

New Jersey Student Learning Standard for World Languages

INTRODUCTION

World Languages Education in the 21st Century

New Jersey citizens are part of a dynamic, interconnected, and technologically driven global society centered on the creation and communication of knowledge and ideas *across geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders*.



How global is New Jersey?

Changing demographics and economic opportunities show we're more global than ever.



How are we preparing students?

Schools can not yet meet community needs and workforce demands.



How do we plan for the future?



These two infographics illustrate the connections between the global economy of New Jersey and the nation as a whole. (<http://mappingthenation.net/index.html>)

Individuals who effectively communicate in more than one language, with an appropriate understanding of cultural contexts, are *globally literate* and possess the attributes reflected in the mission and vision for world languages education that follow:

Mission: *The study of another language and culture enables individuals, whether functioning as citizens or workers, to communicate face-to-face and by virtual means in appropriate ways with people from diverse cultures.*

Vision: An education in world languages fosters a population that:

- Communicates in more than one language with the levels of language proficiency that are required to function in a variety of occupations and careers in the contemporary workplace.
- Exhibits attitudes, values, and skills that indicate a positive disposition and understanding of cultural differences and that enhance cross-cultural communication.

- Values language learning as a global literacy as well as for its long-term worth in fostering personal, work-related, and/or financial success in our increasingly interconnected world.

Intent and Spirit of the World Languages Standard

The study of world languages is spiraling and recursive and aligned to appropriate proficiency targets that ultimately enable the attainment of proficiency at the Novice-High level or above, which is a requirement for high school graduation. All students have regular, sequential instruction in one or more world languages beginning in preschool or kindergarten and continuing at least through the freshman year of high school. Further, N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(b)4 directs districts to actively encourage all students who otherwise meet the current-year requirement for high school graduation to accrue, during each year of enrollment, five credits in world languages aimed at preparation for entrance into postsecondary programs or 21st-century careers. Opportunities to develop higher levels of proficiency should be based on personal and career interests and should be encouraged in Personalized Student Learning Plans.

The number of years spent studying a language and the frequency of instruction impact the level of proficiency acquired in the language. This principle has historically been supported by research in the United States and abroad. However, as part of a three-year grant project (2005-08), the New Jersey Department of Education collected [data](#) from New Jersey schools that further support these research findings. Data from the federally funded project that assessed the language proficiency of 60,000 8th-grade students present compelling evidence for the need to develop programs that offer *all* students the opportunity to meet the state-designated proficiency level of Novice-High. The data show that programs offering *a minimum of 540 hours of articulated instruction in classes that meet at least three times a week throughout the academic year* produce a majority of students who can speak at the Novice-High proficiency level or higher. Consequently, the establishment and/or maintenance of quality, well-articulated language programs at the elementary and middle-school levels, as required by [New Jersey Administrative Code](#), is critical for building the capacity of high school students to achieve the Novice-High level of language proficiency required for graduation.

Revised Standard

Although the Standard for World Languages was adopted in 2009, it only became fully operational as of September 2012. Following the revision of the Standard groups of educators convened to develop support materials to assist other educators in implementing the Standard. These resources include the Classroom Application documents, the 21st Century Model Unit, the World Language Standard in Action documents, and the Model Curriculum. These materials contain instructional guidance and assessment examples to help educators in implementing the Standard with fidelity. Furthermore, the New Jersey Educator Resource Exchange provides a venue for educators to share additional support materials.

In *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), Gladwell emphasizes the role that practice plays in improving performance. By readopting the Standard in its current form with minor changes, educators have the opportunity to improve their practice by focusing on a target that remains constant. The intent of the Department is to continue to provide resources to assist educators. Thus, the annotated glossary and related resources component, while still connected to the Standard, has been removed as part of the Standard and will serve as a living document that can be updated as appropriate.

We know that when students have the opportunity to transfer skills across content areas the learning becomes deeper and more enduring. There is a strong link between the New Jersey Students Learning Standard for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects and the New Jersey Student Learning Standard for World Languages.

