



2008 JNCL Legislative Day and Delegate Assembly

by Lorraine D'Ambruoso

As your Executive Director, I just returned from representing CLTA at the annual JNCL Conference. There are three goals for this annual gathering:

- advocacy—Delegates are spokespersons for foreign language education, hoping to convince legislators that learning world languages and cultures is important.
- networking—state, regional and national associations' representatives learn what their colleagues are doing to further our cause.
- information-sharing—JNCL updates the delegates on everything that is happening across the nation, resulting in severe information overload!

The first day is the legislative assembly. We receive a briefing on proposed legislation that might affect our discipline; proposed legislation goes through two stages: authorization, where the bill is created, and appropriations, where the funding is provided for the bill. We reach consensus on our stand regarding each proposed bill, and then we meet with legislators to ask them to sponsor and/or support certain bills and to vote in favor of them. This year, we agreed to limit our comments to three bills.

H.R. 2111—The Foreign Language

Education Partnership Program, introduced by Representative Rush Holt of New Jersey, would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, to establish a partnership program in foreign languages. The Secretary of Education would have authority to make incentive payments to partnerships to “develop and maintain model programs that support **articulated** language learning in kindergarten through grade 12.”

H.R. 5179—The International Education Leadership Act of 2008, introduced by Representative Rush Holt of New Jersey, would establish an Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education and an Office of International and Foreign Language Education within the Department of Education. This person would **promote** language and culture education, administer all programs dealing with international and foreign language education and research, **coordinate** with like programs in other federal agencies, and coordinate the Department of Education's activities in international affairs.

H.R. 4137—The College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007, introduced by Representative George Miller of California, would amend and reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965, using a broader definition of “critical foreign language” in Title 1, including foreign languages in Title II grant programs, and adding changes

to include foreign languages in many of the Title VI programs.

The second and third days of the conference were the delegate assembly days. We were overwhelmed with the amount of information from the speakers that JNCL Executive Director J. David Edwards provided for us. Rather than overwhelm you, I will simply comment on a few burning issues.

FLAP grants will focus on **articulated** programs that would enable students to advance from elementary school through college, reaching a superior level of proficiency—in critical languages.

NSLI (National Security Language Initiative) will continue to work to increase the number of Americans teaching, learning and speaking critical languages.

But the two most fiery issues are NCLB and AP—excuse the alphabet soup!

NCLB is essentially dead for now, until the new administration comes onto the scene. At this point, there is no common ground on NCLB in Washington. Even private schools are now complaining about NCLB's effect on foreign language programs.

The recent decision of the College Board to eliminate the AP French and Latin Literature and Italian Language examinations has led to a cry from the field. According to a member of the Board, the move is toward a single examination in language and culture,

as exists with Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Russian. Various organizations and educational associations have written to protest the decision, but the CB seems prepared to stay the course.

One of the delegates made some cogent points, stating that the issue is not, as so many seem to think, of competition between languages, or of the field versus AP. We talk about K-16 articulation and about the need to build language capacity. We need to ask the CB why they would destroy the infrastructure (the exams that already exist and the students

who are already studying languages) to create a new one (the “flavor of the year” approach). It seems that the issue is not the CB versus some languages, but the frame of mind. Perhaps it is true that, in this country, “We do languages one war at a time!”

Several of the delegates commented on the “supposed” non-profit status of the College Board, questioning how a non-profit can justify the elimination of examinations because too few students take them?

There will obviously be more on this

topic in the months to come. CLTA will attempt to keep you informed.

As you can see, the three days were packed. As I spoke with colleagues from across the country, I was once again reminded that CLTA is indeed a special family of educators. I thank you, the Board and the members, for enabling me to represent you in this special activity.

CB Eliminates FL AP Exams

by Lorraine D'Ambruso

First of all, please excuse the use of three acronyms in the title of this article. But all educators, and most especially, all foreign language educators, should immediately recognize their meaning. One of the most discussed items at the recent JNCL meeting was the College Board's decision to eliminate certain foreign language Advanced Placement Examinations. Their proposal could conceivably see an end to the French and Latin Literature and the Italian Language Examinations.

In the case of Latin and French, the rationale is the supposedly low number of students sitting for these exams. But in the case of French, according to the AATF, enrollment in the French Literature Exam has increased by 26% in the years from 1997 to 2007. As for Latin, the move to eliminate the Literature Examination will leave only the test on Virgil, thus narrowing the students' exposure to other Latin authors.

The proposed elimination of the Italian Language Examination seems particularly precipitous, since it has not been administered enough times to determine if there will eventually be sufficient numbers to justify retention of the examination.

The College Board's reply is that there is a movement to change the examinations to reflect best practices in the field. This would mean administering single examinations in Language and Culture, as is the case with Italian and Chinese, for example, rather than separate examinations in Language and Literature.

