

PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE: OHIO'S PLAN FOR WORLD LANGUAGES

The Ohio Foreign Language Advisory Council Report Executive Summary

The Council's Charge

Amended Substitute Senate Bill 311 called for the creation of the Foreign Language Advisory Council. The members of the Council, who represent Ohio's many diverse sectors, were selected by the State Board of Education through recommendations from the Ohio Department of Education, The Ohio Board of Regents, the Partnership for Continued Learning, the Office of the Governor and from nominations from the field in March, 2007.

The Council was charged with proposing a statewide foreign language implementation plan which includes recommendations for legislation to implement the plan by the 2014-2015 school year. The plan is being presented to the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Ohio Board of Regents, the Partnership for Continued Learning, the Governor, the Speaker and Minority Leader of the Senate, and Chairpersons and ranking minority members of standing committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate that consider education legislation by December 31, 2007.

The Foreign Language Advisory Council was asked to consider the following three areas:

Access to PreK-16 Foreign Language Programs

- Facilitating foreign language acquisition across grades kindergarten through twelve, rather than limiting it to high school.
- The extent to which students should focus on critical languages of economically competitive countries.

Foreign Language Instructional Delivery

- Best practices for implementing P-16 solutions to course instruction in foreign languages.
- Multiple course-delivery models, including distance learning, online learning, and synchronous and asynchronous Web-based delivery.

Defining Proficiency and Awarding Credit

- Defining a proficiency-based approach to earning credit for foreign language that can be reflected on students' high school transcripts.
- Allowing for the proficiency-based approach to apply to nonnative English speakers in their native languages.

The Council's Work

Council met five times beginning in April, 2007. Between meetings, Council members revised and refined their thinking through electronic communication in a shared, virtual environment. The Council brought multiple perspectives and ideas to the discussion based on their various roles as parents, K-16 foreign language educators, career and technical educators, principals and superintendents, and business and government representatives.

The recommendations were shared with a broad range of stakeholder groups and professional associations. In addition, the recommendations were posted on the Ohio Department of Education's Web site and an invitation to provide feedback was included in department newsletters.

The Council's shared conclusions build a solid foundation for increasing foreign language proficiency and cultural understanding to ensure Ohio's economic and strategic well-being far into the future.

The Foreign Language Advisory Council's Vision

Ohioans are living and working in a global age. Increasing world language capacity and global awareness are paramount to Ohio's continued economic and strategic success.

Ohio is no longer competing for jobs with neighboring states. It is competing with other countries. In this 21st century economy, Ohio businesses need a competitive edge to attract and retain investment from across the globe. Proficiency in languages other than English and knowledge of other cultures are key to Ohio's ability to succeed in the global economy; to collaborate on scientific research; and to solve security, environmental and health problems.

The Foreign Language Advisory Council's vision reflects this critical need:

Every Ohioan will have the opportunity to develop a functional level of proficiency in at least one language other than English, and more Ohioans will develop advanced language skills tied to specific career fields. Ohio's citizens will thus be better equipped to engage in the global marketplace and to communicate effectively with citizens from around the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS & STRATEGIES

Recommendation #1: Provide access to a sequence of world language instruction across grades PreK-16, so that instruction at each level builds upon the proficiency that students have attained at an earlier level.

- **Provide students with opportunities to attain at least a basic level of proficiency in at least one world language by the end of eighth grade.**
- **Build longer, articulated sequences of world language instruction from ninth grade down rather than from kindergarten up in order to eliminate gaps between levels.**
- **Enable high school students with prior language proficiency to develop greater proficiency through traditional coursework, online or distance learning or career-embedded language experiences.**
- **Offer more dual enrollment opportunities for world language learning so that high school students may earn college credit.**
- **Place students into postsecondary or workforce language learning based on their demonstrated level of proficiency.**

Recommendation #2: Retain capacity in commonly taught languages such as French, Spanish, German, Latin and American Sign Language while building capacity in languages critical for economic and strategic importance such as Arabic, Japanese and Chinese.