Language Proficiency Levels

Unlike other content areas, the world languages standard is benchmarked by proficiency levels. In this iteration of the standard, grade level performance benchmarks are also included. Below is a chart from *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners 2012* that shows how assessing for performance is different from assessing for proficiency.

ASSESSING PERFORMANCE VS. ASSESSING PROFICIENCY: HOW ARE THESE ASSESSMENTS DIFFERENT?

Assessing Performance	Assessing Proficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Instruction: Describes what the language learner can demonstrate based on what was learned • Practiced: Tasks are derived from the language functions and vocabulary that learners have practiced or rehearsed but which are applied to other tasks within familiar contexts • Familiar Content and Context: Content based on what was learned, practiced, or rehearsed; all within a context similar but not identical to how learned • Demonstrated performance: To be evaluated within a range, must be able to demonstrate the features of the domains of a given range in those contexts and content areas that have been learned and practiced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent of specific instruction or curriculum: Describes what the language user can do regardless of where, when or how the language was acquired • Spontaneous: Tasks are non-rehearsed situations • Broad Content and Context: Context and content are those that are appropriate for the given level • Sustained performance across all the tasks and contexts for the level: To be at a level, must demonstrate consistent patterns of all the criteria for a given level, all of the time

The development of these proficiency levels was informed by the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998), the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Speaking* (ACTFL, 1999), and the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Writing* (ACTFL, 2001) and is supported by more recently released documents including the [ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners 2012](#) and [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#). Below is a short summary of each proficiency level included in the standard document:

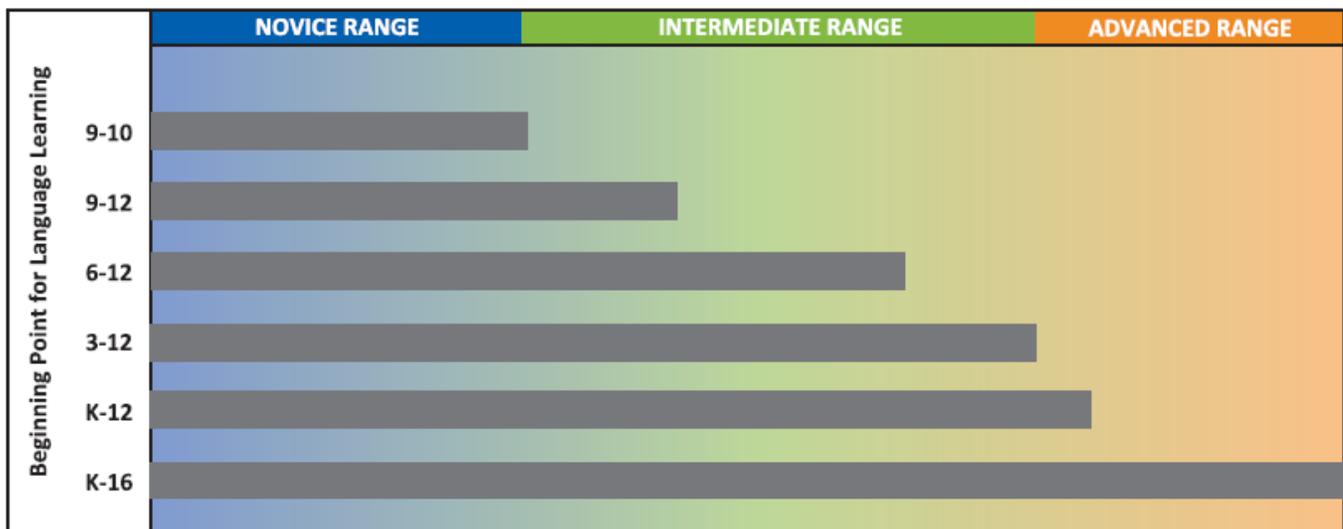
- Novice-Mid Level: Students communicate *using memorized words and phrases* to talk about familiar topics related to school, home, and the community.
- Novice-High Level: Students communicate *using words, lists, and simple sentences* to ask and answer questions, to handle simple transactions related to everyday life, and to talk about subject matter studied in other classes.
- Intermediate-Low Level: Students communicate *using simple sentences* to ask and answer questions, to handle simple transactions related to everyday life, and to talk about subject matter studied in other classes.
- Intermediate-Mid Level: Students communicate *using strings of sentences* to ask and answer questions, to handle simple transactions related to everyday life, and to talk about subject matter studied in other classes.