There are several concerns from and for the profession. Most importantly, as J. David Edwards, Executive Director of JNCL, states, “The College Board's elimination of these courses sends a message to the nation that the study of foreign languages is not important,” when in fact they are more important than ever before in the history of our country. Another concern is that the College Board is proposing a destruction of the infrastructure (already existing and successful exams) before the desired new exams have been created. It also seems to be pitting one language against another. But it also seems to be looking more at the “bottom line” rather than at the needs of our students, whom the College Board, as a non-profit, should be serving. Language teachers struggle every day to sustain their programs, maintaining quality and rigor in the face of constant cuts in sup-

port and funding. Eliminating exams will only lead to elimination of programs. The CB should be doing everything in its power to help these educators maintain their programs.

However, the greatest concern is that the College Board has taken a momentous step in eliminating these exams without consulting the professionals in the field, those who have worked quietly and faithfully for years within the structure of the College Board and who have supported the College Board and AP testing over the years.

Hopefully the College Board will see fit to revisit this decision and engage in dialogue with the field. Whatever the results of such dialogue, whether exams remain cancelled or are re-instated, the CB would at least regain the respect it has lost by the manner in which this decision was made.

(Should you wish to express your concerns directly to the College Board, address your e-mail to: Trevor Packer, Vice President of College Board, tpacker@collegeboard.org)

2009 CLTA Conference: Raising the Standards—Raising the Bar

by Paula Hirsch, Conference Coordinator

The upcoming CLTA Conference will be held at the Double Tree Hotel in Sacramento. Please note that this conference is very early, February 26- March 1, 2009. The cost of a single or double room is only \$125.00 plus tax. Consider sharing a hotel room with a colleague from your affiliate or driving up with a friend! If you are a person who likes to shop, across the street from our hotel is a very large shopping mall with stores as well as restaurants. FLAGS, the affiliate host, is planning a variety of creative activities. Join the fun; network with colleagues!

Save money; present an interest session or a workshop and let CLTA pay for your registration! With each presentation at the conference, you will receive one complimentary registration for the 2009 Conference. All workshop presenters also receive an honorarium. The proposal form is on line; you can submit a presentation from your home computer; no need to venture out to the post office. Our goal is to have all proposals by the end of August so that we can get all of the information on line at the CLTA website [www.clta.net] by the end of this November.

CLTA is planning to keep the workshop and conference fees the same as last year. Member registration for the pre-conference workshops will cost \$40.00 for one three-hour workshop, \$65.00 for two three-hour workshops and \$90.00 for three three-hour workshops. The Saturday/Sunday Conference fee without meals is, as always, \$100.00. **Ask about funding before you leave for summer vacation!** We look forward to seeing you in Sacramento!

Futures Academy Becomes a Reality

By Carol Moir

After four long years of discussing, debating, planning, and editing, the California Language Teachers' Association in conjunction and cooperation with the California Foreign Language Project has initiated the first round of leadership training for up and coming leaders from within our own ranks. The dream and the program are very real to the fourteen participants from across California. The program started at the conference in Orange County in March. The focus of the first training session is "Exploring the Multiple Dimensions of Leadership."

Our facilitator from that Friday was Peggy Grant, who came to us from the healthcare industry in the central valley. One of her most interesting comments was "I cannot believe the level of energy in the room." She was not at all accustomed to the dynamic nature of teaching and learning. It was refreshing and

stimulating to hear home truths from a non-educator. After introductions and a team building exercise, Ms. Grant took the group through a journey of self-discovery. During lunch our Futures fellows were able to listen to leadership stories from some of our most outstanding teachers, including Gloria Payette and Jamin Lynch. Christine Lanphere, 2006 ACTFL National Language Teacher of the Year, also shared her pathway to leadership. The luncheon focused our new leaders on successes and what brought teachers to their current aspirations.

The day concluded with planning for the three day summer session at Stanford University. The dates for this session are June 29-July 1, 2008. At this session we will continue with leadership and then move into affiliate leadership and teamwork, how tos, pitfalls and progress. When I spoke with one fellow about Friday, he

responded, "I met an amazing group of teachers who were all driven toward the same goal...picking up the gauntlet of leading our association and affiliates into the 21st century."

When reflecting on our first experience and pondering the future, another candidate stated, "I look forward to getting together again and sharing our experiences as leaders. I look forward to learning...new strategies to promote languages in California."

Be sure to look for the profile surveys we are publishing on our Futures Fellows over the next year or so. Futures is now a living, breathing program to help our students improve academics and electives courses.

We thank CLTA, the CFLP, and the board of CLTA for allowing us to think out of the box and "hatch" our own leaders

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Please let us know what you think of *Language Magazine*, CLTA's latest service to its members.

Some statistics from JNCL

According to the US Department of Education, only 44% of American high school students are enrolled in foreign language classes, only 31% of American elementary schools even offer foreign languages, and fewer than 8% of US undergraduates study a foreign language.

According to the 2000 census, only 9% of Americans can speak a second language, whereas over 50% of Europeans speak one or more foreign languages.

The National Research Council concluded that early language learning in elementary and secondary school is key to establishing a pipeline of students who can eventually reach a high enough level of proficiency in foreign language and culture to meet national needs.

Research indicates that language education beginning in primary school is the best way to introduce a child to foreign languages and its nuances. Studies also suggest that foreign language study helps develop a child's cognitive skills and improves the child's learning of other subject matter.

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