- **Encourage schools and community-based providers to offer multiple languages to meet individual, community and state needs.**
- **Create networks to share resources and teachers needed for language learning.**

Recommendation #3: Use proven programs with the goal of developing long sequences of PreK-16 language learning and advanced levels of proficiency.

PreK-12

- **Fund at least one fully articulated P-12 pilot program in each of the 16 regions of the state.**

Preschool

- **Begin programs in preschool when children are naturally acquiring oral language and pre-literacy skills.**

Elementary

- **Increase immersion programs that allow English speaking students to learn at least half to all of their school subjects in a target language.**
- **Create dual immersion programs with a 50-50 split of heritage language learners and English language learners in school districts with a sufficient heritage language population so that both groups of students become bilingual.**
- **Increase the number of elementary world language programs that meet for at least 90 minutes per week and reinforce content from other disciplines.**
- **Deliver instruction via a range of technology with reinforcement by teachers or paraprofessionals**

Middle and High School

- **Plan middle school and high school programs that build on instruction that takes place in elementary so that learners are not forced to start over at a beginning level.**
- **Develop occupational world language courses such as Spanish for school personnel, Somali for healthcare professionals or Arabic for business.**
- **Award credit through educational options for internship or service learning experiences where students use their world language skills.**
- **Continue funding intensive summer enrichment programs and camps such as the Regents' Language Academies.**
- **Encourage learners to acquire more than one world language based on personal interest, community need or career goals.**

University and Adult Learners

- **Offer a variety of on-campus and online programs at convenient times so that more Ohioans have the opportunity to become proficient in a second language.**

Recommendation #4: Use multiple means to deliver language instruction.

- **Supplement face-to-face delivery with a variety of synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods.**
 - **Encourage districts to provide online and distance learning language courses.**
 - **Create online and face-to-face discussion-group opportunities which include native or heritage speakers.**
- **Work with technical schools and community colleges to develop programs that lead toward professional skills in high-need languages in areas such as health care, social services and business.**
- **Develop immersion programs for high school and college students who already have a basic level of language proficiency.**
- **Develop language courses that are relevant and include real-world experiences.**
- **Expand the learning day by allowing students to learn language through services provided in the community.**
- **Develop community-based programs that utilize the resources of the heritage language communities in Ohio to provide instruction.**

Recommendation #5: Grant world language credit based on demonstration of proficiency.

- **Require all students to take a world language as part of the Ohio Core during high school or before.**
- **Use the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) levels to determine students' language proficiency.**
 - **Learners should reach at least Intermediate-Low proficiency in languages such as French, Italian or Spanish.**
 - **Learners should reach at least Novice-High proficiency in difficult languages such as Chinese, Arabic or Japanese.**
- **Allow students to demonstrate proficiency on existing reliable and valid tests or to earn two traditional Carnegie units to meet the Ohio Core requirement.**
- **Make existing reliable and valid proficiency testing available to all learners so that they may earn credit for their language proficiency.**

Recommendation #6: Increase the number and build the capacity of qualified world language instructors in the state of Ohio.

- **Continue to recruit and fund licensure for heritage and native speakers as instructors and paraprofessionals.**
- **Change current alternative licensure for world language teachers from the current 7-12 to align with traditional world language licensure which is P-12.**
- **Require teacher candidates to demonstrate proficiency on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) as a condition for licensure. ACTFL recommends Advanced-Low for languages such as Spanish, French and German. For difficult languages, ACTFL recommends Intermediate-High.**
- **Create a world language endorsement to the regular teaching license of teachers of other subjects who have Advanced-Low/Intermediate-High proficiency in a language.**
- **Expand teachers' abilities to utilize current and emerging technologies including teaching in an online environment and distance learning.**
- **Increase teachers' skills in teaching and assessing so that students of differing ability levels can learn to interpret, speak, read and write languages and develop sensitivity to and understanding of other cultures.**