

W a s h i n g t o n S t a t e

K - 12

World Languages

Learning Standards

July 2010



Washington State K-12 World Languages Learning Standards

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Table of Contents

I. OVERVIEW.....	1
II. WORLD LANGUAGES LEARNING STANDARDS.....	3
III. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND FOR THE STANDARDS.....	4
IV. ASSESSMENT.....	6
V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	8
VI. REFERENCES.....	10
VII. RECOMMENDED CITATION	10

I. Overview

The Washington State K-12 World Languages Learning Standards describe what students should know and be able to do as they study and learn to communicate in languages beyond English. The purpose of this document is to provide strong support for students, parents, teachers, and the broader community by guiding the alignment and integration of world language standards into the planning and delivery of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

In this second decade of the 21st century, it has become clear to policy makers, business and community leaders, educators, families, and students that we live in an interconnected world where students will need a new kind of education that prepares them to be global citizens. The Washington State Legislature took an important step in 2007 toward recognizing this reality by updating the definition of basic education to include the goal of preparing students to be “responsible and respectful global citizens” (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.210> accessed 4/8/2010).

One of the skills of global competence is the ability to communicate in languages of the world beyond English. Learning world languages was not a central part of Washington State’s education reform efforts through the 1990’s, but in 2005, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) took the step of adopting the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* as Voluntary World Language Standards for Washington State. This decision followed an extensive review process of other state standards and the national standards by a task force with representatives from OSPI, the Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT), the Washington State Coalition for International Education, University of Washington, and Pacific Lutheran University. The task force was originally established in response to the 2004 World Languages & Technology Survey where world language teachers indicated that adopting world language standards was a top priority. The task force put forward the recommendation that our state align with the national standards rather than undertaking a separate state-specific standards-development effort. The standards became Washington’s Voluntary World Language Standards in 2005.

In February 2010, the state’s Curriculum Advisory and Review Committee (CARC), which consists of statewide representative groups of superintendents, curriculum directors, and principals, recommended that the voluntary standards be adopted formally as Washington’s world languages learning standards to serve as a strong guide for school districts, educational service districts, and teachers for supporting world language instruction. They further recommended that OSPI launch a systematic effort to introduce the standards to world language teachers across the state.

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, available from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (www.actfl.org), include five overarching goals, known as the “5 C’s,” and eleven specific content standards for language learning.

The Five C’s of World Language Education

The purposes and uses of world languages are as diverse as the students who study them. Some students study another language in hopes of finding a rewarding career in the international marketplace or government service. Others are interested in the intellectual challenge and cognitive benefits that accrue to those who master multiple languages. Still others seek greater understanding of other people and other cultures. Many approach world language study, as they do other courses, simply to fulfill a graduation requirement.

Regardless of the reason for study, world languages have something to offer everyone. It is with this philosophy in mind that the standards task force identified five goal areas that encompass all of these reasons: **Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities**—the five C’s of world language education.

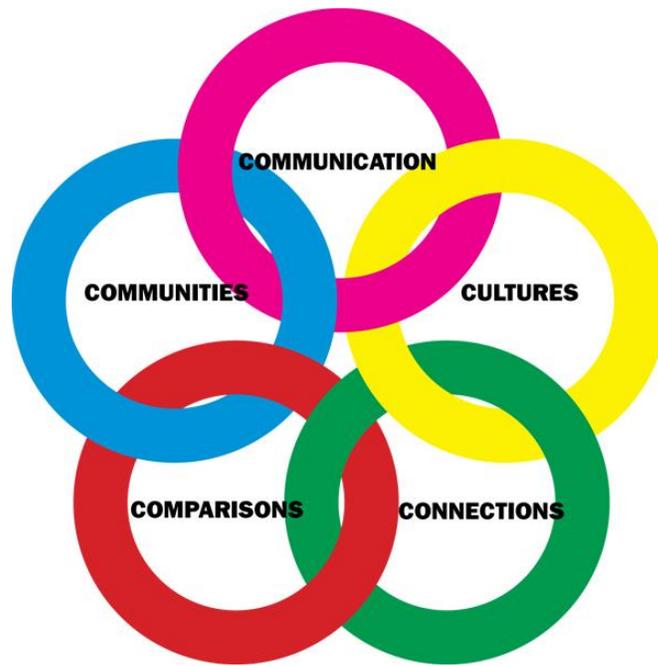
Communication is at the heart of second language study, whether the communication takes place face-to-face, in writing, or across centuries through the reading of literature. Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the **cultures** that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.

