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Massachusetts Heritage Languages Framework Study Final Report



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# Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is committed to creating equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved, through inclusive multilingual and multicultural teaching and learning that values and affirms each and every student and their families. In accord with this vision, DESE is committed to supporting all students to advance their linguistic and cultural proficiency in their home language(s) and to supporting schools in providing high-quality academic programs that advance their students’ linguistic and cultural assets. To further explore the possibility of developing a Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework and help guide next steps in supporting students who already possess skills in languages other than English, DESE contracted the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) as an independent, third-party research organization to conduct research on existing U.S. heritage language programs and curriculum frameworks. The purpose of this study was to support DESE in determining if and how to adopt or develop a Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework; how to create and expand heritage language programming in schools or districts; and how to support existing heritage language programming in schools or districts. Comprised of three major activities, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the landscape of heritage language programming in the U.S.?
2. What, if any, U.S. heritage language program models, elements, and practices in schools, districts, and states are associated with positive outcomes for students?
3. What are the existing Massachusetts heritage language practices and dispositions?

To address the first and second research questions, CAL conducted a literature review that examined how heritage languages, heritage language learners, and heritage language programs are generally defined; what heritage languages frameworks and standards exist in the U.S. and what they have in common; and what heritage language program models are commonly used in the U.S., as well as what these program models have in common and if any of these program models or other practices are associated with positive student outcomes. CAL also analyzed and compared definitions, frameworks and standards, program models, resources, and teacher training programs associated with heritage languages across 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; 123 nationally recognized world language, dual language, and heritage language organizations; and 33 individual districts/programs. To address the third research question, CAL explored educator practices and perspectives related to heritage language education through three virtual focus groups, a statewide online survey, and ten virtual interviews with Massachusetts educators who have experience working with heritage language learners.

The findings of each activity are presented in this report, which is organized into the following sections: (1) Review of Literature; (2) Comparative Analysis; and (3) Analysis of Educator Practices and Perspectives. The report concludes with a discussion of the findings and a series of recommendations for DESE on how to best meet the needs of heritage language learners and the educators who serve them, followed by a list of references.

# Review of Literature

## Introduction

Heritage language learners are a group of students who have pre-existing skills in and connections to languages other than English. Through this literature review, we seek to provide an overview of research on programs and practices that support this group of students in advancing their linguistic and cultural proficiency in their home languages. This part of the report starts by exploring definitions of the terms “heritage language” and “heritage language learner.” Next, we investigate current trends in standards and frameworks for heritage language teaching and learning, with a focus on effective instructional practices for heritage language classrooms and programs. Finally, we provide an overview of the heritage language program models commonly used throughout the United States and discuss approaches and practices that are associated with positive outcomes for heritage language learners. This part of the report concludes with a summary of the findings and includes an annotated bibliography of frequently cited sources. A full list of references is also included at the end of the report.

## Definitions

 In this section, we discuss the different types of definitions that have been proposed for heritage languages and their learners. We examine the similarities and differences among these definitions, as well as emerging issues and new considerations associated with their use, and then provide recommendations for developing appropriate definitions of these terms in K-12 school settings. For the purposes of this literature review, we use the terms “heritage language learner” and “heritage speaker/signer” interchangeably, unless otherwise noted.

### Heritage Languages

Heritage language education has been in existence in the United States for more than 300 years (Kibler & Valdés, 2016), and there has been an increasing interest in this field in the U.S. context over the past few decades (Fishman, 2014; Kagan & Dillon, 2008; Leeman, 2015; Son, 2017; Valdés, 2016; Wiley, 2014). On a global scale, the term “heritage language” has been defined in many ways since it was originally defined in Canada as any language other than English or French being used in the country (Leeman & King, 2014). At their most basic, heritage languages have been described as “languages other than the national language(s)” (Leeman & King, 2014), though various other interpretations have emerged over time.

In his review of the literature, Bale (2010) identified several different terms being used interchangeably with the term “heritage”, including (but not limited to) “aboriginal”, “ancestral”, “community”, “ethnic”, “home”, “immigrant”, “Indigenous”, “migrant”, “minority”, “mother tongue”, and “refugee”. These terms, as well as the term “heritage,” may have different meanings in different contexts and often do not reflect ways in which speakers/signers of these languages view themselves and the languages they speak/sign (Bale, 2010; Ennser-Kananen & King, 2018; Wiley, 2014), making it difficult to apply a single term to such a complex concept. In the United States context, heritage languages are commonly defined as minority languages (Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016), any language other than the dominant language (Ennser-Kananen & King, 2018), or languages other than English to which some learners have a historical, familial, or cultural connection (Christian, 2017), and researchers have further recognized that this group of languages may include immigrant languages, aboriginal or Indigenous languages, and other minority languages that coexist with majority languages in linguistically and culturally diverse places (Montrul & Polinsky, 2022).

Although widely referenced and acknowledged in the field of language education and beyond, the term “heritage language” and its use have been heavily debated in recent years. Early descriptions of heritage languages placed them into specific categories as Indigenous languages, colonial languages, or immigrant languages (Fishman, 2001). Despite including speakers/signers with historical or ancestral ties to a language and thus being inclusive of different degrees of exposure and connection to a heritage language, these categorizations do not acknowledge important cultural dimensions of being a heritage language learner today (Hornberger & Wang, 2017) and have since been criticized for their simplistic view of these languages and their speakers/signers (Ennser-Kananen & King, 2018). Arguments have also been made that, despite providing recognition to these languages and their speakers/signers, the term “heritage language” contributes to the “othering” of these languages among dominant or majority languages in society (Shin, 2017), which may contribute to negative stereotypes and ideologies about them and their role within and outside of the classroom. There are also criticisms that the term “heritage language” carries the connotation that these languages were primarily used in the past rather than the present (McCarty, 2008), and while some researchers prefer the term “heritage and community languages” to refer to all languages that fall within this category, others prefer different terms for different language groups and communities (e.g., “heritage mother tongue” for Indigenous languages).

### Heritage Language Learners

Since first gaining recognition in the 1990s (Hornberger & Wang, 2017), the terms “heritage language learner” and “heritage language speaker/signer” have served as a point of much debate (Bale, 2010). Although these terms are widely used by educators, researchers, and policymakers alike, there are numerous ways of defining them (Bale, 2010; Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016; Kagan & Dillon, 2008; Leeman, 2015; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Wiley, 2014; Zyzik, 2016), and the lack of consensus surrounding what it means to be a heritage language learner/speaker/signer has led to challenges both within and beyond the classroom (Hornberger & Wang, 2017).

Defining heritage language learners is a complex process (Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016; Wiley, 2014), and definitions may focus on language acquisition, language exposure, linguistic proficiency, educational classification, and/or cultural connections (Leeman, 2015). These areas of focus differ in both research and practice, resulting in a variety of definitions that may be more or less applicable in different situations, and each definition may carry a different meaning for each person who is using or identifying with the term (Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016). In addition, heritage language learners are a largely heterogenous group, making it difficult to adequately define them in a single, universal way (Benmamoun et al., 2013a; Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016; King & Ennser-Kananen, 2013). These individuals may have been raised in a home where the heritage language was used and then gradually started using the dominant language more at home over time, or they could have continued using the heritage language at home while simultaneously using the dominant language outside of the home throughout their lives (Polinsky, 2015).

There is no single profile of a heritage language learner (Hornberger & Wang, 2017) and there is no one-size-fits-all definition that can be easily and effectively applied across contexts (Benmamoun et al., 2013a), though shared understanding of what it means to be a heritage language learner is essential for the development and implementation of language programs that will best meet the needs of this group of students (Valdés, 2017). Overall, there are two major schools of thought when defining heritage language learners—focusing on one’s connection to or affiliation with the heritage language or focusing on one’s abilities and/or proficiency in the heritage language (Bale, 2010).

Recognizing the different contexts in which the term heritage language learner may be defined, Polinsky & Kagan (2007) explore broad and narrow definitions of this term, which largely align with the two schools of thought mentioned above. Broadly speaking, a heritage language learner could have cultural and/or familial ties to the language yet little linguistic knowledge of the language. While some choose to follow this broad definition, Polinsky & Kagan (2007) argue that individuals falling under this category do not have sufficient experience with the language itself to be considered “heritage speakers” in the context of teaching and learning. They propose the use of a narrow definition of this term, which underscores the importance of some degree of linguistic proficiency in the heritage language.

This focus is also reflected in Valdés’ (2000) definition, stating that a heritage language learner is “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (p. 388). This definition is perhaps the most widely used in the field and is referenced by many researchers (Kagan & Dillon, 2008; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, Wiley, 2014) in describing the criteria for being considered a heritage language learner, primarily due to its focus on instruction and pedagogy, its utility for placing students into separate groups or courses, and its inclusivity of individuals with varying levels of proficiency in the heritage language (Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016).

Despite countless variations, most definitions include elements of this narrow conceptualization of the term and mention some degree of heritage language exposure in the early years, acquisition of the heritage language outside of a classroom setting, some cultural connection to the heritage language, some degree of linguistic proficiency in the heritage language, some degree of bilingualism, and/or some degree of dominance in a language other than the heritage language (Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016; Zyzik, 2016). Definitions may focus on shifting language use from the heritage language to the dominant language (Flores, 2015), being exposed to both the heritage language and the dominant language while growing up (Montrul, 2010), or having “some significant proficiency” in the heritage language (Polinsky, 2015, p. 2). The population to whom one is referring when using the term “heritage language learner” also varies based on the context in which the term is being used. In educational spaces, it has historically been used to describe those who have some connection to a language that is not taught in mainstream school settings and those who have been raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken and are enrolled in foreign language classes in which their home language is being taught (Valdés, 2001). Beyond school settings, it has been used more broadly in reference to second-generation immigrants whose home language differs from the dominant language of their country of residence (Flores, 2015).

Researchers have argued that such narrow definitions and applications of the term may exclude many individuals with other types of linguistic or cultural connections to a language other than English in the United States today, such as “multiracial adoptive families and children of interracial or multiracial marriages; third, fourth, or fifth generation speakers; and speakers living in places where two languages are spoken” (Hornberger & Wang, 2017, p. 5). To be more inclusive, researchers and educators can recognize that one’s heritage language may not actually be used in their home (Cho et al., 1997) and acknowledge the full spectrum of individuals who may identify as heritage language learners by defining different types of “membership” based on different degrees of connection to the heritage language/culture (Hornberger & Wang, 2017). Heritage speaker/signer definitions that emphasize linguistic proficiency as a defining characteristic exclude individuals who might otherwise identify as heritage language learners despite not currently having any functional abilities in the language, and educators would benefit from viewing heritage language learners through the lens of their implicit knowledge of the language (i.e., knowledge of the language that has been gained “without a conscious intention” and “without awareness” that is has been acquired) rather than their proficiency in the language and also recognizing that students may not meet all “criteria” of what it means to be a typical heritage language learner in order to identify as one (Zyzik, 2016, p. 23).

Another criticism of commonly used definitions of heritage speakers/signers is that they do not adequately support multilingual students in determining which of the language(s) they speak should be considered their heritage language, thus impacting their ability to construct their identities as heritage speakers/signers within and beyond the classroom (Hornberger & Wang, 2017). Individuals who are heritage speakers/signers of endangered languages may also be excluded from the commonly used proficiency-based definitions (Bale, 2010). In addition, definitions like that of Valdés (2000) imply that the order of acquisition is a critical component of who is a heritage speaker/signer (Benmamoun et al., 2013b) and may thus exclude English-dominant individuals who are looking to reclaim their heritage later in life. Finally, limited research has been conducted on the meaning of the term “heritage language learner” to those that are described as such (Doerr & Lee, 2013), making it difficult to discern ways in which the term and its definitions impact the very population they intend to serve.

Recent developments have been made in the field, and new definitions and conceptualizations of the terms “heritage language learner” and “heritage language speaker/signer” have been emerging in response to limitations of current definitions, the difficulties applying them, and the lack of agreement on which definition should be used for the purposes of identifying and supporting students in language classrooms. Hornberger and Wang (2017) propose an ecological view of heritage language learners that underscores their own individual agency in identifying with the term, describing them as “individuals who have familial or ancestral ties to a particular language that is not English and who exert their agency in determining whether or not they are heritage language learners of that heritage language and culture” (p. 26). When thinking about an appropriate definition for one’s context, the researchers recommend distinguishing between the terms “heritage language learner” and “heritage speaker/signer,” as well as considering the positioning (e.g., social, economic, political) of different heritage languages and their speakers in the dominant society and the construction of one’s identity as it relates to the heritage language. Other researchers have similarly argued in favor of identity-based definitions of heritage speakers/signers rather than focusing on proficiency (Ennser-Kananen & King, 2018), and others have recommended that heritage speakers/signers be viewed from multiple perspectives (e.g., that of the education program, the community, and the larger society) when defining them for the purposes of teaching and learning (Wiley, 2014). Additional considerations raised in recent years when defining heritage speakers/signers include recognizing the struggle to balance one’s heritage language and culture with that of the dominant society, the need to negotiate how and when different forms of the heritage language can and should be used, and the challenges associated with differences between home/community and other mainstream language ideologies (Hornberger & Wang, 2017).

In school-based settings, it is important to note that definitions describing what this group of students generally can and cannot do in comparison to their native-speaker or L2 (second language) learner peers may perpetuate deficit-based perspectives that negatively impact student learning (Zyzik, 2016). Also, it is important to recognize that the term “heritage language learner” is not always used in K-12 schools, and students are instead classified as English language learners and thus positioned in terms of their lack of proficiency in one language rather than placing value on the knowledge and abilities in a language other than English that they bring to the classroom (Seals & Peyton, 2017). Despite criticisms of this framing, it is important to note that being classified as an EL may actually increase a student’s chances of receiving some instruction in their heritage languages in school-based settings from a young age, as those with higher levels of English proficiency who are not classified as ELs may miss out on opportunities to enroll in certain types of ELE programs that include the heritage language as a medium of instruction (Potowski, 2021). It is recommended that schools consider ways in which they can define heritage language learners in a positive way while simultaneously ensuring that students have access to appropriate language education programs. Finally, it is important to consider the extent to which any definitions that rely on prior schooling or formal exposure to the heritage language may be excluding some students, as different heritage languages have not been traditionally taught in schools (Wiley, 2014).

Although there is a great deal of variance among heritage speakers/signers (Leeman & King, 2014), research has shown that they possess a number of shared characteristics, most notably having some degree of exposure to and knowledge of the heritage language in addition to their knowledge of the dominant language (Polinsky, 2015). Findings also indicated that a majority of heritage language learners demonstrate at least some of the following characteristics: native-like pronunciation; strong listening and speaking skills; an intuitive understanding of grammar; knowledge of high-frequency vocabulary; limited literacy skills or metalinguistic awareness; knowledge of non-standard varieties of the language; and connections to the heritage culture and/or motivation for learning the language (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). While these various characteristics do not necessarily appear in definitions of heritage language learners, they may be helpful for educators involved in the application of school-based definitions or the identification of these learners. Researchers have agreed that heritage language learners are different from native speakers and second language learners, as demonstrated through this discussion, and it is therefore important to appropriately define who these learners are in order to provide them with the types of language education that best meet their unique needs.

## Standards, Frameworks, and Pedagogical Approaches

In this section, we explore existing standards and frameworks for heritage language education in the U.S. and discuss heritage language–specific goals as well as pedagogical strategies and frameworks that may support educators in addressing these goals and that have been increasingly referenced in the literature on best practices for heritage language learners. Finally, we provide a few considerations for developing heritage language standards and frameworks in the future.

### Availability of Standards

According to the literature, there are not currently any nationally or internationally recognized content standards, curriculum frameworks, or proficiency scales/guidelines specifically designed for the instruction and assessment of heritage language learners (Ilieva & Clark-Gareca, 2016). There are no established goals or policies for heritage language teaching in the United States (Valdés, 2014), and many of the challenges involved in the education of this group of students can be attributed to the lack of standardized heritage language curricular frameworks (Gironzetti & Belpoliti, 2021). To support further advances in the field of heritage language education, researchers have expressed the need for heritage-specific tools (Ilieva & Clark-Gareca, 2016), a framework for comparing and evaluating heritage language programs (Valdés & Parra, 2018), and “a comprehensive heritage language pedagogy for different languages and instructional contexts” (Carreira & Kagan, 2018, p. 164).

Currently, world language standards and proficiency guidelines have commonly been used when working with heritage language learners, and while some researchers have noted that these tools were developed in collaboration with educators experienced in the areas of heritage language teaching and learning and that they can be effectively adapted for use with this group of students (Valdés, 2014), others have argued that they ignore the unique language development process and needs of heritage language learners (Ilieva & Clark-Gareca 2016) and that their focus on elite varieties of language may devalue many heritage language learners’ abilities (Leeman & Serafini, 2020). Overall, there is a lack of consensus on the extent to which world language standards and guidelines are appropriate for informing instruction and describing what students know and can do in the heritage language (Son, 2017).

### Goals of Heritage Language Education

Regardless of whether or not world language standards are being used when working with heritage language learners, research on heritage language education recommends that teachers use learning goals that are tailored to meet the needs of their students and teaching context to drive instruction and assessment (Albirini, 2014). These individualized learning goals can be used to support proficiency-based instruction alongside world language content standards if these are being used with heritage language learners (Martínez, 2016), and there have been some recommendations to explicitly add new focal areas to the standards (e.g., including an additional focus on students’ consciousness of their role as heritage language learners in larger society) when working with this group of students (Trujillo, 2009).

Although learning goals largely depend on the specific context in which they are being used, some broad goals to guide heritage language teaching and learning have been proposed in recent years. Valdés (1995) originally proposed the following goals for Spanish as a heritage language education: (1) Spanish language maintenance; (2) the acquisition of a prestige variety; (3) the expansion of the bilingual range; and (4) transfer of literacy skills. These were later amended (Valdés, 2000) with the addition of (5) the acquisition of academic skills in Spanish. Martínez (2016) further developed these goals, with some minor modifications in wording (e.g., the acquisition of a “standard variety” instead of “prestige variety”) and the addition of two new goals: (6) cultivation of positive attitudes toward the heritage language and (7) acquisition or development of cultural awareness. Each of these goals can be impacted by classroom, school, and community experiences and resources, and may thus yield different results and student outcomes depending on the specific heritage language programming and policies in place.

The goal of heritage language maintenance can be addressed by activities involving students in their community, promoting the use of the heritage language, and working on language revitalization projects (Martínez, 2016), and it is essential to reflect on and incorporate students’ motivations for learning their heritage language when designing activities addressing this goal. Through policies and advocacy work, promotion of heritage language maintenance can also extend beyond the classroom by having conversations with parents, administrators, and community members who may view English language acquisition as more important than acquisition of the heritage language. Research shows that heritage language education can help with the development of English language skills and other academic skills (Carreira & Rodríguez, 2011), and this can be communicated to various stakeholders involved in heritage language programming. Families and community members should be encouraged not to criticize students when they make errors in the heritage language, as this type of judgment can cause students to stop speaking the language (Karapetian, 2014) and thus negatively contribute to overall efforts to preserve and maintain these languages. With support in and out of the classroom, learners can confidently work toward this goal by engaging in tutoring roles, community classes and projects, and practice of the language at home and in the neighborhood (Beaudrie, 2015; Carreira & Rodríguez, 2011; Martínez, 2016).

The second goal, acquisition of a standard variety, equips students with language abilities they can use in their professional life and continuing education (Carreira & Rodríguez, 2011). Educators can use an additive approach to broaden students’ linguistic repertoires without dismissing or devaluing different varieties of the heritage language that students speak or have been exposed to in their communities (Beaudrie, 2015; Kondo-Brown, 2010; Leeman, 2018; Martínez, 2016). Instructional materials should demonstrate different forms of the language being used, and different varieties should be recognized even when teaching grammar to ensure all variations of the language used by students are represented and included in the classroom (Beaudrie, 2015). When addressing this goal, students can learn about the context in which different registers are used and practice making linguistic decisions that are appropriate for different settings (Beaudrie, 2015; Martínez, 2016; UCLA Center for World Languages, n.d.), and notions of correctness can be taught in relation to the context of use as opposed to promoting a single “correct” and superior form of the language (Beaudrie, 2015).

The third goal, expanding bilingual range, calls for instruction that welcomes the authentic use of bilingual forms of the language (Beaudrie, 2015; King et al., 2018). Practices such as translation (Mellinger & Gasca Jiménez, 2019), language brokering (Gasca Jiménez & Adrada-Rafael, 2021; Mellinger & Gasca Jiménez, 2019), translanguaging (Menken & Avni, 2017), code-switching (King et al., 2018), and language transfer (King et al., 2018) allow students to authentically use their full linguistic repertoires to communicate, and if heritage language learners are to maintain and develop their multilingualism, it is important for them to be able to use these dynamic language practices within and beyond the classroom (King et al., 2018; Menken & Avni, 2017; Palmer et al., 2014). Language brokering is “the global practice whereby children in immigrant communities are called upon by family members to serve as linguistic and cultural intermediaries by translating and interpreting” (López et al., 2019, p. 481, as cited in Gasca Jiménez & Adrada-Rafael, 2021). Otheguy, O. García, and Reid (2015) contrast code-switching, in which multilinguals alternate between their languages, with translanguaging, which they define as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (p. 281). Language transfer is shown when multilinguals use features from one language while speaking/signing another language (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). The simultaneous use of more than one language demonstrates heritage speakers’ pragmatic competence and their ability to adapt their language practices when interacting in different contexts and with different audiences (Valdés, 2005; Yow et al., 2018). Allowing students to engage in creative language practices can positively contribute to their construction of identity as it relates to the heritage language, as is notable among speakers of Spanish in the United States (Potowski, 2012).

Incorporating translanguaging in the classroom can also help students learn when to use certain registers or languages (Patenaude, 2020), which addresses elements of both the second and third heritage-specific goals mentioned above. Multiple studies suggest that including translanguaging in the classroom can lead to long-term educational advantages (Patenaude, 2020) and may encourage students to discuss sensitive issues and develop their linguistic proficiency (Palmer et al., 2014), making it particularly appropriate for heritage language learners. Integrating rather than separating languages in the curriculum in programs where multiple languages are being taught simultaneously (e.g., dual language programs) may help students transfer skills from one language to another (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). Heritage language instruction should build on students’ linguistic adaptability and strengthen their “linguistic awareness, translation competence, and pride in bilingualism” (Llombart-Huesca, 2017), and relevant instructional activities could involve practice using two languages in the same discourse and putting these skills to use by helping community members navigate bilingual spaces and situations (Martínez, 2016). Using different varieties of the heritage language in the classroom can help further expand students’ bilingual range. Students can be exposed to, and begin to use, different varieties of the heritage language through texts written in different varieties, class projects on cultural topics requiring the use of multiple varieties, and various role-play activities (Fairclough, 2016). In addition, explicitly drawing attention to differences between varieties can help students acquire new forms (Fairclough, 2016). One way this can be accomplished is through translation activities, including translation from the standard to the heritage dialect (Fairclough, 2016). However, translation must be “purposeful, contextualized, and meaningful” (Fairclough, 2016, p. 166).

The fourth goal of transferring—and developing—literacy skills in the heritage language is often explicitly addressed in heritage language teaching and learning (Beaudrie, 2015). It is important to note that literacy instruction is not the same across all languages (e.g., although decoding is a major component of literacy instruction in English, less time is spent on decoding during literacy instruction in languages with more transparent orthography, such as Spanish). Still, research has found that students’ literacy skills in the heritage language tend to reflect their literacy skills in English and vice versa (Martínez, 2016), and research has shown the benefits of leveraging students’ existing literacy skills in other languages to support their acquisition of these skills in the heritage language. Providing students with authentic resources that cover relevant topics of interest can help further developing their literacy skills, and encouraging students to read extensively at or just above their proficiency level in the heritage language may also improve reading fluency (Brustad, 2006; Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Suk, 2017). It is recommended that students be provided with opportunities to produce and interpret meaning using multimodal and multilingual practices across different types of media (Warner & Dupuy, 2018), and exposure to different genres may also improve heritage language learners’ metalinguistic awareness and understanding of different communication styles for different purposes (Chevalier, 2004). In addition, activities such as reading aloud can foster the transfer of oral language skills to written language production, and oral language skills can be further leveraged through group or paired brainstorming sessions that allow students to plan for writing activities before completing them (Chevalier, 2004).

The fifth goal, acquiring academic skills in the heritage language, also positively impacts students’ progress in English and the heritage language (Carreira & Kagan, 2018; Kondo-Brown, 2010). Research has shown that heritage language instruction that covers academic content and specialized topics can foster students’ skills in learning topic-specific vocabulary and connect them to meaningful, real-world language use (UCLA Center for World Languages, n.d.). Scaffolding is an important aspect of connecting students’ existing language skills to academic language (Carreira, 2016; Moreno, 2021). Educators should incorporate the heritage culture via relevant, comprehensible material and guide students in linking it to their own experiences (Kondo-Brown, 2010; Moreno, 2021), and it may be helpful to draw on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol for additional scaffolding strategies, such as breaking a task into smaller components, modeling a skill, and activating students’ background knowledge (Carreira, 2016). Project-based learning can also facilitate the acquisition of academic skills (Johnson & Carreira, 2018; Kresin, 2017), and research projects can allow students to gain specialized vocabulary and practice presentational skills, which may be scaffolded with visual supports (Johnson & Carreira, 2018; Kresin, 2017). When assigning projects, it is helpful to provide detailed, step-by-step instructions and provide opportunities for students to practice each component of the project (Carreira, 2016). Academic skills in the heritage language may also improve through extensive reading of academic texts in that language (Kondo-Brown, 2010).

 The sixth goal of cultivating positive attitudes toward the heritage language is essential for encouraging students to engage in lifelong learning, and educators play a key role in making sure their own attitudes, the materials they use, and their instructional approaches positively portray the heritage language and culture. Teachers should value the linguistic and cultural knowledge students bring to the classroom and use students’ experiences as a starting point for instruction, demonstrating that their backgrounds and experiences are essential to what is being taught (Leeman, 2018; Moreno, 2021; Torres et al., 2018). Instructional strategies designed to address this goal should give students agency in their learning by allowing them to have a voice in the classroom, and some examples of activities that are well tailored to this goal include those that allow students to initiate their own projects and be responsible for their learning in groups (UCLA Center for World Languages, n.d.).

The final goal of acquiring or developing cultural awareness is designed to be woven into all aspects of heritage language instruction. From the use of authentic materials to exposure and service to community members, culture serves as the foundation of student learning. Educators need to get to know their students and their interests and needs as they relate to the heritage culture to then help them build their skills in this area, and it may be helpful to dedicate time to contextualize cultural products, perspectives, and practices and ensure cultural meanings are made comprehensible for students at different proficiency levels (Moreno, 2021). In addition, it is recommended that educators build students’ critical awareness of sociopolitical contexts that may affect cultural norms and practices through discussions and reflections when addressing this goal (Moreno, 2021).

### Pedagogical Approaches

In addition to these proposed heritage-specific goals, which could potentially serve as the foundation of a heritage language curriculum framework, researchers have increasingly explored the use of different pedagogical frameworks in heritage language classrooms, and these may also be helpful to consider when addressing heritage-specific goals or when developing standards or frameworks for heritage language education. These pedagogical frameworks include the critical language awareness approach, the multiliteracies approach, and the community-based service-learning approach (Parra, 2014), and while they have been examined individually in the context of heritage language teaching and learning, they have also been described as complementary of one another and may also be used in tandem with more general best practices for working with heritage language learners. For an overview of these frameworks, see the “Heritage Languages” section of the [2020 Massachusetts World Languages Literature Review](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/framework/literature-review.docx).

When supporting students’ acquisition of a standard language variety and academic skills in the heritage language, the critical language awareness approach is particularly useful, as these goals for instruction can inadvertently lead to the devaluing of different varieties of the heritage language that students bring to the classroom (Beaudrie et al., 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Samaniego & Warner, 2016; Torres et al., 2018). Research has shown that this approach allows educators to appropriately introduce standard varieties of the language (Beaudrie et al., 2020; Leeman, 2018) and helps students understand larger social and political influences on the valuing of different languages (Beaudrie, 2015). As a result, students feel empowered and encouraged to maintain language skills learned at home and in the community as part of their linguistic repertoire (Beaudrie, 2015; Correa, 2011; Martínez, 2016; Mikulski, 2006), and they gain valuable critical thinking skills that may transfer to their study of other languages and disciplines. The critical language awareness approach may also contribute to students’ expansion of bilingual range, as it provides an understanding that all forms of communication, including bilingual and/or code-switching practices, reflect authentic and meaningful language practices and competencies (Leeman, 2018; Leeman & Serafini, 2016), and this approach also allows students to think critically about the history of their heritage language in the United States.

In addition to the critical language awareness approach, the multiliteracies approach can expand ways students can make meaning and equip them with knowledge of different genre conventions and their uses (Samaniego & Warner, 2016), further supporting the heritage-specific goals related to standard varieties, academic skills, and literacy skills. The multiliteracies approach can incorporate media beyond traditional texts and can foster critical awareness of how people and dialects are portrayed in media (Parra, 2016). In this approach, educators provide students with many examples of texts; directly assist students in understanding the way meaning is designed in those texts; guide students to reflect on the effects of design choices in texts; and scaffold opportunities for students to draw on meaning-making resources to create their own texts (Samaniego & Warner, 2016).

The community-based service-learning approach can help inform the heritage-specific goals of language maintenance, cultivation of positive attitudes toward the heritage language, and acquisition or development of cultural awareness. This approach connects with the heritage language community as a source of motivation for further developing skills and knowledge in the heritage language and culture (Carreira & Chik, 2018; Leeman, 2011; Pascual y Cabo et al., 2017). A key element highlighted in the literature is the importance of students’ self-confidence and feeling of ownership of the language and culture (Llombart-Huesca & Pulido, 2017; Pascual y Cabo et al., 2017; Lowther Pereira, 2015). It is important for instructional practices to draw from student’s experiences and to value their expertise by building on their backgrounds (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Kondo-Brown, 2010; Leeman, 2018; Martínez, 2016; Wu et al., 2011). Students involved in activities outside the classroom can be exposed to language use that legitimizes their own abilities (Kondo-Brown, 2010; Leeman, 2018) and develops their confidence as knowledge holders (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Martínez, 2016). Community service programs may also promote teenage students’ participation in language learning opportunities outside of mainstream school settings (e.g., community-based heritage language schools), especially when students can earn community service hours for this work that can later contribute to the hours needed to meet graduation requirements in their public schools (Lico & Schmith, 2022).

Research recommends that community service activities be respectful and beneficial to all participants (Kagan & Dillon, 2009; Lowther Pereira, 2016). Rather than providing students with a deficit-based perspective of the community, effective community-based service-learning enhances students’ knowledge of and appreciation for the community (V. García, 2022; Silva, 2022). Empowering students to see themselves and their communities as valuable sources of knowledge can begin with activities inside the classroom, such as analyzing language examples and linguistic strategies and investigating any language ideologies at work in these examples (Leeman, 2018). Students may also benefit from conducting their own research outside of the classroom, including surveying, recording, and observing community and family members using the heritage language (Leeman, 2018). It is essential to integrate service-learning with instruction (Parra, 2016), and educators should begin with their objectives for learning and for service when designing courses and activities that will ultimately contribute to students’ overall cultural awareness and attitudes toward the language, culture, and community (Lowther Pereira, 2016). Building strong relationships with community partners can help facilitate service-learning projects, and students will benefit from opportunities to reflect on language use, community experiences, identity, and related issues, ideally in the heritage language (Lowther Pereira, 2016; Parra, 2016). The community-based service-learning approach can also incorporate critical language awareness through critical discussion of these reflections, though it is important to create a space where students can discuss their experiences without judgment (Parra, 2016). Despite its benefits, community-based service learning can be logistically challenging in some situations, especially for students who have work obligations (Parra, 2016), and it may be more feasible to invite community partners to engage in classroom activities to address heritage-specific goals if students are unable to participate in activities outside of the classroom.

In reviewing current trends and practices in Spanish heritage language education, Valdés and Parra (2018) note that educators are increasingly concerned with empowering students as agents of change within and beyond their communities, in addition to focusing on the heritage-specific goals and pedagogies identified earlier in this section. There is also a growing interest in addressing issues of identity when working with heritage language learners (Leeman, 2015), and it may be beneficial to include Social Emotional Learning (SEL)-based goals or standards in the classroom to ensure instruction has positive effects on heritage language learners’ overall sense of self and wellbeing (Wu et al., 2011). Goals that explicitly address SEL may help teachers address any issues with self-esteem and confidence that students have developed as a consequence of the devaluing of their home language variety (Torres et al., 2018). For more information about best practices for social and emotional learning in language classrooms, see the [2020 Massachusetts Quick Reference Guide on Social and Emotional Learning in World Language Programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/framework/qrg-sel.docx).

