

Credit Flexibility Guidance for World Languages

In 2006, the Ohio General Assembly established the Ohio Core Curriculum (Senate Bill 311), which raised expectations for what all Ohio students must know and be able to do to earn a high school diploma. At the same time, Senate Bill 311 directed the State Board of Education to develop a statewide plan for implementing methods for students to earn units of high school credit based on the demonstration of subject area competency. Lawmakers provided flexibility to students and educators to successfully meet these higher expectations. The outcomes of this provision of the law are clear:

1. Students now can demonstrate what they already know for course credit and move on to higher-order content they are ready to learn and have not yet mastered; and
2. Students now can learn subject matter and earn course credit in ways not limited solely to “seat time” or the walls of a school building.

Based on the provisions in law, there are two options students can use to earn flexible credit in a world language:

Option #1 - Testing Out

A student seeks to receive flexible credit for his or her demonstrable proficiency in a native or heritage language — or in a language already learned through informal or other means. Here are some examples of possible scenarios that would qualify for the **Testing Out** option:

- Maribel is a heritage speaker of Spanish who grew up in Ohio and wants high school credit for her oracy and literacy skills in her home language.
- Boris is a recent immigrant from Russia in your high school’s ESL program. He is interested in having his native Russian language skills assessed to meet one of the requirements for earning an Ohio Honors Diploma and an Ohio Seal of Biliteracy.
- Students exiting your German and French FLES programs want to earn credit for the proficiency they gained during their K-8 years and place into a level 2 course upon entering high school.
- Lili is a self-taught Chinese speaker. During her junior year of high school, she studied abroad in China. Now she would like to earn Chinese language credits to meet the world language admissions requirement of a well-known university.
- Hussein came to Ohio from an Arabic-speaking country in middle school and still uses the language at home daily with his family. He is thinking about applying to a postsecondary Arabic Language Flagship Program and would like to have the Arabic credits to bolster his college application.
- Mary Lynn is the hearing child of deaf parents. Growing up, she learned ASL at home to communicate with her parents — something she does with high proficiency. She is now a junior and wants credit for her proficiency in ASL — a world language her school does not offer.
- Alex and his twin Ana were enrolled in a Hebrew language immersion school through 10th grade before they moved to your district. They both would like to secure flexible credit for their considerable proficiency in Hebrew to fulfill one of the requirements for an Ohio Honors Diploma.

Here are the steps that are recommended to ensure the fidelity of learners’ petitions to earn flexible credit through the **Testing Out** option:

Step 1: Refer students and parents or guardians to the district's credit flexibility policy for initial guidance, timelines and other requirements. Have the student complete and submit a credit flex application if required by the local district. Refer the student to his or her school counselor for assistance if needed.

Step 2: Ask the student and parent or guardian to meet with the school's credit flex committee — or form a credit flex committee if needed. The committee typically includes the student, the student's parent or guardian, a member of the world language department and the student's school counselor, who ideally would chair the committee. Other individuals often participate in the committee, for example, administrators, tutors, etc. The district can determine the exact composition locally.

Step 3: Determine how to assess the student's proficiency across applicable language skills:

- Listening, speaking, reading and writing for modern languages;
- Receptive, interactive and expressive for ASL; or
- Reading for classical languages (listening, speaking and writing are optional based on their focus in local program design).

It would be preferable to use a nationally valid and reliable language performance or proficiency assessment, for example, the STAMP 4s, AAPPL, ALIRA, SLIPI or other standardized assessments. For an expanded list of language assessment options, refer to the Department's [list of assessments](#) approved for Seal of Biliteracy evaluation.

Step 4: Based on the district's credit flexibility policy, determine who will pay for the cost of proficiency testing — the school or the student's family/guardian.

Step 5: Determine the timeline for completing the proficiency assessment.

Step 6: Once proficiency testing has been completed, reconvene the credit flex committee to review the assessment results.

- Note: The role of the world language teacher on the committee is to help interpret the assessment results correctly. This teacher does not need to be licensed in or a speaker of the language targeted by the credit flex plan. Additionally, this teacher should not be viewed as a formal teacher of record and should not be marked as such in EMIS.

Step 7: Working together as a committee, determine how much credit to award based on the proficiency assessment results and recommendations made in the Department's [Research-based Proficiency Targets](#). For modern languages, first determine the difficulty level of the language to determine which target chart to use. The committee can elect to award full or partial credit based on the student's assessment results.

Step 8: Conclude the credit flexibility process in one of two ways:

- If the student demonstrated measurable proficiency and the district granted flexible credit, include the awarded credit on the student's official transcript.
- If the student did not meet the established learning objectives or failed to demonstrate the expected proficiency gains, the credit flex committee can decide whether to allow the student to engage in additional learning and/or retake part or all of the assessment or take a different assessment altogether. Agree on a new timeline for completing any additional learning and/or assessments.