- Intermediate-High Level: Students communicate *using connected sentences and paragraphs* to handle complicated situations on a wide-range of topics.
- Advanced-Low Level: Students communicate *using paragraph-level discourse* to handle complicated situations on a wide-range of topics.

Realistic Grade-Level Targets for Benchmarked Performance Levels

Language learners can be expected to move through levels of proficiency at different rates. In addition, language learners may demonstrate differing proficiencies depending upon the communicative mode in which they are functioning ([interpersonal](#), [interpretive](#), or [presentational](#)) and the language they are studying. For example, students studying a language with a different writing or grammar system and few if any cognates or loan words may require additional time to acquire the language at the same proficiency level as students studying a language with many cognates or loan words and the same writing or similar grammar system. Other factors that correlate to the development of proficiency include the age and cognitive development of the students and literacy in their first language.

The chart below comes from the **ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners 2012** and visually depicts general approximation of performance for all students. As time and intensity of program are directly related to the development of proficiency the chart reflects elementary programs that meet for at least 90 minutes a week in a standards-based program and middle school and high school programs that meet daily for the equivalent of a class period.



A Note about Preschool Learners: Like other young learners, preschool students learn world languages with the goal of reaching the Novice-Mid level by third or fourth grade. However, the focus of language learning for preschool students may differ from the focus of language learning for students in grades K-2.

Philosophy and Goals

The world languages standard and indicators reflect the philosophy and goals found in the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006) and the summary of the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*. They were developed by consulting standards in

the United States and internationally, as well as by examining the latest research and best practices on second-language acquisition. The revised world languages standard is generic in nature, designed as a core subject, and is meant to be inclusive for all languages taught in New Jersey schools. With regard to the implementation of the world languages standard for particular languages or language groups:

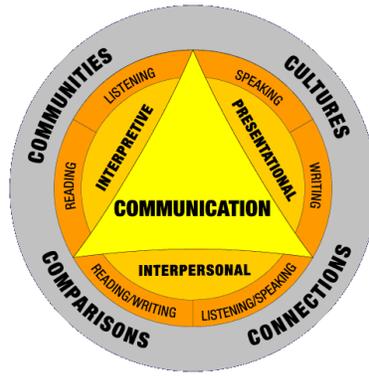
- **American Sign Language (ASL):** Students and teachers of American Sign Language (ASL) communicate thoughts and ideas through three-dimensional visual communication. They engage in all three modes of communication—interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational—by using combinations of hand-shapes, palm orientations, and movements of the hands, arms, and body. ASL differs from other spoken languages in that the vocal cords are not used for communication.
- **Classical languages:** The study of classical languages focuses primarily on the interpretive mode using historical contexts. Occasionally, some attention may be given to oral dimensions of classical languages, such as by asking students to make presentations in the language of study as a way of strengthening their language knowledge and use.
- **Heritage-languages:** Heritage-language students may be (1) newly-arrived immigrants to the United States, (2) first-generation students whose home language is not English and who have been schooled primarily in the United States, or (3) second- or third- generation students who have learned some aspects of a heritage language at home. These students have varying abilities and proficiencies in their respective heritage languages; they often carry on fluent and idiomatic conversations (interpersonal mode), but require instruction that allows them to develop strengths in reading (interpretive mode) and in formal speaking and writing (presentational mode). These students are held to the same standards for world languages as their English-speaking peers, and they should be provided with opportunities for developing skills in their native languages that are both developmentally supportive and rigorous. Designing curriculum to maintain and further develop native-language skills ensures that the skills of these students do not erode over time as English becomes their dominant language.