Overall, there is a consensus that heritage language learners require unique approaches to instruction and assessment to effectively develop or maintain their heritage languages, and it may therefore be helpful to create standards, curriculum frameworks, and/or proficiency guidelines that are specifically designed to meet their needs. When thinking about the development of heritage language benchmarks and expectations, Valdés and Parra (2018) recommend considering how these could be framed around students’ “capabilities” rather than “competencies” and if and how they could be designed without contributing to the standardization and commodification of heritage languages.

## Program Models

In this section, we start by defining heritage language education and provide an overview of heritage language program models commonly used throughout the United States. We examine the common and divergent elements of these program models, as well as ways in which English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) service delivery is integrated into those models, and then provide recommendations for building a school-based heritage language program.

### Heritage Language Education in the U.S.

Heritage language education is generally described as any type of education that targets and addresses the needs of heritage language learners (Kelleher, 2010), and there are a variety of different program models and approaches to heritage language education used in the United States today. These programs differ in terms of their goals, the ways in which they are structured, the types of students that are enrolled, their approaches to instruction and assessment, and their role in mainstream education systems and the community (Leeman & King, 2014). It is therefore difficult to group all these programs together under the label of “heritage language education,” and arguments have been made that using this single term to describe the various programs that serve heritage language learners may conceal the many ways in which these programs differ and the influence of each individual language and context on program practices (Leeman & King, 2014). In terms of similarities across programs, the most prominent is their limited availability as well as their often limited success in supporting students in developing and/or maintaining their heritage languages (Valdés, 2017).

Hornberger & Wang (2017) identify three main types of heritage language education: (1) heritage language programs, which are typically found at the postsecondary level or in community-based school settings; (2) Indigenous language programs, which are typically found at tribal colleges and universities or within language nests or other immersion settings; and (3) K-12 bilingual education programs and traditional foreign language programs, which are not inherently designed for heritage language learners but often include this group of students and may be tailored to meet their needs. Beaudrie (2016) similarly identifies school-based programs, higher-education programs, and community-based programs as the three main types of heritage language programs being offered in the United States today. In the context of K-12 school-based programs, there may also be separate courses for heritage language learners, though these are mostly offered in high schools depending on the language being taught and the resources available (Christian, 2017). Programs may be classified broadly under the term “heritage language education” if the heritage language is used as a medium for instruction (e.g., a transitional bilingual program), or they may also fall within a narrower interpretation of the term if the heritage language is the object of instruction (e.g., a heritage language program) (Leeman & King, 2014).

Heritage language programs have been broadly defined at the federal level as “programs for students with a family background or cultural connection to the partner language” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), and while the definition of these programs varies from state to state, they have been categorized by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition (2019) as one of the different types of language education programs designed to develop students’ proficiency in two languages. In practice, the term “heritage language program” may refer to programming that involves providing heritage-specific courses to students as part of a world language program offered in school-based settings and also includes community-based heritage language programs. These heritage-specific programs differ from other approaches to heritage language education due to their focus on desire, opportunity, and motivations as they support students’ in building stronger connections to the heritage language community and developing their identities as they relate to the heritage language and culture (Carreira, 2021). The goals of heritage language learners are typically quite different from the goals of other types of language learners, and the instructional approaches and curriculum used in heritage-specific courses and programs thus reflect these differences (Kelleher, 2010). Generally, these heritage language programs aim to strengthen students’ cultural identities, abilities to communicate with family members in the heritage language, and college and career readiness through their abilities to apply their linguistic and cultural knowledge beyond the classroom (Hinman et al., 2021). They also typically focus on developing students’ literacy skills in the heritage language and supporting students in acquiring standard or prestige varieties of the heritage language while simultaneously validating the unique dialects/varieties that students speak at home and in their communities (Leeman & King, 2014).

It is important to note that, despite these similarities, heritage language programs may differ from one another in many ways, including their student population, their structure, and their approach to language use in the program. Programs may follow monoglossic approaches in which the heritage language is developed without the use of English, or they may follow heteroglossic approaches that allow students to draw from their full linguistic repertoires when learning the heritage language, which may include the use of English in the classroom (Hinman et al., 2021). Different program structures will affect the target amount of heritage language use, and although ACTFL[[1]](#footnote-1) recommends 90% target language use in world language classes, they do not have a publicly available statement on whether this goal is relevant for heritage language learners or programs. As discussed in the “Goals of Heritage Language Education” and “Findings for Program Models” sections of this report, research suggests that allowing students to use their full linguistic repertoires can be beneficial for heritage language teaching and learning (O. García et al., 2018; Menken & Avni, 2017; Palmer et al., 2014).

While heritage language programming in the form of heritage-specific classes may fall within the various options for world language education in a school, district, or state, it is also important to note that the program model of “heritage language” is also among the top 10 most commonly reported Language Instruction Educational Program models (LIEPs) for English learners at the state level (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) and often falls under the category of English Learner Education (ELE). Based on publicly available information, it is only possible to say that many programs are categorized this way across states; it cannot be determined how English is taught within these programs or why they are categorized as ELE programs unless it is specified in their program model definitions. There is limited information on the number of school-based heritage language programs and courses offered in the United States, though 25 states formally reported providing heritage language programs in their consolidated state performance reports for SY 2015-2016 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

### K-12 Program Models

Most heritage language education at the K-12 level is provided in the form of bilingual education programs, including dual language programs (two-way or one-way), transitional bilingual programs, and/or developmental or maintenance bilingual programs. These forms of education all include some degree of ESL or ELD service delivery, though they differ in terms of the amount of instructional time dedicated to English and whether English language acquisition is the primary goal of instruction or carries equal weight with the acquisition of another language. These types of heritage language education explicitly focus on English in addition to heritage language development and maintenance and may therefore fall within a school, district, or state’s options for English Learner Education (ELE) rather than its options for world language education.

Within dual language education, two-way immersion programs are often cited as being particularly useful models of heritage language education, as students spend dedicated time learning the partner language (heritage language) in addition to English and are expected to make progress in both languages (Boyle et al., 2015; Christian, 2017; Shin, 2017). These programs typically enroll both native English-speaking students and students with a linguistic or cultural connection to the partner (heritage) language of the program, ideally with each group representing about half of the overall student population (Boyle et al., 2015). While research shows that these programs generally support students in further developing or maintaining their proficiency in their heritage language, some issues have been raised regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of two-way immersion programs for heritage language learners. Although the heritage language is explicitly taught in these programs, there is often still an emphasis on English, and heritage language learners may thus underperform compared to their native English-speaking peers. Prior to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), dual language programs sometimes used less of the target language than was officially scheduled due to concerns about student performance on standardized tests in English, especially during time periods shortly before the tests were administered (Potowski, 2004). After its passage, NCLB contributed to a decrease in bilingual education programs and a general narrowing of course content, particularly where high-stakes tests were administered only in English (Boyle et al., 2015; Menken & Avni, 2017; Wright, 2017). Although NCLB was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, the emphasis on English acquisition remained strong, with increased accountability provisions for English learners (Lee, 2019). There are also limited opportunities for students to engage in an articulated course of study after graduating from two-way immersion programs due to limited heritage-specific offerings at the secondary level (Moore, 2014), and more research is needed to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of such programs for less commonly taught heritage languages, as most programs currently being offered are designed for Spanish heritage speakers (Christian, 2017).

One-way immersion programs (or “heritage language immersion programs”) are another approach to dual language education that falls under the umbrella term of heritage language education, though these programs are not as common as two-way immersion programs in the U.S. K-12 school system. Similar to two-way immersion programs, these are designed to support the development of proficiency in both English and a partner (heritage) language, though all students come from the same language background (i.e., all students are heritage language learners of the partner language being taught in the classroom) (Boyle et al., 2015). Students in these programs may be more dominant in the heritage language or English (Christian, 2017). In terms of the availability of both types of dual language education in the United States, there is no single source reporting the total number of programs offered, though some researchers have estimated that there are between 1,000 and 2,000+ dual language schools across the country, and there is information in the literature about programs offered for commonly taught (e.g., Spanish, French), less commonly taught (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Hebrew, Russian, Polish, Japanese, Italian), and Indigenous (e.g., Navajo) languages (Potowski, 2021).

Although research has shown the benefits for heritage language learners of developmental or maintenance bilingual programs in which the heritage language is continuously used over time to support English language acquisition, most K-12 bilingual education programs in the United States (outside of dual language programs) are more transitional in nature and only use the heritage language for a limited time to support students’ acquisition of the English language (Carreira, 2021; Hornberger & Wang, 2017; Moore, 2014). Both types of bilingual programs are particularly prominent in multicultural regions of the United States with large communities of native or heritage speakers of languages other than English, with more transitional bilingual programs being offered where there is a strong emphasis on acquiring proficiency in English in local school systems (Moore, 2014). Research has generally shown that transitional bilingual programs are not associated with positive outcomes for heritage language learning (Moore, 2014), but they are often the only type of program in which heritage language learners receive any instruction in their heritage language in the early years (Potowski, 2021). The few developmental or maintenance bilingual programs that are offered at the elementary level could lend themselves well to an articulated course of study for students who continue with heritage speaker classes offered at the secondary level (Christian, 2017).

Beyond different forms of bilingual education, students may have the opportunity to enroll in heritage-specific courses, though most of these courses offered in K-12 schools are those designed for speakers of Spanish as a heritage language in high school (Potowski, 2021). Research shows that there are still few of these courses being offered across the country, with fewer than 2.1% of U.S. Spanish speakers being enrolled in courses designed for heritage language learners in secondary school (Leeman & King, 2014), and those that are offered often do not incorporate best practices in heritage language teaching and learning (Kibler & Valdés, 2016). Research has shown that many of these programs continue to use materials and approaches designed for L2 learners and promote standard varieties of heritage languages that devalue or delegitimize the various dialects and varieties of the language that students bring to the classroom (Kibler & Valdés, 2016). There is also limited research available on the effectiveness of heritage-specific courses offered in school-based settings (Wright, 2015), though it is widely recognized that mainstream foreign language classes with L2 learners (e.g., mixed classes) are not designed to meet the needs of heritage language learners and are thus deemed less appropriate and less effective forms of heritage language education (Ennser-Kananen & King, 2018). Despite this consensus, heritage speakers/signers are often taught their heritage language in traditional world language classes (Beaudrie, 2011; Beaudrie, 2012; Carreira, 2016; Carreira & Kagan, 2018), as schools and districts may have limited resources and cannot afford to create a separate course for heritage language learners. They may also offer instruction in a limited number of languages, which may lead to heritage language learners being placed in a world language program for a language that is not their heritage language (Carreira & Kagan, 2018). Including specialized instructional methods and settings in mixed classrooms is challenging to world language educators, and resources and training for these purposes are scarce (Beaudrie et al., 2020; Caballero, 2014).

 Outside of mainstream schooling, heritage language education typically takes place in community schools. Community-based heritage language programs have a longstanding history in the United States and around the world, and these programs are typically organized by parents and community members who offer classes after school during the week, on weekends, or during summer breaks. Current estimations indicate that there are “approximately 8,000 community-based heritage language schools in the USA, teaching over 200 languages” (Seals & Peyton, 2017, p. 89-90). While some studies indicate that students enrolled in these programs make valuable gains in their heritage language proficiency, there has not been strong evidence of this in the empirical research (Potowski, 2021). There is also a need for greater collaboration and articulation between community-based schools and the public school system to best support students’ language learning and ensure that they are formally recognized for their abilities in the heritage language (Moore, 2014). Indigenous language programs (both in schools and the community) are also considered a form of heritage language education in that they are designed to strengthen students’ connections to home/ancestral languages and culture, though these programs are often described as “Native Language programs” as opposed to “heritage language programs” (Boyle et al., 2015).

### Recommendations for School-Based Programs

To help heritage speakers/signers maintain and build their language skills, there is a consensus that heritage language education should be provided in mainstream schools starting from an early age and throughout students’ K-12 educational experiences (Potowski, 2021), though most of the nation’s heritage language education is still taking place in community-based schools and other places outside of the public school system (Christian, 2017) or only at the secondary or post-secondary levels (Leeman & King, 2014). Although there are a growing number of heritage language programs being offered in the United States, the availability of school-based programs in a variety of languages remains limited (Ennser-Kananen & King, 2018). Challenges involved in building and sustaining heritage language programs include those related to teacher recruitment and training, funding and institutional support, state and federal language education policies, student identification and placement, and the availability of appropriate curriculum and resources (Beaudrie, 2016).

Due to these issues, research has shown that most heritage speakers/signers in the U.S. are not able to access any form of heritage language education, including heritage-specific courses or programs and dual language immersion programs (Carreira, 2021; Leeman & King, 2014; Potowski, 2021). While some language programs offered in K-12 schools such as dual language immersion programs can provide some support for heritage language learners, most U.S. elementary and secondary schools do not have language programs specifically designed to meet the needs of this group of students (Kelleher, 2010; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011). This results in language loss among a large number of heritage language learners during the early years, requiring them to later enroll in “foreign” language classes to relearn their heritage language (King et al., 2018; Shin, 2017; Wright, 2015). There is a need, therefore, for more programs designed to meet the needs of heritage language learners at all grade levels and across a variety of educational contexts.

When building a school-based language program that serves heritage language learners, it is important to consider the individual students’ needs, as well as the community context in which the program will be offered (Christian, 2017). Decisions about which program models will be offered may be impacted by students’ levels of proficiency in both the heritage language and English. Limited research has been conducted on heritage language program design and administration (Beaudrie, 2018), and while more research is needed to support the successful development of these programs at all levels of education, Beaudrie (2016) proposes the following steps: (1) gathering information and building an argument for the program; (2) gathering resources for program building; (3) investing in teacher development in heritage learner instruction; (4) deciding on program structure and preliminary course content; (5) identifying heritage students; (6) placing heritage students in appropriate course levels; (7) promoting the program and recruiting students; and (8) evaluating the program. More information on each of these steps will be provided in the following section on approaches and practices associated with positive outcomes.

In their review of an elementary school heritage language program, Hinman et al. (2021) share some recommendations for developing effective school-based heritage language programming, including gathering input from students and families to inform program design and implementation, making connections between student learning in the classroom and outside of the classroom, and providing ample opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice and participate in evaluations of the program over time. To expand the number of heritage language programs being offered, researchers have also argued that efforts should be made to provide more opportunities for members of the heritage language community to become involved in program development and implementation, as this will help programs be more effective in meeting the specific needs of their students and also help them better advocate for and support the programs over time (Moore, 2014). Growing and supporting networks involving multiple stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and these community members, is key to growing and mainstreaming heritage language education in U.S. school systems (Carreira & Kagan, 2018). It may also be helpful for public schools to collaborate with one another to accommodate as many students as possible, and this can be done via course sharing that provides students with access to a larger number of courses at multiple levels, as well as courses in different languages that are not offered at every individual school (Carreira & Kagan, 2018).

## Approaches and Practices for Positive Student Outcomes

In this section, we discuss which U.S. heritage language program models and practices are associated with positive outcomes for students, including those related to English language acquisition for English learners, students’ levels of proficiency in the heritage language, and broader academic and social-emotional development. We begin with a brief overview of outcomes of different forms of bilingual language education and community-based heritage language programs, followed by a discussion of the research on school-based heritage language programming and recommendations for addressing challenges that may prevent positive outcomes and/or programmatic success.

### Findings for Program Models

As previously noted, dual language programs are widely recognized for their benefits for all types of language learners, and while a great deal of research has been conducted on the effectiveness of these programs, Kondo-Brown (2010) notes “the primary interest of the investigation seems to be its impact on the students’ overall academic achievement in the mainstream school, not HL [heritage language] maintenance or development” (p. 28). Findings from studies that have specifically focused on heritage language learners in dual language programs indicate that, although students’ proficiency levels in the heritage language may vary due to individual differences, these programs are generally associated with positive outcomes for heritage language development and provide students with access to content-based instruction in their heritage language (Kondo-Brown, 2010; Potowski et al., 2008). Students in dual language programs, including English learners, have achieved comparable or higher results in content areas, including math and science, when compared to peers in other programs (Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Tran et al., 2015). Dual language programs do not prevent students from learning English, and research has shown that these programs can help students maintain and even develop home-language proficiency (Felber-Smith, 2009; Lindholm-Leary, 2005; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Mahgoub, 2019).

Despite this, programmatic policies may impact accessibility to dual language programs and the effectiveness of these programs for heritage language learners. Students may be excluded from dual language programs if they are open only to second language learners and not students who already have some degree of proficiency in the partner language (Mizuta, 2017). Even when heritage language learners are able to access dual language programs, these programs may be based on an inaccurate conception of students as either English learners or not, which does not account for the multilingual repertoires of heritage language learners (O. García et al., 2018; Menken & Avni, 2017). In addition, language education policies may require a strict separation of languages in the classroom (Menken & Avni, 2017). Although these policies are based on recommendations from the dual language literature, they ultimately do not reflect heritage language learners’ or other multilingual learners’ practices and needs (Menken & Avni, 2017). Programs may have separate teachers for each language, leading to a variety of challenges, including finding adequate time for collaboration, and this model does not reflect best practices in elementary education, which call for one teacher who can understand each child holistically (O. García et al., 2018). Research also warns that common teaching methods in both dual language program models and specialized heritage language programs that focus on building academic language proficiency must also value the skills heritage students bring to the classroom (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This includes giving an appropriate importance to language use outside of academic settings and valuing language registers used in homes and in community settings (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Pedagogies designed to help heritage language learners develop a critical awareness of language use in different settings may not be a priority of dual language program models focused on content-based and academic language use only (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Leeman, 2018).

Teachers’ individual practices may also impact the extent to which positive outcomes related to students’ proficiency in the heritage language and their sense of identity as heritage language learners are demonstrated in dual language programs. In her ethnographic study of four students in a fifth-grade dual immersion classroom (two of whom were heritage language learners of Spanish), Potowski (2004) found that, despite programmatic policies indicating that 60% of instruction would be in Spanish and 40% would be in English, Spanish was only used as the “official language” of instruction during 40% of the time. In addition, she found that the heritage language learner students (who were highly proficient in both languages) did not necessarily speak Spanish more than the L2 students in the classroom, and although all students were more likely to speak Spanish with the teacher, they spoke considerably more English than Spanish when interacting with peers. Based on her observations, Potowski notes that, in dual language programs, giving a task in the target (heritage) language does not guarantee students will use this language as opposed to using English and that teachers should purposefully group students and explicitly teach topics such as phrases for managing group work in the desired language. She also underscores the importance of encouraging heritage language learners to develop positive attitudes toward learning their heritage language for the purposes of language maintenance, stating “if heritage speakers in dual immersion are to maintain their Spanish language skills to a sufficient degree for them to transmit the language to their own future children, this study suggests that they need to be encouraged to cultivate strong investments in identities as Spanish speakers” (p. 96).

There are few, if any, studies on the effects of other types of bilingual education (including transitional bilingual education and maintenance bilingual education) on measures of heritage language proficiency. One study of Spanish-speaking preschoolers found that transitional bilingual education had advantages for their Spanish literacy, but transitional bilingual education and predominantly-English classrooms had similar results for learners’ early English literacy (Durán et al., 2015). Additional research has shown that while English immersion programs tend to produce higher reclassification rates for English learners in early years, this advantage diminishes by middle or high school, with students enrolled in transitional bilingual education programs ultimately being reclassified at a slightly higher rate than English immersion students, and students enrolled in maintenance bilingual education being reclassified at significantly higher rates (Umansky & Reardon, 2014).

For community-based heritage language programs, studies have generally shown that these programs are associated with positive outcomes related to heritage language maintenance, student and family motivation, and successful transmission of community values and culture (Martínez, 2016; Pascual y Cabo et al., 2017). Researchers advocate for collaboration between academic school systems and community language teaching, and some examples of this type of collaboration include opportunities to engage in community service-learning or sponsored after-school language programs (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; C. Lenz, 2017; Martínez, 2016). Positive outcomes of formal education programs involving community members include fostering the development of heritage students’ identities and their critical awareness of how the language is used within and outside the classroom (Carreira & Chik, 2018; Martínez, 2016; Leeman et al., 2011; Llombart-Huesca & Pulido, 2017).

Although heritage-specific classes and programs are generally considered more appropriate for heritage language learners than other types of heritage language education, especially the inclusion of heritage language learners in traditional world language classes, there is very little empirical research on the extent to which these programs are associated with positive outcomes, especially in mainstream K-12 schools. The federal government annually collects information about English learners served by Language Instruction Educational Programs available in each state, which often include heritage language programs, but the required form does not ask about the effectiveness of each type of program, and in some states heritage language programs may also be considered part of world language education, which does not require any type of federal reporting on outcomes. Even New Mexico, which has had a bilingual multicultural education law since 1973, does not analyze or publish information about the effects of each program type (including the heritage language model) on student outcomes (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee Program Evaluation Unit, 2022). Additional state-level data would be helpful for evaluating the effectiveness of different approaches to heritage language education, and many scholars have discussed the need for more empirical research to support this type of evaluation (Bowles & Torres, 2021; Carreira, 2012a; Henshaw, 2016). Despite these limitations, the literature does contain some examples of and recommendations for effective models and programmatic policies for heritage language learners based on research conducted at the K-12 and postsecondary levels.

### Effective Practices

Within the context of K-12 school-based programs, Seals and Peyton (2017) present a case study of an elementary school in Oregon that implemented a Home Language Program with support for Russian, Ukrainian, and Spanish speakers in two 40-minute classes per week. The school also had a Language Enrichment Program that offered all students the opportunity to choose among several activities each day, including language. These programs had positive effects on both students’ affective characteristics and their academic achievement. The Language Enrichment Program promoted interest in languages among the non-heritage students and offered heritage language learners an opportunity to share their languages. As a result, heritage language learners perceived themselves more positively due to their multilingual abilities. By the fourth year of the program, the heritage language learners had increased their overall passing rate on the state annual assessment from 20% to 50%, and 90% of these students passed the English language reading portion of the assessment in the program’s fourth year. Among other strategies, the authors recommend visually presenting heritage languages in the classroom; whole-class sharing of multicultural family histories; and advocating to the community about the benefits for all students of a similar heritage-language program.

In a quantitative meta-analysis, Bowles and Torres (2021) found eight studies that met quality controls and had an experimental or quasi-experimental design that compared a group of heritage language learners who received some type of instruction on an aspect of their heritage language to a group of heritage language learners that did not. These studies either focused on students at the elementary or post-secondary levels, and most were conducted with heritage language learners of Spanish enrolled in school-based heritage-specific courses or programs. They found that the research indicated a moderate, positive, but variable effect of instruction in the heritage language on various aspects of students’ proficiency in the heritage language, including their understanding of grammatical features, their knowledge of vocabulary, and their literacy skills. The meta-analysis also found that explicit instruction was more consistently effective than implicit instruction for the post-secondary students studied, and the two studies of language arts style instruction in elementary-aged children showed a larger effect on the studies’ respective proficiency measures than either type of instruction had on the proficiency measures in the post-secondary studies. The authors caution that more research is necessary to confirm all findings and recommend reviewing dissertations and unpublished research to confirm that publication bias has not affected the results.

At the post-secondary level, Beaudrie (2020) surveyed faculty of university Spanish heritage language programs and obtained 18 responses from programs whose enrollment had either increased or decreased by over 10%. By contrasting the two groups, the researcher found that the groups with increased enrollment shared certain practices that were not used in the declining enrollment programs. The successful programs had strong, well-publicized, student-centered missions and well-articulated curriculum goals. They actively recruited students and worked to publicize their heritage language courses. These programs also used technology in creative ways and incorporated community-service learning. The teachers in successful programs had been trained in heritage langauge pedagogy and were offered opportunities for ongoing professional development, and successful programs had dedicated program administrators. While this research was limited in scope and cannot confirm whether these factors were the direct causes of program success, they may nonetheless be promising areas for programs to explore.

### Challenges and Potential Solutions

In addition to reporting on practices and policies that have been effective, some studies have discussed the previously mentioned challenges involved in heritage language programming, which we will briefly discuss along with some potential solutions that could lead to postive outcomes for student learning and program success. Scheduling and program publicity emerged as major challenges in Bowles and Montrul’s (2014) study of heritage Spanish speakers at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Over a third of their survey respondents did not know that the university offered heritage speaker courses, and the researchers explained that advisors often guide students toward classes for L2 learners instead of those designed for heritage language learners. They also found that only about a quarter of students surveyed indicated that they would choose to take heritage-specific classes. In addition, some students indicated in focus groups that scheduling constraints led them to choose non-heritage speaker class options. While these findings are difficult to generalize, particularly beyond the university setting, they are a good reminder that scheduling constraints and lack of knowledge about heritage-specific classes may prevent students from taking these courses and that it is important to publicize different class options for heritage language learners. Community-based heritage language schools face similar challenges, as weekend language classes must compete with activities such as sports (Lico & Schmith, 2022; Mizuta, 2017), and students often prefer to spend time with friends rather than in classes, which they may see as a burden (V. García, 2022; Mizuta, 2017). In public schools, some heritage-specific courses offered at the secondary level provide students with an opportunity to gain AP credit and world language credits for graduation (Wright, 2015), which may help strengthen the program by motivating heritage language learners to enroll in these courses for reasons beyond their own personal interest in the language or culture, but more research is needed to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of such efforts.

Program articulation has also been reported as a challenge for heritage language programs across different contexts. Many community-based heritage language schools, where most heritage language education occurs in the United States, struggle with articulation between their programming and that which is provided in public schools (Liu et al., 2011). Some community-based heritage language schools report that public schools are dismissive of students’ language learning in community settings, while others have found that opportunities like the Seal of Biliteracy have helped motivate students to continue their heritage language studies (Lico & Schmith, 2022). Even when students do have access to heritage language classes in mainstream school settings, there may not be any clear articulation between programs offered at the elementary level and those offered in middle school and high school (A. Lenz, 2022; Potowski, 2021). Heritage language learners who exit elementary programs may not work with heritage language texts or academic content in their heritage language until high school (Potowski, 2021). Within high schools, heritage or native speaker courses may only be offered at lower levels or as prerequisites for higher-level classes (e.g., AP classes), and thus heritage language learners who advance to higher-level classes will be mixed with L2 learners due to a lack of heritage-specific course options (Randolph, 2011). Even at the postsecondary level, Spanish heritage language course sequences usually consist of one or two courses (Beaudrie, 2020). Short course sequences and limited articulation between different types of courses and programs mean that heritage language learners at all levels may quickly exhaust their course options and be placed in mixed classes that do not meet their needs. To address issues with articulation, it is recommended that teachers across courses and levels meet on a regular basis to discuss programming and plan for continued collaboration and communication over time.

Placement is often cited as a practical and programmatic issue for heritage language programs, including those with extensive course sequences. As heritage language learners have diverse learner profiles that often vary from those of L2 learners (Fairclough, 2012; Ilieva & Clark-Gareca, 2016; Valdés, 2005), placing students of similar proficiency levels in the same class can help educators tailor instruction to student needs (Carreira, 2012b). In order to place heritage language learners in the appropriate classes, these students must first be identified, which may be difficult depending on the time and resources available. Research suggests that interviews, language-use surveys, and tailored language-based test questions may be effective for identifying heritage language learners (Beaudrie, 2016), and as there are no standardized nationwide placement tests for heritage language learners and a large degree of variation among programs, researchers recommend the use of locally-designed placement methods that assess multiple skills to provide a full picture of heritage language learners’ proficiency (Fairclough, 2012). It may be helpful to design placement tests that assess receptive and productive skills across multiple contexts (Fairclough, 2012; Ilieva & Clark-Gareca, 2016), and tasks that are integrated across language domains, including reading-writing tasks and listening-speaking tasks, tend to reflect real-life language use and can be more accurate proficiency measures than tasks that isolate skills (Fairclough, 2012). For spoken languages, researchers also recommend including an oral component in a heritage language placement test (Fairclough, 2012). Programs may also want to include a background questionnaire as part of placement testing to help identify heritage language learners (Fairclough, 2012; Ilieva & Clark-Gareca, 2016). When a suitable heritage language course is not available, research suggests that placement should take into account students’ social as well as academic needs (Carreira, 2012a; Randolph, 2011). For instance, if a specialized class is not available for receptive bilingual students, they may be best placed in world language classes with a curriculum focused on topics such as culture and identity (Carreira, 2012a).

Finally, teacher preparation is a further challenge for heritage language programs. As previously discussed, Beaudrie (2020) found that successful university heritage language programs were led by teachers with training in heritage language pedagogy, and these programs offered opportunities for ongoing professional development. However, few institutions of higher education provide specific training for heritage language teachers (Carreira & Kagan, 2018), and many other pre-service teacher preparation programs do not support teachers in addressing the needs of heritage language learners (Beaudrie, 2016; V. García, 2022). The field also lacks resources such as methods textbooks, state-sponsored certifications, and standards for heritage language teacher training (Silva, 2022). Many language teachers may struggle to meet the sociolinguistic needs of heritage language learners in their classes, and preparation programs should address the importance of valuing students’ languages and cultures (Randolph, 2017) and provide educators with knowledge of appropriate pedagogical strategies and classroom management techniques, as well as an understanding of language variation and heritage language acquisition (Lacorte, 2016). Researchers caution, however, that the importance of additional teacher training should be balanced with consideration of the nationwide teacher shortage (Potowski, 2021). Time, money, and institutional resources may present barriers to completing extended training for in-service teachers who need accessible, flexible training options to further support them in serving their students (Gironzetti & Belpoliti, 2021). For current training needs, educators may be best served by online courses and collaborative distance learning opportunities (Carreira & Kagan, 2018), some of which may provide some type of certificate upon completion. There is also a lack of commercially-available heritage language resources for teachers and students to interact with, despite the growing popularity of heritage language education (Durán Urrea & Meiners, 2019), and while open educational resources and materials development workshops may provide some effective solutions, it should be noted that both options require time to implement (Durán Urrea & Meiners, 2019; Parra, 2021).

Many of these issues that could prevent positive student outcomes and programmatic success are addressed by Beaudrie (2016) in her guidance for building heritage language programs. Before a heritage language program begins, she advises that a survey of local heritage language learners or community members may provide evidence of local desires for a heritage language program that can supplement the research evidence about the benefits of these programs. This could also raise awareness among potential students and encourage them to participate in heritage language programming despite issues with scheduling or other commitments. When building an argument for the program, the author also recommends looking into programs being offered at other local schools to further demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of such programs to administrators and other stakeholders involved in the decision-making process. This step may support program articulation efforts as well, as there may be examples of effective communication and collaboration between educators that can be leveraged when designing a new program.

In terms of program development, the author emphasizes that time, work, and resources are needed to establish a program (in addition to funding), and that each of these should be taken into consideration. When determining what content to focus on in the program, she notes that content must be flexible and underscores the importance of considering the interests, motivations, and needs of potential students and focusing on their connections to the heritage culture, identity, and community, which again may help to address problems with program advocacy and support. To further promote the program, she recommends sending welcome letters to potential students, delivering presentations to these students in their current classes, and creating promotional materials and informal opportunities for students to learn more information about the program. Finally, once the program is established, she advocates for ongoing evaluation in order to review program goals and ensure that materials, placement, instruction, and assessment effectively serve student needs and are effective in achieving the program’s aims.

## Conclusion

Heritage language learners are a diverse group of students, and the types of language programs serving them are also diverse. To effectively support heritage language learners, it is important to first define this group of students using an assets-based approach that is inclusive of different experiences with and degrees of connection to the heritage language and then determine what type of programming would best meet these students’ needs. Overall, heritage language courses/programs, dual language programs, and developmental or maintenance bilingual programs tend to be most effecive in addressing the unique needs of heritage language learners and advancing their linguistic and cultural proficiency (as opposed to transitional bilingual programs or traditional world language programs), though programs may look different in different contexts and teachers’ individual practices impact the extent to which these programs are associated with positive student outcomes. While it may be helpful to use heritage-specific standards, curriculum frameworks, and/or proficiency guidance when working with this group of students, these resources do not currently exist on a national level and their development requires time, expertise, and funding. Heritage-specific learning goals can be used to guide instruction and assessment, and teachers should ensure that their approaches to teaching and learning value students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge and lived experiences. As heritage language education is not often covered in language teacher preparation programs, educators would benefit from additional resources, time for planning, and heritage-specific training, as well as opportunities for collaboration across courses and levels. If dual language programs are offered at the elementary level, collaboration can also help ensure that heritage language learners transition smoothly from these programs to world language classes or heritage-specific classes in middle and high school. Programs can also benefit from conversations with parents, community members, and administrators to promote the importance and value of heritage language education, and ongoing recognition and support from school leaders is essential for program success and sustainability over time.

