

A Report on the JNCL Delegate Assembly

by Anne Fountain

It was my privilege to represent SWCOLT at the 2006 JNCL-NCLIS meeting in Washington D. C. Each year representatives of over sixty organizations (national, regional and state/local) gather to undertake the important work of advocacy. The 2006 sessions were exciting because the need for language proficiency is increasingly seen as a national priority and because languages have captured some of the spotlight on security.

Legislative Day

The JNCL-NCLIS Legislative day began on Thursday morning, May 4, in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, where Jayne Abrate, JNCL-NCLIS President, gave the welcome and introductions and J.D. Edwards, JNCL-NCLIS, Executive Director-- our man in Washington--gave an overview and presentation about legislative issues of concern to our profession. The morning program featured: a presentation on issues concerning languages and legislation in the 109th Congress; information about the **National Security Education Act (NSEA)**; and a focus on how to be effective in Congressional Visits. The afternoon was devoted to office visits on Capitol Hill.

Delegate Assembly: Title VI, Study Abroad, FLAP, "Discover Languages," NSLI

The Delegate Assembly the following day included a debriefing session on Congressional Visits, a description of the review of Title VI (the International Education and Foreign Language component of the Higher Education Act) and Fulbright-Hays programs and a report on the Lincoln Study Abroad Commission by William DeLauder, Executive Director. The Assembly also featured an update on the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), a presentation by Bret Lovejoy and Marty Abbott of ACTFL about the Discover Languages campaign, and a panel discussion on the President's new focus on language, the **National Security Language Initiative (NSLI)**.

Delegate Responses to NSLI and NSEA

Breakout Sessions in the afternoon led by Board member teams, Nancy Rhodes and Martin Smith and Nancy Zelasko and Renate Schulz took the delegates through draft responses to the **NSLI** and responses to questions concerning the reauthorization of **ESEA (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act)**. The "final" JNCL Delegate Assembly summary responses are appended to this report. Martin Smith provided the ESEA summary and Renate Schulz gave the NSLI response. Those in SWCOLT can be proud that Martin Smith and Renate Schulz were presenters at the SWCOLT/AZLA Conference in Phoenix. Both drew up excellent response documents.

The final day was devoted to the Nominating Committee Report, business items and member activities reports: Collaborative Activities (Helene Zimmer-Loew); AP Exams (Dan Davidson); a Chinese Handbook (Shuhan Wang); and Arabic Survey (Ray Clifford)

It is always a challenge to report succinctly on the Delegate Assembly and JNCL-NCLIS. There is a sea of acronyms and each year brings new initiatives and policy changes. The best single way to keep up is to go to the website: www.languagepolicy.org. which provides details about **NSEA, NSLI and ESEA** and much more. In addition, feel free to contact me with questions or suggestions <fuentedepaz@yahoo.com>. The boxes following this report give a brief explanation of what JNCL-NCLIS represents plus some nuggets of information from the Delegate Assembly.

What is JNCL-NCLIS? - They are the voice for our profession in Washington. JNCL is the Joint National Committee for Languages and NCLIS is the National Council for Languages and International Studies. JNCL is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization; NCLIS representing over
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sixty professional associations, is the lobbying arm and works to influence policy and funding. JNCL-NCLIS 4646 40th St., NW Suite 310 Washington, DC 20016 Phone: 202-966-8477 Fax: 202-966-8310 info@languagepolicy.org www.languagepolicy.org

Information from the Delegate Assembly

- MLA (The Modern Language Association) has a new Language Map that gives enhanced data and features for finding out about language communities in the United States. Go to: < http://www.mla.org/census_main >.
- The U.S. Department of Education offers Summer Workshops for teachers (all subject areas) and this summer there will be two k-12 workshops with emphasis on Mandarin Chinese. Go to: < www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative >
- The Peace Corps has positions for Country directors who oversee Peace Corps work in a given country. These directors are federal employees and are the senior Peace Corps officials in the country of assignment. Go to: < www.peacecorps.gov/cd >
- The National Museum of Language is continuing to promote understanding about language. For more information go to: < www.languagemuseum.org >.

Response Reports from the 2006 JNCL Delegate Assembly

A Response to the National Security Language Initiative by the Language Profession

The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL/NCLIS) are composed of sixty-four member organizations representing approximately 200,000 language educators and professionals. JNCL/NCLIS members deal with the languages taught, studied and used in the United States including the commonly taught and less-commonly taught languages, English as a Second Language, American Sign Language, the classics and bilingual education. Our member organizations are involved across all educational levels (Pre-K to adult learners) and are engaged in teaching, research, translation and interpretation, distance learning/computer-assisted instruction, materials development, assessment, student and faculty exchanges, and study abroad, among other areas.

