

MARYLAND FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTENT STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

As a nation we are increasingly aware of our interdependence with diverse cultures and our need to participate in the global community. In addition, the growing diversity of Maryland's population requires the preparation of a citizenry that is sensitive to other languages and cultures.

In response to this need, the Maryland State Board of Education, through the State Superintendent of Schools, formed a Foreign Language Content Standards Committee comprised of local school system (LSS) program managers and selected members of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Foreign Language Liaison Committee,

- Ms. Fern Babkes (College of Notre Dame)
- Dr. Pat Barr-Harrison (Prince George's County Public Schools)
- Mr. Harve Bennett (Harford County Public Schools)
- Mr. T. DeWayne Cash (Baltimore City Public Schools)
- Mr. Frank Edgerton (MSDE Foreign Language Specialist)
- Ms. Maria Flores (Prince George's County Public Schools)
- Ms. Susan Helm Murphy (Frederick County Public Schools)
- Ms. Connie Lathrop (Cecil County Public Schools)
- Dr. Gladys Lipton (University of Maryland, Baltimore County)
- Mr. James Mumford (Somerset County Public Schools)
- Ms. Janet Newberry (Baltimore County Public Schools)
- Dr. Tyrone Parker (MSDE Foreign Language Specialist)
- Dr. Robert Robison (Montgomery County Public Schools)
- Ms. Charlotte Weirich (Charles County Public Schools)
- Dr. Arlene White (Salisbury University)

The committee met monthly over the course of two years, using resources such as the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, along with documents from other states.

The Maryland Foreign Language Content Standards assist teachers and administrators in planning, developing, and implementing foreign language curricula. They provide a broad framework from which local systems may construct comprehensive foreign language programs.

The Maryland Foreign Language Standards represent what the profession considers the fundamental outcomes of high quality foreign language programs: a high level of second language proficiency and a thorough understanding of the target culture. To achieve such high standards, recent research urges that "foreign language instruction begin early, certainly by the third grade, that it be offered daily, and be continued through all the grades." (Boyer, 1995, 73).

Because language programs in Maryland provide numerous entry points across grade levels in elementary, middle, and high school, the standards have four levels of language learning: beginning, emerging, developing, and advancing noting the varying cognitive demands at the students' point of entry. These levels characterize student development of language skills in Kindergarten through grade 12 and provide a common vision for determining student ability to make the transition from high school to post-secondary instruction.

The standards focus on student learning. "They tell us what students should know and be able to do. This document describes the targeted performance for students, not what the teacher does to create that performance" (Sandrock, 2002, 5).

PHILOSOPHY

The Nature of Foreign Language: The ability to communicate in another language enables one to access a world not previously known: new people, new ideas, new cultures, and new experiences. We use language to describe the surrounding environment, to share thoughts and feelings with others, and to understand another culture and the roots of civilization.

Foreign Language and Society: As Maryland and the United States become more culturally diverse and their participation in the world community grows, effective cross-cultural communication is an essential component of good citizenship. The skills developed in the foreign language classroom are of great value in interpersonal relationships, education, business, world trade, travel, scientific research, national security, and diplomacy. Foreign language study is one means for developing cultural sensitivity and an understanding of the changing cultural dynamics of local, state, national, and international communities. In the case of classical languages, these skills also lead students from an understanding of the Greco-Roman influence on Western civilization to an appreciation of cultural diversity emanating from a common historical past.

Foreign Language and the Learner: Research regarding the personal benefits of foreign language study shows that students who study foreign languages demonstrate increased/enhanced:

- Performance on national high stakes assessments in language arts, math, and social studies
- Reading, writing, and listening skills
- Vocabulary development
- Critical, creative, and divergent thinking
- Problem solving
- Cultural sensitivity

Through the study of a second language, students develop a clearer understanding of the English language and its use. In addition, foreign language learners exhibit greater achievement in other subjects including reading, social studies, and mathematics.). Brain research indicates that learning a second language is a powerful experience that helps develop cognition in young children (Curtain, 1990, 2). These benefits accrue to a greater degree to students who begin their foreign language study in elementary school. Research indicates that students who have taken four to five years of a foreign language

achieve higher SAT verbal scores than students who have not (Shultz, & Willard-Holt, 2004, 625).

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

National and state standards guide the development of district curriculum. They identify for students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community what to learn, progress to make, skill levels to achieve, and what to measure. The standards establish:

- For students: a real-world purpose for learning a new language
- For classroom teachers: guidelines for vertical teaming and lesson planning that focus on broad goals which allow teachers to make choices to meet student needs and interests
- For administrators: criteria for classroom observations
- For teachers, administrators, parents and the community: a basis for accountability

The fundamental purpose of foreign language instruction is to enable students to communicate in a foreign language in a culturally appropriate way. Today's foreign language curricula concentrate at all levels on the five *C's of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning*: Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

COMMUNICATION: The Communication standard is the heart to the foreign language classroom. Central to foreign language learning is *using* the second language to communicate, to learn, and to become part of another culture, rather than talking *about* the second language or another culture in English. Communication includes three modes that represent different purposes for using language:

- to engage in conversation, exchange ideas, or negotiate meaning with another person (interpersonal mode).
- to understand information received through reading, listening, or viewing (interpretive mode), and
- to express ideas or deliver information through speaking, writing, or showing (presentational mode).

CULTURES: The Culture standard stresses the awareness of differing perspectives behind the products and practices of the target cultures. The goal is to consider why the similarities or differences exist and how they help students understand another culture's perspective or view of the world.

CONNECTIONS: The Connections standard links foreign language study with other disciplines to create interesting, meaningful and authentic contexts for communication in the classroom. As a result, the pool of potential content in a language classroom is virtually limitless, allowing students to use language as a tool for learning in a more natural context.

COMPARISONS: The Comparisons standard helps students recognize that language and culture interrelate and evolve to meet the dynamic needs of people and society. As

a result, students encounter not only cultural and linguistic differences, but also similarities between the language and culture studied and their own.

COMMUNITIES: The Communities standard reminds teachers to look beyond the four walls of the classroom to ensure that students learn how to apply the skills and knowledge gained in the classroom. This may take the form of actual or virtual field trips locally and abroad, student or teacher exchanges, authentic materials used for specific purposes, or written or verbal communication with people from another culture. The teacher designs lessons that help students use their new language in purposeful and meaningful ways to provide personal enrichment and lifelong learning.

CLASSICAL LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

The persistent and increasing popularity of Latin and the renewed interest in Ancient Greek in recent years brings about new and invigorated learning environments with more effective teaching materials. Successful programs in classical languages currently exist in grades K–12, although most programs start in grade 6 and continue through high school.

The Foreign Language Content Standards Committee designed *Standards for Classical Learning* to be a companion document to the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and as such organized the companion document with the same five goal areas. The document addresses the unique instructional context needed for students to learn a language that is rarely spoken.

Each goal relies heavily on the basic goal of reading the classical language. The reading of Latin or Ancient Greek (Standard 1) permeates the other four goals. By reading the classical language, students become immersed in the Culture (Standard 2) and Comparisons (Standard 4), and understand and move more comfortably in the Communities (Standard 5) of the world. *Standards for Classical Learning* stresses the prime importance and value of reading (American Classical League and American Philological Association, 1999, 190-191).