



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, LANGUAGE ENHANCEMENT,  
AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

March 11, 2003

Ms. Ana Sainz de la Pena  
ESL/Bilingual Education Advisor  
Pennsylvania Department of Education  
333 Market Street, 8th Floor  
Harrisburg PA 17126-0333

Dear Ms. de la Pena:

The United States Department of Education is committed to helping you and the schools in your State meet the challenging goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. No Child Left Behind made dramatic changes in education policy to promote accountability for results, State and local flexibility, concentrating resources on proven educational methods, and safe schools.

There are many elementary and secondary education programs, such as foreign student exchange programs, that have a proven track record of effectiveness. Foreign student exchange programs have been very successful at helping our students learn about the language, culture, history, and government of other nations. In addition, the foreign students who come here to attend school learn about America, and bring a better understanding of our nation back to their home countries. I strongly support these programs because they are educationally effective and help foster international understanding.

Recently, I have learned that some school districts are concerned that requirements of No Child Left Behind might make it more difficult for them to accept foreign exchange students. I want to assure you that the overriding purpose of No Child Left Behind is to provide American students with the best education possible. Consequently, No Child Left Behind does not seek to discourage school districts from participating in a foreign student exchange program. In fact, we believe that foreign exchange programs enrich the education of our students.

An important goal of No Child Left Behind is to help English language learners who reside in the United States attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging content standards expected of all students. The requirements of No Child Left Behind, however, should not deter a school district from accepting foreign exchange students. First, many foreign exchange students from non-English speaking countries have enough command of

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English to benefit from regular classroom instruction in English and, for that reason, would not be considered limited English proficient under No Child Left Behind. Second, even if a foreign exchange student is limited English proficient, No Child Left Behind does not mandate a particular type of instruction for that student, but gives school districts the flexibility to select, consistent with State law, an appropriate method for serving that student. Finally, assessment results for foreign exchange students who are enrolled in a school in the United States for less than a year, even if they are limited English proficient, are not to be included in the school-level measurement of adequate yearly progress required by No Child Left Behind.

No Child Left Behind does not prevent or make it more difficult for school districts to participate in foreign student exchange programs. A school district's decision on whether to participate in a foreign student exchange program, therefore, should only be based on the educational value of that program. I urge you to do all you can to support foreign student exchange programs and encourage school districts in your State to participate.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or any other issues relating to foreign exchange students in your schools, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,



Maria Hernandez Ferrier, Ed.D.  
Director