – save that as well).

When you’ve collected the written reflections, compile all of them (or select portions of the best) into one document. Use the compilation in a number of ways, including:

- Present the document with a “thank you” to every member of your Board of Education and to your school superintendent. Thank them for approving the trip for

XX years and for their continued support. Let them see the impact their decision has had on their students.

- Present the document to the state legislators of your school district. Be sure to include a cover letter outlining the critical need for LOTE education. Show how your current program has directly impacted student lives. Use documents from the Public Advocacy site to add specific information to your cover letter.
- Send the document to NYS Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia and to your local Regent with the same message.
- Don't leave out our national legislators. Use letter templates on the Public Advocacy site to remind them to support the legislation that supports LOTE.
- Use some of your best pieces to write an article for your school or community newspaper. A brief report of the trip with an extensive description of the impact the trip had may influence your district's residents. If you want more parents and students to read the article – have a student write the article. A student name as the author will attract more readers.
- And don't forget NYSAFLT! We'd love to see your participants' reflections and hopefully be able to use them to continue to advocate.

Remember that all contact information (state and national legislators, Regents, Commissioner, etc.) is available on the Public Advocacy site.