

# World Languages Frequently Asked Questions Credit Flexibility

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### Q: Which students are best suited to take advantage of credit flexibility for world languages?

**A:** While all students are eligible, there are four populations of students who should be encouraged to take advantage of credit flexibility for world languages. These include:

- Heritage language speakers who have grown up hearing, speaking, reading and writing their home language and/or have attended heritage language weekend schools. Competence may vary across skills and thus partial credit may be in order with a plan to improve weaker skills (usually literacy).
- Students who come to secondary school with extensive early language learning experiences. Children who have been in immersion programs or strong, content-enriched elementary programs should have their language proficiency assessed upon entrance to middle school. Too often, these learners have had to "start over" rather than continue into higher levels of instruction.
- Students who participate in summer intensive or study-abroad programs, such as STARTALK,
  Rotary or the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y). After an immersive
  experience, learners should demonstrate what they can do with their new-found language skills,
  be given credit and encouraged to persist into higher levels.
- Language "geeks" who relish the challenge of learning a second or third language not offered at school. Students who already have accrued competence in a commonly taught language, such as French or Latin, are primed to take on the study of a critical language such as Chinese or Arabic.

# Q: Why should language learners be able to earn credit regardless of when, where or how they acquire language proficiency?

**A:** The spirit behind the credit flexibility provision points to rewarding learning 24/7/365. Students who bring the gift of a home language other than English to school or eager language learners who take advantage of unique opportunities to acquire languages should be able to earn credit for demonstrated proficiency. Accelerating learners into upper levels of language instruction, including university courses, or freeing up time in the busy high school schedule for other classes, ensures that learners make the most of their time in middle and high school.

That said, a detailed plan must be in place before any assessment administration or demonstration project. This ensures that learners know exactly what is expected of them to earn credit and grades.

# Q: Against what criteria should a student's language performance be measured?

**A:** The field of language education is fortunate to have nationally agreed upon proficiency and performance guidelines that act as common yardsticks to define language ability. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages adapted the adult *Proficiency Guidelines* of 1982 for K-12 learners,

resulting in the *Performance Guidelines* (1998). Both are explained in the document entitled "Language Proficiency."

The National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) based *LinguaFolio* descriptors and cando statements on the *Guidelines* and on the *Common European Frame of Reference*. The Self-Assessment Grid and Checklists of *LinguaFolio* clearly define what students can do with language as they progress through the levels from Novice to Pre-Advanced (and beyond).

It is normal for students' proficiency to develop at different rates across the modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational) and across skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The North Carolina *Essential Standards* for World Languages (pp. 6-14) <u>suggest</u> proficiency outcomes based on the language of study, program model and student population.

# Q: How do we assess a student who asks for credit for a language not offered at our school?

**A:** There are several options to assess students who seek credit for a language not offered at your school:

- Consult the list of nationally available assessments in the "Credit Flexibility and World Languages" document. Visit the website for each provider to see if additional languages or skills have been added, when assessments are given and how much each costs.
- Identify a district or postsecondary institution that offers the language in question and see if you can make arrangements for the student to be assessed through an end-of-course exam and/or a proficiency interview and writing sample.
- Secure participation on the credit flex team of an educated heritage speaker of the language in
  question from the local community. The family of the student seeking credit may be able to
  suggest an individual who could serve. Have the person review the proficiency guidelines in the
  "Language Proficiency" document and become familiar with the LinguaFolio descriptors in the
  self-assessment grid and checklists. Ask for his or her rating of the student's language
  proficiency on the chosen assessment and project.
- Tweak assessments and projects for languages already offered at your school by enlisting the help of a heritage speaker of the language in translation and scoring.
- Contact one of the many heritage language schools in Ohio and work with the staff to determine the student's level of proficiency through examination and projects.

#### Q: How much credit should be awarded based on assessment and project results?

**A:** The American Council for Education (ACE) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) collaborated to provide guidance on equating proficiency level to units of credit. Review the "Supporting Data – Proficiency and Course Credit" document for specific recommendations and for guidance based on other equivalency determinations.

In Ohio, for example, we know that students who have earned three years of French, Spanish or German credit typically have performed at the Intermediate-Low level of proficiency on the Collaborative Articulation and Assessment Project's (CAAP) speaking and writing assessments over a 20-year period. CAAP uses rubrics rather than the aforementioned proficiency guidelines, but the project director has indicated that desired results align with Intermediate-Low proficiency descriptors. Thus, a credit flex candidate who scores well on the CAAP assessments (and does well on the project) should receive at least three credits.

### Q: How do we transcript credit for language proficiency earned through credit flexibility?

**A:** Your credit flex team will need to discuss assessment and project results and equate them to existing courses and/or proficiency scales. The process may be different for each candidate. Several examples follow:

- Equating to courses: A heritage Chinese speaker takes the AP test-out option (not the whole AP course via credit flex) and receives a score of at least 4. He or she should be given credit for four or five courses of language, just as a non-heritage speaker would receive in any language based on similar results. The four to five would be determined based on when students normally take the AP exam in your program sequence after fourth year or after AP. Potential grades should be spelled out clearly before taking the AP and submitting the project. For example, a student who scores a 4 on the AP and has an excellent project may be awarded an A. Or, the student might have a 4 on the AP and turn in an average project based on predetermined criteria. This might earn the student a B. The weighting of assessment/project results needs to be specified beforehand. Note that the AP policy requires a score of 4 or 5 on the test-out option. Candidates who put a plan in place to take the AP course and the test may score a 3 or above.
- Equating to proficiency: A true language lover wants to earn credit for learning Korean in a summer STARTALK program, followed by online learning and using Rosetta Stone. Let's say you plan to use the STAMP test and a project rated on the LinguaFolio Self-Assessment Grid and a detailed rubric to evaluate the learner's language after he or she completes a certain period of study. Based on the credit flex resources related to World Languages, your team will need to predetermine how much credit to award based on proficiency scores. Following the advice of North Carolina, Jackson Local Schools and the ACE, for example, you may decide that if the student scores Novice-Mid to Novice High, you will award two credits. If the student reaches the desired target and has an excellent project, you would probably award an A. Adjust credit and grade as needed based on lower proficiency or project results.
- Partial credit: An English language learner from a Spanish speaking home wants to earn credit for her proficiency. Your team shares the equivalency scale determined in the aforementioned example (\_\_\_\_proficiency level=\_\_\_credits) with her. Your Spanish teacher conducts an oral interview with the student and the student performs very well, reaching the Intermediate-Mid level of proficiency. But, the results on the writing and reading tasks are disastrous. The learner clearly needs to build literacy skills. Your team decides to award partial credit for oracy skills (transcripted as an A in an "other" course category for Spanish) and to put a plan in place for the student to increase literacy skills.

# Q: How does credit flexibility fit with Honors Diploma requirements?

**A:** Students must still earn three credits of one language or two credits of two different languages to meet the language requirements for the Honors Diploma.

Q: We need to reduce costs by cutting language sections and staff. Can we use credit flex options?

**A:** No. Credit flexibility options should not be used in this manner. Consider standards-based, culturally authentic online and technology-based options that afford learners opportunities to interact with competent role models. For detailed guidance on what to look for in these types of alternatives, consult the information at this link.