## Annotated Bibliography

 The following annotated bibliography presents a synopsis of selected articles and reports that address (1) heritage language definitions; (2) standards, frameworks, and pedagogical approaches for heritage language teaching and learning; (3) heritage language programming; and (4) heritage language approaches and practices associated with positive outcomes.

### Definitions

**Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C. (2017). Who are our heritage language learners?: Identity and biliteracy in heritage language education in the United States. In** **D. M. Brinton, O. Kagan, & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language education: A new field emerging* (pp. 3-36). Routledge.**

 This chapter presents a conceptual framework for understanding and defining heritage language learners through an ecological perspective of their identities. Using the continua of biliteracy model, the authors discuss how heritage language learners are positioned in relation to context (where the heritage language is learned), development (of the heritage language), content (of their heritage and identities), and media (how the heritage language is represented and expressed). Recommendations are provided for supporting heritage language learners in the classroom based on this conceptualization of who they are and what they experience when developing their identities and biliteracy.

**Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the ‘wild’ and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, *1*(5), 368-395.**

 This article provides an overview of what is currently known about heritage languages and their speakers/learners. The authors examine issues in variation among this group of students and how this impacts ways in which they are classified for the purposes of instruction, followed by a description of the grammatical knowledge and abilities of students with low levels of heritage language proficiency. The authors also discuss correlations between different groups of heritage language learners and issues with assessment and curriculum in heritage language classrooms.

**Zyzik, E. (2016). Toward a prototype model of the heritage language learner. In M. Fairclough & S. M. Beaudrie (Eds.), *Innovative strategies for heritage language teaching: A practical guide for the classroom* (pp. 19-38). Georgetown University Press.**

 This chapter presents a prototype model of a heritage language learner in response to issues surrounding previously proposed definitions of this group of students. The author discusses proficiency and its role in defining heritage language learners, highlighting differences between basic-level cognition (BLC) and higher-level cognition (HLC) and how these relate to the types of knowledge (both implicit and explicit) commonly seen among those learning a heritage language. The author argues for a limited view of proficiency as BLC and a separate focus on implicit knowledge in her prototype model, which includes further attributes of ethnic/cultural connection to the heritage language, dominance in a language other than the heritage language, early exposure to the heritage language, and bilingualism.

### Standards, Frameworks and Pedagogical Approaches

**Kondo-Brown, K. (2010). Curriculum development for advancing heritage language competence: Recent research, current practices, and a future agenda. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *30*, 24-41.**

This article discusses common themes in heritage language instruction: sociolinguistic competence development, content-based curriculum, student-centered instruction, and language development outside the classroom. The author describes program models available for heritage language learners and the positive outcomes and challenges of instruction in mixed classes, two-way immersion, FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools) programs, or community-based schools. Kondo-Brown also analyzes heritage language instruction in the post-secondary context as well as assessment practices and general recommendation for heritage-specific curriculum and pedagogy.

**Leeman, J. (2018). Critical language awareness and Spanish as a heritage language: Challenging the linguistic subordination of US Latinxs. In K. Potowski (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of Spanish as a heritage language* (pp. 345-358). Routledge.**

This chapter discusses approaches and pedagogies using the Critical Language Awareness (CLA) framework to support heritage language education. The author argues for instructional practices that promote positive attitudes toward the heritage language and culture from teachers and students and positive social change beyond the classroom. The research includes a thorough description of the ideological dimensions that affect the approach of different linguistic registers, varieties, and dialects in the heritage language classroom. The chapter also covers instructional goals and strategies for developing heritage students’ critical consciousness, agency, and sociolinguistic skills and provides examples for effective community-based learning, student-centered instruction, and the acquisition of multilingual skills.

**Martínez, G. (2016). Goals and beyond in heritage language education. In M. Fairclough & S. M. Beaudrie (Eds.), *Innovative strategies for heritage language teaching: A practical guide for the classroom* (pp. 39-55). Georgetown University Press.**

               This chapter discusses the pertinence of the ACTFL standards to address the needs of heritage language learners and proposes a separate set of goals for heritage language instruction. The research covers heritage-specific issues such as language maintenance, literacy, and linguistic and cultural awareness. The author outlines the importance of community in heritage language instruction and provides examples of positive learning outcomes from practices and pedagogies including community-based service learning, community-academic collaboration, and the use of social media to connect students with immediate and distant heritage language communities.

### Program Models

**Hinman, T. B., He, Y., Wilson, S. M., Paschal, A. A., & Nelson, J. (2021). Challenges and strength-based strategies for cultivating a sense of belonging in a heritage language program. In B. S. Faircloth, L. M. Gonzalez, & K. Ramos (Eds.), *Resisting barriers to belonging: Conceptual critique and critical applications* (pp. 173-198). Lexington Books.**

This chapter provides an overview of heritage language programs, with a focus on their role in developing students’ sense of belonging and how this relates to their development of proficiency in the language. The authors discuss some of the challenges associated with heritage language teaching and learning and present a case study of a Spanish heritage language program serving elementary learners that demonstrates strategies for overcoming challenges associated with students’ sense of belonging, including providing opportunities for students to engage in projects connecting with their families and community and promoting ongoing family engagement within and beyond the classroom.

**Moore, S. C. K. (2014). Program models for heritage language education. In** **T. G. Wiley, J. K. Peyton, D. Christian, S. C. K. Moore, & N. Liu (Eds.), *Handbook of heritage, community, and Native American languages in the United States: Research, policy, and educational practice* (pp. 341-348). Routledge.**

This chapter reviews various program models used to support heritage language education, with a focus on K-12 school-based and community-based programs. The author discusses similarities and differences between traditional foreign language education, dual language education, transitional bilingual education, and developmental/maintenance bilingual education, as well as language camps and after school or weekend language programs. Examples of successful program models are provided along with an overview of the major characteristics of each program type.

**Potowski, K. (2021). Elementary school heritage language educational options and outcomes. In S. Montrul & M. Polinsky (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of heritage languages and linguistics* (pp. 761-776). Cambridge University Press.**

 This chapter presents a brief overview of ESL/ELD services commonly provided at the elementary level in the United States, followed by a discussion of learning outcomes for heritage language learners enrolled in different types of language programs. The author reviews findings from studies of Spanish-speaking English learners, discusses how dual language programs have some demonstrated success in developing students’ abilities in their heritage language, and provides recommendations for future research on learning outcomes for this group of students.

### Approaches and Practices for Positive Student Outcomes

**Beaudrie, S. M. (2016). Building a heritage language program: Guidelines for a collaborative approach. In** **M. Fairclough & S. M. Beaudrie (Eds.), *Innovative strategies for heritage language teaching: A practical guide for the classroom* (pp. 80-98). Georgetown University Press.**

This chapter discusses eight steps towards building a heritage language program. Each step includes researched-based recommendations for various program aspects, including arguments for its creation; professional development for instructors; course content; heritage learner identification; placement; and evaluating the program. The author argues that the outlined process should be seen as a cycle, as program structures may need to shift to respond to students’ needs or other contextual factors. The chapter also includes practical examples of each step and thus can serve as a valuable reference for educators seeking concrete guidance for building or reformulating their own programs.

**Beaudrie, S. M. (2020). Towards growth for Spanish heritage programs in the United States: Key markers of success. *Foreign Language Annals, 53*, 416-437.**

 This article compares university Spanish heritage language programs whose enrollments had increased by over 10% in the past five years to programs whose enrollments had decreased in the same time period. The author finds four programmatic and four curricular markers of success that were shared by all programs in the growth group and were not seen among programs whose enrollments had decreased. The article also provides a review of previous research in Spanish heritage language programs. Although limited conclusions can be drawn from this study, this article offers promising areas for heritage language programs to explore.

**Menken, K., & Avni, S. (2017). Challenging linguistic purism in dual language bilingual education: A case study of Hebrew in a New York City public middle school. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 37*, 185-202.**

This article examines the ways that linguistic purism can cause dual language bilingual education programs to fail to meet heritage language learners’ needs. The authors begin with a discussion of linguistic purism in dual language bilingual education policy and explain how such policies do not reflect the practices or needs of multilingual students, including heritage learners. The article then turns to a case study of a Hebrew program at a New York City public middle school, examining the practices that the school enacted to best serve its students as well as the conflicts between these practices and the city’s official dual language bilingual education policies. The article concludes with a call for flexible policies that will allow schools to serve the needs of local and especially minoritized and multilingual communities.

# Comparative Analysis

## Introduction

 To examine the current landscape of heritage language programming in the U.S., we conducted a comparative analysis with a focus on how heritage languages and heritage language learners are defined, what heritage language frameworks and standards exist and how they were developed, what heritage language program models are used and how they are defined, what resources are provided to support heritage language education, and what heritage language teacher training programs are available at institutions of higher education.

The analysis consisted of a web search of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; 123 nationally recognized world language, dual language, and heritage language organizations; and 33 districts/programs (selected in collaboration with DESE) from states with robust programming for or large populations of heritage language learners or Indigenous language learners. Documents and information from states’ Department of Education websites and organizations’ or districts’/programs’ websites were analyzed, and representatives from ten states (GA, IN, MN, NC, NE, NV, NY, OH, VA, and WA) were contacted via email and phone to clarify and supplement information about their heritage language frameworks/standards, program models, or resources. A web search was also conducted to identify all heritage language teacher training programs offered at U.S. four-year public institutions of higher education, and information about these programs was collected from the institutions’ websites.

This part of the report is organized into five sections: (1) Definitions; (2) Frameworks/Standards; (3) Program Models; (4) Resources; and (5) Teacher Preparation Programs, and each section is further divided into subsections with findings from states, organizations, and districts/programs (with the exception of Teacher Preparation Programs). This part of the report concludes with a summary of the findings, and an appendix of state, organization, and district/program-level data that includes hyperlinks to where the information was found is included at the end of the report.

## Definitions

In this section, we present definitions for heritage languages and heritage language learners provided by the states, organizations, and districts/programs included in the comparative analysis.

### States

 Ten states (FL, IN, MI, MT, NC, ND, NE, NM, NV, and OR) provide a definition of the term “heritage language.” Table 1 lists definitions for the states that provide this information in documents posted on their Department of Education websites.

Table 1. State Definitions of Heritage Languages

| State | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| FL | “Heritage Language - is a native, home, and/or ancestral language. It may be an indigenous language (e.g., Navajo) or the language of immigrants or migrants (e.g., Spanish or Hungarian in the U.S.). It is a language spoken at home or in a cultural community that is different from the dominant language of the mainstream culture.” |
| IN | “According to the American Councils for Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL), heritage language is the primary language used by the student’s family.” |
| MI | “Heritage language: In the United States, World Languages originally used by the culture to which one or one’s family belongs.” |
| MT | “Heritage Language: Languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given social context.” |
| NC | “Heritage language: refers to immigrant languages, indigenous languages, and colonial languages.” |
| ND | “Heritage language - a language used at home that is different than the language used in the broader community.” |
| NE | “Heritage Language Preservation: The language a person regards as their native, home, and/or ancestral language. This covers indigenous languages (e.g. Navajo) and immigrant languages (e.g. Spanish in the United States).” |
| NM | “Heritage language means a language other than English that is inherited from a family, tribe, community, or country of origin. Home language means a language other than English that is the primary or heritage language spoken at home or in the community.” |
| NV | “Heritage languages refers to immigrant languages, indigenous languages, and colonial languages; both Paiute people and Spanish-speaking Latinos in the United States are heritage language speakers.” |
| OR | “Heritage language means a language that has cultural or familial significance to a student, going beyond personal preference. A student’s primary language cannot be a heritage language if it is also the language of the dominant culture in the student’s educational environment.” |

 As shown in Table 1, all ten states define heritage languages differently, though there are some similarities between their definitions. Four state definitions (FL, NC, NE, and NV) explicitly reference “immigrant languages” and “Indigenous languages,” and five state definitions (FL, MT, ND, NM, and OR) refer to heritage languages as languages that are different from the “dominant” language being used in the school, community, or country. There is mention of “culture” in three state definitions (FL, MI, and OR), and one state definition (NM) differentiates between “heritage language” and “home language” on the basis of whether the language is inherited or actively used at home or in the community. Note that some of these definitions were found in individual state-level reports, presentations, or guides, making it difficult to determine the extent to which they are used statewide and if they are considered “official” state definitions.

 A total of 22 states provide a definition of the term “heritage language learner.” Note that some states use the term “heritage speaker” in addition to or in place of the term “heritage language learner.” These terms generally refer to the same group of students, though one state (IN) provides two separate definitions for heritage learners and speakers based on definitions provided by ACTFL. Broadly speaking, states define heritage language learners with regards to three areas: (1) acquisition of the heritage language outside of school (e.g., at home or in the community); (2) some degree of cultural connection to the heritage language; and (3) some degree of linguistic proficiency in the heritage language. Table 2 lists definitions for the states that provide this information in documents posted on their Department of Education website and indicates which of the three criteria are included in each state’s definition.

Table 2. State Definitions of Heritage Language Learners

| State | Definition | Acquisition outside of school | Linguistic proficiency in the HL | Cultural connection |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AL | “A heritage speaker is exposed to a language other than English at home. These students can have different levels of development of the heritage language. Some are highly proficient; others may have high oral proficiency but their written proficiency is not developed. Still others -- typically third or fourth generation -- can speak to a limited degree but cannot express themselves on a wide range of topics. Heritage speakers may also have gaps in knowledge about their cultural heritage.” | • | • | • |
| AR | “Heritage speakers: students raised in an English-speaking area, but in a family in which the target language was regularly spoken.” | • |  |  |
| CA | “Heritage language learner: an individual who may or may not have full proficiency in a language other than English but has a cultural connection to a community of target-language users.” |  | • | • |
| CO | “Children who come to school from non-English speaking backgrounds, known as heritage language learners, should also have educational opportunities to maintain and further develop their first language.” | • |  |  |
| DC | “Heritage Language Learners (HLL): refers to students studying the language in which he/she is linguistically and culturally connected. A HLL is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken. The student may be able to speak or merely understand the non-English language. The student may or may not be able to read and write the non-English language.”“The typical profile of a Heritage Language Learner includes the following groups: Third- or fourth-generation U.S.-born Hispanic students considered to be receptive bilinguals. These students are English dominant and understand almost allspoken Spanish, but they have limited speaking skills in Spanish and do not read or write it; First- or second-generation bilinguals who possess different degrees of proficiency in English and Spanish. In most cases, these students have received their education in English and have developed few if any literacy skills in Spanish; Recent immigrants to the United States who are Spanish dominant. Their level of English proficiency, the amount of formal education they have had in Spanish and their literacy skills in Spanish vary. This classification can be used for any type of Heritage Language except for Native American Languages, which do not include the recent immigrant category.” | • | • | • |
| FL | “Heritage language is a native, home, and/or ancestral language…in the United States, heritage speakers may include ELL or fluent bilingual speakers; they may be newcomers, indigenous peoples, or second or later generations of immigrants.” | • | • |  |
| IN | “For instructional purposes, ACTFL makes a distinction about Heritage Language Learners. ACTFL refers to a Heritage Language Learner as a speaker (HL speaker) and as a learner (HL learner). ACTFL states, “A speaker is an individual who is ‘raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and English’ (Valdes, 2001). The term learner, on the other hand, refers to a student who has a familial, and thus personal and cultural, connection to the target language, but does not necessarily speak or understand it.” | • | • | • |
| KS | “Heritage speaker: A person who has learned a non-English language through exposure at home or in the community but may not have any formal instruction in the language and may prefer use of the English language in many/most situations.” | • |  |  |
| KY | “Learners bring a variety of languages and cultures to Kentucky. They may have learned a language at home, in another country, or through local communities.” | • |  |  |
| MA | “A heritage speaker is commonly defined as ‘a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language.’  | • | • |  |
| MS | “Heritage learner/speaker: A student who is exposed to a language other than English at home. Students may have full oral fluency and literacy in the home language; others may have a limited degree of proficiency.” | • | • |  |
| NC | “Heritage language speaker: Someone who has had exposure to a non-English language outside the formal education system. It most often refers to someone with a home background in the language but may refer to anyone who has had in-depth exposure to another language.” | • |  |  |
| NJ | “Heritage-language students may be (1) newly-arrived immigrants to the United States, (2) first-generation students whose home language is not English and who have been schooled primarily in the United States, or (3) second- or third- generation students who have learned some aspects of a heritage language at home. These students have varying abilities and proficiencies in their respective heritage languages; they often carry on fluent and idiomatic conversations (interpersonal mode) but require instruction that allows them to develop strengths in reading (interpretive mode) and in formal speaking and writing (presentational mode).” | • | • |  |
| NV | “Heritage speaker: Someone who has had exposure to another language outside the formal education system; most often refers to someone with a home background in the language but may refer to anyone who has had in-depth exposure to another language.” | • |  |  |
| NY | “Heritage Language Speakers: Never-ELLs who have knowledge of two or more languages whether through heritage or experience abroad.” | • |  |  |
| OH | “Students who are raised in a home where a non-English language is always used. Students who sometimes speak or merely understand the home language. Students who have a strong cultural connection to a particular language, usually through a family interaction.” | • | • | • |
| OK | “Heritage Learner: Being raised in a household where another language is spoken, living in a community where another language is used frequently or having a cultural connection to a specific language group.” | • |  | • |
| SC | “Heritage speakers are learners of a language who, according to ACTFL, have been “raised in an environment where the language was spoken.”  | • |  |  |
| TN | “Learners bring a variety of languages and cultures to Tennessee. They may have learned a language at home, in another country, or through local communities.” | • |  |  |
| TX | “Students who have fully or partially acquired the skills required at each proficiency level through home or other immersion experiences are known as heritage speakers.” | • | • |  |
| VA | “Students who have home backgrounds in a language other than English.” | • |  |  |
| UT | “Learners bring a variety of languages and cultures to Utah. They may have learned a language at home, in another country, or through local communities.” | • |  |  |

 As shown in Table 2, all states (with the exception of NC and NV, as well as KY, TN, and UT) have different definitions for the term “heritage language learner,” though most definitions share several characteristics and include at least two of the criteria used for determining if students are considered heritage language learners. The most commonly included criteria in state definitions is acquisition of the heritage language outside of a classroom setting, as this criterion is included in all but one state’s (CA) definitions. Having some degree of linguistic proficiency in the heritage language is part of ten states’ definitions (AL, CA, DC, FL, IN, MA, MS, NJ, OH, TX), most of which indicate that students meeting this criterion often have a range of proficiency levels and that these levels may differ across skills or modes of communication. Six states (AL, CA, DC, IN, OH, OK) also include having some degree of cultural connection to the heritage language in their definitions. As previously mentioned when discussing state definitions of the term “heritage languages,” note that some of the definitions of “heritage language learner” were found in individual state-level reports, presentations, or guides, making it difficult to determine the extent to which they are used statewide and if they are considered “official” state definitions. Information about where these definitions were found is provided in the appendix of state-level data.

### Organizations

 Two of the 123 organizations analyzed provide a definition of the term “heritage language,” and six of the 123 organizations analyzed provide a definition of the term “heritage language learner.” The International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA) defines heritage languages as “languages which are not official languages of the community or country where the speaker is currently residing, and they are spoken by individuals and groups living in that community and country.” They also define heritage language learners as “children or adults who are in the process of learning a heritage language” and mention that these learners may have an ancestral tie to the heritage language/culture and differ from native speakers despite sometimes having a high degree of proficiency in the language. The National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) at the University of California, Los Angeles also defines both terms. According to the NHLRC, heritage languages (in the U.S. context) are languages other than English that are used in the home, and heritage language learners are “bilinguals – often with two native languages – but native bilinguals are not two monolinguals in one.” Aside from these definitions, the other definition of the term “heritage language learner” listed on organizations’ websites is that of Valdés (2000): “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (p. 388). ACTFL references this definition in its materials, along with more broad definitions, such as “those raised in an environment where the language was most likely spoken in the home” and “individuals who have a home background in the language.”

### Districts/Programs

 None of the 33 districts/programs analyzed provide definitions of the terms “heritage language” or “heritage language learner,” but Gwinnett County School District in Georgia defines the term “heritage Spanish speaker” as “a student who grew up mostly or entirely in the United States speaking some Spanish at home, but who has never studied Spanish formally.”

## Frameworks and Standards

In this section, we present heritage language frameworks and standards provided by the states, organizations, and districts/programs included in the comparative analysis.

### States

 Two states (GA and IN) have standards/frameworks specifically designed for heritage language learners, and one state (VA) has heritage-specific progress indicators for each major “strand” of their world language standards.

Georgia’s Performance Standards for Spanish for Native Speakers provide standards for Levels [I](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/Spanish%20for%20Native%20Speaker%20Level%20I%5B1%5D.pdf#search=spanish%20for%20native), [II](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/Spanish%20for%20Native%20Speaker%20Level%20II%5B1%5D.pdf#search=heritage%20language), and [III](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/2019%20%202020%20HLS/Modern%20Languages%20SNS%20Level%203.pdf#search=heritage%20language) Spanish for Native Speakers courses. Each set of standards begins with a course description, which includes information about the focus of the course, what students will be able to do by the end of the course, and the entry and exit proficiency expectations for each course. Heritage-specific standards are provided for the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational); cultural perspectives, practices, and products; and connections, comparisons, and communities; and each of these skill areas has at least one standard with several sub standards. Each set of standards also concludes with suggested topics for the course. The standards for Levels I and II were published in 2007 and are designed for “heritage learners of Spanish,” and the standards for Level III were published in 2018 and are designed for “heritage/native learners of Spanish.”

The Spanish for Native Speakers courses described in the Georgia Performance Standards for Spanish for Native Speakers appear to be intended for middle and high school students. The recommended entrance requirement for Level I is Intermediate Mid proficiency in listening, and the expectation is for students to reach the Intermediate Mid level of proficiency across all domains (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) by the end of the course. This course helps students “gain confidence using Spanish to express their own thoughts.” For Level II, students are expected to have an Intermediate High level in listening and an Intermediate Mid level in all other domains upon entering the course, and the expectation is for students to reach the Advanced Low level across domains upon completing the course. This course helps students “gain proficiency in using Spanish in increasingly complex ways.” Finally, for Level III, the recommended entrance requirement is Intermediate High to Advanced Low in listening and Intermediate High in all other domains. By the end of Level III, students are expected to reach the Advanced Low to Advanced Mid level in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In addition to helping students use Spanish in increasingly complex ways, this course places additional focus on “refining written Spanish appropriate for professional settings” and “linking the competitive advantages of bilingualism to student career interests and/or pathways.” All course descriptions include a focus on “understanding Hispanic cultures and issues of identity of heritage speakers of Spanish in the United States,” and course descriptions also note that adjustments to content and vocabulary may need to be made to reflect students’ interests and educational backgrounds. In addition, course descriptions indicate that courses may be taught during a single semester in a block schedule or over the course of the academic year.

A representative from Georgia described the development of the Spanish for Native Speakers Level III standards. Georgia develops standards via two pathways. In the first, the state initiates a standards review process and develops the standards itself. As part of this process, the state generally uses a survey to determine if standards need to be reevaluated and forms a committee to review and write new standards if needed. In the second, districts request that new standards or courses be created. In this process, the district can submit a new course or standards for approval by the board and other districts. While both processes require time, the second route is shorter and may incur fewer costs at the state level since the districts invest directly in course creation. The estimated costs for the first route depend upon the time and number of courses involved and can cost up to thousands of dollars. Both processes also have a number of required steps including gathering public input, convening review committees and advisory boards, and receiving multiple levels of policy and board approval. The Performance Standards for Spanish for Native Speakers Level III, the newest in the sequence, were developed through the second process. These standards were needed in order to provide a full Spanish for Native Speakers pathway, as a pathway requires three courses of the same world language. The representative recommended that other states that wish to develop similar standards should collaborate closely with the districts and teachers who will be impacted by the standards or courses to ensure that the content is relevant, appropriate, and meaningful for all stakeholders.

The Georgia Spanish for Native Speakers Level I Standards (SNSI) generally correspond to the Modern Languages Level IV (MLIV) standards. The language functions are highly similar, however, the SNSI standards expect students to enter at Intermediate-Mid proficiency for listening and exit the course at Intermediate-Mid proficiency in all skills, while the MLIV standards expect students to enter at Novice-High to Intermediate-Low and exit at Intermediate-Low in speaking and writing and Intermediate-Mid in listening and reading. The MLIV standards include more information about what tenses students are expected to use in communication, while the SNSI standards include a few additional expectations for students. For the Cultural Perspectives, Practices, and Products standards, SNSI students are additionally expected to “discuss…issues of Hispanic identity in the modern world,” “identify and evaluate contributions of Hispanic cultures to the modern world,” and “compare and contrast how Spanish is used in various countries and communities, in formal and informal settings, and by people from varying backgrounds.” For the Connections, Comparisons, and Communities standards, SNSI students have the additional expectation that they will “identify career paths that require bilingualism.” The list of suggested topics is also slightly different for each set of standards. MLIV suggests fashion, medical and dental, shopping, survival skills, and travel and transportation, which do not appear in SNSI, while SNSI suggests bilingual/bicultural identity, history of Spanish-speaking countries and communities, political issues and structures, and socio-linguistic stereotypes. Spanish for Native Speakers II (SNSII) and Modern Languages Level V (MLV) are also largely parallel. The SNSII standards’ unique Communication expectations include expecting students to comprehend regional and other variations in spoken and written Spanish. The other unique expectations for each set of standards are the same as those for SNSI and MLIV. The lists of suggested topics are more divergent. SNSII has the same list of topics as SNSI, while MLV has a new list including topics such as contemporary figures, cultural nuances, and literary genres and works. The next level of each set of standards, Spanish for Native Speakers III (SNSIII) and Modern Languages VI (MLVI), continue to be parallel in language functions but with different proficiency level expectations. The MLVI standards for Communication expect students to examine regional differences in the target language, a topic that was discussed by SNS students beginning at SNSI. The other unique expectations for each set of standards are the same as for previous levels. The lists of suggested topics for SNSIII and MLVI are the same as their respective previous levels.

The Georgia Department of Education also has Performance Standards for Native Language Reading and Literacy for Levels I and II, though these documents note that such courses are designed for “native speakers” and do not mention heritage language learners, making it unclear if these standards are used when working with heritage language learners of languages other than Spanish.

[The Indiana Academic Standards for Heritage Language Learners](https://www.in.gov/doe/files/indiana-academic-standards-heritage-language-learners-10252019-jmw.docx), published in 2019, provide standards in the form of can-do statements for communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities. Although modeled on the ACTFL standards, greater emphasis is placed on communication and culture in these heritage-specific standards, and both of these C’s are further divided into specific skill areas and include both proficiency benchmarks and performance indicators. For communication, standards are provided for interpersonal communication, interpretive reading, interpretive listening, and presentational communication. Standards for Intermediate Low to Intermediate High are included for interpersonal communication and interpretive listening, and standards for Novice High to Intermediate Mid are included for interpretive reading and presentational communication. Culture standards are provided for Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels and divided into “intercultural” standards and “investigate” standards. The standards for connections, comparisons, and communities are similarly divided into the three main proficiency levels, but only include proficiency benchmarks. Throughout the standards, the can-do statements emphasize students’ heritage linguistic and cultural experiences as well as understanding the broader heritage language community, variations in the heritage language, and relationships between culture and identity (e.g., I can connect my experiences, including my heritage identity and language, while interacting within my school and home). The document also includes a chart of expected proficiency levels across communicative modes for three levels of heritage language courses: Heritage Language I, Heritage Language II, and Heritage Language III. Students are expected to reach the Novice High level in interpretive reading and presentational communication and the Intermediate Low level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication by the end of Heritage Language I. The expectation is for students to subsequently advance each skill by one sublevel per course, thus reaching the Intermediate Mid level in interpretive reading and presentational communication and the Intermediate High level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication by the end of the three-course sequence.

A representative from Indiana noted that the state reviews its standards on a six-year cycle, and the process includes the formation of a standards committee, public comment, and multiple committee meetings to finalize revisions before the standards are sent to the state Board of Education for approval. This process usually takes several months. State educators, content experts, and postsecondary educators were all involved in the development of the Indiana Academic Standards for Heritage Language Learners, and on the advice of the Commission of Higher Education, the state chose to align their heritage language standards to their world languages standards at a higher level (e.g., standards for Heritage Spanish I courses align with standards for World Language II courses) in order to open the possibility of offering Spanish for heritage learners as a dual credit course. Thus, heritage language courses are generally a year ahead of world language courses, are more difficult, and incorporate more culture. The representative advised that other states include as many stakeholders as possible in the standards development process, including K-12 educators, administrators, educators working in institutions of higher education, and community members.

The Indiana Academic Standards for Heritage Language Learners have some differences from the Indiana Academic Standards for World Languages for East Asian Languages and the Indiana Academic Standards for World Languages for Classical-Modern Languages. The Heritage standards divide Interpretive Communication into Reading and Listening, and they refer to “idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions” as well as the use of register throughout the Communication standards, while the other sets of World Language standards do not. For the specific Cultures standard “Relating to Other Cultures by Interacting,” the East Asian and Classical-Modern standards divide their can-do’s into Language and Behavior can-do statements. The Heritage standards, however, are not labeled this way, and they focus on comparisons between the heritage and predominant culture, including analyzing how interrelationships between products, practices, and perspectives of the heritage culture shape the student’s cultural identity. For the other specific Cultures standard, “Relating Cultural Practices and Products to Perspectives,” the proficiency benchmarks are shared among the sets of standards, but the Heritage standards have more extensive and specific can-do statements to accompany these proficiency benchmarks. These can-do statements call for students to have a greater understanding of traditions, historical phenomena, and contemporary experiences within the heritage community. For the Connections goal area, the Heritage standards begin with gathering primary resources in the heritage language and progress to critiquing those resources to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented, while the East Asian and Classical-Modern standards discuss accessing and evaluating information and perspectives that are available through the target language and its cultures. The East Asian and Classical-Modern Connections goal area also includes using the target language to make connections to and acquire knowledge and skills in other disciplines, while the Heritage standards discuss using one’s heritage language, culture, and experiences across multiple social and academic contexts. All three sets of standards have similar proficiency benchmarks for the specific “Cultural Comparisons” standard of the Comparisons goal area, but while the East Asian and Classical-Modern standards discuss comparisons between the native and target language for the “Language Comparisons” specific standard, the Heritage standards focus on national and regional variations within the heritage language, as well as reflections on the nature of language. The final goal area, Communities, has two specific standards. For “School and Global,” the East Asian and Classical-Modern standards focus on using the target language in the community, while the Heritage standards focus on connecting student experiences, including the heritage identity and language. For “Lifelong Learning,” the East Asian and Classical-Modern standards expect students to set goals, make decisions, self-assess, and reflect on their learning, while the Heritage standards expect students to connect with their heritage to engage with their schools, families, and communities.

Virginia’s [World Language Standards of Learning](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/2248/637950302146500000) include a series of progress indicators for heritage language programs that “provide examples of what the standards might look like for learner performance” in this context. The progress indicators (along with the document in its entirety) were published in 2021 and include at least two progress indicators for each main level of proficiency (Novice, Mid, and High) for interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication, as well as “investigate intercultural products, practices, and perspectives.” The progress indicators are largely similar to those for the general world language standards, but the suggested topics may vary; for instance, at the Novice High level for Presentational Communication, the general world language standards expect students to share information about simple routines such as a school day or planning a trip, while the heritage language progress indicators suggest presenting information about family and activities. The heritage languages section of the document also provides a chart with heritage language exit proficiency expectations across communicative modes/skills for alphabetic and logographic languages. Expectations are provided for three levels of heritage language instruction: Level I (140 hours), Level II (280 hours), and Level III (420 hours), and similar to Indiana’s expected proficiency outcomes, the expectation is for students to advance each skill by one sublevel per course. Heritage language learners of alphabetic languages who have completed Level I are expected to reach the Novice Mid level in presentational writing, the Novice High level in interpretive reading and presentational speaking, and the Intermediate Low level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication. Students in this group are thus expected to reach the Intermediate Low level in presentational writing, the Intermediate Mid level in interpretive reading and presentational speaking, and the Intermediate High level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication by the end of the three-course sequence. For logographic heritage languages, students who have completed Level I are expected to reach the Novice Mid level in interpretive reading and presentational writing and the Novice High level in all other modes/skills. Students in this group are expected to reach the Intermediate Low level in interpretive reading and presentational writing and the Intermediate Mid level in all other modes/skills by the end of the three-course sequence. A representative from Virginia stated that a team of five to six classroom teachers and supervisors with experience working in heritage language programs worked on developing the progress indicators. This process took six weeks, and the progress indicators are currently being reviewed by a review team. The representative recommended that states find a few committed people to guide the development of heritage language program indicators and noted that it is essential to include current teachers of heritage language courses in the process.

