

**The Foreign Language Assistance Program:  
Possibilities for Future Change  
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**Introduction**

During the first session of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Members worked towards the impending reauthorization of the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. The first discussion draft was introduced by original NCLB authors, Representative George Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and Representative Howard P. (Buck) McKeon, senior Republican member of the same Committee in the House of Representatives. This was followed by a Senate version of the bill, co-authored by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (Senate HELP Committee), and ranking member, Senator William B. Enzi. However, due to time constraints and appropriations obstacles, neither House was able to act further on the drafts. Now, in the midst of a very important election year, it is likely that the law will not be reauthorized until 2009.

The additional time needed to finish the reauthorization may produce positive outcomes for the future of foreign language education, as one of the most important pieces for foreign languages, the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), will hopefully be expanded under the new law as a result of input from the language field. Currently, the two drafts of NCLB include two very different versions of FLAP. One largely reflects the current program, and the other significantly expands upon the current program by adding the Foreign Language Education Partnership Program. The intention here is to compare and contrast the two programs and compare them to the Foreign Language Partnership Program that exists as part of the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (America COMPETES) law.

**Senate**

The Senate draft to reauthorize NCLB, released by Senators Kennedy and Enzi, shows the provisions of FLAP most similar to the current version (as of 2001). There are, however, a few additions and changes in the proposed FLAP program, as follows:

- ☑ Adds a priority for “high-utility languages” and the authority of the Secretary to set aside up to 20% of grant funds for “programs that support critical foreign languages”, though a program supporting any foreign language remains eligible
- ☑ Defines “critical foreign language” as the list of languages appearing on the August 2, 1985 list designated by the Secretary in the Federal Register
- ☑ Defines “advanced level of proficiency” as ACTFL ‘advanced’ or ILR ‘2’
- ☑ States that an articulated program would have such a proficiency goal and would be designed to expand sequentially
- ☑ Defines “high utility language” as a “commonly taught foreign language” or a language that is widely used for business and international communications.
- ☑ Awards grants to State educational agencies (SEA) for systemic approaches to changing foreign language education within the state that give special consideration to applications providing professional development for teachers, promoting articulated foreign language study, and the use of innovative activities
- ☑ Defines the use of funds in greater detail than the previous program

Furthermore, this version would include significant changes to the Elementary School Foreign Language Incentive Program (FLIP) that is part of the overall FLAP legislation. Now called the Kindergarten through Grade 12 Foreign Language Incentive Program, the draft would:

- ☑ Award 4 year matching grants to local educational agencies (LEA) to “support innovative model programs providing for the establishment, improvement, or continuation of foreign language study” for grades K through 12
- ☑ Allows for application in partnership with SEA, institutions of higher education (IHE), and other actors
- ☑ Gives special consideration to applications providing professional development for teachers, promoting articulated foreign language study, and use of innovative activities
- ☑ Expands usages of funds and specifies the percentage of funds of the total grant paid annually to recipients
- ☑ Requires a report of program activities
- ☑ Specifies that programs should supplement not supplant other language programs

### **House of Representatives**

The draft of the NCLB reauthorization by Representatives Miller and McKeon provides another plausible option for FLAP in the future. This version would maintain the original version of the FLAP grant, but replaces the FLIP section with the Foreign Language Education Partnership Program (FLEPP), which is more comprehensive in its goals and terms. This piece was originally introduced in May 2007 by Representative Rush Holt as H.R. 2111, as the Foreign Language Education Partnership Program Act, and has now been inserted, with some changes, into the House draft NCLB bill. The program would:

- ☑ Provide 5 year matching grants to applicants consisting of a partnership between an IHE and one or more LEA, and may include one or more SEA that would develop and maintain model programs of articulated foreign language learning in grades K through 12 to reach an “advanced level of proficiency”
- ☑ Define “advanced level of proficiency” as ACTFL ‘advanced’ or ILR ‘2’
- ☑ Define “critical foreign language” as a “less commonly taught foreign language, the teaching of which is critical to the Nation’s security and global economic leadership, as determined by the Secretary”
- ☑ Allow for up to 2 years of planning the development of an “articulated instructional curriculum for the critical foreign languages”, in-service and pre-service for teachers, and the development of materials, curriculum, assessments, and contextual programs
- ☑ Specify application requirements and procedures
- ☑ Provide a comprehensive list of acceptable/desirable uses for funds
- ☑ Require that the foreign language program include historic, geographic, cultural, economic, and other contextual factors regarding countries with speakers of the program language
- ☑ Require the programs to include a “research and evaluation component” and that partnerships collect and analyze data to be made available to the public
- ☑ Specify that programs should supplement not supplant other language programs
- ☑ Oblige the Secretary to prepare and submit a biennial report to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the House Committee on Education and Labor regarding the progress of these programs

### **America COMPETES**

America COMPETES is an updated version of the 2006 National Competitiveness Investment Act introduced by Senators Frist and Reid. It is a bipartisan response to the National Academies’ “Rising Above the Gathering Storm” report and the Council on Competitiveness’ “Innovate America” report. As a whole, it would increase research investment, strengthen educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics from elementary through graduate school, and develop an innovation infrastructure. In addition to expanding AP and IB programs and funding for math, science, engineering, and technology, America COMPETES would

develop and implement programs for teacher recruitment and would expand critical foreign language programs in elementary and secondary schools to increase the number of students studying and becoming proficient in these languages through a Foreign Language Partnership Program. Although it is law, Congress did not provide funding for America COMPETES, but directs partnership grant activities to be funded through \$2.4 million of the total \$25.7 million appropriated for FLAP in FY 2008. The provisions of this program include:

