

(Your address, date)

_____, 2003

The Hon. _____

Dear Senator/Assemblymember _____:

I am writing to ask you to work with other legislators to reinstate New York State funding for education to at least the 2002-2003 levels. This would ensure the continuation of important early foreign language programs. I also ask you to support a proposal to address current and anticipated shortages of foreign language teachers. I am enclosing a copy of this proposal which provides incentives for future foreign language teachers.

The study of a foreign language and culture will help prepare our students to meet the challenges of our world. American citizens who are proficient in a Language Other than English (LOTE) are better able to represent our country in the world. They are more competitive in the global economy and are better prepared to contribute to our national security. A strong foundation in foreign languages will enhance the career opportunities of our students and will enrich their lives.

Research shows many benefits for children who begin foreign language study at an early age and who continue study of that language for an extended period of time. In addition to developing fluency in the language studied and an openness to people from other cultures, elementary school students of foreign languages outperform others in standardized tests of language arts, reading and math. Foreign language programs reinforce and enrich the elementary school curriculum.

Because of the uncertainties caused by the projected State budget cuts, many schools may be forced to reduce or eliminate existing foreign language programs in the elementary schools. Please make every effort to provide sufficient funding in the State budget so that these important programs can continue.

According to the New York State Education Department, districts have difficulty finding certified LOTE teachers. I hope that you will support the enclosed proposal which seeks to improve this situation. Please let me know if you would be interested in sponsoring this proposal, which was prepared by the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYS AFLT).

I would be happy to provide you with more information on the benefits of foreign language study if you wish.

Sincerely yours,