Learning languages provides **connections** to additional bodies of knowledge that may be unavailable to the monolingual English speaker. Through **comparisons** and contrasts with the language being studied, students develop insight into the nature of language and the concept of culture and realize that there are multiple ways of viewing the world.

Together, these elements enable the student of languages to participate in multilingual **communities** at home and around the world in a variety of contexts and in culturally appropriate ways.

Excerpted with permission from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) from the “Standards for Foreign Language Learning Executive Summary”
http://www.actfl.org/files/public/StandardsforFLExecsumm_rev.pdf.

Note for Washington State: Where the original text uses the term “foreign” languages, the word “foreign” has been replaced by “world” because the preferred terminology in Washington State is now world languages. This terminology has gained acceptance in recent years because so often languages other than English cannot really be considered “foreign.”



II. World Languages Learning Standards

The standards indicate what students should know and be able to do as they study and learn to communicate in a language other than English. There are eleven standards in five goal areas, known as the “5 C’s.”

Communication

Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the world language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the world language and its cultures.

Comparisons

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

III. Context and Background for the Standards

COMMUNICATION

Standard 1.1 Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

This standard focuses on interpersonal communication, that is, direct oral or written communication between individuals who are in personal contact. In most modern languages, students can quite quickly learn a number of phrases that will permit them to interact with each other. In the course of their study, they will grow in their ability to converse in a culturally appropriate manner.

Standard 1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.2 involves one-way listening and reading in which the learner works with a variety of print and non-print materials. The context in which the language is experienced and the ability to control what they hear and read may impact students' development of comprehension. As a result, the ability to read may develop before the ability to comprehend rapid spoken language. In addition, content knowledge will often affect successful comprehension, for students understand more easily materials that reflect their interests or for which they have some background.

Standard 1.3 Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

This standard focuses on the formal presentation of information, concepts, and ideas in spoken and written form and is concerned, in most cases, with one-way speaking and writing. Students with little or no previous language experience are likely to produce written and spoken language that will contain a variety of learned patterns or will look like English with words in the other language. This is a natural process and, over time, they begin to acquire authentic patterns and to use appropriate styles. By contrast, home-background students will write in ways that closely resemble the spoken language. Moreover, they will control informal oral styles. Over time these learners will develop the ability to write and speak using more formal styles.

CULTURES

Standard 2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

This standard focuses on the practices that are derived from the traditional ideas and attitudes (perspectives) of a culture. Cultural practices refer to patterns of behavior accepted by a society and deal with aspects of culture such as rites of passage, the use of forms of discourse, the social "pecking order," and the use of space. In short, they represent the knowledge of "what to do when and where."

Standard 2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

This standard focuses on the products of the culture studied and on how they reflect the

perspectives of the culture. Products may be tangible (e.g., a painting, a piece of literature, a pair of chopsticks) or intangible (e.g., an oral tale, a dance, a sacred ritual, a system of education). Whatever the form of the product, its presence within the culture is required or justified by the underlying beliefs and values (perspectives) of that culture, and the cultural practices involve the use of that product.

CONNECTIONS

Standard 3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the world language.

Learning today is no longer restricted to a specific discipline; it has become interdisciplinary. Just as reading cannot be limited to a particular segment of the school day, so too can world language build upon the knowledge that students acquire in other subject areas. In addition, students can relate the information studied in other subjects to their learning of the world language and culture. World language instruction thus becomes a means to expand and deepen students' understanding of, and exposure to, other areas of knowledge. The new information and concepts presented in one class become the basis of continued learning in the world language classroom.

Standard 3.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the world language and its cultures.

As a consequence of learning another language and gaining access to its unique means of communication, students are able to broaden the sources of information available to them. They have a "new window on the world." At the early levels of language learning, students can begin to examine a variety of sources intended for native speakers, and extract specific information. As they become more proficient users of the world language, they can seek out materials of interest to them, analyze the content, compare it to information available in their own language, and assess the linguistic and cultural differences.

COMPARISONS

Standard 4.1 Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

This standard focuses on the impact that learning the linguistic elements in the new language has on students' ability to examine English and to develop hypotheses about the structure and use of languages. From the earliest language learning experiences, students can compare and contrast the two languages as different elements are presented. Activities can be systematically integrated into instruction that will assist students in gaining understanding and in developing their abilities to think critically about how languages work.

Standard 4.2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

As students expand their knowledge of cultures through language learning, they continually discover perspectives, practices, and products that are similar and different from their own culture, and they develop the ability to hypothesize about cultural systems in general. Some students may make these comparisons naturally, others may not. This standard helps focus this reflective process for all students by encouraging integration of this process into instruction from the earliest levels of learning.

