Citywide Council on English Language Learners (CCELL)

Department of Education of the City of New York

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Council Members: *Division of English Language Learners & Student Support:* **Milady Baez***, Deputy Chancellor*
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CCELL Resolution 24: In Support of the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A329/S554 to implement more foreign language instruction in elementary schools
January 5, 2017

Whereas, the CCELL, was established by NYS Education Law 2590-B, . . . with the power to advise and consent on any educational or instructional policy involving bilingual or English as a Second Language Programs, . . . ; and

Whereas, the New York City Council Education Committee held a hearing on November 22, 2016 regarding its Resolution No. 890, calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A.329/S.554, to implement more foreign language instruction in elementary schools; and

Whereas, the ability to communicate in more than one language is critically important in the interconnected world of the 21st century; and

Whereas, furthermore, there is growing awareness in the United States that creating a multilingual society is crucial to our economic success, national security, and international relations; and

Whereas, today's students, who will have to compete in the global economy and work with people of diverse cultures abroad and at home, thus need to learn one or more foreign languages; and

Whereas, studies have found that young children are better able to learn new languages, and that the ability markedly declines after puberty, as the brain is more ready to create new neural circuits before than after puberty; and

Whereas, in addition, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) states that beginning foreign language instruction early sets the stage for students to develop advanced levels of proficiencies in multiple languages, as younger learners still possess the capacity to develop near native-like pronunciation and intonation in a new language; and

Whereas, ACTFL also reports that children who learn a foreign language beginning in early childhood demonstrate certain cognitive advantages over children who do not; and

Whereas, additionally, longitudinal studies by Harvard University confirm that learning additional languages increases critical thinking skills, creativity and flexibility of the mind in young children; and

Whereas, despite such evidence, a national survey from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) shows U.S. elementary schools cut back on foreign language instruction in recent years; and

Whereas, According to the CAL survey, the percentage of public elementary schools offering foreign language instruction decreased significantly, from 24% in 1997 to 15% in 2008, the latest year for which data is available; and

Whereas, as in most other states, foreign language instruction is not currently found in all public elementary schools in New York, but is needed so that all students are able to develop proficiencies in one or more languages other than English (LOTE); and

Whereas, A.329, sponsored by Assembly member Rozic, and its companion bill S.554, sponsored by Senator Parker, would allocate $2 million to establish an incentive program for school districts wishing to implement programs of foreign language in the elementary schools and establish an incentive program for college students wishing to become foreign language teachers; and

Whereas, more specifically, A.329 and S.554 would establish a pilot program in five high needs districts ($200,000 each) to expand foreign language education programs at the elementary level; and

Whereas, in addition, A.329 and S.554 would provide for 100 awards of up to $10,000 each for college students who are working towards certification in foreign languages education, to cover the costs of tuition and materials for their education; and

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Whereas, it is hoped that the success of these Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) programs will not only encourage the districts to find the funds to continue offering the FLES programs once funding from the bill has ended, but also generate interest in the neighboring districts which will inspire them to implement FLES programs, thus creating a grassroots movement in favor of FLES; and

Whereas, further, regarding the goal to provide funding to encourage college students wishing to become LOTE teachers, it is hoped that this will help to address the current severe shortage of LOTE teachers in New York State which can prevent school districts from offering a variety of languages; and

Whereas, it is also hoped that dual language programs that have long been established, and recently expanded, in New York City will be eligible for additional funding under this resolution to provide needed resources and support for these programs; and

Whereas, students in New York State and especially those in New York City, the nation's most diverse and global city, need to have skills in at least one language other than English in order to successfully confront the challenges of the world of today and tomorrow; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Citywide Council on English Language Learners (CCELL) calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A.329/S.554, to implement more foreign language instruction in elementary schools.

Approved: January 5, 2017