

## Foreign and Native Language\* Standards Rationale (Adopted 4.28.97)

Today's students prepare for the tomorrow in which they will need to function in varied contexts. The constant shrinking of the globe will expand their experience beyond that of previous generations to include contacts with other languages and cultures, both in their private lives and in their work. Languages are increasingly demanded in a wide range of professions. To succeed, students will need new tools, many of which are available primarily, if not solely, through the study of other languages. They include:

- ***the ability to communicate well for varied purposes.*** In other languages, as well as in English, effective communication requires an understanding of both the target language and culture under study and one's own, which implies the ability to interact confidently within many arenas, including the workplace and communities where the language is spoken.
- ***a solid foundation in basic subject matter and skills.*** All core subjects must contribute to this end, in an integrated fashion, to aid students in realizing the connections among the parts of their education. Basic subject matter includes the development of verbal reasoning, and listening skills and knowledge of the great achievements of human cultures, e.g., artistic, literary, scientific. The study of another language has been shown to enhance student performance in other academic fields. Learnings from other fields can also be reinforced in the foreign language classroom.
- ***an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of languages and cultures, including one's own.*** These tools aid students to function as responsible, informed, and confident citizens and enhance their personal development. They allow the finding of one's own place in the wider world.

### Introduction to the Foreign Language Standards

The foreign language standards state what students need to know about languages and cultures, including their own; what students need to be able to do; and how this knowledge and these abilities relate to the subject matter of other core areas. The standards are stated clearly and in measurable terms:

- what students need to **know** in order to function successfully as they enter a new millennium that promises major changes in communications and contacts with other languages and cultures;
- what students need to be able to **do**. Knowing about a language and its culture(s), while essential, is not sufficient; students will develop skills for functioning effectively in varied contexts; and

\*The Foreign Language Standards name was changed 10/22/01 to Foreign and Native Language by the state Board of Education.

- the integration of foreign languages into the rest of the curriculum so that the connections are clear and so that learning in all areas is facilitated, including the development of a deeper understanding of one’s own language and culture. The five strands under which the standards are organized—Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons and Communities—are meant to be interwoven among themselves as well, rather than taught as separate entities. Meeting the standards for each one will contribute to reaching the standards of the others.

These standards for foreign language study are highly challenging for all students. They assume an extended sequence of learning throughout the students’ school career, thus reflecting the likely nature of schools in the future. Meeting these standards will require the study of grammar—the forms and structures of the language—as well as effective learning strategies. Students will also need to use technologies that will bring the language and the culture to them in new ways and enhance their opportunities to learn.

In these standards we refer to “the target language,” which may stand for “world language,” “foreign language,” “second language,” or “heritage language” (i.e., the language that is the predominant language in the home).

## **Descriptions of Language Abilities for Each Level**

### ***Readiness***

Students use basic vocabulary related to people, places, things and actions close to their own lives. They express themselves in phrases, short sentences and memorized material. Their language is characterized by an emerging control of the most common basic grammatical forms and structures. Because comprehension of oral and written language normally exceeds production, students are able to comprehend simple descriptions, narratives, and authentic materials such as advertisements, on topics studied in class. Pronunciation and fluency are such that students often might not be understood by native speakers. They are able to write accurately what they can say.

### ***Foundations***

Students speak and write extemporaneously using short sentences and sentence strings in present tense on topics within their experience with the language. They can describe, ask and answer questions; engage in simple conversations; and carry out simple realistic functions such as ordering a meal, buying something, or introducing themselves or others to a group. Since their knowledge of the forms and structures of the language has grown rapidly but their practice has been limited, their speech is likely to contain numerous linguistic errors. Students are comprehensible to sympathetic listeners who have experience with non-native speakers of their language. Their written language still mirrors their oral language, although they may be able to express more ideas more accurately in writing, given time to reflect, review and revise.

### ***Essentials***

Students speak with somewhat longer utterances and begin to display an ability to connect phrases and sentences to show relations between ideas expressed. Although patterns of errors are still common, students now speak and write extemporaneously in past, present and future time, using vocabulary related to their own lives and interests. Accent and intonation are generally accurate, although pauses and false starts may be common, as students give simple instructions and directions, make comparisons, solve problems together, and engage in conversations on a range of topics including leisure activities, professions and current events. In written work, students' spelling and punctuation are mostly accurate; and they organize their ideas well.

### ***Proficiency***

Students use paragraph-length connected discourse to narrate, describe, and discuss ideas and opinions. On topics of interest to them and within their experience, they show few patterns of linguistic errors, they are generally comprehensible to native speakers of the language, and their vocabulary is sufficient to avoid awkward pauses. They are able to circumvent linguistic gaps or lapses by "finding another way to say it." Given time to reflect and revise, they are able to express their ideas completely and interestingly in writing, with generally accurate grammar, vocabulary, spelling, accents and punctuation. They comprehend most authentic expository and fictional material produced for contemporary native speakers.

### ***Distinction***

Students show almost no patterns of linguistic errors and are able to carry out almost any task that they can execute in English, albeit with less fluency and control or breadth of vocabulary and grammar. They can argue a point effectively and extemporaneously, explaining their point of view in detail. In writing, their ideas are well organized and clearly, completely, and interestingly presented, with accurate use of the language's writing system. They can comprehend any non-technical material produced for the general public of native speakers in the standard language.

**Table 1. Foreign and Native Language Standards**

***STANDARD 1: Communication***

Students understand and interpret written and spoken communication on a variety of topics in the target language

***STANDARD 2: Communication***

Students engage in oral and written exchanges which include providing and obtaining information, expressing feelings and preferences, and exchanging ideas and opinions in the target language.

***STANDARD 3: Communication***

Students present information and ideas in the target language on a variety of topics to listeners and readers.

***STANDARD 4: Culture***

Students know “what to do when” and “what to say while doing it” in the culture and use this knowledge to interact appropriately. They also understand the relationships between cultural perspectives, products and practices within cultures.

***STANDARD 5: Connections***

Students use the target language and authentic sources to reinforce and/or learn other content from the other subject areas.

***STANDARD 6: Comparisons***

Students develop insights into their own language and their own culture through the study of the target language.

***STANDARD 7: Communities***

Students use the target language within and beyond the school setting.

