

Guidelines for Organizations Seeking Approval of Instructional Programs Offering World Languages Not Taught in Public School Districts

Background:

In August 2001, legislation was passed into law that required the Department of Education to establish a World Languages Instruction Committee to develop a plan which would provide students in public schools the opportunity to receive instruction in and graduation credit for a world language not taught in the public school district. This legislation was initially conceptualized and proposed by Assemblyman Steve Corodemus of Monmouth County.

In compliance with this law, the department established a committee that has developed an implementation plan to be followed by districts upon the written request of a student and his/her parent to be granted graduation credit for a language program offered by an external organization. An external organization as defined by the World Languages Instruction Committee refers to a non-profit organization such as a church or community group. The committee has also developed procedures for external organizations to follow that are seeking approval of their world languages programs by public school districts. These procedures may be found below along with additional important information related to providing world language instruction to earn high school graduation credits.

Procedures to be followed by External Organizations

A student and his/her parent must first make a request in writing to the high school principal to enroll in a language program offered by an external organization. The district will then notify the organization to:

1. Submit a request in writing to the district to review its eligibility. This includes providing the necessary written documentation to support the request. The documentation should include:
 - Information about the organization and the population it serves (template attached);
 - A copy of the world languages curriculum in English;
 - Evidence of assessments used in the program to demonstrate increasing levels of student language proficiency in all skill areas; and
 - Credentials of teachers instructing in the program. This includes the type of certification the teacher(s) may possess (e.g., New Jersey, out-of-state, out-of-country).

2. Note that upon receipt and review of written documentation to support the organization's request for approval, district staff *may* request an on-site visitation of the program to gather further data.

In order to obtain program approval, organizations should:

- Review the world languages curriculum carefully to ensure it is aligned with the specific goals and objectives delineated in the 2004 version of the *New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages* (www.state.nj.us/njded/aps/cccs/wl). Note that the curriculum review will be conducted by a district administrator and/or a world languages specialist.
- Provide specific examples of ongoing assessments used in the program to show that there are ample opportunities for students to demonstrate increasing language proficiency in all skill areas in the program.

Upon completion of the program review, the school district will notify the organization in writing of program approval. Organizations may use official district approval letters and/or local School Board resolutions in subsequent communication with constituents about the program.

Summative Assessment of Student Proficiency

- The current state proficiency level for world languages has been identified by the Department of Education as *Novice-High* according to descriptors found in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners*. These performance guidelines are available for purchase at www.actfl.org.
- Districts may award 5-credits for attaining the *Novice-Mid* level of proficiency and 10-credits for attaining the *Novice-High* level of proficiency*. Should the student attain a higher proficiency level (i.e., in the *Intermediate* or *Intermediate-High* range), it is strongly recommended that additional credits be awarded by the district.
- The committee has concluded that the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)* would best serve for the summative assessment of students. spoken language ability for the awarding of credit because it is an internationally recognized measure for academic placement, student assessment, professional certification and hiring qualifications. Moreover, many of the languages that students would be studying outside of the public school district fall under the category of less commonly taught languages, and the OPI is available in many of these languages.
- For assessment of students. writing skills, the committee has concluded that the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Written Proficiency Test (WPT)* would be an excellent measure of written language ability.

- Other nationally and/or internationally recognized, commonly administered measures of assessment for languages that assess both spoken and written skills will be considered for approval by the World Languages Instruction Committee.
- Documentation of student performance on the assessment must be provided to school districts in order to award high school graduation credits.

Additional Information

1. Costs

All costs incurred by a student's enrollment in such a program, including costs of proficiency testing, will be absorbed by the student's parents, or legal guardian.

2. Timelines

January 1: Deadline for submission of written requests to the high school principal by a student and his/her parent seeking to be granted graduation credit for a language program not offered in the local public school district

March 1: Deadline for external organizations to submit a complete application with supporting documentation to the local public school district for program approval

June 1: Deadline for district notification to the external organization of program approval or disapproval to enable students to receive credit for the world languages course during the academic year beginning September 1

Note: Districts may seek to modify timelines upon approval of the instruction committee.

3. Program Re-approval

External organizations must be notified by and make application to the local public school district for re-approval of language programs upon cyclical revision of the standards and assessment code (e.g., adoption of new standards and regulations regarding student assessment).

Recommendations

- When possible, employ a certified language teacher. Teachers should hold appropriate New Jersey certification in the language they are teaching.
- Provide information and/or financial assistance to the organization's language teacher(s) to become an American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Certified Tester*. As a certified tester, a teacher conducts the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) in accordance with the policies, procedures and protocol established by ACTFL. ACTFL certified testers conduct OPIs and assign advisory ratings within their own academic institution, for the purposes placement, fulfilling graduation requirements, and program evaluation. For more information, go to the ACTFL web site at <http://www.actfl.org> and click on *Proficiency Testing*. Having an ACTFL certified tester within an organization will enable students to take the Oral

Proficiency Interview at less cost. Additionally, the certified tester training process provides valuable information and skills for language teachers in assessing the language proficiency levels of their students.

- Contact Cheri Quinlan, world languages coordinator, at: (609) 777-1478 or cheri.quinlan@doe.state.nj.us with any questions about the law or the procedures to be followed.

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