Beyond these heritage-specific standards/frameworks and progress indicators, many states mention heritage language learners in their world language standards/frameworks and indicate that these documents are appropriate for use with this group of students. Most of the heritage-specific information provided in these documents is limited to a brief paragraph with general recommendations or a statement recognizing that heritage language learners exist and require different approaches to teaching and learning. The Nebraska World Language Standards include some specific considerations for heritage language/native speaker courses following their standards for Communication and Connections, in which they note that “standards that more closely align with first language acquisition” may be more appropriate for students with more extensive home or academic experience in a language. They reference the WIDA Spanish Can-Do Descriptors as one resource that may be helpful to use when working with heritage language learners, and provide tables comparing the Nebraska World Language Standards to these descriptors to support educators in determining what approach to use in their classrooms. Some states also provide more extensive information about expected proficiency outcomes for heritage language learners or heritage language programs within or in addition to their world language standards/frameworks, and these will be discussed in the Resources section of this report.

### Organizations

None of the 123 organizations analyzed provide heritage language frameworks or standards on their websites. ACTFL states that their World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages are applicable to “native speakers and heritage speakers, including ESL students,” but heritage-specific standards are not provided. The ACTFL standards also contain a section on heritage language learners, which includes general information about the types of programming that states provide for this group of students and common student characteristics and needs, and they indicate that modifications may need to be made to the standards and progress indicators when using them with heritage language learners. In addition, they state that the “sample progress indicators for learners at the Advanced level describe potential performance of secondary native or heritage speakers of the language.”

### Districts/Programs

 One of the 33 districts/programs analyzed has a heritage languages framework. Arlington Public Schools in Virginia provides a [Spanish for Fluent Speakers curriculum framework](https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Spanish_for_Fluent_Speakers_Framework.pdf), which was revised in 2011. The framework is based on the 2006 National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, a precursor to the 2015 ACTFL standards. The framework includes a vision, mission, and belief statement; goals in the areas of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities; content standards for each goal area; and more extensive performance standards for Communication and Communities. The framework also has placement guidance and entry and exit criteria for the different levels of Spanish for Fluent Speakers classes. Students entering Level I are expected to have Intermediate Low to Mid levels of proficiency across the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and students entering Level II are expected to be at the Intermediate Mid level across all domains. In terms of exit criteria, students are expected to reach the Intermediate High level across domains upon completing Level II and advance by one sublevel for all subsequent courses (Levels III, IV, and V) to reach the Advanced High level by the end of the five-course sequence. Sample progress indicators, language forms (e.g., adjectives, nouns, verbs), and a list of recommended readings and orthographic rules to master are provided for different levels within and across courses, and guidance for assessment in these courses is also provided, including descriptions of alternative assessments and holistic writing rubrics, as well as a Level V-VI AP course syllabus.

## Program Models

In this section, we present information about heritage language program models provided by the states, organizations, and districts/programs included in the comparative analysis. Although many states offer bilingual/dual language programs, and many of these serve heritage language learners despite not being specifically designed for them, this section of the report focuses on heritage-specific programs.

### States

 Seventeen states define heritage language programs as one type of language education program that can be offered in the state. Note that while most states use the term “heritage language program,” others use different terminology (heritage language preservation, heritage language bilingual, etc.) to refer to these types of programs. In addition, some states group heritage language programs and Indigenous programs together, while others separate them or specify if there are Indigenous heritage language programs offered under the larger umbrella of heritage language programs.

Broadly speaking, states include all or some of the following components in their definitions of heritage language programs: (1) student population; (2) program structure; (3) program goals/focus; (4) program language and/or grade levels; and (5) inclusion of ESL/ELD (English as a Second Language/ English Language Development) services. Table 3 lists definitions for the states that provide this information in documents posted on their Department of Education website and indicates which of the five components are included in each state’s definition.

Table 3. State Definitions of Heritage Language Programs

| State | Definition | Types of students | Program structure | Program goals/focus | Language or levels | ESL/ELD services |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AK | “Heritage language program or Indigenous language program: The goal is literacy in two languages. Content taught in both languages, by teachers fluent in both languages. Typically targets non-English speakers with weak literacy skills in L1. Known by the name Indigenous Language Program particularly in American Indian educational communities, the program supports endangered languages and serves students with weak or no receptive and productive skills in the language.” | • |  | • | • | • |
| AR | “Heritage and Native Speakers I, II, and III are intended for native speakers (students who were raised in an area where the target language is spoken), and heritage speakers (students raised in an English-speaking area, but in a family in which the target language was regularly spoken). The courses provide a thorough review of the target language. Students improve literacy through extensive, varied writing activities and exposure to a variety of literature, newspapers, magazines, films, music, and current issues. Language skills are improved through oral presentations, debates, and class discussions in both formal and informal settings. Culture and traditions are presented to deepen students’ appreciation of them. Heritage and Native Speakers I, II, and III should include applications, problem solving, higher-order thinking skills, and performance-based and project-based open-ended assessments with rubrics. There are no prerequisites for Heritage and Native Speakers courses; students who have developed proficiency in a language, whether through life experience and/or formal study, may be evaluated for placement into the most appropriate language course for their skill level. Arkansas Department of Education approval is not required for Heritage and Native Speakers I-III courses.” | • | • | • | • |  |
| CA | “Heritage Language or Indigenous Language provides instruction in English and another language for non-English speakers or students with limited literacy skills in their first language. Indigenous language programs support endangered minority languages in which students may have limited receptive and no productive skills. Both programs often serve American Indian students. This program is typically found in kindergarten through grade twelve.” | • |  |  | • | • |
| DC\* | “One-Way Dual Language Education, Heritage Language and Language Restoration: Indigenous communities; from an indigenous perspective, the mother language serves as a basic and fundamental source of identity, sacredness, and strength of an individual, family, and community; each program has its own unique heritage language, some of which are not written languages.” | • | • |  | • |  |
| DE | “Heritage Language Programs allow native speakers an opportunity to participate in native language instruction at a level that enhances their culture and academic language.” | • |  | • |  |  |
| GA\* | “Spanish for Native Speakers: Designed for heritage learners of Spanish, this course can accommodate students from a wide range of backgrounds, from those who are minimally functional (can comprehend Spanish but are not able to speak fluently, read or write) to those who are more proficient and/or literate in Spanish.” | • | • |  | • |  |
| IN | “Heritage Language Program: Program that develops a student’s native language skills and literacy (i.e. Heritage Spanish for Spanish speakers; Heritage German for German speakers). Note: A Heritage Language program model must be implemented in conjunction with other program models that directly address English proficiency, and cannot be the sole ELD service model for a student. Goals: Native language proficiency to support English proficiency.” | • |  | • | • | • |
| KS | “Heritage language courses for native speakers should begin at appropriate proficiency levels. Generally speaking, Intermediate Low indicators would be suitable for a Heritage Level 1 class. In any of the curriculum articulation plans described above, once heritage speakers have experienced a course geared to their particular needs, they should be able to progress with non-native learners, provided the course indicators (i.e. Advanced Placement Language and Culture or International Baccalaureate) are at the next proficiency level.” | • | • |  | • |  |
| KY | “Heritage Language Program – A dual language program in which students are primarily English speakers with some proficiency in or a cultural connection to the partner language through family, community or country of origin.” | • | • |  |  |  |
| MN | “Heritage Language Instruction: A program that aims to develop proficiency in a language that is spoken by the students’ relatives, ancestors, or community members in which the student may have some level of proficiency. The student must also receive direct content-based ELD instruction from an ESL-licensed teacher.” | • |  | • |  | • |
| MT | “Heritage Language or Indigenous Language Program: L1 literacy classes are an essential part of a comprehensive program that provides academic rigor to secondary students, keeping them challenged and engaged in school. Goals: Advancement/retention of heritage language literacy.” |  |  | • | • |  |
| NC\* | “Dual & Heritage Language programs include dual language/immersion programs where students are taught academic content in two languages, English and the target language, as well as Spanish for Native Speaker or other heritage languages taught to native speakers. In dual language/immersion programs, students are learning math, science, social studies, etc., in two languages and become bilingual and biliterate as a result. For heritage language speakers, such as those who speak Spanish or some other language besides English at home, heritage language programs help build literacy skills in reading and writing, so that they can bridge into advanced language courses.” | • | • | • | • |  |
| NE | “Heritage Language Preservation: The language a person regards as their native, home, and/or ancestral language. This covers indigenous languages (e.g. Navajo) and immigrant languages (e.g. Spanish in the United States). The focus of instruction may be community oriented and focused on language preservation and maintenance, or it might be on heritage language development.” | • |  | • | • |  |
| NM | “Heritage Language Model: designed to support and revitalize a student’s native language and culture through oral and/or written language instruction; Native American language programs require approval from tribal councils or from other appropriate tribal entities with authority to make educational decisions on behalf of Native American children…Listening, speaking, reading, and writing (where applicable) skills must form a defined component of the program, and many aspects of the home culture of the heritage language students must also be included. An immersion method is a recommended approach…when ELs are served through a heritage language BMEP\*\*, they must also be provided one hour of ELD/ELS instruction beyond English language arts instruction.” | • |  | • | • | • |
| NV | “Heritage language programs are designed for students, such as those who come to a classroom setting with some level of proficiency in a language other than English because they speak the language at home. In many cases, students in Heritage Language programs may have high levels of proficiency in speaking and listening and significantly lower proficiency in the skills of reading and writing. The purpose of Heritage Language programs is to help build literacy skills in reading and writing, so students can bridge into advanced language courses.” | • |  | • |  |  |
| WI | “One-Way Dual Language Education for Heritage Learners: Description: Minimum of 50% of daily core instruction in partner language. Language of instruction guided by the program's language-content-time allocation policy (90/10, 80/20, 50/50); Learners: English learner, partner language speakers; Outcomes: Academic Achievement, Bilingualism/Biliteracy, Sociocultural and Global Competence.”“American Indian Heritage Language Bilingual: Description: American Indian indigenous language and English, used to facilitate language, literacy, and/or academic content learning. Indigenous language is used for less than 50% of daily core instructional time. Language is being renewed/reclaimed in the community; Learners: English learners who are heritage speakers of American Indian Languages. Students share the same heritage language background; Outcomes: Develop Heritage Language and English Language, Academic Achievement.”“Heritage Language Bilingual: Description: heritage language is used for less than 50% of daily core instructional time; Learners: English learners who are heritage/home language speakers of a language other than English; Outcomes: Develop Heritage Language and English Language, Academic Achievement."“Heritage learner world language programs: "Language and literacy development for heritage/home-language learners, such as Spanish for Native Speakers courses" | • | • | • | • | • |
| WY | “Heritage Language – A program where Active ELs are taught literacy in the language a person regards as their native, home ancestral language. This covers indigenous languages (e.g., Arapaho and Shoshone) and immigrant languages (e.g., Spanish). The intent is to provide literacy skills that can then transfer to English language acquisition." | • |  | • | • | • |

\* Note: The documents containing DC, GA, and NC’s definition include additional information about the structure of heritage language programs beyond what is reported in this table. Also, Heritage Language Learners Program of Studies is listed as a program type in DC’s World Language Standards, but a definition of this program is not provided.

\*\* BMEP: Bilingual Multicultural Education Program

As shown in Table 3, all states have defined heritage language programs differently, though most definitions have similarities and all include at least two of the components identified above. All states (with the exception of MT) describe the types of students that heritage language programs are designed for in their state, and while descriptions vary from state to state, students are often referred to as either “heritage speakers” or “native speakers” of a language spoken at home or that they have a connection to through their family or community, and a few states refer to students as “English learners” or “non-English speakers.”

Seven states (AR, DC, GA, KS, KY, NC, and WI) provided detailed information about the structure of heritage language programs in their states. Arkansas’s definition notes that three levels of heritage and native speakers’ courses are offered in their heritage language programs. The District of Columbia notes that heritage language programs should support students in earning AP credit in the language in less than three years and mentions that most programs are offered for students learning Spanish or French as a heritage language. Georgia provides descriptions of three levels of Spanish for Native Speakers courses (as noted in the previous section of this report), and the definition provided by Kansas describes how heritage language classes are offered at lower levels and articulate with non-heritage language courses as students advance in their language proficiency. Kentucky states that their heritage language programs are a type of dual language program. North Carolina describes their heritage language programs as provides a “a bridge into advanced modern language courses,” and they provide a course sequence chart showing how students may enroll in two heritage-specific courses before proceeding to AP classes along with L2 learners. In Wisconsin, several definitions are provided for heritage language programs, including heritage learner world language programs, one-way dual language programs for heritage learners, and heritage language bilingual programs, as well as those specifically designed for American Indian languages. These definitions are presented in a chart and each includes information about the types of learners, the structure of the program, and the overall goals and outcomes of the program. Although New Mexico’s definition does not specify how heritage language programs are structured, the state does provide an extensive Technical Assistance Manual for its Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs (BMEPs), which includes more detailed information about heritage language programming. According to the manual, heritage language programs and enrichment programs are both designed to support students in further developing, sustaining, or revitalizing their home language and culture. Students enrolled in heritage language programs (which include ELs) or enrichment programs (which do not include ELs) must receive one hour of heritage language arts instruction per day and may also receive an additional hour of heritage language instruction in a content area, including fine arts.

Twelve states (AK, AR, DE, IN, MN, MT, NC, NE, NM, NV, WI, and WY) include information about the goals or focus of heritage language programs in their definitions, which include the development of linguistic proficiency, literacy skills, cultural connections and identity, oral language skills, academic language skills, and content skills. In terms of languages and/or levels, although thirteen states (AK, AR, CA, DC, GA, IN, KS, MT, NC, NE, NM, WI, and WY) include one of these components in their definitions, most do not provide much detailed information or simply provide examples of which languages and levels could be served through heritage language programs. A few states explicitly reference Spanish as a heritage language and several states mention Indigenous languages as part of their heritage language programming, but information about all languages that can be or are being taught in heritage language programs is not included in most state definitions. Only two states explicitly mention grade levels in their definitions, one of which (CA) states that these programs can be offered throughout K-12 schools and one of which (MT) notes that heritage language courses are offered at the secondary level. New Mexico’s BMEP Technical Assistance Manual notes that heritage language programs may be offered at any grade level (K-12), and the languages for which heritage language arts instruction may be provided include Jicarilla, Keres, Navajo, Tiwa, Tewa, Towa, Zuni, and Spanish. Finally, seven states (AK, CA, IN, MN, NM, WI, and WY) mention ESL/ELD service delivery in their definitions, which is either provided in the form of dual language programming or in addition to heritage language courses/instruction, and these services may be required by the state for students who are classified as English learners and participating in heritage language programs.

In addition to these common components of states’ definitions of heritage language programs, two states (AK and MN) include information about the types of teachers working in these programs, with the former indicating that teachers should be fluent in both English and the heritage language and the latter indicating that teachers providing ELD services as part of the states’ heritage language programs must be ESL-licensed. New Mexico’s definition of heritage language programs does not include this information, but their BMEP Technical Assistance Manual provides details about the licensure required for teaching heritage language courses, including heritage language arts courses. For grades K-5, Spanish language arts teachers must have a bilingual endorsement; for grades 6-12 they must have a bilingual endorsement and a modern, classical, and native languages endorsement. Language arts teachers for Native American languages at all grade levels must have a Native American language and culture certificate. This certificate may be issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department to “an instructor who has been approved and deemed proficient in their Native American language by a New Mexico tribe, pueblo, or nation.” Other states have similar licensure programs for Native American education, with examples including Montana’s [Class 7 American Indian Language and Culture Specialist License](https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Licensure/Educator-Licensure/Educator-Licenses#9389210449-class-7-american-indian-language-and-culture-specialist), Wisconsin’s [American Indian Language and Culture Education Licenses](https://dpi.wi.gov/amind/language-culture-education), and Washington’s [First Peoples’ Language, Culture, and Oral Traditions Certification Program](https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/native-education/native-education-rules-and-regulations). New Mexico’s BMEP Technical Assistance Manual also notes that “Native American language programs require approval and recommendations from tribal departments of education and/or tribal councils.”

Although information about heritage language teaching and learning can typically be found in a state’s world language frameworks/standards and related resources, heritage language program models are often listed and defined within the context of available programs for English Learner Education (ELE). The definitions of heritage language programs listed above were found on the world language education sections of six states’ websites (AR, DC, GA, KS, NC, and NV), and these definitions were found within the ELE sections of eleven states’ websites (AK, CA, DE, IN, KY, MN, MT, NE, NM, WI, and WY). It is important to note that some states define heritage language programs in one of these two contexts (world language vs. ELE), yet also mention them or provide instructional resources for them in the other (e.g., Indiana’s definition is found in the ELE section of their website, but their heritage language standards are part of their world language standards), and one state (NV) lists heritage language programs as a program model that can be used for ELE, yet more fully defines them in the context of world languages.

In addition to the definitions presented in this section, some states mention that heritage language programs are possible models for instruction, but do not define them; some states include language about the importance of providing heritage language support in other types of language programs, but do not have definitions of heritage language programs; and some states recommend that heritage-specific courses be provided when possible, but do not provide information about this type of programming. There is also limited information available at the state level about how many heritage language programs are offered (if any) and for which languages and levels these programs are offered. In addition, it is unclear if the presence of a state-level definition indicates that these programs exist, if programs are encouraged or supported by states, or if they are simply recognized as potential models of instruction, and there is no state-level information available on the extent to which existing programs are associated with positive outcomes. As previously mentioned when discussing state definitions of the terms “heritage languages” and “heritage language learners”, note that some of the definitions of “heritage language program” were found on individual state-level reports, presentations, or guides, making it difficult to determine the extent to which they are used statewide and if they are considered “official” state definitions.

An analysis conducted in 2021 by New America as part of a larger state-by-state look at EL data for its English Learner Accountability Hub identified which states offered heritage language programs as one of their English Learner Instructional Program Models during the 2015-2016 school year according to their consolidated state performance reports. Five states (DE, GA, KS, KY, and NV) that currently provide state-level definitions of heritage language programs were not listed as offering heritage language programs in New America’s data, and ten states (AZ, CO, ID, LA, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, and VA) that do not currently provide state-level definitions were listed as offering heritage language programs. In addition, although information about which heritage languages are taught is not available on most state’s websites, the New America data indicates that 19 states reported which languages were taught in heritage language programs during the 2015-2016 academic year. This information is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Heritage Languages Taught in SY2015-2016 (New America, 2021)

| State | Language(s) offered |
| --- | --- |
| AK | Yupik |
| AR | Spanish |
| AZ | Navajo |
| CA | Chinese, Hmong, Khmer, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese |
| CO | Spanish |
| DC | Spanish |
| ID | Spanish |
| IN | Spanish |
| LA | Spanish |
| MN | Hmong, Somali, Spanish, Russian |
| MT | Blackfeet, Chippewa, Cree, Crow |
| NE | Spanish |
| NC | Cherokee, Chinese, Spanish |
| NJ | Spanish |
| NM | Navajo, Spanish |
| NY | Chinese, Spanish |
| OH | Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Pennsylvania Dutch, Somali, Spanish |
| WI | Spanish |
| WY | Arapaho, Shoshoni |

 As shown in Table 4, the most commonly taught language in heritage language programs was Spanish, and several states also reported offering heritage language programs for less commonly taught and Indigenous languages.

 In addition to reporting on heritage language program offerings through annual consolidated state performance reports, states also have the opportunity to submit this information via state reports to the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL). Thirty-four states have provided information about heritage language programming in the publicly available reports on the NCSSFL website, and most states have updated their reports in the last five years. Two states (DC and KY) that currently provide state-level definitions of heritage language programs stated that they do not offer heritage language programs in their reports (submitted in 2016 and 2018, respectively), and 20 states that do not currently have state-level definitions on their websites indicated that heritage language programs are offered in their states in their reports (submitted between 2011-2022, with most submitted in the last five years). Information about what languages are offered is included in some of the state reports, though many states indicate that decisions about heritage language programming are made at the local school or district level and comprehensive information about this type of programming is not available at the state level. Based on the state reports, Spanish continues to be the most commonly taught language in heritage language programs, followed by various Indigenous languages.

 Based on the information gathered by New America, NCSSFL, and this comparative analysis, representatives from four states (MN, NE, NV, and NY) were contacted for more information about heritage language programs in their state. A representative from Minnesota stated that most heritage language programs are offered at the secondary level and very few programs are available at elementary levels, with middle school programs often following an A/B day or semester schedule and high schools offering more consistent classes such as meeting every day for 45-60 minutes or following a block schedule. The representative noted that the most common programs are in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish, with one district considering starting a Karen heritage language program. Districts can choose to offer heritage language programs as part of their LIEP (Language Instruction Educational Program) when offered alongside a content-based ELD program. The representative also stated that part of the reason for this option is that the LIEP should be considered as an educational program rather than an isolated language instruction that ELs receive. In addition, the state recognizes that many heritage language learners are not ELs, and heritage language programs are technically considered world language programs and are required to use the ACTFL standards per Minnesota statute. The state hopes to offer more support for heritage language programs and currently emphasizes an asset-based approach and the use of home languages and translanguaging in training and professional development for teachers. A representative from Nebraska noted that many heritage languages are offered through community schools; however, ten districts offer at least one Spanish for Native Speakers course and one offers Arabic for Arabic Speakers courses. Nebraska heritage language teachers are offered access to world language resources, networking, and professional development opportunities, and the state representative recommended collaboration among public schools, heritage language communities, and community-based heritage language schools to provide language educational opportunities and access to the Seal of Biliteracy. A representative from Nevada stated that some Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the state offer heritage language programs in Spanish and Indigenous languages but noted that offerings are determined locally. Finally, a representative from New York reported that they do not currently have the information requested about their heritage language programming but hope to gather this information in the future.

### Organizations

 Two of the 123 organizations analyzed provide information about heritage language program models, though both of these define and describe community-based heritage language programs rather than programming for K-12 schools. The International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA) defines community-based heritage language schools as “language learning institutions which have unique organizational structures, funding models, curriculum, community and cultural events, and locations,” and emphasizes how these schools are organized and operated outside of the public school system and often serve as the only place in which learners access education in their heritage languages. Similarly, the Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools states that these schools are “typically non-profit organizations founded and operated by parents from the respective immigrant or heritage language community for the purpose of maintaining and teaching the language and culture of their heritage.” They also highlight how these schools are independently run without support from public or private school systems and that the languages being taught are usually languages that are used at home or in the community, though students who are not considered heritage language learners are often able to participate in programming as well.

The Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools regularly conducts and reports on a national survey of community-based heritage language schools, through which it gathers information about languages offered, program locations, the types of students enrolled, the structure of programs, and levels taught. According to a presentation from 2021, a total of 39 languages are being taught in community-based heritage language schools across the country, including commonly taught (Spanish, French, German), less commonly taught (e.g., Chinese, Hindi, Russian), and Indigenous (e.g., Passamaquoddy, Wazhazhe) languages. Many languages not traditionally taught in the U.S. school system (including Norwegian, Ukrainian, Latvian, Gujarati, Swedish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Czech, etc.) are represented among these schools. Programs are offered in 38 states, and the majority of these schools provide 3-5 hours of instruction per week on the weekends. Most programs also report that at least 50% of their students are heritage language learners, with nearly a third reporting that heritage language learners make up 90%-100% of their program, and programs are offered for all grade levels, including PreK, K-12, and adults.

### Districts/Programs

Seventeen of the 33 districts/programs analyzed include some amount of information about heritage language program models on their websites. One district mentions serving heritage learners via one-way dual language programs; several districts provide both dual language programs and heritage-specific courses; and most districts offer heritage-specific courses, particularly at the high school level. Certain schools operating within the Dallas Independent School District (TX), Atlanta Public Schools (GA), and the Wake County Public School System (NC) offer Spanish for heritage or native speakers, but the districts as a whole do not have accessible information about their program policies or models.

The Chicago Public Schools (IL) website mentions heritage language learners in its descriptions of Dual Language One-Way Programs, describing them as serving “English learners from the same background and heritage speakers of the language.” The Long Beach Unified School District (CA) offers heritage language programs in Khmer and Spanish via courses at different middle and high schools. The district also offers Spanish Dual Immersion at several elementary and middle schools. According to a high school course catalog on the district’s website, the Khmer for Khmer Speakers course sequence begins with the 1-2 course and culminates in Khmer for Khmer Speakers 7-8. Each course is two semesters long, and the 1-2 course is described as follows:

*Khmer for Khmer Speakers 1-2 is an intensive course for students with conversational fluency and beginning academic skills in Khmer. Students* *begin to develop academic Khmer proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, literature, and key cultural aspects from the entire Khmer-speaking world. The course goals and objectives are based on Stage II of the* *World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools (2009).*

Over levels 3-4 and 5-6, “students study increasingly difficult academic Khmer listening, speaking, reading, writing, and literature of the Khmer-speaking culture,” and the course goals are based on Stages III and IV, respectively, of the World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools (2009). At level 7-8, the course description emphasizes grammar, history, and arts:

Khmer for Khmer Speakers continues to expand and refine students’ communicative-based listening, speaking, reading, writing competencies from Khmer for Khmer Speakers 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6. Students will use increasingly complex grammar with improving accuracy and read a variety of authentic texts. Students will also deepen their understanding of the history, literature and arts of the Khmer-speaking culture. The course goals and objectives are based on Stage III and parts of Stage IV of the World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools (2009).

 Similarly, the Spanish for Spanish Speakers course sequence begins with Spanish for Spanish Speakers 1-2 and progresses through Spanish for Spanish Speakers 7-8. The 1-2 course description is similar to the Khmer for Khmer Speakers 1-2 course description, and also mentions that “academic literacy skills studied in this course align to competencies assessed on the English Language Arts portion of the California High School Exit Examination.” Similar to the Khmer for Khmer Speakers courses, the content of the levels 3-4 and 5-6 Spanish for Spanish Speakers courses increases in difficulty, and the descriptions note that students who perform well may be recommended to take the AP Spanish Literature course and the AP Spanish Language Exam. Spanish for Spanish Speakers 7-8 has a somewhat different description, notably emphasizing native speakers or dual immersion continuation students and describing the literature studied:

Spanish for Spanish Speakers 7-8 offers native speakers of Spanish and students continuing the Dual immersion Program the opportunity to study the language formally in an academic setting in the same way native English-speaking students study English language arts. This course focuses on the study of Hispanic cultures and the critical study of selected works representative of significant literary movements beginning in the Middle Ages and continuing through the Golden Century (“Siglo de oro”), Baroque, Realism and Romanticism periods, concluding with 20th Century Modernism and contemporary literature.

The Long Beach Unified School District also offers several practical Spanish courses that may be appropriate for heritage language learners, including Intro to English/Spanish Legal Interpretation, Intro to English/Spanish Medical Interpretation, and Spanish Interpretation/Translation in Education, which aim to provide English/Spanish biliterate students with the skills to work as interpreters or translators. The district also lists a Medical Spanish: Healthcare/Patient Care course, which is described as a level three course. This course uses Spanish as the medium of instruction while teaching students both language and content skills and culminating in career exploration and healthy living units.

 The San Diego Unified School District (CA) offers a Spanish for Spanish Speakers course sequence beginning with Spanish Language Development for Spanish Speakers, a middle school course available in certain schools that is focused on developing academic reading and writing skills. This literacy focus continues through the 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6 courses, which are available throughout the district. The district also offers Spanish Language Arts classes at certain schools to support students after they exit K-5 dual language programs.

Broward County Public Schools (FL) offers Portuguese for Portuguese Speakers at one high school and Spanish for Spanish Speakers at one K-8 school, four middle schools, and 18 high schools. The district also offers dual language programs in Spanish and French. Although there is no district-wide course catalog and a description of the Portuguese for Portuguese Speakers classes is not available, several schools offer descriptions of their Spanish for Spanish Speakers classes. The middle schools that offer course descriptions note that these are high school level courses. Two of the three middle schools state that “Language Arts Standards are also included in this course to enable students to become literate in the Spanish language and gain a better understanding of the nature of their own language as well as other languages to be acquired.” The third school’s description includes cultural awareness and appreciation. At the high school level, some schools offer Spanish for Spanish Speakers I and II, while others extend the course sequence to a third or fourth level, which generally carries honors credit. While almost all high schools offer a course catalog that lists these classes, only four offer full course descriptions. A typical course description for Spanish for Spanish Speakers I is as follows:

The purpose of this course is to enable students whose heritage language is Spanish to develop, maintain, and enhance proficiency in their heritage language by reinforcing and acquiring skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including the fundamentals of Spanish grammar. Language Arts Standards are also included in this course to enable students to become literate in the Spanish language and gain a better understanding of the nature of their own language as well as other languages to be acquired. The course content will reflect the cultural values of Spanish language and societies.

The descriptions for Spanish for Spanish Speakers II are similar, though they note that the course builds on the grammar skills acquired in Spanish for Spanish Speakers I. When available, descriptions for Spanish for Spanish Speakers III generally include a mention of a variety of literary genres, authors, and sources. West Broward High School provides descriptions for Spanish for Spanish Speakers II and III and differs from other schools in its descriptions, placing a greater emphasis on historical figures, literature, and media analysis.

Gwinnett County School District (GA) offers some Spanish for Native Speakers classes at the high school level. Although the district notes that exact course offerings at a given school will vary, the district course description for Spanish for Native Speakers I states:

This course is intended for heritage speakers of Spanish. A heritage Spanish speaker is a student who grew up mostly or entirely in the United States speaking some Spanish at home, but who has never studied Spanish formally. In this course, student will improve their spoken Spanish and learn basic reading and writing skills. Students also gain a deeper understanding of their own heritage culture and cultures of other Spanish-speaking countries.

Spanish for Native Speakers II can be completed after this course or is open to “students who are strong native speakers.” It aims to develop all four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing (with an emphasis on reading extensive texts), as well as deepen students’ understanding of Spanish-speaking countries’ cultures. While the district website states that many elementary schools offer exploratory language programs and most middle schools offer introductory language courses, there is no district-level information about the specific courses offered across the 110 schools operating in the district or whether any of these classes are intended for heritage speakers.

 Indianapolis Public Schools (IN) provide a district-wide course catalog for high school classes. The catalog describes a generic three-course sequence of Language for Heritage Speakers I, II, and III. The descriptions for all three courses are very similar, with II and III noting that they build on the previous level:

Language for Heritage Speakers I is a course designed for heritage speakers of world languages who have demonstrated some degree of oral proficiency. The purpose of this course is to enable Heritage Language Learners to increase proficiency and bi-literacy in their native language by providing opportunities to improve reading and listening comprehension, as well as writing and grammar skills. Special attention will be given to grammar and vocabulary of the standard language, as well as to the importance of biculturalism and bilingualism in the United States today. Placement of students and development of the course curriculum is dependent upon the population of students enrolled in this course.

The catalog also states that each course is a two-semester course that awards one credit per semester, counts as a directed elective or elective for all diplomas, and fulfills a World Language requirement for the Core 40 with Academic Honors Diploma, matching other World Language courses in the catalog. The high schools whose course catalogs are readily available online also list Language for Heritage Speakers courses, but do not specify which language or languages are taught.

