



American Association of Teachers of French

Publisher of the French Review
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April 23, 2008

Lester P. Monts, Chair, College Board
University of Michigan
503 Thompson Street
Room 3084, Fleming Bldg.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1340

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my strongest opposition to the recent announcement of the cancellation of AP French Literature as well as AP Latin Literature and AP Italian. As Executive Director of the national professional association for French teachers which counts nearly 10,000 members, I have received an avalanche of communication regarding this decision. Many AATF members have served as AP readers and on AP test development committees. I personally am currently serving the AP Language Commission, along with several other AATF national and chapter officers. They are unanimous in their opposition to this decision.

AP French Literature was one of the original AP subjects, representing the highest level of achievement for students of French who wish to go beyond AP French Language. The study of literature challenges these students intellectually and develops their critical and creative thinking skills. These students go on to the top American universities and often major in other disciplines with which they can combine their language skills. They represent the leaders of tomorrow in business, government, and diplomacy.

The U.S. government has recognized the country's need for speakers of other languages who possess a high degree of proficiency. French figures on numerous lists of critical languages which come from federal agencies like the Department of Defense, the FBI/CIA, and the Department of State. A high level of proficiency (ACTFL Superior, ILR 4+), needed to function in a full professional capacity in another language, cannot be achieved by language study alone. In studying literature, students are exposed to all that surrounds it—history, civilization, philosophy, human behavior. By removing from our highest-achieving students the possibility of official recognition for their high school literature study, we are shortchanging these students. Although perhaps unintended, the implication is clear: advanced studies in French and the study of literature per se are not valued.

While numbers in the aforementioned disciplines may be lower, it is important to note that they are not declining. Enrollment in AP French Language and Literature has steadily grown

over the last 15 years, and, in fact, from 1997 to 2007 enrollment in the AP French Literature exam has increased by 26%. While it is true the growth may not have been as rapid as in other languages, it is a steady progression. It should be possible to consider AP language and literature exams as an aggregate in their cost effectiveness. This would give equal weight to the importance of all languages, allow the inclusion of critical languages which do not have the student-base individually to support an exam but which are important to national security and global competitiveness, and would address the needs of our highest-achieving high school students.

As President of the Joint National Committee for Languages/National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL/NCLIS), I represent a coalition of more than 60 language associations and more than 200,000 language teachers. We work to emphasize the importance of all languages, the need for speakers who are proficient at the highest levels, as well as the imperative for individuals to possess the intellectual background and skills to conduct the nation's business. We hope that the College Board will join us in this endeavor by revisiting the decision to eliminate AP French Literature, AP Latin Literature and AP Italian and to help lead the way toward promoting the importance of many languages and their literatures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jayne Abrate". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Jayne Abrate

cc: College Board Committee Members