
ACTFL Position Statement on Languages as a Core Component of Education for All Students

The ACTFL Board of Directors with leadership of the National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL) and the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) have released a position statement to describe how four major initiatives in the United States today connect with language learning. Local, state, regional, and national perspectives are represented in this position statement, as an additional 70 organizations provided input and comment. All ACTFL Position Statements can be accessed online at www.actfl.org/news/position-statements.

In the 21st century, language learning meets real world needs:

- Rewards learners with a resume differentiator – the ability to communicate and collaborate in another language across cultures and time zones
- Provides access to information and collaboration in any field - including science, technology, engineering, mathematics; business; and health care
- Develops critical literacies by practicing skills to understand, exchange opinions, and present ideas
- Develops flexible and adaptable thinking, plus an ability to function in new and unfamiliar situations
- Prepares learners to think and interact in a global community

Language learning develops these 21st century skills as learners:

- Participate in face-to-face interactions via technology, internships and volunteer opportunities in the community.
- Apply their competence in a new language to their career and personal goals, broadening their thinking beyond self-serving goals
- Become more adept in understanding diverse cultural perspectives and their own identity

These benefits are essential for and are within reach of all learners. An early start to learning a second language, programs of immersion or dual language immersion, and long learning sequences show strong results in helping all learners achieve these results. More states are setting up processes to verify second language competency (whether learned through classroom experiences or not) and provide academic credit.

The five goal areas (five Cs) of the **National Standards** become a rationale for learning languages and provide a roadmap for effective and motivating teaching and learning.

Standards-based language learning develops literacy and numeracy. By learning communication strategies to use language for interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational purposes, learners expand their repertoire to elicit information and exchange ideas, to comprehend and interpret, and to create effective oral and written messages. As learners compare the new language with their native language, they gain a deeper awareness of how language functions. As learners collect and interpret data, they practice numeracy. This process builds literacy and numeracy skills as described in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Through language learning, learners:

- Develop literacy with a balance of informational and literary text
- Use their second language to access, discuss, and create content across all disciplines
- Access increasingly complex text
- Provide text-based answers
- Write from sources to explain, persuade, and convey experience
- Build academic language

Standards-based language learning prepares learners in the STEM areas. The goal area of connections broadens the content for learning languages to any area where learners might use language. Project- or Problem-based language learning with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) content develops problem solving, critical thinking, and inquiry skills when activities are at a level of cognitive challenge that is age/developmentally-appropriate.

Examples include:

- Reading informational text on STEM topics
- Using technology to access information not available in English
- Creating surveys for learners to conduct, interpret, and share the results with non-English speaking audiences
- Participating in projects underway throughout the world

Standards-based language learning engages learners through practical applications for special purposes. By interacting with new information and acquiring new perspectives that are only available through the target language, learners expand their knowledge beyond what they are learning through their native or heritage language. Learners identify local and global communities in which they can apply their new skills, perspectives and language skill in purposeful ways. Service learning, business environments, the arts, and technology provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability to communicate in culturally appropriate ways. In these contexts, learners build a disposition for lifelong learning while they acquire technical skills.

Standards-based language learning strengthens college and career readiness. Learners heighten their essential 21st century skills of communication, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, and creativity. Strengthening their performance in each of the modes of communication, learners become ready for post-secondary education and careers as described in the Common Core State Standards: responding to the varying demands of audience, task and purpose; developing collaboration skills; presenting or conversing with clarity and precision; comprehending as well as critiquing; valuing evidence; and using technology and digital media strategically and capably. These skills are also identified as essential for all high school graduates by state employability standards and postsecondary initiatives (such as Project LEAP). By using their new language to explore interests and any subject areas, learners build strong content knowledge.

Language learning is real world education; the knowledge and skills are applied lifelong.