JNCL/NCLIS applauds the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) and the President's efforts to increase language capability in our country. NSLI is an encouraging beginning for establishing a broad, meaningful language policy to put the U.S. on equal footing with other nations and impact on our national security, economic competitiveness, international understanding, and educational excellence. JNCL/NCLIS and our members stand ready to support and assist in the implementation of the policies and efforts of the NSLI. We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to create, shape and implement programs that will make NSLI and future endeavors in language education successful. In this regard, we would note that the success of NSLI will depend upon all those involved agreeing on a few guiding principles.

- **The Place of Language Education:** While NSLI focuses on languages currently critical for national security, there is a critical need for *all* languages. Strong language skills are needed internally as well as for interacting with the rest of the world in commerce, diplomacy and peace keeping and cultural exchange. A quality, world-class education requires that foreign languages be a core academic

subject for all students, offering varied instructional models with multiple entry points throughout the curriculum. Learning foreign languages prepares students for global understanding and living in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual world. Study of and through another language provides essential communication skills, and enhances learning through improved cognitive development, transferable reading skills, reinforcement of other subject areas, cultural sensitivity, and tolerance for diversity.

- **The Need for Lengthy Learning Sequences:** Acquiring a superior level of language competence (i.e., an FSI rating of 3 or higher) needed for our national security and economic competitiveness requires long sequences of study. Beginning language study early and continuing such study in extended instructional sequences with established and commonly agreed upon benchmarks provides the best opportunity for most students for achieving proficiency, and also enhances potential success in acquiring additional languages
- **The Need for Qualified Teachers:** Languages must be taught by teachers who are not only fluent in the language but also pedagogically qualified. The teacher shortage in all languages must be addressed in a proactive manner. To create a cadre of high quality teachers in both commonly and less-commonly taught languages requires a solid infrastructure for professional preparation, major incentives in teacher recruitment, and ongoing professional development. The development of innovative teacher training and certification programs is particularly crucial for teacher development in the less-commonly taught languages.
- **Language Study and Cultural Immersion Abroad:** Study abroad and educational exchanges are highly valuable cultural experiences, and opportunities for such study should be available to every student, teacher and administrator. As a setting for language acquisition they are most effective when offered in a context that provides pre- and post-language study.
- **Support for Heritage Speakers:** Heritage language speakers should be provided the opportunity to develop high levels of competence in their native languages as well as in English. With their existing proficiency in languages other than English, heritage language communities in the U.S. offer a rich source of candidates for programs leading to superior levels of language ability in both languages.

Summary of discussion on ESEA

There was common dialogue in both groups. -- Agreement that foreign language needs to remain defined as a core academic subject as it is in NCLB [No Child Left Behind], but that this needs to go beyond just “in name only.” It can’t continue as an unfunded mandate that is negatively impacted by the current accountability measures for languages arts, math and soon to be science.

ESEA needs to promote the goal of well-articulated, long-sequence language programs that lead to demonstrable results for all students.

We need models of quality programs:

- Models must be varied (immersion, dual-language, FLES) and clearly state what can be expected at the end of each sequence.
- Should allow for multiple entry points (Demonstrate that there is positive transfer of language learning skills when moving from one language to another.)

- Models that demonstrate the connection between language study and literacy skill development.
- Models based on content that teach and reinforce the material taught in all subject areas.
- There needs to be equity in access to these programs so that all students can benefit from language study, including rural, urban and low SES [Socioeconomic Status] students.
 - *Technology and distance learning can help to achieve this goal.
 - *Encouraging partnerships among schools.

Accountability: We need to change the current system of accountability that negatively impacts the ability to achieve our goal.

- Move away from a focus on just some academic subjects.
- Move away from a punitive system that punishes schools for what they haven't achieved (the current system of sanctions) to a system that rewards schools for what they have achieved.
 - *Value-added model:
 - Points on AYP [Annual Yearly Progress] for having language programs and including a variety of languages
 - Financial incentives for including well-articulated, long-sequence programs.
 - States rewarded for showing a plan to achieve the goal and rewards for increases in achieving this goal from year to year.
 - Get language back into the NAEP [National Assessment of Education Progress] (sooner rather than later.

Teacher Recruitment & Retention

- Lack of current assessments in all languages creates an inability to get and keep “highly qualified teachers.” Need to allow for more flexibility if we are to increase the number of programs in the less commonly taught languages.
- This shouldn't just be seen as a Higher Education issue, but rather as a K-16+ dialogue.
- Provide funding for effective models of preparing teachers, particularly heritage speakers who come with a different skill set.

Professional Development

- Don't reinvent the wheel; use the expertise of the profession to provide high-quality, sustainable PD [Professional Development] for all teachers.

Research – ESEA needs to fund research in:

- Positive benefits of early starts
- Best practice
- Model programs
- Literacy skill development
- Positive transfer of language learning skills from 1st language studied to subsequent languages studied.

Public Opinion – We need to get the message about the benefits of language study out to parents, administrators, and teachers. Move beyond just speaking to

ourselves and get the message out to everyone with an interest in the education of our children.