- ☑ Authorizing a 5 year matching grant to establish articulated programs for critical foreign language study in elementary through secondary schools with the goal of significantly increasing “opportunities to study critical foreign languages and the context in which the critical foreign languages are spoken” and the number of American students achieving a high level of proficiency in such languages
- ☑ Defining a “partnership” as including an IHE and one or more LEA, and may include other relevant entities
- ☑ Defining “critical foreign language” as any language which the Secretary and other heads of Federal agencies determine to be appropriate and critical to national security and economic competitiveness in the U.S.
- ☑ Defining “superior level of proficiency” as ILR level 3
- ☑ Specifying that the first 2 years of the grant period could be used for planning and development
- ☑ Setting multiple application requirements outlining the ways in which the partnership would ensure that the students reach a superior level of proficiency, including letters of commitment, program development and implications, target proficiency benchmarks, program continuation after the grant period, and assessments
- ☑ Defining acceptable/desirable usages of grant funds
- ☑ Specifying the percentage of funds of the total grant paid annually to recipients
- ☑ Specifying that programs should supplement not supplant other language programs
- ☑ Obliging the Secretary to prepare and submit an annual report to the Senate HELP Committee and the House Committee on Education and Labor regarding the progress of these programs
- ☑ Authorizing the appropriation of \$28 million for fiscal year 2008 and sums as necessary for the succeeding 2 years to carry out the program

## **Conclusion**

It is simple to see that the foreign language education programs outlined above are similar in many ways, as they would provide grants to fund an LEA/IHE partnership program in order to create and expand articulated foreign language study in U.S. schools. However, the programs each differ in significant ways according to the details of their requirements, procedures, and specific goals. One of the main differences of particular concern is the requirement of a critical foreign language for the America COMPETES program. Both the House and Senate programs provide the authority to set a priority for critical languages, but still include commonly taught and high-utility languages. Another major distinction between the programs is the extent of freedom grantees have to spend their funds and their reporting responsibilities. While the Senate version of the FLAP and FLIP programs state very specific applications and uses of the funding, the House version of the FLAP and FLEPP grants give more flexibility in these areas, but have more defined desirable outcomes for the programs and for language proficiency development. Furthermore, as part of a math and science competitiveness bill, the America COMPETES program mostly focuses on language learning for the purpose of maintaining and building on the global competence of the U.S. and this is evident in the provisions of the program. Please see the attached chart to further compare program details.

	Senate		House of Representatives		America COMPETES
	FLAP	FLIP	FLAP (NCLB 2001)	FLEPP	partnership program
Purpose	Matching grant for “innovative model programs” to establish, improve, or expand K-12 FL study	Matching grant for “innovative model programs” to establish, improve, or continue K-12 FL study	Matching grant for “innovative model programs” to establish, improve, or expand K-12 FL study	Matching grant for “developing and maintaining model programs of articulated FL learning” K-12	Matching grant for “developing and maintaining model programs of articulated FL learning” K-12
Grant Length (yrs.)	3	4	3	5	4
Critical Languages	Fed. Reg,			LCTL, crit. to Nat’l/global needs	LCTL, Crit. to Nat’l/global needs
Requirement Priority	✓			✓	✓
Eligible Parties	SEA, LEA	LEA	SEA, LEA	SEA, LEA	SEA, LEA
Partnership		Optional		Required	Required
LEA		✓		✓	✓
IHE		✓		✓	✓
Other		✓		✓	✓
Expected level of proficiency reached (ACTFL, ILR)	Advanced, 2	Advanced, 2		Advanced, 2	Superior, 3
Articulation	✓	✓		✓	✓
Application					
Application Special Consideration:				Application Req:	
1. Prof. Development (PD)	✓	✓			
2. Intensive summer FL prog. for PD			✓		
3. Community involvement			✓		
4. Sequential study		✓	✓		✓
5. Use of technology			✓		
6. Promote innovative activities	✓	✓	✓		
7. Consortium			✓		
8. Articulated study	✓				✓
9. Identify partnership members				✓	✓
10. Describe how students reach prof.				✓	✓
11. Identify prof. levels & benchmarks				✓	✓
12. Describe how prog. Continues past grant				✓	✓
13. Use of assessments				✓	✓
Use of Funds Required:					
1. Strategies per best practices	✓	✓		✓	✓
2. Articulated framework	✓	✓		✓	✓

3. Teacher in-service, PD	✓	✓		✓	✓
4. Recruit teachers/students				✓	✓
5. Recruit heritage populations				✓	✓
6. Summer institutes				✓	
7. Research and evaluation				✓	
Optional:					
1. Develop/enhance assessments	✓	✓		✓	✓
2. Enhance existing K-12 prog.	✓	✓			
3. Provide for max. FL exposure		✓		✓	✓
4. Provide tutoring		✓		✓	
5. Multiple entry points		✓		✓	✓
6. Use of technology		✓		✓	✓
7. Prog. Coordinator				✓	✓
8. Planning and Devel.				✓	
9. Provide scholarships and incentives for new teachers				✓	✓
10. Provide study abroad scholarships				✓	✓
11. Integrate FL in whole school				✓	✓
12. Community involvement activities				✓	✓
13. Develop teacher cert. prog.				✓	✓
14. Obtain Technical assistance in carrying out prog.				✓	✓
Data Analysis				Annual (Prog & Sec) 5% funds	Annual (Sec) 3% funds
Data dissemination				Annual (Prog & Sec)	Annual (Sec)
Includes Cultural component				✓	✓
Report to Secretary	annual	annual			
Report to Congress				biennial	
Matching Waiver available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supplement not Supplant		✓		✓	✓