Selecting Culturally Authentic Materials

Included in the 2009 Standard for World Languages was a chart on how to select culturally authentic materials based on proficiency level. In *Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment*, Adair-Hauck, Glisan, & Troyan offer more current considerations suggesting that instructors should choose materials based on “**CALL-IT**”: **C**ontext, **A**ge, **L**inguistic **L**evel and **I**mportance of **T**ask always keeping in mind that it is the task that should be edited not the text.

Three Strands

The refreshed world languages standard continues to include three strands, one for each of the three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational (in the NAEP graphic below, these are shown around the inner triangle).



Strand A reflects the Interpretive Mode of communication, in which students demonstrate understanding of spoken and written communication within appropriate cultural contexts. Examples of this kind of “one-way” reading or listening include cultural interpretations of printed texts, videos, online texts, movies, radio and television broadcasts, and speeches. Beyond the Novice level, “interpretation” differs from “comprehension” because it implies the ability to read or listen “between the lines” and “beyond the lines.” For more on the interpretive mode of communication:

- Click [Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 Workshop](#) to view a video on the interpretive mode (scroll down to video #1).

Strand B reflects the Interpersonal Mode of communication, in which students engage in direct oral and/or written communication with others. Examples of this “two-way” communication include conversing face-to-face, participating in online discussions or videoconferences, instant messaging and text messaging, and exchanging personal letters or e-mail messages. For more on the interpersonal mode of communication:

- Click [Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 Workshop](#) to view a video on the interpersonal mode (scroll down to video #2).

Strand C reflects the Presentational Mode of communication, in which students present, orally and/or in writing, information, concepts and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers with whom there is no immediate interaction. Examples of this “one-to-many” mode of communication include a presentation to a group, posting an online video or webpage, creating and posting a podcast or videocast, and writing an article for a newspaper.

- Click [Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 Workshop](#) to view a video on the presentational mode (scroll down to video #3)

The Role of Grammar in the World Language Class

While knowledge of the grammar of a language (e.g., rules for syntax, tense, and other elements of usage) is not an explicit goal of the revised world language standard, grammar plays a supporting role in allowing students to achieve the stated linguistic proficiency goals. Grammar is one tool that supports the attainment of the stated linguistic goals; others tools include knowledge of vocabulary, sociolinguistic knowledge, understanding of cultural appropriateness, and grasp of communication strategies.

Students who are provided with ample opportunities to create meaning and use critical thinking skills in a language of study achieve linguistic proficiency. Research has established that all grammar learning must take place within a meaningful context, with the focus on producing structures to support communication.

Resources:

- The Joint National Committee for Languages ([JNCL](#)) website provides advocacy materials.
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages ([ACTFL](#)) offers extensive research related to the ways that language learning benefits students by supporting academic achievement, cognitive development, and positive attitudes and beliefs about languages and cultures.
- There are several resources available to educators to assist them in the implementation of the standard. Among them are the Annotated Glossary with Resources, classroom application documents, the world language standard in action documents, the 21st century model unit, and the model curriculum for world languages at the Novice-Mid and Novice-High levels. Additionally, educators may wish to access the charts that provide a link to resources based on proficiency level and cultural content statements.
- Njcore.org is a website for educators to find and share standards-based resources. The New Jersey Department of Education encourages all educators to contribute to the database.
- **The** most comprehensive report compiled on the status of world languages education in New Jersey's public schools (2005), *A Report on the State of World Languages Implementation in New Jersey*, is available on the [New Jersey Department of Education World Languages](#) homepage.
- The state language organization, [Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey \(FLENJ\)](#), offers links to a variety of language resources, professional development opportunities, and information about student and professional awards and scholarships.

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