Both Minneapolis Public Schools and Saint Paul Public Schools (MN) offer some heritage language programs, but information on the districts’ websites is limited. Spanish for Spanish speakers, Hmong for Hmong speakers, and Somali for Somali speakers courses are offered at various schools operating within Minneapolis Public Schools. While the district’s Hmong Program website states that the program begins with Hmong one-way dual language programming in K-5, continues with social studies-Hmong/Hmong world language courses in grades 6-8, and progresses to Hmong world language courses in high school, there is no information on the middle school website about this program. Although Hmong for Hmong speakers courses at the high school require some fluency in spoken Hmong, these courses begin with pronunciation and spelling so that students can “master these and be able to write simple words, phrases, and sentences or even paragraphs” by the end of the first year. Similarly, although there is a district Somali Heritage Language and Culture Program website, information about programming below the high school level is scarce. At the high school level, Somali is offered to native speakers and the two-course sequence builds on background knowledge to incorporate culture and literacy skills. Spanish for Spanish speakers classes at the high school level likewise begin with Level 1 courses. However, Minneapolis Public Schools also has a K-12 Spanish dual language program that includes content courses in Spanish.

Within Saint Paul Public Schools, the top four languages spoken by ELs are Hmong, Spanish, Karen, and Somali, although data about the total number of heritage speakers is not readily available. Dual language immersion programs and world language courses are offered in Hmong and Spanish in the district, and high school course catalogs indicate that at least some Hmong and Spanish world language classes are designed for native speakers and/or immersion learners. The district also plans to offer a district-wide online world language course in Karen beginning in fall 2023. A Somali Academic Literacy and Teaching extended-day learning opportunity was piloted in 2005-6, but further information about this program is not available and the district does not currently offer Somali language classes. In terms of Indigenous languages, the district’s website lists Ojibwe as a district-wide online language course option, and Ojibwe and Lakota/Dakota classes are offered at the American Indian Magnet School (for grades K-8) as part of its American Indian Studies program and at Harding Senior High School, which offers Dakota Language Levels 1 and 2 and Ojibwe Language Levels 1, 2, and 3. Students can obtain credit for Ojibwe Language Level 3 through Fond du Lac Tribal College. There is also a charter school in Minneapolis, Bdote Learning Center, whose website explains that they offer place-based, experiential, immersion education in Dakota and Ojibwe for grades K-8.

 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC) offer multiple languages across the district. At the elementary level, schools offer FLEX (Foreign Language Exploratory) programs; one-way immersion programs in Chinese, French, German, or Japanese; and two-way Spanish dual language programs. In middle school, Spanish for Native Speakers classes are offered and described as follows:

Spanish for Native Speakers I in middle school consists of a two-year sequence of study for high school credit that begins with SNS I part A in the 7th grade and is completed with SNS I part B in the 8th grade. It is designed to enhance students' reading and writing skills whose heritage or native language is Spanish. The course also provides Spanish speakers the opportunity to read, discuss and write about various genres of literary works in Spanish. In addition, students focus on current events as they affect Spanish speakers throughout the world.

Spanish for Native Speakers classes are also offered at the high school level, although the district website does not have an overall description. The district page for middle school notes that students should speak to their counselors about other high school credit pathways for “dual language/immersion continuation students, heritage or native speakers of other languages, or heritage and native Spanish speakers in schools that do not offer Spanish for Native Speakers.” The high school page also advises that students may complete courses through UNC Charlotte if they exhaust the course offerings at their high school.

 Granite School District (UT) offers Spanish for Heritage Speakers and Chinese for Heritage Speakers at the middle school level and Spanish for Heritage Speakers at the high school level. The district also offers K-12 dual language programming in Chinese, French, and Spanish, though it is not clear whether this programming is designed to accommodate heritage language learners. District-wide course catalogs are available for both the middle and high school and provide course descriptions for the heritage language courses. The Chinese for Heritage Speakers course at the middle school level has the following description:

This course is intended for students whose first language or home language is Chinese. It is designed to improve the literacy (reading and writing) skills of these students in their native or heritage language and give them a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Students will write extensively, read literature, give presentations, and participate in debates to improve their proficiency in the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication. The end-of-year proficiency targets are Intermediate Low for Speaking, Novice High for Reading, Novice Mid for Writing and Intermediate Mid for Listening.

A two-course sequence is offered in Spanish for Heritage Speakers, with the same course descriptions at the middle and high school levels. All courses are “intended for students whose first language or home language is Spanish” and are “designed to improve the literacy (reading and writing) skills of these students in their native or heritage language.” The topics for the first course in the sequence include traditions, culture, and immigration, and students “will also discover their connection to pre-Columbian civilizations.” The second course in the sequence includes technology, social injustice, self-image, environmental problems and solutions, and legends and myths. While both courses include extensive reading and writing, presentations, and debates, the second course places more emphasis on supporting one’s opinion while the first course notes that students will learn “the fundamental grammatical structures, orthographic rules and the ways Spanish can be used in formal and informal settings.” The end-of-year proficiency targets for the first year are Intermediate Low for reading and writing and Intermediate Mid for speaking and listening; for the second year, each set increases by one sublevel to Intermediate Mid and Intermediate High, respectively. While program articulation is not described in detail in the course catalog, several Spanish and Chinese courses are available to students in grades 10-12 who have passed the relevant AP Language and Culture examination. These courses are bridge courses that carry credit at the University of Utah, and it is possible that heritage and/or dual language immersion students are the intended audience.

 Arlington Public Schools (VA) offers Spanish for Fluent Speakers classes beginning at Grade 6. After the introductory course, there are three numbered levels, followed by Spanish Literary Analysis for Fluent Speakers IB 1-2. The school also offers a dual immersion program whose students “comprise both heritage Spanish speakers and non-Spanish speakers.” The dual immersion program is offered for K-8 and Spanish immersion language, science, and economics classes are available at the high school level. The Introductory and Level 1 Spanish for Fluent Speakers courses are “designed for students who have native or near native oral fluency in Spanish but may not have mastered basic reading and writing skills in Spanish. Students develop communication skills in reading, writing, and speaking and begin the study of Spanish grammar.” Level 2 students are expected to read and write at “a basic level,” while Level 3 students are expected to read and write at “a more advanced level.” Grammar is mentioned in the descriptions through Level 2, while Levels 2 and 3 include reading, writing, and presenting increasingly complex forms. All levels include a “deeper understanding” of cultural practices and perspectives, with the note in 6th grade and Level 1 that these are the practices and perspectives of “the Hispanic culture.” Levels 2 and 3 state that this deeper understanding will be developed “through the context of literature.” After Level 3, students are encouraged to enroll in AP Spanish Language and Culture.

 Finally, in terms of Indigenous languages, Anchorage School District (AK) offers a Yupik Immersion Program at College Gate Elementary school. Students spend half the day in English and half the day in Yupik, with language arts and math taught in English and science and social studies are taught in Yupik. The program began with a group of students in kindergarten in the 2018-19 school year and has added one grade level each year such that it covers grades K-4 for the 2022-23 school year. Albuquerque Public Schools (NM) also provides opportunities for Indigenous language learning, as they offer Navajo and Zuni classes as part of their Indian Education programs. Each language offers a two-course sequence that qualifies students for the district and state bilingual seals, and each course carries 1 elective credit per semester and has tribal or Pueblo enrollment requirements. Both languages appear to begin with listening and speaking in the Level I class before incorporating reading and writing. The Navajo classes are described as emphasizing immersion and a cultural approach and including community activities, and the Zuni classes state that they are taught within the cultural context and proceed to an intermediate level of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Zuni II.

## Resources

In this section, we present information about supplementary resources for heritage language education provided by the states, organizations, and districts/programs included in the comparative analysis.

### States

Thirteen states (AR, DC, KS, MA, MT, NC, NE, NM, NV, OH, OK, OR, and WA) provide some type of additional resource for educators working with heritage language learners, and resources include expected proficiency outcomes, guidance for instruction and programming, and professional learning opportunities. Resources vary in their level of detail, and while they are often included directly in a state’s world language frameworks/standards or designed to be supplementary resources for these frameworks/standards, some states also provide standalone resources for heritage language education. Table 5 indicates which type of additional resource is provided by each state, and hyperlinks for each resource can be found in the appendix of state-level data.

Table 5. Additional Resources Provided by States

| State | Expected proficiency outcomes | Guidance for instruction and programming | Professional learning opportunities |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AR | • |  |  |
| DC | • |  |  |
| KS | • |  |  |
| MA |  | • |  |
| MT |  | • |  |
| NC | • | • |  |
| NE |  | • |  |
| NM |  | • |  |
| NV | • |  |  |
| OH |  | • |  |
| OK |  | • |  |
| OR |  | • |  |
| WA |  |  | • |

As previously mentioned in the Frameworks and Standards section of this report, some states (in addition to GA, IN, and VA) provide information about proficiency expectations for heritage language programs. North Carolina provides two tables outlining heritage language exit proficiency expectations across skills/modes of communication for alphabetic and logographic languages. Heritage language learners of alphabetic languages who have completed Level I (135-150 hours) of instruction in their heritage language are expected to reach the Novice Mid level in presentational writing, the Novice Mid to High level in interpretive reading and presentational speaking, and the Intermediate Low level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication. By the end of Level II (270-300 hours), students in this group are expected to reach the Novice High level in presentational writing, the Intermediate Low level in interpretive reading and presentational speaking, and the Intermediate Mid level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication. Heritage language learners of logographic languages who have completed Level I (135-150 hours) of instruction in their heritage language are expected to reach the Novice Low to Mid level in presentational writing and interpretive reading, the Novice Mid to High level in presentational speaking, and the Novice High level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication. By the end of Level II (270-300 hours), students in this group are expected to reach the Novice Mid to High level in presentational writing, the Novice High level in interpretive reading, the Novice High to Intermediate Low level in presentational speaking, and the Intermediate Low level in interpretive listening and interpersonal communication. A representative from North Carolina stated that hundreds of educators were involved in developing the proficiency expectations, including K-12 teachers and administrators implementing Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) programs and courses, as well as renowned language education experts from universities and nationally recognized organizations. The process of developing the proficiency expectations lasted approximately two years, and they are reviewed every five to seven years as part of the review and revision process for the North Carolina World Language Essential Standards. This process involves several phases and includes gathering data from surveys on K-12 world language courses, regional focus groups, and individual interviews, as well as research, policies, and legislation that pertain to world language education. The representative noted that it is important for states to have a process in place for reviewing and revising standards with input from various stakeholders, as this allows them to develop/update proficiency expectations for heritage language learners using current research, expertise, and experience.

The District of Columbia provides a World Language Program Articulation Chart in their world language standards to support educators in understanding the entry/exit points of heritage language programs, as well as the expected proficiency levels of student enrolled in these programs at different levels. Students are exempt from Level 1 (Novice Low to Novice Mid) and Level 2 (Novice Mid to Novice High) of their heritage language in high school and heritage language programs are offered at Level 3 (Intermediate Low to Intermediate Mid), Level 4 (Intermediate Mid to Intermediate High), and Level 5 (Intermediate High to Pre-Advanced). Enrollment in Levels 3 and 4 is mandatory for students to earn required world language credits, and they may choose to continue to Level 5 as an elective and then enroll in AP classes. The chart also indicates that students may participate in pull-out heritage language instruction at the middle school level, though information about proficiency outcomes is not provided for this level.

 Nevada includes a table in their world language standards with exit proficiency expectations across six years of heritage language study. Students are expected to reach the Intermediate Low level after one year (135-150 hours), the Intermediate Mid level after two years (270-300 hours), the Intermediate High level after three years (405-450 hours), the Advanced Low level after four years (540-600 hours), the Advanced Mid level after five years (675-750 hours), and the Advanced High level after six years (810-900 hours). Arkansas provides a chart with high-level proficiency expectations for heritage and native speakers programs in their world language standards, indicating that students enter Heritage 1 courses at the Novice High level and reach the Intermediate Low level, students enter Heritage 2 courses at the Intermediate Low level and reach the Intermediate High level, and students enter Heritage 3 courses at the Intermediate High level and reach the Advanced Low level. In addition, Kansas states that “generally speaking, Intermediate Low indicators would be suitable for a Heritage Level 1 class” and provides a chart with proficiency goals for different types of world language programs, including heritage language programs. According to the chart, students are expected to enter a two-course sequence for heritage language learners with an Intermediate Low level and proceed to a Level 5 course or AP course at the Intermediate High level. Students who choose to continue beyond this can then enroll in AP Literature courses at the Advanced Low level and additional courses at the Advanced Mid to High and Superior levels.

 Few state-level resources have been developed with the sole purpose of providing guidance for heritage language instruction and programming. The Massachusetts Quick Reference Guide for Heritage Learners is one example of a state-level heritage-specific resource for instruction and programming, and this document is designed to be used in collaboration with the state’s world languages framework in world language classrooms. North Carolina provides a standards unpacking document for using their state’s world languages standards in heritage language programs, as well as a bridging document for creating a strong K-12 sequence with heritage courses; an administrator guide to support the integration of best practices in heritage language programs; and various clarifying objectives by course outcomes documents for heritage language courses. The standards unpacking document describes each standard and its objectives across skills/modes of communication and organizes the standards according to the levels of heritage language programs to support educators in curriculum planning and articulation. Examples of two-course sequences used in North Carolina heritage language programs are provided along with some high-level information about student characteristics, resources and materials, and best practices for heritage language teaching and learning. The bridging document presents expectations in the form of can-do statements for both Heritage/Native Speakers Level I for Continuing Immersion and Heritage/Native Speakers Level II Honors for Continuing Immersion courses. Expectations are provided for interpretive communication, interpersonal communication, and presentational communication, as well as the investigate and interact components of intercultural communication. The administrator guide provides background information about the characteristics and expectations of heritage language program and are designed to be “look-for” documents for principals and other administrators to use when working with teachers and students in these contexts. Finally, there are clarifying objectives by course outcomes for heritage language courses for all modern languages taught in North Carolina, and these documents have the language-specific course codes and essential standards for each course level to support educators with standards-based curriculum writing.

To further support instruction and assessment for this group of students, Ohio provides a 16-page PDF with information about heritage language learners. This document includes a definition of heritage language learners and their general characteristics; topics and strategies for teaching heritage language learners in world language and heritage-specific classrooms; and links to external resources, including articles and educational websites with additional materials and resources. A representative from the state reported that this document required several months to develop and that they are currently in the process of updating it with a target completion date of February 2023. The update process involves reviewing all current information and links, as well as relevant articles from ACTFL’s *The Language Educator* and *Foreign Language Annals* to ensure that they are providing research-based, practical strategies and guidance for working with heritage language learners. Nebraska also has a webpage dedicated to heritage speaker programs on their website, which includes some high-level recommendations and links to ACTFL and Language Resource Center (LRC) resources and a few heritage language curriculum models being used in other districts/states. Finally, Montana and Oklahoma have pages on their websites with links to external resources for working with Indigenous language learners, including tribal education websites, teaching materials, language dictionaries and reference guides, land and culture resources, and information about Native language teacher state licensure.

Beyond these resources, some states have provided resources focusing on heritage language policies and programming. New Mexico’s Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs Technical Assistance Manual includes information about the endorsement requirements for educators providing content area instruction or language arts in a heritage language, guidance for Spanish heritage language and Native American language programs, and best practices for determining students’ needs and what programming to offer based on those needs and the resources available. Oregon has a Q&A document on access to linguistic inclusion, which highlights how districts may choose to grant language arts credit for heritage language courses. Also, with the exception of South Dakota, all states currently offer the Seal of Biliteracy, and many states emphasize the importance of providing opportunities for students to earn the Seal for their proficiency in a home or heritage language.

 One state (WA) explicitly mentions professional learning opportunities for heritage language teaching on their Department of Education’s website. In Washington, all educators have the opportunity to participate in a statewide Heritage Language Professional Learning Community (PLC), which is advertised as a community that will “explore heritage language programming and resources, share best practices, and work to solve common problems of practice faced by heritage language educators.” A representative from the state reported that the PLC is offered as part of the state’s grant program for creating or expanding heritage language programming, as grantees are asked to participate in state-level professional development as part of their grant funding and the PLC was developed to serve this purpose. It is open to anyone across the state, including those who do not receive grant funding for their programs. The state representative reported that the PLC was created a few years ago, and while it is sometimes facilitated by the Department, other times educators are invited to lead the meetings to share their expertise and are subsequently provided with professional development credits for their participation. Meetings are held once a month with a focus on programmatic and instructional elements of heritage language teaching and learning, and attendees include a diverse group of educators working with different languages and types of programs.

To further grow and improve the PLC in the future, the representative reported that they are planning to have two separate groups for teachers and administrators, and that they are considering providing stipends for PLC participation and potentially providing a hub where educators can share materials in a way that are publicly accessible online beyond the PLC meetings. Finally, the state representative recommended that state-level heritage language PLC initiatives (1) provide “office hours” for educators who cannot attend the scheduled meetings; (2) have educator cohorts in the PLC from the beginning to support continual onboarding over time; and (3) build strong connections between the world language department and other language departments (e.g., multilingual education departments) to encourage collaboration between and investment from all educators working with heritage language learners in their classrooms.

### Organizations

 Twenty-three of the 123 organizations analyzed provide some type of resource on heritage language education, and resources include briefs, reports, or articles on relevant topics; guidance for instruction or programming; and professional learning opportunities. Resources are often mixed in with other resources focused on bilingual or world language education and may not be a major component of the organization’s website or overall suite of resources, making it difficult to determine the extent to which these resources have been or could be used by educators working with heritage language learners across the country. Table 6 indicates which type of additional resource is provided by each organization, and hyperlinks for each resource can be found in the appendix of organization-level data.

Table 6. Additional Resources Provided by Organizations

| Organization | Briefs, reports, or articles | Guidance for instruction and programming | Professional learning opportunities |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ACTFL | • |  | • |
| American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) | • |  |  |
| American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) |  | • |  |
| Assessment and Evaluation Language Resource Center (AELRC) | • |  |  |
| Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL) | • | • |  |
| Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) |  | • | • |
| Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA) |  | • | • |
| Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools |  |  | • |
| Hebrew in North America/National Association of Hebrew Teachers (NAHET) | • |  |  |
| International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA) |  | • | • |
| Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages & Cultures (MCTLC) | • |  | • |
| National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) | • |  |  |
| National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) | • |  |  |
| National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) | • |  |  |
| National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) | • | • | • |
| New Jersey Bilingual Educators (NJBE) | • |  |  |
| New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT) | • |  |  |
| Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) | • |  |  |
| Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA) | • |  |  |
| Professionals in Education Advancing Research and Language Learning (PEARLL) |  | • | • |
| Slavic and Eurasian Language Resource Center (SEELRC) | • |  |  |
| Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) | • |  |  |
| Washington Association for Bilingual Education (WABE) |  |  | • |

 Eight organizations have their own journals/publications with articles on topics related to heritage language teaching and learning, including ACTFL, the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL), the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT), the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL), the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA), the Slavic and Eurasian Language Resource Center (SEELRC) at Duke University, and the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT). In addition, eight organizations have published research briefs, blog posts, literature reviews, newsletter articles, reports, and/or bibliographies specifically focused on issues in heritage language education, including the Assessment and Evaluation Language Resource Center (AELRC) at Georgetown University, the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona, the Hebrew in North America/National Association of Hebrew Teachers (NAHET), the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages & Cultures (MCTLC), National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) at the University of Maryland, the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the New Jersey Bilingual Educators (NJBE) association. Topics include teaching heritage languages and cultures, implications of heritage language research for Hebrew language education, heritage language preservation, developing heritage language proficiency, assessing heritage language learners, evaluating heritage language programs, and increasing heritage language learners’ access to the Seal of Biliteracy.

 In terms of instruction, seven organizations provide resources that can be used with heritage language learners in the classroom. The Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona provides an Arabic Learners Written Corpus with samples produced by heritage language learners and L2 learners at different proficiency levels and across different genres. The Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas at Austin has a heritage Spanish website with a variety of teaching resources, including resources for teaching about Spanish in Texas, an online corpus of videos of Spanish heritage learners participating in oral interviews, and a series of units for heritage Spanish learners in grades 6-12. The National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) at the University of California, Los Angeles provides sample heritage language curricula and teaching materials for different languages and levels, as well as online script courses for high school Arabic, Hindi, Persian, and Urdu heritage language learners. In addition to resources developed by the organizations themselves, several organizations have pages with links to external resources that support heritage language instruction, including an open-source textbook for Spanish heritage speakers, examples of Chinese language media that can be used for heritage language teaching, and sample inquiry-based and project-based learning activities for heritage language learners of different languages and levels.

To support programming, Professionals in Education Advancing Research and Language Learning (PEARLL) at the University of Maryland offers program review and evaluation services for heritage and community school programs to help ensure that “program goals focus on language performance and proficiency while meeting the needs of heritage/native speakers and local community members.” The International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA) also provides programmatic support in the form of international guidelines for community-based heritage language schools. This document was published in 2021 and developed in collaboration with representatives from various heritage language schools and organizations. It contains ten guidelines across the areas of Core Values: Principles of Professionalism; Organization: Governance and Leadership; Educational Program: Teachers and Instruction; and Community Outreach and also provides a glossary and a list of additional external resources.

 Nine organizations provide heritage language professional learning opportunities for educators, including online courses, webinars, and podcasts; in-person workshops, institutes, and conferences; and forums or spaces for collaboration and resource sharing. ACTFL provides free access to a one-hour webinar recording on research-based strategies for supporting heritage learners in mixed classrooms, and ACTFL members have access to an online course on assisting heritage language learners using existing resources, as well as opportunities to participate in heritage-specific Special Interest Groups (SIGs). The Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas at Austin’s heritage Spanish website includes a series of self-paced professional development modules, which focus on sociolinguistic and language arts approaches to Spanish heritage language instruction, orthography in the Spanish heritage language classroom, and strategies for creating a Spanish heritage language program. In addition, the International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA) has a series of professional development videos on their website, and the Chinese Language Teachers Association’s (CLTA) Chinese Heritage Language SIG regularly hosts online lectures on topics such as teaching grammar, preparing students for real life language use, and sociolinguistics in the heritage language classroom.

The National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) at the University of California, Los Angeles provides access to a series of podcast episodes on topics such as online heritage language teaching, best practices for teaching heritage language learners in mixed classes, and teaching grammar for heritage language learners. In addition, the NHLRC offers an online course (for a fee) for educators working with heritage language learners, as well as annual research institutes, week-long workshops, and a two-day conference covering various topics in heritage language teaching and learning. The Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools also hosts an annual conference and provides educators with access to an online discussion forum and webinar recordings. A few other organizations have included sessions about heritage language education in their annual conferences in recent years, and several organizations have links on their websites to external professional learning opportunities, many of which have been discussed in this section.

### Districts/Programs

 Three of the 33 districts/programs analyzed provide some type of resource on heritage language education. Table 7 indicates which type of additional resource is provided by each district/program, and hyperlinks for each resource can be found in the appendix of district/program-level data.

Table 7. Additional Resources Provided by Districts/Programs

| District/program | Expected proficiency outcomes | Guidance for instruction and programming |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools  | • |  |
| Washoe County School District |  | • |
| Albuquerque Public Schools |  | • |

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC) has a slightly modified version of the North Carolina K-12 Dual Language/Immersion bridging document, which includes information about two levels of heritage language courses at the secondary level. The Washoe County School District (NV) provides a set of heritage language performance rubrics for assessing students’ interpersonal speaking/writing and presentational speaking/writing skills and curriculum guides for two Spanish Literacy (Spanish for Spanish Speakers) courses offered at the high school level. In addition to a sample scope and sequence with essential questions and objectives across communicative modes, each curriculum guide contains sample units with extended learning objectives aligned to the overall scope and sequence. Finally, the Albuquerque Public Schools’ (NM) Indian Education Department has “hundreds of non-fiction and fiction books at all grade levels” written by Native American authors available for educators to use, as well as links to external resources including videos related to Native American culture, online lectures on Indigenous learning, and tribal community partnerships and resources.

## Teacher Preparation Programs

In this section, we present information about teacher preparation programs for heritage language education in the states included in the comparative analysis. Five institutions of higher education (in NE, PA, TX, VA, and WI) offer a program specifically focused on heritage language teaching and learning. Table 8 provides the name of each program and the institution at which it is offered, and hyperlinks are provided for each program’s website.

Table 8. Heritage Language Teacher Preparation Programs

| State | Name of institution | Name of program |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NE | University of Nebraska Omaha | [Graduate Certificate, Teaching Spanish to Heritage/Bilingual Learners](https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/foreign-languages-and-literature/academics/graduate-certificate-heritage-bilingual.php) |
| PA | University of Pittsburgh | [Master of Arts in Teaching, World and Heritage Language Education](https://www.education.pitt.edu/academics/world-and-heritage-language-education/master-arts-teaching-world-and-heritage-language) |
| TX | University of Houston | [Graduate Certificate, Spanish as a Heritage Language](https://www.uh.edu/class/spanish/graduate/certificate/) |
| VA | George Mason University | [Graduate Certificate, Spanish Heritage Language Education](https://masononline.gmu.edu/programs/shle/) |
| WI | University of Wisconsin Whitewater | [Graduate Certificate, Heritage Language](https://www.uww.edu/ce/heritagelanguageeducation/certificateheritagelanguage) |

As shown in Table 8, one university offers a master’s degree on heritage language education, and the other four universities offer a graduate certificate in this area, with a primary focus on Spanish as a heritage language. The University of Pittsburgh offers a Master of Arts in Teaching in World and Heritage Language Education with certification studies available in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, or Latin. Although “heritage language education” is explicitly included in the name of the degree, the program curriculum primarily focuses on K-12 “foreign language education” and does not appear to include any courses that focus on heritage language education. It is therefore unclear the extent to which this program prepares educators to work specifically with heritage language learners.

The University of Nebraska Omaha offers a Graduate Certificate in Teaching Spanish to Heritage/Bilingual Learners, which may be completed entirely online. In addition to a required course on heritage language pedagogy, students are able to take courses on Hispanic bilingualism and sociolinguistics and Spanish in the U.S., among other topics related to Spanish language and literature. The University of Houston similarly offers an online Graduate Certificate in Spanish as a Heritage Language, which requires students to complete courses on teaching Spanish to heritage learners, sociolinguistics of U.S. Spanish, and U.S. Hispanic culture and literature. George Mason University also offers a Graduate Certificate in Spanish Heritage Language Education which may be completed in-person or online, and available courses focus on heritage language education, teaching Spanish for social justice, critical approaches to teaching Spanish language culture, Hispanic sociolinguistics, Spanish linguistics, and other related topics. Finally, the University of Wisconsin Whitewater offers a Graduate Certificate in Heritage Language. This certificate includes courses on critical approaches to heritage language education, arts-integrated multiliteracies for heritage learners, curriculum design for heritage learners, race and ethnic studies for heritage learners, and teaching heritage languages through the language arts.

## Conclusion

 Findings from this analysis of the current landscape of heritage language programming in the U.S. indicate that while just over half of states have a definition of “heritage languages” and/or “heritage language learners,” few nationally recognized language organizations or districts/programs serving this group of students have defined these terms, and although state definitions share some common characteristics, there is no single way in which these terms are defined across states. In addition, state definitions of heritage language programs vary, and some states list these programs as part of their world language education offerings, while others list them as a type of English learner education program. Definitions for all terms related to heritage language teaching and learning do not often appear directly on states’ Department of Education websites, and there is little information available about the extent to which these definitions are used for official purposes and the extent to which these programs are offered. Decisions about heritage language programming are often made at the local level, and information about course sequences, languages or levels taught, and the content or focus of instruction can be found on the websites of several of the districts/programs analyzed, most of which offer Spanish for Spanish speakers courses at the secondary level. Finally, in terms of resources, there are a number of expected proficiency outcomes provided at the state level for different types of heritage language courses and sequences, and several organizations have published on heritage language education and provide guidance or resources for instruction and programming, though there remain few professional learning opportunities for educators working with heritage language learners in U.S. schools.

# Analysis of Educator Practices and Perspectives

## Introduction

In this part of the report, we summarize findings from Massachusetts educators who work with heritage language learners collected through three virtual focus groups, a statewide online survey, and ten virtual interviews conducted with selected survey respondents. The purpose of this research was to investigate the practices and perspectives regarding heritage language programming, curriculum, and instruction of educators in districts with heritage language programs as well as educators who have experience working with heritage language learners in world language and English Learner Education programs. For each of the three phases of data collection we provide an overview of the methodology followed by findings and a summary. This part of the report concludes with a summary of the findings across all data collection methods, and the focus group protocol, survey questions, and interview protocol are included in the appendices at the end of the report.

## Focus Groups

### Methodology

 Focus group participants included Massachusetts language educators and program administrators who have an interest in or experience with heritage language education. A recruitment message with a link to register to participate was sent out by DESE. CAL staff contacted respondents to gather their consent and background information, and all applicants who met the minimum eligibility criteria of being Massachusetts K-12 educators with interest or experience in heritage language education were invited to participate.

A total of 14 participants took part in the three virtual focus groups, and each group included between four and five participants. Group assignments were made to ensure that educators from the same district participated in different focus groups and to group participants by role to the extent possible. The first group (Group 1) comprised four classroom teachers, the second group (Group 2) comprised three teachers and two administrators, and the third group (Group 3) was composed of four administrators and one advocate/teacher support provider from MATSOL. Participants completed a short demographic survey, and Table 9 summarizes the demographic information reported by the participants across all three groups.

Table 9. Focus Group Participant Demographic Information

| Demographic category | *n* |
| --- | --- |
| Current role\* |  |
| ESL Teacher | 1 |
| ELE Administrator | 1 |
| World Language Teacher | 7 |
| World Language Administrator | 6 |
| Advocate/teacher support | 1 |
| Context of experience working with heritage learners |  |
| None | 1 |
| Only in ESL courses | 1 |
| Only in world language courses | 4 |
| In heritage language courses/programs | 8 |
| Years of experience working with heritage learners |  |
| None | 2 |
| Less than 1 year | 2 |
| 1-5 years | 5 |
| 6-10 years | 4 |
| 20+ | 1 |
| World languages taught/worked with\* |  |
| Spanish | 9 |
| Portuguese | 5 |
| French | 3 |
| Italian | 3 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| English | 2 |
| German | 2 |
| Latin  | 2 |
| Arabic | 1 |
| ASL | 1 |
| Cape Verdean Creole | 1 |
| Haitian Creole | 1 |
| Grade levels taught/worked with |  |
| PreK-K | 1 |
| K-12 | 2 |
| 6-12 | 1 |
| 9-12 | 9 |
| K-12 and college | 1 |
| District Location |  |
| Eastern Massachusetts | 6 |
| Central Massachusetts | 5 |
| Western Massachusetts | 2 |
| N/A | 1 |
| \* Participants could select more than one role and more than one language. |  |

Virtual focus group sessions lasted approximately 90 minutes and were held concurrently on October 27, 2022, using the online meeting platform Zoom. Each of the three sessions was led by one CAL facilitator, and an additional CAL staff member served as a notetaker to document participants’ responses. A PowerPoint discussion guide was provided via screenshare to support both facilitators and participants throughout the sessions.

The Zoom meeting began with an overview of the project and focus group procedures delivered by one CAL facilitator to the full group of 14 participants. Participants then entered breakout rooms for their assigned groups. During the concurrent focus group sessions, the notetaker captured comments and discussion from the group, and the facilitator confirmed key points and conclusions. Participants were asked to use both audio and video capabilities for the duration of the session, and the sessions were recorded. The focus group sessions were organized into the following sections: introductions, discussion, and summary and conclusion. The discussion section asked about three major topic areas: definitions of “heritage language learner;” local heritage language programming, curriculum, and instruction; and desires for resources, guidance, and training.

Following each session, the facilitator and notetaker met to synthesize the discussion, review notes, and write a brief memo summarizing important aspects of the group’s discussion. The research team then reviewed notes and synthesis memos to determine key takeaways across groups. The appendix provides an overview of the protocols and procedures followed before, during, and after the focus group sessions.

### Findings

#### Focus Group Profiles

In Group 1, the teacher group, all participants taught Spanish in high school, and one also taught ESL. Two participants taught in recently created programs for Spanish heritage language learners and one participant taught heritage language learners in a cluster within a regular Spanish world language class and hoped to build a program. The participant who taught ESL and Spanish did not come from a school with heritage language programming but wanted to learn more about working with heritage language learners. Overall, this group had a shared understanding of the definition of heritage language learners, and the teachers emphasized that they saw diversity in language skills among their heritage learner students. The three participants who taught heritage language courses confirmed they created these courses to meet local needs, used solely educator-developed curricula, and wished to expand their programs. They named teaching grammar and spelling, placement, and differentiation for heritage language learners including those with IEPs, and assessment as specific areas of challenge for instruction. In terms of resources, the participants expressed a need for specific instructional materials for working with heritage language learners as well as models and other supports for starting and building full heritage language programs.