Option #2 - Credit Flex Learning

A student seeks to learn a world language not offered by his or her district and earn flexible credit. Here are some examples of possible scenarios that would qualify for the **Credit Flex Learning** option:

- Jon is a freshman taking French 1. He will live with his grandparents in France next year and attend high school there. He wants to ensure he will be able to earn credit for his anticipated French proficiency gains upon his return and place into a higher-level French course.
- Maddie has always wanted to learn Portuguese, but her school does not offer courses in the language. Through research, she has identified a reputable online provider of a level I Portuguese course that offers both synchronous and asynchronous learning components. She would like her school to grant her flexible credit upon successfully demonstrating measurable proficiency gains at the end of the school year.
- Darius has always been fascinated by Swahili — the language of his ancestors. Unfortunately, his district discontinued its Swahili language program when the Swahili teacher retired a few years ago. He is highly motivated to earn flexible credit by establishing a language-tutoring partnership with an educated family friend who is a native Swahili speaker.
- The local Polish American community operates a weekend Polish language school to help their children maintain their linguistic and cultural ties to Poland. Nathan’s family isn’t Polish American, but he is enamored with the language. Recently he learned the heritage school offers beginning Polish language courses open to anyone. He would like to earn flexible credit from the high school he attends for learning Polish there, even though it’s not offered at his own school.
- Olivia has been fascinated with Japanese manga practically ever since she learned to read. In recent years, she has been an avid online gamer, playing some interactive manga-based games with kids in Japan. She has learned a tremendous amount of Japanese through these language- and culture-rich activities. Her local high school does not offer Japanese, but she would like to earn credit for the proficiency she has developed in the language as a result of many years of immersive reading and interacting in Japanese with other gamers.

Here are the steps that are recommended to ensure the fidelity of learners’ petitions to earn flexible credit through the **Credit Flex Learning** option:

Step 1: Refer students and parents or guardians to the district’s credit flexibility policy for initial guidance, timelines and other requirements. Have the student complete and submit a credit flex application if required by the local district. Refer the student to his or her school counselor for assistance if needed.

Step 2: Ask the student and parent or guardian to meet with the school’s credit flex committee — or form a credit flex committee if needed. The committee typically includes the student, the student’s parent or guardian, a member of the world language department and the student’s school counselor, who ideally would chair the committee. Other individuals often participate in the committee, for example, administrators, tutors, etc. The district can determine the exact composition locally.

Step 3: Determine the learning plan the student will follow. Example learning activities might include:

- Taking an online course or in-person course at a local community college or university;
- Working with a language tutor or family member who is fluent in the language;
- Attending a world language class in a neighboring district that offers the language;
- Engaging in self-guided study;
- Participating in an after-school language program;
- Attending a heritage language weekend school;
- Learning the language while participating in a foreign exchange program abroad;
- Completing an internship that includes a language immersion component, etc.

Step 4: Establish the standards-based language learning expectations the student should meet to successfully qualify for flexible credit. Include a description or list of the thematic language targets the student should complete.

- For example, self, family, school, food, likes and dislikes, hobbies, chores, daily routines, weather, clothing, professions, etc., across the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Step 5: Establish the standards-based intercultural learning targets the student should complete and propose possible ways to accomplish them.

Step 6: Determine how the student's learning will be assessed. It is preferable to use a nationally valid and reliable language proficiency assessment, for example, the STAMP 4s or the AAPPL assessments if they are available for the language. For an expanded list of language proficiency assessment options, refer to the Department's [list of assessments](#) approved for Seal of Biliteracy proficiency evaluation. Multiple measures like portfolios and demonstrations also can be integrated into a well-rounded assessment plan.

Step 7: Predetermine how much credit the district will award based on the proficiency assessment results and recommendations made in the Department's [Research-based Proficiency Targets](#).

Step 8: Based on the district's credit flexibility policy, determine who will pay for the cost of implementing the credit flex learning plan, including any assessments — the school or the student's family/guardian.

Step 9: Determine the timeline for completing the learning plan.

Step 10: During the period of learning, the teacher assigned with overseeing the plan monitors to ensure the student is doing the work, meeting the goals and making progress in learning. It is the responsibility of the student to do the work to succeed in the plan. The teacher guides the student with feedback.

- Note: The role of the world language teacher on the committee is to help determine whether the expectations for learning and assessment criteria were satisfactorily met. This teacher does not need to be licensed in or a speaker of the language targeted by the credit flex plan. This teacher should not be viewed as a formal teacher of record and should not be marked as such in EMIS.

Step 11: Once the learning timeline has been completed, reconvene the credit flex committee to determine if the student successfully met the learning objectives and assessment criteria previously established by the committee.

Step 12: Conclude the credit flexibility episode in one of two ways:

- If the student successfully met all the linguistic and cultural expectations for learning, as well as the assessment criteria, include the full or partial credit awarded by the district on the student's official transcript.
- If the student did not meet all the expectations for learning and/or the assessment criteria:
 1. The student can go into a traditional classroom (if available) to earn the credit; or
 2. The credit flexibility plan can be revised to address any gaps in the initial cycle of learning or assessment shortfalls. In this case, give the student a new timeline for completing any unfinished requirements.

For questions related specifically to credit flexibility in world languages, contact:

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