COMMUNITIES

Standard 5.1 Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

This standard focuses on language as a tool for communication with speakers of the language throughout one's life: in schools, in the community, and abroad. In schools, students share their knowledge of language and culture with classmates and with younger students who may be learning the language. Applying what has been learned in the language program as defined by the other standards, students come to realize the advantages inherent in being able to communicate in more than one language and develop an understanding of the power of language.

Standard 5.2 Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

Each day millions of Americans spend leisure time reading, listening to music, viewing films and television programs, and interacting with each other. By developing a certain level of comfort with their new language, students can use these skills to access information as they continue to learn throughout their lives. Students who study a language can use their skills to further enrich their personal lives by accessing various entertainment and information sources available to speakers of the language. Some students may have the opportunity to travel to communities and countries where the language is used extensively and, through this experience, further develop their language skills and understanding of the culture.

Excerpted with permission from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) from the "Standards for Foreign Language Learning Executive Summary"
http://www.actfl.org/files/public/StandardsforFLLEXecsumm_rev.pdf.

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IV. Assessment

World languages are fortunate as an academic discipline to have been a high priority for the development of world-class proficiency-based assessments in the arenas of business and government. Nationally available language proficiency assessments measure a person's ability to use a language for a variety of purposes, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, across the three modes of communication found in the World Language Standards: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational.

Proficiency is commonly measured using guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines measure proficiency on a scale of ten levels: Novice Low, Mid, and High; Intermediate Low, Mid, and High; Advanced Low, Mid, and High; and Superior.

For world languages, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines can be used as common benchmarks for language development across the PK-16 spectrum rather than developing specific and separate grade-level performance standards. Depending on the program model, students in a high school

language program may be performing at the Novice Mid level, while students in an elementary program might be at the Intermediate Mid level.

A student's ability to engage in conversation, understand written or spoken text, and present information orally or in writing is developed over a number of years of learning a language. Each person is unique, and even in immersion programs, not all students attain the same level of proficiency in the same period of time. However, all students should be able to increase their proficiency each year if they are in a high-quality language program taught by a fluent and capable teacher. So, assessing language proficiency is a critical component of program design and evaluation.

An even more important reason to assess language proficiency is to provide students with accurate feedback on their developing abilities in the language. While grades may be based on many non-linguistic factors, such as mastery of specific grammar points or completion of homework, language proficiency focuses only on what a student is actually able to do with the language.

There are a number of valid instruments available now for assessing language proficiency for free or at a reasonable cost. The Center for Applied Linguistics (www.cal.org) maintains a Foreign Language Assessment Database of over 200 assessments in 90 languages that can be easily searched. There are several assessment instruments that are being used in Washington schools at this time that are aligned with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. These include:

- ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or OPIc (computer-based) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT), offered through Language Testing International (LTI) (www.languagetesting.com). These are the assessments that are required of all future teachers seeking a Designated World Language Endorsement as of 1/1/2010.
- Online assessments for Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening developed at the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon.
- Oral Proficiency Assessments from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC, that use an interview protocol to assess oral fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension of students PK-8.
- Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) for students grade 7-16 offered through Avant Assessment (www.avantassessment.com)

In addition to these on-demand assessments, there is an array of Integrated Performance Assessments similar to OSPI-developed in Social Studies, the Arts, and Health & Fitness that allow teachers to assess their students' developing language proficiency throughout the year. In addition, one of the most powerful forms of standards-based language assessment may be student self-assessment via a tool developed by the National Council of State Supervisors for Language (www.ncssfl.org) and piloted in a number of states: LinguaFolio and LinguaFolio Online, developed by CASLS (<http://casls.uoregon.edu/>).

LinguaFolio is also aligned to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and uses the same scale of ten levels. However, instead of general descriptions of each level, LinguaFolio provides a series of "CanDo" statements that students can check off as they develop those language skills or set goals for themselves. LinguaFolio allows those who are learning or have learned a language to reflect on their language learning and intercultural experiences. It is a tool that can accompany a student's language learning throughout life and is suitable for documenting language abilities for various uses.

V. Acknowledgments

The adoption of the national Standards for Foreign Language Learning as Washington State K-12 World Languages Learning Standards was an effort led by Washington teachers, community educators, and higher education faculty with support from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Listed here are individuals who played key roles in developing and reviewing this document and to whom we are extremely grateful.

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VI. References

The following references were used in the development of the Washington State K-12 World Languages Learning Standards:

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