In Group 2, the teacher/administrator group, participants were a mix of current teachers, a current teacher who is also an administrator, and a former teacher who is now an administrator. Four participants were current or former Spanish teachers, and one was a current Portuguese teacher. Four participants reported that their schools or districts offered heritage language classes, while one participant taught heritage language learners in a cluster within a regular Spanish world language class and hoped to build a program along with the teacher from Group 1 who worked in the same school. While this group also emphasized the diversity of language skills among their heritage language students, they noted that this label often refers to two groups: immigrant students and students with a cultural connection to the language who were raised in the United States. Participants reported that they generally used educator-developed curricula to serve heritage language learners, including modifying versions of off-the-shelf curricula to serve heritage learners’ needs. They discussed the use of materials related to identity and culture as well as standards and curricular materials from various language education organizations and noted that finding resources that are appropriate to students’ ages, literacy levels, and interests can be a time-consuming challenge, especially for underserved languages. Advocacy was a major theme for this group, as they have found that administrators, parents, and students often do not understand the value of heritage language education. Participants would like to see expanded language programming, training on teaching heritage language learners, resources related to literacy, and advocacy for the value of heritage language programming.

In Group 3, the administrator/MATSOL group, four participants were administrators (directors or department heads at the school or district level), and one participant held a leadership position in MATSOL[[2]](#footnote-2). All participants who reported being administrators indicated that their schools or districts offer heritage language courses in a variety of languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, and Cape Verdean Creole. Overall, this group agreed that heritage language learners are a heterogeneous group of students and that limitations to the number of courses offered often lead to many different types of students with linguistic and cultural connections to the language being placed in the same classroom. They reported that although most districts have some heritage language tracks at the high school level, courses are typically offered at only a few levels for a few languages, and they discussed issues with articulation and alignment between courses/programs. This group also reported that teachers are primarily using their own locally-developed curriculum for heritage language courses and that high quality curriculum focuses on culture and social justice while centering students’ backgrounds and identities in the classroom. Participants emphasized the difficulties in maintaining and expanding heritage language programming, and while there were mixed opinions on the need for professional development, participants agreed that there is a need for curriculum materials and resources, support for staffing, and greater visibility and advocacy for heritage language programs.

#### Key Takeaways

 This section presents key takeaways compiled across the three focus groups with supporting evidence from each group for whom this theme emerged and discussion of differences within and across groups where applicable.

##### Definitions of heritage language learners highlight the diversity among these students, and participants requested that DESE support educators in developing a shared understanding of this group of students.

Across groups, participants noted that the definition of heritage language learners is very broad, and that there is not a universal definition used by districts, programs, or teachers. They reported that there are several types of students who are considered heritage language learners and/or grouped together with them in the classroom, including students with a cultural or familial tie to the language but no experience learning it in a school setting as well as native speakers who immigrated to the United States. Participants highlighted the diversity of skills and different degrees of exposure to the language among heritage language learners, noting that some students may have stronger receptive skills, such as reading and listening, than productive skills, including writing and speaking, while others have stronger speaking and listening skills than literacy skills. According to participants in the teacher/administrator group, heritage language learners also tend to have strong cultural understanding. In terms of needs, participants in the teacher group noted that heritage language learners may benefit from additional input and instruction in academic and formal registers and writing conventions.

Participants in the administrator/MATSOL group stated that, as the term “heritage language learner” is not formally defined at the school or district level, there is no shared definition of who should be categorized as a heritage language learner, resulting in some disagreements between teachers and administrators on who should be offered heritage language courses/programs. They therefore requested that explicit information about the diversity among heritage language learners be provided to better support educators in understanding these different types of learners and determining who would benefit from different types of heritage language programming. Similarly, one participant in the teacher group requested a one-page resource from DESE to define the term “heritage language” so that educators can share and easily explain to families, other language teachers, ELL instructors, principals, and additional stakeholders what this group is and what learners need.

##### Participants emphasized the importance and effectiveness of a curricular focus on culture, identity, and social justice in heritage language classrooms and reported that this is often supported by the use of world language and other standards.

Culture, identity, and social justice emerged as themes across groups. The teacher group named a number of practices that they saw as effective in their locally-developed curriculum and instruction for heritage language learners: developing units that connect to identity, cultures, and contemporary life including through viewing authentic Spanish-language movies and television shows; representing diverse cultures and varieties of Spanish so that students see themselves and consider and compare different perspectives; and adapting college-level materials from *Español para hablantes de herencia* by Margarita Casas. The teacher/administrator group believed that their programs are culturally sustaining and foster connections among peers with similar backgrounds. They incorporated similar topics and activities in their programs as the teacher group, including identity, values and traditions, and social frames; topics with personal connections and relevance to students, including reports on their families’ home countries; popular Spanish-language writers; field trips; journaling; working on oral skills; classroom visits from multilingual visitors; and opportunities to interact with the local Spanish-speaking community. Participants in the administrator/MATSOL group discussed how the focus of instruction in heritage language classrooms is often on identity, which differs from the traditional focus of other second/additional language learning courses. Participants in all groups noted that the curriculum being used in their schools or districts aims to develop students’ understanding of identity and culture as they relate to one’s heritage language. Some participants across groups indicated that their curriculum also focuses on social justice and that the materials and resources used in heritage language classrooms highlight the experiences of marginalized and/or underrepresented groups within the heritage culture. One participant from the teacher/administrator group noted that heritage languages can be a sensitive topic for some students, due to factors such as how their families came to the U.S., making social emotional considerations important when engaging with students and encouraging them to participate in heritage language classes.

Educators in all groups discussed using various standards to support heritage language learners. The Spanish educators in the teacher group reported planning around the ACTFL[[3]](#footnote-3) standards’ goal areas of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (the “5 Cs”) and Advanced Placement (AP) themes as well as connecting to social justice and social and emotional learning topics and standards. Two participants from the administrator/MATSOL group also reported using AP themes, along with world language standards, to create curricular units centered around heritage language identity. While participants from the teacher/administrator group did not mention AP themes, they also reported incorporating additional standards to help enhance their programming, namely some MABE[[4]](#footnote-4) and WIDA[[5]](#footnote-5) standards, including different WIDA language functions.

##### Participants described their efforts to value students’ linguistic and cultural expertise in the classroom and reflect on their own backgrounds, and they recommended that other teachers do the same when working with heritage language learners.

Participants across all groups discussed the importance of valuing the assets that heritage language learners bring to the classroom, including celebrating students’ cultural knowledge and language skills. Participants from the teacher group noted that this was especially important when some students have concerns about their speaking ability in comparison to other heritage language learners or as critiqued by their family and L1 speakers. The teacher group talked about how they had learned new vocabulary from their students and tried to promote the idea that students’ language is rich and useful even if different from their own varieties of Spanish and formal language conventions. Similarly, the teacher/administrator group and administrator/MATSOL group both noted that curricula in their schools or districts are tailored to the specific group of students that are being taught with special consideration for their families’ countries of origin. However, participants in both of these groups noted that it can be difficult to find authentic resources from all students’ countries of origin, and the administrator/MATSOL group reported that some students thus feel that their own language or culture is “wrong” when not adequately represented in the classroom. In addition to advocating for the value of students’ cultural knowledge and language skills, one participant from the administrator/MATSOL group highlighted how those who are working with heritage language learners need time and support to reflect on their own biases and preconceptions and argued that educators must recognize that they have things to learn from their students related to the heritage language and culture, particularly from students who speak different varieties or dialects.

##### Participants noted that educators working in heritage language courses/programs largely create their own programming, and they reported that curricula and resources are needed to guide these efforts.

Participants in all groups reported that teachers in heritage language courses developed their own curricula, including adapting commercial textbooks to suit local needs. These adaptations included ensuring that materials are appropriate for students’ proficiency levels, ages, and interests. One participant from the administrator/MASTOL group emphasized how their heritage language curriculum needs to change from year to year and course to course, as each cohort of students is different and teachers need to target students’ individual interests, abilities, and needs, thus requiring additional work on the part of the teacher to adapt any existing curriculum. The larger administrator/MATSOL group noted that, in some cases, teachers are using a combination of teacher-developed curriculum and textbooks due to a lack of time and guidance surrounding curriculum development. Time was also a recurring theme across groups, as participants emphasized that they needed to search for appropriate and authentic materials, a process that often requires significant time and effort. A Portuguese teacher from the teacher/administrator group and several members of the administrator/MATSOL group noted that curricular materials, books, and resources are limited in many languages. Participants in the administrator/MATSOL group also stated that teachers often use translated materials or resources due to a lack of available authentic resources in the languages being taught.

Participants in all groups requested supports to help heritage language educators with both instruction and programming. Participants in the teacher group expressed a need for instructional materials and requested practical guides and examples for curriculum and lesson planning, while participants in the administrator/MATSOL group expressed a need for universal access to and guidance surrounding curricular materials and resources. At the programmatic level, participants in both the teacher and teacher/administrator groups requested guidance and resources for placement methods. Participants in the teacher group whose districts had heritage language courses explained that they had co-created their programs, and one teacher in the process of designing courses reported having taken on working with a heritage language learner cluster within a world language class. Participants in the teacher group also requested training, resources, and incentives to encourage districts to create heritage language courses as well as a how-to guide for implementing heritage language programs for administrators, superintendents, and school boards in addition to language teachers. Similarly, two participants from the teacher/administrator group requested information about districts with strong heritage language programs that could serve as models or places to visit and observe.

Instructional and curricular resources varied across participants. One high school teacher from the teacher/administrator group noted that their high school switched from Nuevas Vistas to the Galería series, and teachers preferred the new books, while another participant noted that their district could not find an off-the-shelf program that worked. Two participants in this group discussed creating project-based units, while one participant from the teacher group had also recently learned about youth participatory action research and hoped to build community service or project-based learning into their heritage language program in future years. One participant from the administrator/MATSOL group mentioned that they adapt their department’s ESL model curriculum for heritage language courses. Another participant in this group described efforts to create curriculum units in English with a heritage language focus so that teachers working with different heritage languages can translate and adapt them for their own use.

##### Participants reported a desire for greater connection and collaboration between heritage language programs and other types of language programs being offered within schools.

Participants in all groups discussed their interest in increased collaboration between heritage language, world language, and English Learner Education (ELE) programs in their schools. Participants in the teacher group, which included one teacher of both Spanish and ESL, agreed that they had good communications with ELE programs in their schools and were able to share information to help heritage language learners in both contexts. However, they thought that students would benefit from more opportunities for the two types of programs to work together, such as through offering bilingual education options like Latino studies or ethnic studies in Spanish, co-teaching sessions with ELE and language instructors, and spaces to share content and concerns between ELE and heritage language/world language programs. Similarly, participants in the teacher/administrator group believed that increased collaboration could add legitimacy to heritage language programs, and multiple participants from this group discussed the use of ELE resources such as the WIDA and MABE standards when working with heritage language learners, which suggests that there is the potential for collaboration between the different language programs serving this group of students. However, the teacher/administrator group did not believe that their schools or districts currently have strong communication between heritage language and ELE programs. One participant in the administrator/MATSOL group pointed out the importance of collaboration among heritage language programs and world language programs within their school or district and recommended that there be more opportunities for this type of interaction between programs to best meet the needs of heritage language learners.

Across groups, many participants discussed barriers to providing heritage language services to English learners. One participant in the teacher group noted that a student had to leave the heritage language class in which she felt successful due to a conflict with a required ELL class, suggesting that coordinating schedules could benefit heritage language learners who are also identified as English learners. Participants in the teacher/administrator and administrator/MATSOL groups echoed the concern about scheduling, noting that English learners’ schedules are so filled by learning English that they aren’t able to take electives or courses in languages other than English, including their heritage language(s), indicating that there are some challenges in collaboration between these different language departments. Educators from the teacher/administrator group also noted that students in heritage language classes are sometimes recruited from among ELs with room in their schedules, but this approach risks missing ELs who are reclassified and thus become harder to find and direct towards heritage language programming.

##### Participants underscored the value of heritage language programming and requested additional DESE support to help advocate for these programs statewide.

Participants in both the teacher and teacher/administrator groups saw their heritage language courses and programs greatly benefitting students and wanted resources to advocate for new and expanded heritage language programming. Participants in the administrator/MATSOL group likewise expressed a need for greater visibility and advocacy for heritage language programs at the school, district, and state levels, in their case because they reported feeling that heritage language programs are not currently being served and/or supported in an adequate way. One participant from the administrator/MATSOL group noted that heritage language courses/programs seem marginalized compared to other subjects despite world languages being considered a core subject, and another argued that languages, including heritage languages, are not given enough attention in the state. A participant from the teacher group asked how DESE could further encourage districts to open heritage language courses, perhaps through providing funding, incentives, or other direct support to districts that create such courses or programs. Another teacher from this group suggested that districts hire people to design a full heritage language program instead of relying on classroom teachers with limited time. Participants in the administrator/MATSOL group also discussed the need to increase pathways to becoming a heritage language teacher, whether through partnerships with community colleges and universities, training and support for school personnel with target language skills, or supports for teachers coming from other countries to help them become certified teachers within the U.S. school system.

In addition to these supports for districts, the groups had a variety of suggestions for DESE to support advocacy efforts. Participants in the teacher group requested advocacy materials, while participants in the teacher/administrator group suggested that a DESE-led education campaign focused on the assets of heritage language learners could bolster local advocacy efforts. Both groups reported a desire to reach administrators, superintendents, guidance counselors, and other educators to help them recognize the needs for these programs. The teacher group suggested that all Massachusetts language educators should receive training on understanding and exploring the backgrounds of heritage language learners in their classrooms. The administrator/MATSOL group stated that teachers themselves often push back when asked to teach heritage language courses due to their lack of preparation and capacity. Two participants from the teacher group noted that other educators in their schools or districts sometimes discourage students from taking courses in their heritage language, so they believed that information about specific heritage language offerings and credits and the benefits for students of studying their home languages needs to be shared more widely with students, colleagues, and parents. The teacher/administrator group also discussed the importance of advocacy among parents and community members, particularly those who are not fluent in English or may lack access to email. One participant in this group suggested that informing parents about the Seal of Biliteracy could lead to greater participation in heritage language classes. Similarly, a participant from the administrator/MATSOL group recommended that efforts be made to demonstrate how language learning can lead to successful careers to encourage students to enroll in these courses.

##### Participants agreed that heritage language learners would benefit from more robust language programming, including more heritage-specific course offerings, longer sequences of language learning, and improved articulation within and across programs.

Participants in all three groups suggested that education for heritage language learners in Massachusetts would be improved by starting language courses at the elementary level. Participants in the teacher/administrator group stated that beginning programs earlier would benefit all students, and that waiting until high school to introduce languages does a disservice to students. One participant from the administrator/MATSOL group pointed out that few districts have language instruction at the elementary or middle school levels, and those that do follow either a dual language or Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) model and are not specifically targeting the needs of heritage language learners, which further limits students’ access to and enrollment in high-quality heritage language education. Even when elementary school language classes are offered, a teacher from the teacher/administrator group noted that elementary school pull-out services are frequently scheduled during language class.

Participants also expressed a desire to expand heritage language courses at the high school level, including building better connections with options such as world language classes, the Seal of Biliteracy, AP courses, and college heritage language programs. Participants from the teacher group expressed a desire to expand heritage language courses to all four years of high school, while participants from the teacher/administrator group expressed a desire for more heritage language classes to be offered for specific proficiency levels. Although participants in the administrator/MATSOL group noted that most of their districts have some type of heritage language programming, they similarly expressed a need for expanding this programming to be more inclusive of different grade and proficiency levels and languages. Participants in all groups mentioned AP classes and the Seal of Biliteracy. Two participants from the teacher group noted that they wanted heritage language learners in their schools to be prepared to enter AP courses but saw few heritage language learners enrolling in these courses. Similarly, three participants from the teacher/administrator group mentioned that heritage language classes can help students go on to AP classes, but one of those educators mentioned that this is only done well at one of the several high schools in their district. Another participant in this group, who is working to start a heritage language program in their district, expressed a desire for more heritage language learners to participate in AP classes and the Seal of Biliteracy. Participants from the administrator/MATSOL group indicated that some heritage language courses are designed so that students can continue in world language classes, such as AP courses, after completing all courses offered in the heritage track, but that this is not always the case depending on the language. They also noted that there are often issues with articulation between the heritage language courses and world language courses offered, making it difficult to provide students with appropriate programming as they progress from level to level. In addition, although participants in this group discussed their goals for students to earn the Seal of Biliteracy, they reported that language programs are not offered for all heritage languages represented in their schools or districts, making it difficult for some students to reach the proficiency level needed to earn the Seal. Similarly, most participants in the teacher/administrator group expressed positive attitudes toward the Seal of Biliteracy, but none cited high student participation rates in this program. They also advocated for increased staffing to support students with different heritage languages, including languages that are not currently offered. The teacher group also advocated for building connections to the Seal of Biliteracy and college heritage programs in order to give students credit and validation for their language courses.

Each group offered additional suggestions for programmatic policies that could help support heritage language learners. One participant from the teacher group commented multiple times on the desire for more dual language programs which can support heritage language learners well, including those who are also English learners. Several participants from the teacher/administrator group advocated for increased identification of heritage language learners. Finally, participants from the administrator/MATSOL group emphasized the difficulties in maintaining and expanding their school or district’s heritage language programming due to a lack of funding, trained teachers, and materials or resources, as well as the limited number of successful program models to look to for guidance. Although one participant discussed efforts to expand their district’s heritage language programming to include less commonly taught languages, such as Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole, and Vietnamese, most of the schools and districts represented in the group have struggled to maintain their existing programs and are unable to expand further than adding a new course level or two each year.

##### Although there were differing opinions on the need for a Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework, all groups requested that state-level supports and resources (e.g., professional development and curricular materials) be developed to address the specific needs of educators in Massachusetts for heritage language curriculum and instruction.

Participants in both the teacher and teacher/administrator groups were generally in favor of a heritage languages framework developed by DESE. Participants in the teacher group agreed that a framework would provide some supports that they do not have at the moment. Their suggestions for the most effective development of this framework included having working groups of educators contribute to writing and editing as they did with the world languages framework, providing examples for practice along with theory and research on heritage language learning, and allowing flexibility and freedom for instruction within the framework. While participants in the teacher/administrator group reported appreciating the use of proficiency levels in the world languages framework, they noted that proficiency levels may look different for heritage language learners. Participants in this group requested that a heritage languages framework include information about teaching literacy that is tailored to older students, and they discussed the importance of including culture and history in a heritage languages framework. When asked what they would like to see in a heritage languages framework, participants in the administrator/MATSOL group expressed a need for curricular materials and resources so that all districts can provide the same quality of education for heritage language learners and that this education is delivered in an equitable way. Rather than a framework, participants in this group requested a scope and sequence and/or model curriculum units for heritage language courses and programs to help educators understand what the expectations are and what instruction should look like in the heritage language classroom. They also requested a list of vetted materials and resources, or places to find them, and more guidance and support for finding and recruiting teachers. Participants in the teacher/administrator group would likewise welcome resources such as curriculum and tools that are easily accessible to all educators. Finally, as mentioned above, participants in the teacher group discussed a need for the DESE website to clearly define what a heritage language is for families and educational stakeholders.

There were also somewhat mixed opinions on the need for additional professional development. One participant from the administrator/MATSOL group mentioned that educators in their school or district receive plenty of professional development opportunities, but that these ultimately take time away from curriculum development and often do not provide the type of training that is truly needed. Other participants from this group requested training be provided on differentiation, literacy development, and capitalizing on students’ existing skills and abilities. In the teacher group, one participant suggested workshops on how to organize a full heritage language program, and another requested funding for staff to attend existing PD opportunities, as did one participant from the administrator/MATSOL group. Finally, participants from the teacher/administrator group expressed a desire for professional development about teaching heritage language learners, including differences from L2 instruction and assets-based approaches, as well as training on advocating to administrators.

### Summary

 The focus groups combined perspectives from teachers, administrators, and a MATSOL leader. Participants requested advocacy and education from DESE to help promote the importance of heritage language education among teachers, administrators, students, families, and community members, and they requested shared definitions of heritage languages and heritage language learners to assist with their own advocacy efforts. Participants agreed that heritage language learners bring important assets to the classroom and explained how they tailored their curriculum to their students’ backgrounds and needs. Creating and adapting curriculum is a major task for educators working with this group of students, and this process, along with finding appropriate and authentic materials/resources, can be very time consuming and challenging. Across groups, participants requested more practical resources and guidance for curriculum development and program implementation. While participants generally agreed that a framework and professional development could be useful, they expressed a greater need for instructional and curricular resources. They would also appreciate learning more about successful heritage language programs in the state and would welcome the opportunity to visit these programs and learn from them. Participants also expressed a desire for more robust heritage language programming, recommended beginning world language programs at younger ages, and identified the potential for collaboration between different types of language programs offered in schools (including world language and English Learner Education programs) to better serve heritage speakers/signers. However, participants also noted that there are barriers to accessing heritage language education, particularly for English learners, and hoped for greater support and advocacy to ensure that all heritage language learners have an opportunity to further develop their home language(s).

## Survey

### Methodology

An online survey was designed to gather feedback from Massachusetts K-12 educators who work with heritage language learners about the current state of heritage language programming throughout the Commonwealth. The survey was administered via Survey Monkey and consisted of up to 35 multiple-choice questions and open-response items. Respondents were routed to different parts of the survey based on their responses to certain questions, and thus may not have reviewed all 35 items.

Survey respondents were recruited via email. The recruitment email was circulated to DESE distribution lists and newsletters. In addition, CAL staff sent personalized emails to the focus group participants as well as participants in the heritage languages focus group from the Massachusetts World Language Standards Focus Group and Implementation Services project asking them to share the survey within their networks. The survey opened on November 7 and closed on November 30, 2022.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to indicate if they are currently educators in Massachusetts K-12 public schools, and those who did not meet this criterion were exited from the survey. Responses from participants who completed the background information section were included in the data analysis. Of the total 218 responses, 142 (65.1%) responses met these criteria; data from respondents who did continue past this point in the survey are not included in this report. Some survey questions were optional, and others allowed for multiple responses. This accounts for differences in the total number of responses in the survey results by question. It should also be noted that some questions received small numbers of responses, and these small sample sizes mean that the responses received may not be representative of all educators currently working in Massachusetts K-12 public schools. Data were downloaded, cleaned, and analyzed in Microsoft Excel, and open-ended questions were coded into thematic categories to systematically analyze responses.

Results are organized into the following sections: (1) Respondent Background Information; (2) Heritage Language Programs for Heritage Speakers/Signers; (3) World Language Programs for Heritage Speakers/Signers; (4) English Learner Education Programs for Heritage Speakers/Signers; and (5) Professional Development and Supports. This organization follows the structure of the survey, which can be found in the appendices.

### Findings

#### Respondent Background Information

Survey respondents first provided information about their roles and experience. Table 10 summarizes respondents’ years of experience working with heritage language learners in any program.

Table 10. Survey Respondents' Experience

| Years working with heritage language learners in any program | *n*  | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 11 years or more | 90 | 63.4% |
| 6 - 10 years | 24 | 16.9% |
| 1 - 5 years | 18 | 12.7% |
| Less than 1 year | 10 | 7.0% |

As shown in Table 10, responses indicate that almost all respondents were experienced educators with at least one year of experience working with heritage speakers/signers, and 63.4% of respondents had 11 or more years of experience working with this group of students.

Twelve respondents, not shown in Table 10, indicated that they had no experience working with heritage speakers/signers in any type of program. These respondents were offered the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback about the resources they thought would benefit educators of heritage speakers/signers, what they would like to see in a heritage languages curriculum framework if they worked with heritage speakers/signers in the future, and any other comments they had about how DESE can support improvements in heritage language programming in the state. Three respondents chose to provide feedback. In terms of resources, these respondents requested groups to support educators working with heritage speakers/signers, professional development, a framework, opportunities to tour model schools, model curriculum units, and links to relevant research. For a framework, one respondent requested extensive instructional resources or suggested curriculum programs. Two respondents provided additional comments about how DESE can support heritage language programming, including support for Seal of Biliteracy access and advocacy for heritage language programs via a statement to districts about how heritage language programming supports equity and access. After answering the open-ended questions, these respondents were excited from the survey and did not see any more questions.

Respondents who indicated that they had some experience working with heritage language learners were next asked about their current role. A total of 142 respondents answered this question, and the results can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11. Respondents' Current Roles

| Current role\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| World language teacher | 88 | 62.0% |
| ESL teacher | 24 | 16.9% |
| World language administrator | 23 | 16.2% |
| ELE administrator | 14 | 9.9% |
| ELE coach | 3 | 2.1% |
| World language coach | 2 | 1.4% |
| Other\*\* | 11 | 7.7% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question.\*\* Responses: Principal, Linguistic researcher, Superintendent, Spanish Immersion, Bilingual Visual Arts Teacher, Special Education Director, Dual language teacher (Spanish), ELE Coordinator, Bilingual Programs Administrator, Curriculum Coordinator of Education in Languages Other Than English, Curriculum Supervisor |

As shown in Table 11, most respondents (62.0%) indicated that they work as world language teachers, followed by ESL teachers (16.9%) and world language administrators (16.2%).

Respondents were next asked about the district they work in. Table 12 shows the number of responses received by county, and this information is also presented visually in Figure 1. Although participants could provide multiple responses to this question, only three respondents indicated that they work in multiple districts. The percentages in Table 12 are relative to the total number of respondents (*n*=142) rather than the total number of districts named.

Table 12. Number of Survey Respondents by County of School District

2

4

14

2

15

1

4

8

42

4

12

5

14

22

| County | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Middlesex | 42 | 29.6% |
| Worcester | 22 | 15.5% |
| Essex | 15 | 10.6% |
| Bristol | 14 | 9.9% |
| Suffolk | 14 | 9.9% |
| Norfolk | 12 | 8.5% |
| Hampshire | 8 | 5.6% |
| Plymouth | 5 | 3.5% |
| Berkshire | 4 | 2.8% |
| Hampden | 4 | 2.8% |
| Nantucket | 4 | 2.8% |
| Barnstable | 2 | 1.4% |
| Dukes | 2 | 1.4% |
| Franklin | 1 | 0.7% |

Figure 1. Number of Survey Respondents by County of School District

As shown in Table 12, nearly 30% of respondents indicated that they work in a district located in Middlesex County. Respondents were also asked to report what school levels that work in, and Table 13 shows the responses received.

Table 13. School Levels Where Respondents Work

| Current school level\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| High School | 115 | 81.0% |
| Middle School | 56 | 39.4% |
| Elementary School | 38 | 26.8% |
| PreK | 20 | 14.1% |
| Other\*\* | 2 | 5.3% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Responses: Adult Ed, Administration |

As shown in Table 13, all grade levels were represented in the survey data, and most respondents (81.0%) reported working in high schools. Participants could select multiple responses to the question about grade levels taught, and the percentages presented in Table 13 are relative to the total number (*n=*142) of respondents.

 In this section of the survey, respondents were also asked some general questions about heritage speakers/signers in their school and ways in which this group of students are defined and identified.

 Table 14 presents the heritage languages represented among the students in respondents’ schools. It is important to note that this data is self-reported; teachers from the same schools did not necessarily report all of the same languages. Nonetheless, it presents an overview of the most common heritage languages among students in the state.

Table 14. Heritage Languages Represented Among Students in Respondents' Schools

| Languages\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Spanish | 136 | 95.8% |
| Portuguese | 100 | 69.7% |
| Arabic | 76 | 53.5% |
| Haitian Creole | 69 | 48.6% |
| Chinese\*\* | 61 | 42.3% |
| French | 60 | 42.3% |
| Russian | 44 | 31.0% |
| Cape Verdean | 40 | 28.2% |
| Khmer | 27 | 19.0% |
| Japanese | 26 | 18.3% |
| Korean | 23 | 16.2% |
| Italian | 22 | 14.8% |
| German | 16 | 11.3% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Note that this covers multiple dialects (e.g., Cantonese, Toishanese, and Mandarin). |

 As shown in Table 14, Spanish was the most common heritage language, selected by 136 of the 142 total respondents (95.8%), followed by Portuguese (69.7%), Arabic (53.5%), and Haitian Creole (48.6%). In addition to the heritage languages presented in the table, a total of 45 other heritage languages or dialects were mentioned by the respondents, and some respondents mentioned that other unspecified heritage languages were also represented in their school(s) or district. The five most common other languages reported were Vietnamese (10), Gujarati (9), Ukrainian (7), Albanian (7), and Urdu (6).

 Respondents were next asked whether their school(s) defined the term “heritage speaker/signer,” and a total of 38 respondents (26.7%) indicated that they do and provided their schools’ definitions. These definitions may represent a shared understanding by teachers at a school rather than official definitions, and common elements included exposure to the language at home and/or among family, familiarity with the language, and a potential for stronger speaking skills than literacy skills. A few definitions mentioned culture, while many definitions also included native or immigrant language users, indicating that there is overlap in the conceptualizations of native and heritage speakers. Representative comments include:

A student who has exposure to a language and culture other than English at home.

Fluent students, Hispanic background students [for whom] English is their second language

A student whose family speaks the language and they speak it as well but may not be able to read and write it

 The following question asked respondents to indicate how their school(s) identified heritage speakers/signers, and Table 15 shows the identification methods reported.

Table 15. Identification Methods for Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Method\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Home language surveys | 89 | 62.7% |
| Placement tests | 57 | 40.1% |
| Self-selection | 48 | 33.8% |
| Student interviews | 44 | 31.0% |
| Caretaker interviews | 22 | 15.5% |
| Other\*\* | 15 | 10.6% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Responses: I don’t know (5); teacher observation/request (2); placement test upon teacher request; ELL program, registration for school; current or former ELs; Checking last names or language used at home in our school roster; Access testing; we use all of the above but not in a formal, systematic way; family self-identification; they are not identified |

 As shown in Table 15, most respondents (62.7%) indicated that heritage speakers/signers are identified via home language surveys, followed by placement tests (40.1%), self-selection (33.8%), and student interviews (31.0%). Caretaker interviews were relatively uncommon, selected by only 15.5% of respondents.

 The final question in this section of the survey asked respondents about the greatest challenges their school(s) had in identifying heritage speakers/signers. A total of 92 respondents answered this open-ended question, and the five most common challenges can be seen in Table 16.

Table 16. Schools’ Greatest Challenges in Identifying Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Challenge\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lack of system or policy | 23 | 25.0% |
| Not clearly identified by parents/students | 22 | 23.9% |
| Placement | 14 | 15.2% |
| Lack of resources | 9 | 9.8% |
| Lack of support for/lack of understanding of heritage language education | 7 | 7.6% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one challenge. |  |  |

The most common challenge, reported by 25.0% of respondents, was a lack of system or policy related to identifying heritage language learners. This was closely followed by parents not identifying their children as heritage speakers or students not identifying themselves as such (23.9%). Of these, nine responses indicated issues with the home language surveys. Representative comments include:

The fact that our SIS [student information system] only allows one home language to be identified based on the HLS [home language survey], and that many families indicate only English on the HLS which means that other heritage languages are not identified, mean this is not ideal.

Parent[s] sometimes list a second home language that they speak when it is not actually spoken at home and therefore their child has a far lower proficiency than we might be led to believe.

Four responses also referred to a stigma against being identified as an English learner, as in the following example:

Parents don't want to identify children as ELL for fear of affecting their placement.

The next most common challenge was placement (15.2%). One comment specifically mentioned the lack of an assessment, while several others referred to heritage students’ uneven proficiency levels across skills making it challenging to determine which class to place them in.

#### Heritage Language Programs for Heritage Speakers/Signers

 At the beginning of the next section of the survey, respondents indicated whether they worked with heritage speakers/signers in heritage-specific classes. Those who responded “yes” were asked the remaining questions in this section, while those who responded “no” skipped this section. Fifty respondents indicated that they worked with heritage language learners in such classes and therefore were asked to respond to the questions in this section of the survey. First, respondents were asked the languages for which heritage language programming was offered in their school(s), and this information is presented in Table 17.

