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**ASSOCIATION FRANÇAIS LANGUE ETRANGERE HONG KONG**

**The Hong Kong Association of French Teachers**  
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Professor Arthur Li  
Secretary for Education and Manpower  
15/F, Wu Chung House  
213 Queen's Road East  
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Hong Kong

November 15, 2004

Dear Professor Li

We are writing to express our deepest concern for the future of the teaching and learning of French in Hong Kong secondary schools. Indeed, under the proposed reform of the school curriculum, there seems to be no provision for the teaching of foreign languages, although French is currently taught in some local schools and is listed as a subject in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education (HKCE). Furthermore, the local universities include foreign languages as part of their set of requirements for entrance, which is an indication of their continuing commitment to internationalizing the student population at tertiary level. - The following points summarize the feelings collected among the members of the Hong Kong Association of French Teachers and other concerned parties.

1. As you are aware, a small percentage of students registered in local schools do not speak, or are not literate in, Chinese. We now wonder about the sort of provision that will be offered to these students if they do not have the possibility to choose French instead of Chinese as a Core Subject in the new Senior Secondary Schools ? Limiting their options to international or ESF schools seems rather unfair, each Hong Kong citizen being entitled to free education.
2. It must also be kept in mind that the secondary schools currently offering French have a long tradition of teaching this subject. Some of them have been teaching French for 100 years or more. At a time when our city and way of life are changing ever faster, it may be worthwhile to keep some traditions alive and maintain the diversity that makes Hong Kong education system so rich and successful.
3. One would have thought that with the government's aim of making Hong Kong Asia's World City, China's opening to the world and growing economic and cultural exchanges with the rest of the world, the teaching of foreign languages would become an educational priority to our city.
4. Furthermore, this omission seems rather odd to us, in view of the current worldwide trend, particularly in Europe, to encourage primary and secondary school students to learn at least two and sometimes even three foreign languages. Learning a foreign language has many benefits for students. It contributes to enriching students' personality, developing their intelligence and their social skills. It allows students to discover different ways of thinking and being, thus making it easier for them to integrate in today's global culture. Last but not least, it increases students' career opportunities, even if they are not targeting a career as language specialists.

5. Finally, our colleagues are very worried about their future as teachers of French in secondary schools. Are they expected to join the growing numbers of unemployed people or will they be able to keep doing a job they love ? This group of teachers have undeniably played an active role, in most cases single-handedly, in educating students who are often the elite of local schools. Ignoring their future without taking into consideration their continuous efforts and outstanding contributions over the years would be most disappointing.

For all the reasons expressed above, we are now urging the Education and Manpower Bureau to review its position on the teaching of foreign languages and to add French into the list of Core and Optional Subjects of the curriculum of Senior Secondary Schools. We would be most pleased to explain our position fully, should you be willing to grant us with a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Jean-Luc Rey  
Chairman  
Hong Kong Association of French Teachers