



# NEWS

## Connecticut Department of Education

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg Commissioner

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### **Connecticut Council of Language Teachers Fall Conference kicks off “2005: Year of Languages”**

(Hartford, CT) – Commissioner of Education Betty J. Sternberg will announce Gov. M. Jodi Rell’s proclamation of “2005: The Year of Languages” Monday, October 18, at the fall conference of the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (CT COLT), to be held at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Cromwell. Dr. Sternberg’s keynote speech on the value of studying world languages and cultures will begin at 8 a.m.

The Year of Languages will be celebrated nationally under the auspices of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The state teachers’ organization, CT COLT, will coordinate the observances in Connecticut schools and communities. According to ACTFL, “The goal of the Year of Languages is to advance the concept that every American should develop proficiency not only in English, but in other languages as well.”

Commissioner Sternberg strongly supports this principle. “Every Connecticut child should have the opportunity to study another language beginning in kindergarten,” Dr. Sternberg said. “Fluency in a language in addition to English provides so many benefits – the ability to succeed in an increasingly global economy and to relate positively to our own citizens with different backgrounds and to people in other countries. Further, research has shown that students who study languages perform better in other subjects than students who do not, and the College Board has indicated that students who have studied a world language or languages for at least four years score higher on the SAT.”

Dr. Sternberg added that the knowledge of other cultures which is developed through world language study is invaluable in developing the kind of understanding that promotes constructive relationships in all walks of life. “International exchange experiences, whether actual or virtual, are extremely important,” the Commissioner said, “and every youngster should have the opportunity to participate in one.”

Spanish is the language most frequently studied in Connecticut's schools. "However," Dr. Sternberg said, "we need to expand language offerings in our schools, especially to languages that are critical to our national security and economic interests – for example, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Russian and Japanese."

Dr. Sternberg praised the progress that has been made in expanding world languages into the lower grades in Connecticut (145 school districts now offer instruction before Grade 8; 34 before Grade 4), and expressed enthusiasm for the Year of Languages. "The focus and activities CT COLT has planned for the Year of Languages will go a long way toward reinforcing and expanding language study at all levels, Commissioner Sternberg said. "I look forward to the coming year and encourage those who are interested in languages to become involved – and others to become interested. The study of world languages is extremely rewarding."

For more information, please contact Mary Ann Hansen, Connecticut State Department of Education world languages consultant, at the CT COLT conference on Monday, October 18, or at (860) 713-6753.