Table 17. Languages for Which Heritage Language Programming is Offered in Respondents' Schools

| Languages\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Spanish | 26 | 65.0% |
| Portuguese | 13 | 32.5% |
| French | 4 | 10.0% |
| Arabic | 2 | 5.0% |
| Chinese | 2 | 5.0% |
| German | 1 | 2.5% |
| Haitian Creole | 1 | 2.5% |
| Italian | 1 | 2.5% |
| Japanese | 1 | 2.5% |
| Russian | 1 | 2.5% |
| Other\*\* | 2 | 5.0% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Responses: many, Tamil |  |

Of the 40 responses received for this question, over half (65.0%) indicated that Spanish heritage language programming was offered in their school(s), and nearly a third (32.5%) indicated that Portuguese heritage language programming was offered. As with all data reported here, it is important to note that this data is self-reported; teachers from the same schools or districts did not necessarily report all of the same languages. Language courses reported may also represent programming options such as online or after school classes.

 Respondents next indicated the grade levels for which heritage language programming was offered in their school(s). A total of 40 respondents answered this question, and the results are shown in Table 18.

Table 18. Grade Levels for Which Heritage Language Programming is Offered in Respondents' Schools

| Grade level\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PreK | 2 | 5.0% |
| K | 7 | 17.5% |
| 1st | 7 | 17.5% |
| 2nd | 6 | 15.0% |
| 3rd | 5 | 12.5% |
| 4th | 4 | 10.0% |
| 5th | 5 | 12.5% |
| 6th | 6 | 15.0% |
| 7th | 10 | 25.0% |
| 8th | 10 | 25.0% |
| 9th | 36 | 90.0% |
| 10th | 36 | 90.0% |
| 11th | 35 | 87.5% |
| 12th | 35 | 87.5% |
| Other\*\* | 1 | 2.5% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Response: Important to note that it depends on the grade which class is offered |

 As shown in Table 18, responses indicate that heritage language programming is relatively uncommon at the elementary school level, becoming slightly more common in 7th and 8th grades and much more common in high school. It cannot be determined whether these results are due to more high school teachers taking the survey, or whether more high school teachers responded to the survey because there are more heritage language programs at the high school level. Of the six administrators who responded to this question who indicated that they work at all grade levels, two reported that heritage language programming is only offered at the high school level, two reported that it is offered at middle and high school levels, and two reported that it is offered for all levels.

 Respondents next indicated how many heritage language classes are offered in their school(s) each year. The question gave the example that “Spanish 1 for heritage learners” would be one class, even if multiple sessions are offered. Again, a total of 40 responses were received for this question, and the results are shown in Table 19. Respondents who selected “more than 5” were asked to specify in an open-ended comment box.

Table 19. Number of Heritage Language Classes in Respondents' Schools Each Year

| Classes per year | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2-3 | 23 | 57.5% |
| 1 | 6 | 15.0% |
| More than 5 | 6 | 15.0% |
| 4-5 | 5 | 12.5% |

As shown in Table 19, the most commonly reported number of heritage language classes (57.5%) was 2-3 classes per year. Among schools offering more than 5 classes per year (15.0%), half of respondents indicated that they had some kind of dual language programs, all of which were at the elementary or middle school levels.

 The following question asked respondents how many times per week heritage language classes meet in their school(s) on average. The results, out of a total of 40 responses, are shown in Table 20. Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify in an open-ended comment box.

Table 20. Average Number of Times per Week that Heritage Language Classes Meet in Respondents' Schools

| Times per week | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4-5 | 28 | 70.0% |
| 2-3 | 10 | 25.0% |
| Other  | 2 | 5.0% |

As shown in Table 20, most respondents (70.0%) indicated that classes meet 4-5 times per week, although 25% of respondents reported that classes meet only 2-3 times per week. For the respondents who selected “other,” one noted that elementary and middle school classes meet every day while high school classes meet less frequently. The other reported working in a dual language program where 50% of the day is taught in Portuguese.

 Respondents next answered questions about their programs’ curricula. First, they were asked to select the statement(s) that best described curriculum use in their programs, and results are shown in Table 21 (*n*=40). The question included an open-ended comment box that asked respondents to specify the off-the-shelf curriculum or other curriculum that they used.

Table 21. Curriculum Use in Heritage Language Programs

| Curriculum\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| We use a teacher-designed curriculum. | 26 | 65.0% |
| We use a curriculum designed by our school. | 15 | 37.5% |
| We use a curriculum designed by our district. | 10 | 25.0% |
| We use content curricula in the heritage language. | 10 | 25.0% |
| We use off the shelf curriculum. | 5 | 12.5% |
| Other | 5 | 12.5% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |

 The majority of respondents reported using a teacher-designed (65.0%) or school-designed (37.5%) curriculum. There is some overlap in these categories, with nine respondents indicating that they use both teacher- and school-designed curricula. In total, 36 respondents (90.0%) indicated that they use at least one of teacher-, school-, or district-designed curriculum. There is also overlap in the use of off-the-shelf or other curriculum with a locally-designed curriculum, with five respondents indicating the use of commercial resources with teacher-, school-, or district-designed curriculum. One respondent who currently uses an off-the-shelf curriculum noted that their school had previously used a teacher-designed curriculum. Respondents named Galería, Benchmark Adelante, Entre Mundos, Estrellita, AP curriculum, and Language Bird as off-the-shelf resources they currently use, and one respondent noted that their school(s) plan to adapt American Reading Company literacy units in the future.

 Participants then had the option to explain what was missing from the curriculum and what could be improved. A total of 27 respondents answered this open-ended question, and the four most common responses are shown in Table 22.

Table 22. What is Missing From or Could be Improved in the Curriculum in Respondents' Heritage Language–Specific Programs

| Missing Element\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Resources | 17 | 63.0% |
| Staff & training | 4 | 14.8% |
| Structure | 3 | 11.1% |
| Time | 3 | 11.1% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one missing element. |

 Most respondents (63.0%) who answered this question indicated a need for resources. Requests included a framework, authentic sources, resources at particular levels, literacy resources, resources to address heritage learners’ specific needs, and resources in particular languages. Representative comments include:

If there was a framework or suggested resources that DESE or ACTFL could provide, that would be helpful. We hope to make this curriculum as student-centered as possible.

The fact that there are no Portuguese or French curricula that is “Off the shelf” that is common core aligned and designed for heritage and non-native speakers of the language, that means that it takes an extraordinary amount of time for teachers to create curricula.

*We need really basic phonics and literacy for some of our heritage kids. We need access to leveled texts for reading.*

The curriculum and assessments are not appropriate to the wide range of heritage learners in our district. It is inequitable for us to assess students on the world language model on the basis of language proficiency alone, rather than on other dimensions such as literacy and content learning and the functional approach to language. If we actually used WIDA to drive our curriculum rather than World Languages it would be a much more appropriate approach for our students. Currently we have situations where students whose primary language is Spanish are being told they are "Intermediate Low" in proficiency in their own language because all of our assessments are based on a language proficiency scale. Also, we should design courses to reflect students’ dynamic bilingualism rather than a strict language separation. Our students mostly live in bilingual spaces and this translanguaging should be celebrated in heritage classes.

 Respondents were next asked to rate the effectiveness of their programming in supporting heritage speakers/signers in fulfilling certain goals. A total of 40 respondents provided responses to this question, and results are shown in Table 23. Note that a similar question was asked in other sections of the survey completed by respondents who indicated that they have experience working with heritage language learners in world language education or English Learner Education programs, and a comparison of responses about program effectiveness across program types can be found in the Summary section of this part of the report.

Table 23. Evaluation of Heritage Language Programming

| Goal | Not effectively | Somewhat effectively | Effectively | Very effectively | Not sure |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Developing proficiency in the heritage language culture | 1 | 9 | 16 | 11 | 3 |
| 2.5% | 22.5% | 40.0% | 27.5% | 7.5% |
| Developing proficiency in listening/viewing and speaking/signing in the heritage language | 1 | 5 | 20 | 11 | 3 |
| 2.5% | 12.5% | 50.0% | 27.5% | 7.5% |
| Developing proficiency in reading and writing/glossing in the heritage language | 3 | 11 | 15 | 8 | 3 |
| 7.5% | 27.5% | 37.5% | 20.0% | 7.5% |
| Building connections with the heritage language community | 0 | 15 | 10 | 12 | 3 |
| 0.0% | 37.5% | 25.0% | 30.0% | 7.5% |
| Developing their personal/cultural identities | 0 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 3 |
| 0.0% | 25.0% | 32.5% | 35.0% | 7.5% |
| Earning the Seal of Biliteracy | 4 | 8 | 13 | 10 | 5 |
| 10.0% | 20.0% | 32.5% | 25.0% | 12.5% |

As shown in Table 23, 50% or more of respondents indicated that their programming effectively or very effectively supports heritage language learners in fulfilling each of these goals. At the same time, however, a large proportion of respondents indicated that their programming is not effective or only somewhat effective in supporting heritage language learners in fulfilling these goals, ranging from 15.0% to 37.5% of respondents for different goals. For five of the six goals, a quarter or more of respondents rated their programming as not effective or only somewhat effective. The goal that was most frequently described as effectively or very effectively supported was developing proficiency in listening/viewing and speaking/signing in the heritage language (77.5%), followed by developing proficiency in the heritage language culture (67.5%) and developing personal/cultural identities (67.5%). Building connections with the heritage language community was the goal most commonly described as only somewhat effectively supported (37.5%), followed by developing proficiency in reading and writing/glossing in the heritage language (27.5%). Earning the Seal of Biliteracy was the goal most commonly described as not effectively supported (10.0%). As a follow up to this question, respondents were asked to answer an open-ended question about whether their program had other goals and if it was effective in achieving those goals for students. Respondents listed, but did not rate, the following goals: having the most experienced teachers in these classes to help these kids develop higher skills; movement towards eventual Seal of Biliteracy; being part of a[n] interconnected global community; being fully bilingual in all areas of communication; and having heritage language students learn, develop and use the heritage language as their own. One respondent did rate their goal of critical consciousness as being somewhat effectively supported.

 The final question in this section asked respondents about the greatest challenges their school(s) had in providing heritage language programming. A total of 30 respondents answered this question, and the five most common challenges are shown in Table 24.

Table 24. Greatest Challenges in Providing Heritage Language Programming Among Respondents in Heritage Language–Specific Programs

| Challenge\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Staffing | 11 | 36.7% |
| Resources | 10 | 33.3% |
| Support for varying proficiency levels | 7 | 23.3% |
| Support for programs | 5 | 16.7% |
| Access to classes | 3 | 10.0% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one challenge. |

 As shown in Table 24, a third or more of respondents indicated that staffing (36.7%) and/or resources (33.3%) were their greatest challenges. Staffing challenges included both finding and retaining qualified staff, and specific resource needs included funding, placement tests, a program design model, and curricula suited to students’ needs and interests. Representative comments include:

Good curriculum for lower level / young students

Lack of funds to create a specific class for Spanish Heritage learners

Develop a curriculum that attends [to] the academic need of the students and helps them to integrate with culture.

The next most common challenge (23.3%) was supporting students with different proficiency levels. Respondents noted that it can be challenging to cater to many different language levels in the same class, especially when some students have literacy skills in the heritage language and others do not. One respondent mentioned students with interrupted schooling as a particular group that is difficult to place in the appropriate level due to their limited literacy skills relative to their speaking and listening skills. Support for programs was also mentioned as a challenge (16.7%), as administrators, guidance counselors, other teachers, and other stakeholders may not see the value in or support heritage language courses. Of the three teachers who mentioned barriers to accessing classes (10.0%), two mentioned English learners as a particular group that faces such barriers, while a third discussed issues of scheduling.

#### World Language Programs for Heritage Speakers/Signers

At the beginning of the next section of the survey, respondents indicated whether they worked with heritage speakers/signers in world language programs. Those who responded “yes” were asked the remaining questions in this section, while those who responded “no” skipped this section. Ninety-nine respondents indicated that they worked with heritage language learners in such programs and therefore were asked to respond to the questions in this section of the survey. First, they were asked the about the resources used to support heritage speakers/signers in world language classes in their school(s). The results are shown in Table 25 (*n*=90).

Table 25. Supports for Heritage Speakers/Signers in World Language Classes

| Support\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework | 62 | 68.9% |
| Teacher/locally developed materials for heritage speakers/signers | 51 | 56.7% |
| 2021 Massachusetts Quick Reference Guide for Heritage Languages | 19 | 21.1% |
| Commercially available materials for heritage speakers/signers | 19 | 21.1% |
| I don’t know | 10 | 11.1% |
| None of the above | 9 | 10.0% |
| Other\*\* | 4 | 4.4% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Responses: ELL program; Administration of the AAPPL to Juniors and Seniors in order to receive a State Seal of Biliteracy; Teachers Pay Teachers and Facebook groups; Guest speakers of the heritage language from different Spanish speaking countries |

The 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework was the most common resource (68.9%) respondents reported using to support heritage speakers/signers in world language classes, followed by teacher-/locally-developed materials for heritage learners (56.7%), and the 2021 Massachusetts Quick Reference Guide for Heritage Languages and commercially available materials for heritage speakers/signers (both selected by 21.1% of respondents). A sizeable fraction of respondents used none of the listed materials (10.0%) or selected “I don’t know” (11.1%).

 Respondents were next asked what was missing from the resources that they used to support heritage speakers/signers and what could be improved. A total of 53 respondents provided responses to this optional open-ended question, and the six most common challenges are shown in Table 26.

Table 26. What is Missing From or Could be Improved in the Resources that World Language Educators Use to Support Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Missing element\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| More or more specific resources | 23 | 43.4% |
| Support for heritage language-specific needs or programs | 15 | 28.3% |
| Support for diversity of heritage language learners | 8 | 15.1% |
| Supports for heritage language learners and teachers in mixed classes | 6 | 11.3% |
| Staffing | 3 | 5.7% |
| Identification and placement | 3 | 5.7% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one missing element. |

As shown in Table 26, the most common request (43.4%) was for more resources or more specific resources. Of these, four respondents stated that they simply had no resources for heritage learners. Other common resource needs included funding; curriculum; authentic materials, especially for languages other than Spanish; and information about the specific needs of heritage speakers/signers. Representative comments included:

For Portuguese specifically maybe more available material, books, etc. For Spanish there is a lot more.

Defined outcomes for each specific learner. Curriculum units with a flow. Authentic materials with a throughline.

It can be challenging for World Language teachers to address the needs of Heritage Language speakers in the World Language class. Considerations for Heritage Learners in curriculum, materials, and mindsets would be helpful.

More resources written in [the] target language from those countries.

The next most common missing element (28.3%) was support for heritage language–specific needs or programs. Some respondents cited a lack of support from administrators, and others discussed the potential for heritage language classes to attract more student interest. Representative comments include:

Information for administrators about the benefits of heritage language in terms of equity and community building.

A class sequence for Heritage speakers of Spanish geared toward literature and culture (rather than basic mechanics, grammar, and vocab as usual) would be engaging and useful for those students.

There could be more set and specific supports for heritage speakers in lower level Spanish classes. Having heritage speakers mixed into lower level Spanish classes is not necessarily the best way to set them up for heritage classes, but if there are set heritage speaker assignments that go with the curriculum and prepare them for heritage classes that could help teachers[,] or [having] another heritage speaker class or Spanish preparation class for heritage speakers who need more support to access the heritage speaker curriculum.

We need more guidance/support on setting up heritage classes that can meet a wide range of learner needs. We have had Spanish for heritage speakers in the past but the World Language dept currently doesn't have these classes, largely citing the challenges for teachers.

Support for the diversity of heritage language learners, including in terms of age, culture, language, and multilingualism, was the next most common missing element (15.1%). One respondent noted that their district only worked with heritage language learners in upper-level world language classes and did not support these students at the elementary or middle school level. Other respondents discussed ways in which resources could better represent the students they serve. Representative comments include:

The standards are very biased on Romance languages. The surveys do not take a multilingual approach to identifying languages spoken by the individual.

I know we have speakers of indigenous languages (from Guatemala) and they are not supported to maintain their first languages.

Culturally sustaining instructional approach and materials, room for translanguaging

Staffing was a concern for three world language respondents (5.7%), and responses included requests for bilingual counselors to work with students. Three respondents (5.7%) also noted that identifying and placing students can be challenging.

In the following question, respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of their world language programming in supporting heritage speakers/signers in fulfilling certain goals. These results are shown in Table 27. The number of respondents who rated the effectiveness of their programming for each goal is listed in Table 27, and percentages are based on the number of respondents who provided a rating for that goal. Note that a similar question was asked in other sections of the survey completed by respondents who indicated that they have experience working with heritage language learners in heritage language specific or English Learner Education programs, and a comparison of responses about program effectiveness across program types can be found in the Summary section of this part of the report.

Table 27. Evaluation of World Language Programming for Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Goal | Not effectively | Somewhat effectively | Effectively | Very effectively | Not sure |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Developing proficiency in the heritage language culture | 12 | 28 | 25 | 11 | 14 |
| *n=90* | 13.3% | 31.1% | 27.8% | 12.2% | 15.6% |
| Developing proficiency in listening/viewing and speaking/signing in the heritage language | 9 | 27 | 31 | 10 | 12 |
| *n=89* | 10.1% | 30.3% | 34.8% | 11.2% | 13.5% |
| Developing proficiency in reading and writing/glossing in the heritage language | 10 | 31 | 29 | 9 | 11 |
| *n=90* | 11.1% | 34.4% | 32.2% | 10.0% | 12.2% |
| Building connections with the heritage language community | 19 | 31 | 20 | 8 | 12 |
| *n=90* | 21.1% | 34.4% | 22.2% | 8.9% | 13.3% |
| Developing their personal/cultural identities | 11 | 33 | 24 | 10 | 11 |
| *n=89* | 12.4% | 37.1% | 27.0% | 11.2% | 12.4% |
| Earning the Seal of Biliteracy | 18 | 15 | 23 | 25 | 9 |
| *n=90* | 20.0% | 16.7% | 25.6% | 27.8% | 10.0% |

As shown in Table 27, the goal that was most frequently described as effectively or very effectively supported was earning the Seal of Biliteracy (53.3%); however, this was also the goal that was most commonly described as not effectively supported (20.0%). For all other goals listed in the table, over 40% of respondents indicated that each goal was not effectively or only somewhat effectively supported in world language programming.

As a follow up to this question, respondents were asked to answer an open-ended question about whether their program had other goals and if it was effective in achieving those goals for students. Four respondents’ goals mentioned the Seal of Biliteracy, two mentioned AP programming or tests, and three reported having goals related to increasing students’ cultural knowledge or connections. Respondents also listed goals related to improving other specific skills, including skills in all modes of communication, presentational skills, comprehension skills, and literacy skills. One respondent’s goal was listed as “Spanish club,” while another sought to offer students preparation to study in countries where their heritage language is spoken. One respondent’s goal was critical consciousness, and another aimed for better connection between students with different cultural backgrounds. One respondent voiced a concern that not all heritage languages may be incorporated in their programming, and two other respondents described their goals to offer more targeted programming for heritage language learners, including relevant, proficiency-based coursework. None of the respondents rated their programming’s effectiveness in achieving these additional goals.

 The final question in this section asked respondents about the greatest challenges their school(s) had in working with heritage speakers/signers in world language classes. A total of 62 respondents answered this optional open-ended question, and the five most common challenges are shown in Table 28.

Table 28. Greatest Challenges in Working with Heritage Speakers/Signers in World Language Classes

| Challenge\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Support for varying proficiency levels | 18 | 29.0% |
| Programmatic issues\*\* | 16 | 25.8% |
| Lack of heritage language–specific programming | 13 | 21.0% |
| Valuing heritage languages and cultures | 9 | 14.5% |
| Resources | 8 | 12.9% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one challenge.\*\* Issues of administration and coordination across language classes; see examples below  |

The most common challenge that respondents reported (29.0%) was support for varying proficiency levels. This is a concern both when working with students whose proficiency levels may vary across skills and when working among heritage language learners as a group. Respondents also mentioned challenges in differentiating classes for these varying proficiency levels. Representative comments include:

Our heritage speakers are mixed with non-heritage speakers which often works out well. However, in some cases it is hard to determine a good placement because they may excel in speaking and listening but have limited experience with reading and writing. They may be placed in a lower level class in order to work on those skills but then are not being challenged to improve their speaking and listening.

We find that our heritage Spanish learners (not all speak Spanish) come with tremendous variations in terms of their proficiency levels and learning needs. It's incredibly hard to develop one program or approach that would meet all their needs, and we don't have the numbers for different kinds of classes (for example, literate and fluent heritage speakers v. second/third generation heritage learners who hear Spanish at home but don't speak it fluently).

Other respondents indicated placement challenges stemming from a desire for students to receive higher grades, a challenge that overlaps with some programmatic issues discussed below. Interestingly, this desire may come from either guidance departments or students themselves, as the following comments show:

Some students refuse to be moved into heritage speakers classes because they'd prefer an 'easy A' and we are supposed to let them stay in the class.

Our guidance department schedules them in Level 1 classes without concern for their proficiency level for an "easy A"

 While respondents commonly reported that they were challenged by a lack of heritage language-specific programming in their schools (21.0%), especially for low-incidence districts, even those whose school(s) provide services or programming designed for heritage language learners were often challenged by programmatic issues (25.8%). These issues included time, scheduling, services for languages other than Spanish, identifying heritage language learners, classroom management, curriculum, and course articulation. Representative responses include:

Moving students from Spanish 3 to AP or H[onors] classes.

Properly putting students into heritage speakers classes is a challenge. Some students refuse to be moved into heritage speakers classes because they'd prefer an 'easy A' and we are supposed to let them stay in the class. Another challenge is that the heritage speaker curriculum is not as accessible to heritage speakers who are not as motivated or who have IEPs and need more supports with a literature aspect.

Identifying them sooner to place them better.

The next most commonly reported challenge was valuing heritage languages and cultures (14.5%) in a more global way. Two respondents indicated that the Seal of Biliteracy is not offered in their districts, and one noted administrative resistance to implementing it. Other responses reported attitudes that do not prioritize heritage languages and cultures, whether due to low incidence or lack of knowledge about how world language classrooms may not address heritage language learners’ needs. Further representative comments include:

Spanish is treated as an exploratory subject where students meet one day a week for 4 years, making progress difficult.

The language oppression that comes from a deficit approach to students' languaging

Seal of Biliteracy not offered in this district. No supports/groups/activities for Heritage Learners in languages other than the language taught in our World Language program (Spanish). Parents of Spanish Heritage Learners often have unrealistic expectations and want a specialized program for their children that is significantly different than the regular World Language curriculum, but teachers are not given time or support to do this.

Resources were the next most commonly reported challenge (12.9%). Most comments simply mentioned a lack of materials or resources, although one specified resources specifically for students with interrupted formal education and requested supports to address literacy skills. Although not among the five most common challenges, social and emotional considerations (*n*=7, 11.3%) followed closely behind. This category included concerns such as students’ ages when considering placement into high school level classes, absenteeism, wanting students to feel connected, and self confidence in using the heritage language. In addition, staffing was listed as a challenge by four respondents, indicating that this concern is not limited to heritage-specific programs.

#### English Learner Education Programs for Heritage Speakers/Signers

At the beginning of the next section of the survey, respondents indicated whether they worked with heritage speakers/signers in English Learner Education (ELE) programs. Those who responded “yes” were asked the remaining questions in this section, while those who responded “no” skipped this section. Forty respondents indicated that they worked with heritage language learners in such programs and therefore were asked to respond to the questions in this section of the survey. First, they were asked which ELE program models were offered to heritage speakers/signers in their school(s). This information is presented in Table 29 (*n* = 38). Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify in an open-ended comment box.

Table 29. ELE Program Models Offered to Heritage Speakers/Signers in Respondents' Schools

| ELE Model\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sheltered English Instruction | 31 | 81.6% |
| Dual Language Education | 11 | 28.9% |
| Transitional Bilingual Education | 7 | 18.4% |
| Other | 5 | 13.2% |
| \*Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |

As shown in Table 29, Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) was by far the most common program model reported (81.6%), followed by Dual Language Education (28.9%) and Transitional Bilingual Education (18.4%). Other program models included English for Language Learners, SEI with pullout ESL class, and Native Spanish Literacy for SLIFE students. A 2002 ballot initiative titled Question 2 made SEI the main ELE model in Massachusetts; while provisions were amended and repealed in 2017, SEI remains very common.

 Next, respondents were asked how heritage speakers’/signers’ heritage languages were integrated into the ELE program(s) in their school(s). The results are shown in Table 30 (*n* =38). Respondents who selected “other” were asked to specify in an open-ended comment box.

Table 30. How Heritage Speakers'/Signers' Heritage Languages are Integrated into ELE Program(s) in Respondents' Schools

| Method\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| There are opportunities for students to use their heritage language in the classroom. | 24 | 63.2% |
| There are discussions about the value and importance of the heritage language/culture. | 22 | 57.9% |
| There is support provided in the heritage language. | 16 | 42.1% |
| There is instruction provided in the heritage language. | 11 | 28.9% |
| Other | 10 | 26.3% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |

The most common support (63.2%) was providing opportunities for students to use their heritage language in the classroom, followed by discussions about the value and importance of the heritage language/culture (57.9%). While not as common, support provided in the heritage language (42.1%) and instruction provided in the heritage language (28.9%) were still prevalent. Other supports included encouraging translanguaging, using translation earbuds with newcomers, and providing native language support for beginning ELs. One respondent reported that their school(s) is currently designing a heritage course, while three reported that few or no supports are offered.

 The survey then asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of their ELE programming in supporting heritage speakers/signers in fulfilling selected goals. These results are shown in Table 31 (*n* = 38). Note that a similar question was asked in other sections of the survey completed by respondents who indicated that they have experience working with heritage language learners in heritage language specific or world language education programs, and a comparison of responses about program effectiveness across program types can be found in the Summary section of this part of the report.

Table 31. Evaluation of ELE Programming for Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Goal | Not effectively | Somewhat effectively | Effectively | Very effectively | Not sure |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Developing proficiency in the heritage language culture | 14 | 13 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| 36.8% | 34.2% | 21.1% | 5.3% | 2.6% |
| Developing proficiency in listening/viewing and speaking/signing in the heritage language | 17 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| 44.7% | 31.6% | 15.8% | 5.3% | 2.6% |
| Developing proficiency in reading and writing/glossing in the heritage language | 19 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| 50.0% | 31.6% | 10.5% | 5.3% | 2.6% |
| Developing English language proficiency | 1 | 5 | 15 | 16 | 1 |
| 2.6% | 13.2% | 39.5% | 42.1% | 2.6% |
| Building connections with the heritage language community | 10 | 14 | 10 | 2 | 2 |
| 26.3% | 36.8% | 26.3% | 5.3% | 5.3% |
| Developing their personal/cultural identities | 4 | 16 | 13 | 3 | 2 |
| 10.5% | 42.1% | 34.2% | 7.9% | 5.3% |
| Earning the Seal of Biliteracy | 10 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 3 |
| 26.3% | 18.4% | 23.7% | 23.7% | 7.9% |

As shown in Table 31, respondents rated their programs as by far most effective in supporting heritage language learners in developing English language proficiency, with 81.6% rating their programs as effective or very effective in doing so. For all other goals, however, less than half of respondents rated their programs as effective or very effective in supporting heritage language learners in fulfilling them, with earning the Seal of Biliteracy receiving the highest proportion (47.4%) of effective or very effective ratings and developing proficiency in reading and writing/glossing in the heritage language the lowest (15.8%).

Following the rating table for ELE programs, respondents had the opportunity to answer an open-ended question about whether their program had other goals and if it was effective in achieving those goals. Respondents listed varied goals, including specific goals related to students’ English proficiency (2), community connections (2), connections across academic disciplines (2), and self-confidence and self-advocacy (2). Two respondents had goals related to students’ heritage language proficiency, including one whose school or district hopes to achieve dual language programming within five years and one whose program seeks to provide support and opportunities for students to maintain their heritage languages.

 The final question in this section asked respondents about the greatest challenges their school(s) had in working with heritage speakers/signers in ELE classes. A total of 62 respondents answered this optional open-ended question, and the six most common challenges are shown in Table 32 (*n* = 62).

Table 32. Greatest Challenges in Working with Heritage Speakers/Signers in ELE Classes

| Challenge\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Barriers to students’ access to heritage language education  | 8 | 30.8% |
| Valuing heritage languages and cultures | 8 | 30.8% |
| Support in/coordination with content classes | 7 | 26.9% |
| Staffing and teacher training | 6 | 23.1% |
| Resources | 3 | 11.5% |
| Support for varying proficiency levels | 3 | 11.5% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one challenge. |

The most common challenges, both cited by eight respondents (30.8%) were barriers to students’ access to heritage language education, as well as issues with various stakeholders not valuing heritage languages. Barriers included not offering students’ heritage languages as a world language option at the school, low incidence, availability of resources in the heritage language, and the SEI program model. Representative comments include:

Major heritage languages are Cape Verdean and Haitian, and many of those identified as Spanish speakers actually speak Quechua, and Spanish is their second language. Finding materials in the students’ native languages are almost impossible.

Historical exclusion of students at lower English proficiency from the dual language programs and relegation to TBE or SEI (which we are overcoming by removing the structural barriers right now, but still need to work on mindsets of "who belongs in DL"), minimum legal requirements for provision of ESL in Dual Language programs has a detrimental impact on the provision of quality content and literacy instruction particularly in lower grades, no specials teachers who speak the LOTE

Respondents who indicated that valuing heritage languages and cultures was a challenge listed various stakeholders who did not recognize this value, including administrators, parents, other teachers, and students. Representative comments include:

Most parents just want their kids to learn English and do not identify the languages spoken at home.

Often, students are shy to share their language or it's too much attention.

We have a large mix of heritage languages and a mix of English language proficiencies all together in the same ESL class per grade. Outside of the ESL classroom, there is a lack of knowledge regarding cultural proficiency and culturally responsive teaching. There is no push about the power of multilingualism despite the district being around 30% First Language Not English families.

Support in and coordination with content classes, the next most commonly reported challenge (26.9%), was sometimes an issue due to a lack of knowledge about integrating language and culture in the classroom, or a lack of language support in content classes. In other cases, this was challenging due to a lack of time for collaboration. One respondent commented:

We have a pull-out model. ELE teachers and content/classroom teachers must meet on their own time to discuss goals, objectives, instruction, and strategies. Therefore, collaboration is limited.

Staffing and teacher training were also common concerns for this group of respondents (23.1%). One respondent mentioned teacher training specifically, and another requested help getting staff. Other respondents gave more general comments about staffing, and one specified a need for specials teachers who speak students’ heritage languages. Of the respondents who mentioned resources (11.5%), one specified time and another discussed the difficulty of finding resources in less common languages.

#### Professional Development and Supports

 All respondents were routed to the final section of the survey, in which they answered questions about previous and future training and desired resources for heritage language education in Massachusetts, including a possible heritage languages framework. The first question asked respondents to indicate the previous training they had received on working with heritage speakers/signers. The results are shown in Table 33 (*n* = 119).

Table 33. Respondents' Previous Training in Working with Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Training\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No previous training | 51 | 42.9% |
| Professional development course or workshop | 47 | 39.5% |
| Self-study | 44 | 37.0% |
| On-the-job training | 40 | 33.6% |
| Undergraduate or graduate level course on a related topic that included information on heritage language teaching | 23 | 19.3% |
| Undergraduate or graduate level course on heritage language teaching | 19 | 16.0% |
| Other\*\* | 2 | 1.7% |
| \* Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. |
| \*\* Responses: volunteering for DESE; living in another country in high school and attending school there |

Many respondents (42.9%) reported having no previous training in working with heritage speakers/signers. However, almost as many (39.5%) reported that they have attended a professional development course or workshop on working with this group of students, and a slightly smaller proportion reported that they had participated in relevant self-study (37.0%) or on-the-job training (33.6%). There was a significant degree of overlap among these categories, as 65.9% of participants who reported participating in professional development also reported participating in either self-study or on-the-job training, with 40.4% reporting that they have participated in both self-study and on-the-job training. Similarly, 31.9% of participants who reported participating in professional development reported that they had taken an undergraduate or graduate level course on heritage language teaching, and 40.4% reported that they had taken an undergraduate or graduate level course on a related topic that included information on heritage language teaching.

 Respondents then had the option to list topics that they would like to see covered in DESE professional development offerings on teaching heritage speakers/signers. A total of 77 respondents answered this optional open-ended question, and Table 34 shows the results.

