Module 8: Intercultural Communication Standards

This module provides an overview of the mode of Intercultural Communication, discusses the Massachusetts World Languages Standards for Interpersonal Communication, and highlights ways to address the Standards.

Intercultural Communication

This mode involves interacting appropriately with others in and from another culture. In this mode, students read, listen, and view through the lens that the message’s originator intended, and students select language and topics that will be appropriate and comprehensible to their audience or interlocutor(s) when transmitting information. Proficiency in Intercultural Communication encourages students to respect and uphold the value of all cultures and languages, helps students investigate cultural products, practices, and perspectives, and supports students in advancing their proficiency in other communicative modes and participating in their communities.

Intercultural Communication Standards

The Massachusetts World Languages Standards for Intercultural Communication describe the skills that students can demonstrate at different levels of proficiency. The Intercultural Communication Standard at each proficiency level contains between three and five different Functions, numbered from 4.a. to 4.e along with the proficiency level abbreviation. The chart below shows how Functions progress across proficiency levels within the Intercultural Communication Standards. Check marks in a new row indicate Functions that emerge at higher proficiency levels and check marks with a plus sign indicate new, more rigorous features of a previously acquired Function.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | NL | NM | NH | IL | IM | IH | AL | AM | AH | S |
| a. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ |
| b. | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓+ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ |
| c. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+ | ✓ |
| d. |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| e. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |

Addressing the Standards

Recommendations to effectively address Intercultural Communication Standards include setting unit goals/objectives for Intercultural Communication using the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements; embedding Intercultural Communication into other summative assessment tasks using the Integrated Performance Assessment model; and including Intercultural Communication activities that align with the steps outlined in ACTFL’s Intercultural Communication Reflection Tool and that encourage students to apply their intercultural competence to build a more equitable world. When designing Intercultural Communication assessments and learning experiences, educators should consider all students, including students with disabilities and those from diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. To align with Massachusetts’ vision for Deeper Learning, educators should provide students with opportunities to engage with cultural products, practices, and perspectives in a way that demonstrates Mastery, Identity, and Creativity.

Two Lenses: Proficiency and Equity

Proficiency and equity serve as the foundation of the Intercultural Communication Standards. The Standards are organized by proficiency level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, and they are addressed using a cycle of observation, comparison, reflection, interaction, and reflection to develop intercultural competence. In terms of equity, the Intercultural Communication Standards center and affirm students’ identities and cultural behaviors; encourage students to interact with cultural products, practices, and perspectives that carry significance for them; and promote a deeper understanding of and respect for diverse peoples, cultures, and communities.

Additional Resources

[ACTFL Intercultural Communication Reflection Tool](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intercultural%20Can-Dos_Reflections%20Scenarios.pdf) • [ACTFL Resource on Leading with Culture](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/tle/TLE_JanFeb18_Article.pdf) • [CASEL Framework](https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/) • [Massachusetts Deeper Learning Initiative](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/overview.html) • [NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/can-dos/Intercultural%20Can-Do_Statements.pdf)