Table 34. Topics Respondents Would Like to See Covered in DESE Professional Development Offerings on Teaching Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Topic\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Curriculum and instruction | 38 | 49.4% |
| Programming | 13 | 16.9% |
| Advocacy | 9 | 11.7% |
| Support for specific groups | 8 | 10.4% |
| Policy | 5 | 6.5% |
| Identification | 3 | 3.9% |
| Collaboration with related fields | 3 | 3.9% |
| Staffing and teacher training | 3 | 3.9% |
| Assessment | 2 | 2.6% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one topic. |

As shown in Table 34, by far the most (49.4%) requested topics related to curriculum and instruction for heritage language learners. These included general best practices for instruction, finding resources, differentiation, ways to support heritage learners in non-heritage specific world language classes, identity, culture, curriculum development, leveraging existing skills to grow new skills, translanguaging, proficiency models for heritage learners, critical consciousness, assessment, writing, and grammar. Selected comments include:

Implementing strategies to support language growth and creating differentiated curriculum where students can find challenging activities

How to set expectations for heritage speakers that are different than the expectations for non-heritage speakers in lower level Spanish classes, while not excluding them or calling them out.

How to support heritage learners who have complete listening comprehension but very limited speaking skills grow their confidence with skills other than listening[…]There are many other factors at play [in students’ speaking] beyond just the hours of listening to a language in a home setting (including shame, peer pressure, individual learning challenges/needs, etc.).

Supporting Indigenous students from Latin America to develop their cultural identity and learn or maintain their first language. Supporting students from Africa to develop their cultural identity and maintain their additional languages.

How to structure a four year pathway or program to meet the needs of heritage speakers; Best practices and materials to use in heritage speaker classes; Something that highlights the differences between heritage language pedagogy and world language pedagogy for student learning the language for the first time

The next most commonly requested topic (16.9%) related to programming. Representative comments include:

What's DESE approach regarding Heritage Speakers. What are DESE perspectives and goals to achieve [with] a Heritage program

Heritage language curriculum, building school systems that leverage and value heritage languages and cultures

How to develop a program in our system. Materials and programs already set up that have [been] shown to work well. Perhaps with field trips to see these systems in action.

Respondents also requested training on advocating for the value of heritage languages and cultures (11.7%), as they reported that they would like to be able to advocate for heritage language programs and supports with school committees, administrators, and parents as well as other stakeholders. Representative comments include:

How to sell the importance of this topic to school committees for funding of heritage speaker programs.

Ways to encourage families to maintain both languages

How to build support for the Heritage Language program at the district and school level; How to evaluate the effectiveness of the Heritage Language program

Respondents who requested training on support for specific groups (10.4%) mentioned elementary level students, students with little or no educational background, newcomers, ELs including long-term ELs and dually-identified ELs with disabilities, speakers of languages other than Spanish, Indigenous Latin American students, and African students. One respondent requested greater recognition of the heritage languages represented in their district and programming to support these learners. Respondents who commented on policy (6.5%) included both training requests and requested policy changes. Representative comments include:

Recognizing that world languages should be a core content class starting at middle school

How to promote teaching of heritage language in schools where SEI is EL model

There should not be any extra demands placed on World Language teachers to develop significantly different instruction for heritage learners unless that is built in as a specific class. We cannot teach beginners and heritage learners two different lessons at the same time.

Three respondents who requested training on identification discussed the profiles and unique skills and challenges of heritage learners; tools to identify all languages used by a student; and guidance on identifying heritage speakers without bias and discussing ELE with parents in a sensitive manner. Three respondents who requested professional development in collaboration with related fields discussed how this could scaffold and interact with professional development and principles from SEI/RETELL and WIDA; how to coach content teachers; and how to serve heritage learners with disabilities, including appropriate testing. Finally, in addition to these specific topics, several respondents indicated that they would like to see training offered on any topics related to working with heritage speakers/signers.

The next question asked respondents how useful certain resources would be in helping their school(s) better meet the needs of heritage speakers/signers. The results are shown in Table 35 (*n* = 117).

Table 35. Evaluation of Resources to Meet the Needs of Heritage Speakers/Signers

| Resource | Not useful | Somewhat useful | Useful | Very useful | Not sure |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Guidance for creating, maintaining, or expanding heritage language programming | 4 | 14 | 35 | 58 | 6 |
| 3.4% | 12.0% | 29.9% | 49.6% | 5.1% |
| Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework and content standards for heritage language programming | 4 | 15 | 34 | 58 | 6 |
| 3.4% | 12.8% | 29.1% | 49.6% | 5.1% |
| Guidance for adapting the 2021 MA World Languages Curriculum Framework for heritage language programs | 6 | 15 | 33 | 56 | 6 |
| 5.1% | 12.8% | 28.2% | 47.9% | 5.1% |
| Expected learning outcomes for heritage speakers/signers in different types of programs  | 2 | 15 | 27 | 63 | 9 |
| 1.7% | 12.8% | 23.1% | 53.8% | 7.7% |
| Instructional guidance, materials, and supports for heritage speakers/signers | 0 | 11 | 27 | 71 | 8 |
| 0.0% | 9.4% | 23.1% | 60.7% | 6.8% |
| Assessment guidance, materials, and supports for heritage speakers/signers | 4 | 12 | 27 | 67 | 7 |
| 3.4% | 10.3% | 23.1% | 57.3% | 6.0% |
| Heritage Language Leadership Networks with district leaders across the state  | 6 | 14 | 40 | 46 | 10 |
| 5.1% | 12.0% | 34.2% | 39.3% | 8.5% |
| Access to Heritage Language teacher preparation programs | 5 | 10 | 35 | 56 | 9 |
| 4.3% | 8.5% | 29.9% | 47.9% | 7.7% |

As shown in Table 35, for all resources, over 75% of respondents indicated that they would be useful or very useful. Instructional guidance, materials, and supports for heritage speakers/signers received the most ratings of very useful (60.7%). This resource also had the highest proportion of combined useful or very useful ratings (83.8%), closely followed by assessment guidance, materials, and supports for heritage speakers/signers (80.3%). Guidance for adapting the 2021 MA World Languages Curriculum Framework for heritage language programs received the highest proportion of not useful or somewhat useful ratings, but this was still only 17.9% of respondents, with 76.1% of respondents rating this resource as useful or very useful. Even more respondents (78.7%) rated a Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework as useful or very useful, and over three quarters of respondents (76.9%) indicated that expected learning outcomes for heritage speakers/signers in different types of programs would be useful or very useful.

 The next question offered respondents the opportunity to describe anything else that they would like to see in a DESE-developed Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework. Forty respondents answered this optional open-ended question, and the six most common results are shown in Table 36.

Table 36. Elements that Respondents Would Like to See in a DESE-Developed Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework

| Element\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Implementation guidance and resources | 9 | 22.5% |
| Represent the diversity of heritage language learners, languages, and cultures | 4 | 10.0% |
| Guidance and information for different program models | 4 | 10.0% |
| Staffing | 3 | 7.5% |
| Assessment | 2 | 5.0% |
| Advocacy for heritage language learning | 2 | 5.0% |
| \* Respondents could indicate more than one element. |  |  |

The most common request (22.5%) was for implementation guidance and resources. Representative comments include:

Once they do a workshop and/or present labs and classes, I would like to see a friendly booklet distributed to all Districts, so we can have it as a guide and reference.

Curriculum frameworks are fine, but districts need to make sure they don't become just another unfunded mandate for teachers. We're stressed and burnt out already - to make real change for our students requires districts (with state support) to provide money and staffing to build/rebuild programs. Teachers are often expected to transform our professions for free on our own time, and it's not logistically possible, sustainable, or fair.

 Other respondents requested that the framework represent the diversity of heritage language learners, languages, and cultures (10.0%) and to include guidance and information for different program models (10.0%). Respondents asked for the framework to include nuances for different languages and represent all countries where a language is spoken, including their different cultures, to reflect the students whom it will serve. One respondent requested:

Fully encompassing cross-linguistic diversity, diversity among literacy levels... for example how to assess a speaker if the language does not have a standardized orthography/is a sign language. It begs of a global perspective on its design.

In terms of guidance and information for different program models, respondents requested information for elementary, middle, and high school levels; low incidence districts with a variety of minority languages; and various program models. Respondents noted:

We do not have the liberty to separate our Heritage Learner students from our EL immigrant students so a Heritage Languages Curriculum Framework that assumes we have a whole class of heritage speakers would not be helpful for us. Simply some tips and guidance to use in class would be more helpful than a lengthy, formal document.

I would like to see a variety of models being presented. In my district we are transitioning into a more Portuguese/Spanish Language Arts model as that is what meets our needs. However, for some districts, depending on how often classes run and the size of the program, a World Language model, focused on students’ identity and heritage may work best. I would like to see both models honored and addressed by DESE.

Requests related to staffing from three respondents including emphasizing the need for multilingual administrators; eliminating the literacy Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) to enable districts to hire native speaker staff who have passed English tests in other areas and states; and using aides and support staff or separate classes for heritage language learners since teachers already must address many diverse needs in the classroom. Two respondents each requested that guidance for assessment be included in the framework and that the framework advocate for the value of heritage language learning, including perhaps offering honors credit for heritage language classes. Lastly, two respondents expressed gratitude to DESE for their attention to identifying and supporting the needs of heritage language learners.

 Finally, respondents had the opportunity to offer any other comments about how DESE can support improvements in heritage language programming in the state. The results can be seen in Table 37 (*n* = 40).

Table 37. Additional Comments on How DESE Can Support Improvements in Heritage Language Programming in the State

| Topic\* | *n* | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Promote and advocate for heritage language education  | 11 | 27.5% |
| Funding | 6 | 15.0% |
| Gratitude | 5 | 12.5% |
| Other resources | 4 | 10.0% |
| Support for staffing | 3 | 7.5% |
| EL policies | 2 | 5.0% |
| Definitions/identification | 2 | 5.0% |
| \* Respondents' comments could address more than one topic. |

Over a quarter of respondents (27.5%) commented on how DESE should promote and advocate for heritage language education, including the Seal of Biliteracy; language classes at younger grades; promoting heritage language instruction among districts, special ed leaders, administrators, and counselors; advocating for languages programs that reflect the heritage languages spoken in a district; and treating languages as a core subject rather than a bonus. Representative comments include:

Make a case to offer as much as possible where possible. I know that the program supported my students learning in all areas, especially self identity and esteem

DESE could help explain to administration and counselors the need for heritage language programs and get the word out. It should also help campaign for a celebration of the skills that heritage language learners bring with them that are typically ignored.

I think we need to have more emphasis from the state around our ethical responsibility to support home language development as a core, not enrichment, aspect of what we do.

A sizeable fraction of participants (15.0%) requested monetary resources, including funding and grants for programs and one suggestion of grants for students to develop their heritage language skills. Requests for other resources (10.0%) included a basic program that schools could adopt and adapt to their context and resources for low-incidence districts. Requested supports for staffing from three respondents included funding for staff; support in teacher training programs; and advocacy for sufficient staffing to meet the needs of heritage language learners. Two respondents noted that EL policies can prevent students from accessing heritage language classes, as students are often required to take ESL classes which prevents them from having the time to enroll in heritage language classes, and students with lower English proficiency levels have been historically excluded from dual language programs that would provide them with instruction in their heritage language. Two respondents also requested information about defining and identifying heritage language learners. Finally, five respondents expressed gratitude to DESE for their attention to identifying and supporting the needs of heritage language learners.

### Summary

 The survey shared many findings with the focus groups, revealing a lack of shared definitions of heritage speakers/signers; confirming that educators spend a great deal of time adapting curriculum for this group of students and searching for often-scarce authentic resources; and reinforcing that educators are generally in favor of a heritage languages curriculum framework and would welcome more instructional resources and training. Barriers to access to heritage language education and a need to advocate for the value of heritage language programming were also shared themes. The survey emphasized additional shared challenges that respondents face, including staffing, a need for literacy resources, support for varying proficiency levels, issues of program coordination, and valuing heritage languages and cultures. Survey responses showed that, while many heritage languages are represented among students, heritage language–specific programming is rare. Although this is especially pronounced for languages other than Spanish, there remains a lack of specialized services for Spanish heritage language learners as well, with 65.0% of respondents who work in heritage-specific programs reporting that their schools offer Spanish heritage language programming despite 95.8% of all respondents indicating that heritage Spanish speakers were represented in their schools.

 Respondents reported using a variety of methods to support heritage language learners across program types. In heritage-specific programs, locally-designed curricula are common, with 65.0% of respondents reporting that they use a teacher-designed curriculum and 90.0% of respondents reporting that they use at least one of teacher-, school-, or district-designed curriculum. Teacher- and locally-developed materials were also common supports used when working with heritage speakers/signers in world language classes, selected by 56.7% of respondents and coming second only to the 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework, which was selected by 68.9% of respondents. While respondents working in English Learner Education programs were not asked about specific curricular materials, 63.2% reported that they provide opportunities for students to use their heritage language(s) in the classroom, but only 28.9% reported that they provide instruction in the heritage language.

In terms of programming, heritage language specific programming was rated as most effective in supporting heritage language learners to reach various goals, followed by world language programs and then English Learner Education. A comparison of the effectiveness of heritage language (HL), world language (WL), and English Learner Education (ELE) programming in supporting different goals is presented visually in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Effectiveness of Different Programming Types in Supporting Different Goals for Heritage Language Learners

Overall, respondents working in heritage language programs were the least likely to rate their programs as not effective in supporting these goals for heritage language learners, while respondents working in ELE programs were the most likely to rate their programs as not effective in supporting these goals for heritage language learners. Most respondents working in heritage language programs rated their programming as effective or very effective on all goals, with the highest percentage of these respondents (67.5%) rating their programming as effective or very effective in supporting students at developing proficiency in the heritage language culture and developing their personal/cultural identities. Respondents working in world language programs rated their programming as less effective in supporting all goals as compared to those working in heritage language programs, with the highest percentage of these respondents (53.3%) rating their programming as effective or very effective in supporting students in earning the Seal of Biliteracy. Aside from developing English proficiency, which was only included as a goal for ELE programs, respondents working in ELE programs rated their programs overall as less effective in supporting students in fulfilling all goals than respondents working in heritage language programs. They also rated their programs as less effective in supporting students in goals related to developing heritage language proficiency compared to respondents from world language programs; however, respondents from ELE programs did rate their programs as similarly effective to those in world language programs in supporting students in building connections with the heritage language community (31.6% versus 31.1%) and supporting students in developing their personal/cultural identities (42.1% versus 38.2%). It should be noted that, while heritage language programs were generally the most highly rated, there is still room for further support and improvement, as some respondents pointed to areas where these programs were only somewhat effective or effective in supporting heritage speakers/signers.

Finally, survey results show that a heritage languages curriculum framework would be a welcome resource, as 75% of respondents indicated that this type of framework would be useful or very useful, and those who indicated what they would like to see in this framework emphasized implementation guidance and resources; representation of the diversity of heritage language learners, languages, and cultures; and guidance and information for different program models, among other topics related to heritage language teaching and learning.

## Interviews

### Methodology

Interview participants included Massachusetts educators who had experience in heritage language education. They were recruited from among the survey respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews, with priority given to educators who reported working in heritage-specific programs.

A total of 10 educators were interviewed. Table 38 shows the current roles of the interviewees and the grade levels they teach or work with.

Table 38. Background Information of Interview Participants

| Current role\* | *n*  |
| --- | --- |
| ELE administrator | 5 |
| World language teacher | 4 |
| World language coach | 1 |
| World language administrator | 4 |
| Grade levels taught/worked with |
| PreK-12 | 5 |
| K-12 | 1 |
| Middle School-High School | 1 |
| High School | 3 |
| \* Interviewees could list more than one role. |

As shown in Table 38, half of the interviewees reported that they are ELE administrators, and two of these also reported that they are world language administrators. Four interviewees reported that they are world language teachers. One of these reported that they are also a world language coach and another of these reported that they are also a world language administrator. One interviewee reported that they are solely a world language administrator.

Interview sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes and were held between December 13 and December 22, 2022, using the online meeting platform Zoom. Each interview was held between one CAL facilitator and one interviewee. CAL facilitators began each interview with an overview of the project and the interview procedures before asking the interview questions, and facilitators simultaneously took notes on participants’ responses. Participants were asked to use both audio and video capabilities for the duration of the session and the sessions were recorded. An overview of the protocols and procedures followed before, during, and after the interview sessions can be found in the appendices of this report.

### Findings

This section presents findings compiled across the 10 interviews with supporting evidence drawn from various interviewees and discussion of differences between interviewees where applicable. These findings are divided into three sections: (1) what is working well among programs serving heritage language learners; (2) areas for improvement among programs serving heritage language learners; and (3) resources needed from DESE to serve heritage language learners more effectively.

#### Working Well

##### Interviewees’ programs use materials and resources that reflect different experiences, diversity, and culture.

Interviewees consistently mentioned the use of materials and resources that reflect the diversity of heritage language communities, and they reported that educators seek materials to reflect their students’ backgrounds. Different schools and districts have worked to center underrepresented countries and voices, such as Afro-Latino authors in Spanish classes or units on Francophone Africa. Several interviewees highlighted ways in which culture and diversity are addressed through the use of literature in heritage language classrooms, as texts are selected from authors from different countries where the heritage language is spoken and discussions surrounding different accents and dialects are often facilitated within the context of literature. Most of these texts are selected in addition to any commercially available curriculum or literacy program being used in the classroom. One interviewee noted that their school or district includes literature from inner and outer circles, as well as different genders, races, classes, and ages, and students are asked to engage in discussions about where different voices come from and why and how the writers’ experiences relate to them personally.

Several interviewees described the ways in which their curricula focus on identity, such as some courses that have a focus on what it means to be a multicultural person and how students’ backgrounds influence their opinions. Another interviewee noted that they explicitly teach differences between varieties of the heritage language in their school or district and strive to demonstrate ways in which it is a global language, rather than the language spoken in one single country or region. This interviewee also mentioned that there is a written agreement among world language teachers that efforts be made to use materials from a different language variety than the one the teacher speaks to ensure that students are adequately exposed to multiple varieties. Interviewees reported that administrators and coaching staff are generally sensitive to this issue and train teachers to respect students’ dialects and use methods such as graphic organizers to show different ways of saying the same thing. They also reported that teachers generally encourage students to bring in vocabulary and traditions from home, and courses may include units on the countries of origin of students’ families. When working with younger learners, one interviewee mentioned that, in addition to making sure that student backgrounds and experiences are visible within the curriculum, items around the classroom are labelled with terms used in different regions of the world where the heritage language is spoken to help teach students about diversity in the language. Finally, one interviewee mentioned that their school or district uses an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) checklist when reviewing materials and resources used in heritage language classrooms to ensure that they are appropriate and inclusive for the students being served.

##### Interviewees’ programs aim to address student needs within and beyond the language classroom.

Within the classroom, interviewees reported that educators are working to offer differentiation and scaffolding to address students’ linguistic needs. Some interviewees mentioned that teachers in their school or district support students with different proficiency levels in the heritage language through pair and small group activities, as well as intervention groups. One interviewee described efforts to encourage translanguaging in heritage language classrooms to better help students understand the concepts being taught. Another interviewee noted that their school or district would like to facilitate focus groups or conduct a survey to determine what they can do to further meet students’ needs from the perspectives of students themselves, and an interviewee who had conducted such focus groups in their district recommended that DESE do the same.

Multiple interviewees noted that students value their increased abilities to express themselves, and students may find a sense of community and/or identity thanks to heritage language programming. Beyond the classroom, several interviewees reported that they are working to build community partnerships and connections and to find extracurricular ways to meet students’ needs. Some interviewees also noted how their school or district provides opportunities for heritage language learners’ career and college preparation and success beyond the classroom. There are some districts that provide medical or legal interpretation classes at the high school level to encourage heritage language learners to enroll in higher level language courses and support their college or career readiness, and one interviewee mentioned that teachers explicitly discuss how students’ language skills can help them get a job in the future and organize opportunities for guest speakers to come to the class to demonstrate what this looks like. Another interviewee mentioned that, although languages taught in school are not always students’ home languages, their district provides heritage language programming for related languages or languages spoken in the same regions of the world (e.g., Spanish language instruction for Quechua heritage speakers) that leverage students’ existing knowledge and skills and that are of professional value in the community.

##### Massachusetts has many educators who are dedicated and motivated to seek out best practices that will support heritage language learners.

Interviewees discussed various ways that educators working with heritage language learners seek out effective materials and practices for this group of students. As discussed above, many reported that teachers engage in best practices such as celebrating dialect differences among their students, and teachers in some districts have undertaken efforts to find materials such as songs and literature that are representative of a wide variety of varieties, dialects, and experiences. Several interviewees also reported that educators invest significant time and effort in developing curricula, finding materials, and adapting both for their students, as will be detailed in the section on areas for improvement. Interviewees themselves are at the forefront of this group of motivated educators, as they consistently mentioned their own efforts to implement effective programming, seek out resources, and advocate for heritage language learners’ needs.

Interviewees also highlighted ways in which educators collaborate to improve their heritage language programming and other supports for the students they serve. One interviewee mentioned that there are strong relationships between the bilingual and world languages teams in their school or district, which helps to facilitate articulation and alignment between programs. Another interviewee noted that heritage language teachers in their school or district work very closely with one another and with teachers of different languages, including English, and that they share activities, experiences, and challenges throughout the year. This interviewee mentioned that they make efforts to work collaboratively with ESL teachers in particular to help students interact with the same stories in both languages and to best support heritage language learners in interacting with their peers outside of the heritage language classroom. This interviewee also mentioned that heritage and world language teachers in their school or district meet every other week to share ideas, goals, and expectations in a structured way, and that these types of meetings also occur with teachers in other departments. Finally, one interviewee discussed how their school convenes steering committees to develop new heritage language courses from year to year and that these committees involve both teachers and coordinators within the program.

#### Areas to Improve

##### Interviewees reported that heritage language learners in Massachusetts often have no or limited access to programs that effectively support first language maintenance.

While all interviewees discussed some strengths of the programming provided for heritage language learners, they also noted that these programs are not accessible for all students. Speakers of languages other than Spanish, particularly Indigenous and other minoritized languages, and students with disabilities often lack opportunities to access heritage language programs. Even when programs are available, they may be limited in scope, leaving a gap in higher level courses and educational activities.

Interviewees reported that students in many districts represent far more heritage languages than are offered in schools, even as world languages in non–heritage specific programs. In general, Spanish has the most programming available, and other languages lack comparable resources and programs. Several interviewees specifically noted that there are limited opportunities for students whose heritage languages are languages other than Spanish and that there is not much capacity for supporting home language development for students who speak Indigenous languages or other minoritized languages. One interviewee noted that it is difficult to accurately document and capture the number of students who speak Indigenous heritage languages using the home language survey, and that these students may be reluctant to self-identify as heritage speakers of their particular language. One interviewee’s district works to provide access to online classes for languages not offered in district schools, but accredited programs are not available for all languages. In addition, two interviewees noted that students with disabilities are often excluded from heritage language programming, and one interviewee reported encountering attitudes that Spanish would be too hard for students with disabilities, even when it is their home language. Two interviewees also reported that they are working to provide more access to heritage language classes for students with disabilities, and one of these interviewees anecdotally reported some promising outcomes when such access has been possible. Finally, several interviewees reported that English learners are often excluded from heritage language programming, as is discussed in more detail in the Resources Needed section below.

Interviewees also discussed the limited number of opportunities available for young learners to develop and/or maintain their home languages, and while some districts provide dual language programming in the early years, some heritage language learners do not have access to these programs and staffing challenges limit the size of these schools and number of students that can be served. In addition, some interviewees mentioned that not all schools and districts offer higher level language courses or support heritage language learners in enrolling in these classes. While one interviewee reported that heritage language programs lack accessibility because only honors students are accepted, another advocated for heritage language classes to carry honors credit as a way to increase the prestige and appeal of these classes and recognize students’ work and skills. One interviewee noted that heritage language learners often enroll in other world language courses rather than taking Advanced Placement courses in their home language and that school or district administrators often do not see this as a problem and encourage students to try new languages rather than advancing in their home language. Finally, a few interviewees discussed the desire to create more extracurricular activities specifically designed for heritage language learners, such as conversation clubs for those whose home languages are not taught in school or reading clubs for those who want to read novels and other advanced level texts in their home language outside of the classroom.

##### Interviewees emphasized that curriculum development and alignment, including finding appropriate resources, can be challenging for educators working with heritage language learners.

Across interviewees, challenges related to curriculum development and alignment were a consistent theme. Most interviewees indicated that their school or district uses locally-developed curricula (or some combination of teacher-developed and commercially-available curricula) in heritage language classrooms. Although many districts are working on developing curricula and gathering materials, there is little coordination between districts. A few interviewees mentioned that their school or district uses curricular materials in English that are then adapted for the heritage language being taught, and many interviewees noted that curricular materials are developed and compiled by the individual teachers leading heritage language courses and programs. One interviewee noted that their district’s curriculum is developed holistically by a team of educators to ensure that there is a connected sequence of learning from year to year. This interviewee also reported that their district uses a commercially-adopted curriculum for Spanish heritage courses and models the curricula for other heritage language courses on that curriculum. Interviewees reported that the curriculum development process is time consuming and heavily teacher-dependent, leading to challenges that require teachers to work during the summer or on breaks and take away from their focus on instruction. One interviewee also argued that heritage language curriculum needs to be flexible and tailored to the specific needs of a school or district, noting that even if teachers were handed an off-the-shelf curriculum they would not always be able to implement it effectively. Similarly, another interviewee noted that locally-developed curricula can be well adapted for the backgrounds of the students in a school or district; however, adapting a curriculum requires significant time.

Finding resources is another time-consuming task for heritage language educators. Interviewees reported difficulty in finding Portuguese materials, especially ones that are accessible and appropriate for the U.S. setting. They noted that districts are not able to purchase books from another country. Even for Spanish, publicly available materials may not be suitable for students, such as resources aimed at college students that are inaccessible for 9th graders. One interviewee reported visiting multiple heritage language classes in a nearby district and finding that each one was completely different. This participant requested guidelines about what is expected of a student who is placed in heritage language classes, what the curriculum should look like, and what the developmental trajectory for heritage language learners is expected to be.

##### Interviewees noted that educators may face challenges in making sure that all stakeholders understand the value of heritage language programming.

Some interviewees noted that there was strong public support for the multilingual programs in their schools or districts, while others felt that these programs were undervalued, often describing attitudes that treated language education as something “nice to have” rather than essential. While many interviewees described efforts for collaboration between teachers and language departments (e.g., the ESL department and world languages department), some interviewees reported experiencing challenges in this area. One interviewee noted that many English learners (many of whom are heritage language learners) are unable to fit a world language course into their schedule and are exempt from the requirements for world languages, resulting in them not receiving any type of instruction in their home language. There are also schools or districts that still do not offer any heritage-specific courses. As previously mentioned, some interviewees reported that their schools or districts do not encourage heritage language learners to enroll in advanced level language courses or do not consider heritage language learners “ready” for these courses. In addition, one interviewee highlighted how teachers working in heritage language programs are often world language teachers and that they tend to apply teaching strategies and techniques that are appropriate for world language classrooms in their heritage language classrooms rather than tailoring their instruction for this group of students. Another interviewee wanted to be sure that heritage language programs took a bilingual or multilingual perspective that valued all of students’ language skills, including strategies such as supporting translanguaging. Overall, interviewees recommended making sure that all stakeholders, including district leadership, educators, school committees, and the public, understand the value of heritage language learners and heritage language education.

#### Resources Needed from DESE

##### Interviewees discussed the need for additional professional development on serving heritage language learners.

Interviewees stated that they would appreciate additional professional development on serving heritage language learners. They would welcome information about heritage language learner–specific needs that may differ from needs of L2 learners and dual language learners, as well as information about teaching heritage language learners in mixed classes and leveraging English or home language literacy. One interviewee also requested additional training on serving Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education. In addition, one interviewee noted that it would be helpful to have professional development in language arts for heritage language teachers, as many of these teachers are trained as world language teachers and have not received this type of training before. Many interviewees discussed the need for professional development on supporting students’ literacy skills in heritage language classrooms, with some interviewees requesting training on the differences in literacy development across grade levels and others requesting support for teaching decoding skills in languages other than English. Training on working with students with complex proficiency profiles would also be beneficial, especially for world language teachers with no training in literacy development. One interviewee also requested guidance on teaching heritage language courses that have a large number of students whose home language/culture may be similar to or geographically connected to the language being taught (e.g., Quechua speakers in Spanish heritage courses), especially when courses are rooted in oral proficiency or if there is debate over the orthographic conventions of the language.

##### Interviewees requested guidelines and resources for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Interviewees would particularly welcome additional resources to assist in serving heritage language learners. Several interviewees requested guidance and support for acquiring authentic materials and resources for heritage language programs, especially those working with languages other than Spanish and those making efforts to incorporate voices from developing countries or regions of the world. One interviewee requested assistance in buying books from other countries, while another mentioned that a list of texts in the heritage language that are appropriate for different levels would also be helpful, as well as comparisons between these texts and other ways of leveling books so that teachers can have meaningful conversations with their ESL and English Language Arts (ELA) colleagues. Many educators do not know what materials to use and cannot direct students to what they should be reading given the lack of resources available in their classroom libraries, making it difficult to support students’ development of literacy skills in the heritage language.

Several interviewees stated that they would like to have sample units, with one noting the importance of such materials having a critical lens. In addition, the need for guidance on making connections to students’ cultures and identities was mentioned by some interviewees, with one interviewee noting that videos recorded by heritage speakers themselves would be helpful for understanding what students wish their teachers knew about them and what would be most beneficial for them in the classroom. One interviewee also suggested that DESE could facilitate connections to other districts and states with strong heritage language programs. Assessment was another area where additional resources would be beneficial. While interviewees requested guidance for assessments, including rubrics to guide grading and assessments that address specific needs for heritage language learners, one interviewee noted that tests may not serve heritage language learners’ needs and suggested that a portfolio procedure could be more beneficial. This participant stated that any assessment procedure should value students as bilinguals and measure their bilingual growth. Other interviewees requested assistance with placement and identification of heritage language learners, including suitable assessments.

When discussing a possible heritage languages framework, interviewees had varying opinions on what should be included. One interviewee noted that while a framework might be useful, it was essential to consider how it could be operationalized in busy, complex districts. Some interviewees were strongly in favor of having a framework, noting that it could help increase administrative support for heritage language programming or guide curriculum enhancements that are tailored to heritage language learners’ needs, and many interviewees provided thoughtful suggestions on key elements for a framework. Overall, interviewees expressed a desire for the framework to take a stance that recognizes the value and importance of students’ backgrounds and identities. Multiple interviewees requested that the framework emphasize culture, and they noted the importance of representing all cultures and places where the languages are used and ensuring students’ heritage cultures are represented in the classroom. Multiple interviewees also requested that the framework include an emphasis on identity, and one interviewee mentioned the importance of respect for others’ identities and the development of students’ identities as bilinguals. Relatedly, one of these interviewees requested that the framework include a critical lens or stance that views language as a social phenomenon rather than something isolated, and another noted the importance of the framework supporting students rather than languages.

Interviewees also had specific requests related to curriculum and language development to be included in a heritage languages framework. One interviewee requested guidance on how to include grammar, and to what extent, while maintaining a focus on culture. As previously noted, another interviewee requested guidelines about what is expected of a student who is placed in heritage language classes, what the curriculum should look like, and what the developmental trajectory for heritage language learners is expected to be. One interviewee requested assessment information parallel to that offered in content area frameworks, such as specific examples of distinguishing marks and what is meant at particular developmental levels. Another interviewee requested that the framework include real world applications like learning to do translation work; that it be rigorous, including expecting students to demonstrate proficiency more quickly; and that it have information for all grades K-12. One interviewee critiqued the use of proficiency scales when working with heritage language learners, noting that students who are using their language skills to accomplish tasks and build relationships may nonetheless receive a score such as Novice High based on an assessment. This interviewee also advocated for a bilingual proficiency scale as being more representative of students’ language use and goals.

##### Interviewees would welcome policy changes and advocacy to support greater access to heritage language education.

Interviewees strongly advocated for the value of heritage language education and bilingual programs and requested DESE’s support in advocating to a wider audience as well as removing structural barriers to these programs in Massachusetts. Some interviewees cited Question 2 (the 2002 ballot initiative that made Sheltered English Immersion the main ELE model in the state) as having lingering effects on mindsets and the availability of expertise, and others noted that while the LOOK Act has been helpful, heritage language education and bilingual programs are still seen as a bonus rather than an essential component of education. The state could increase support for these programs by advocating for their benefits and educating the public about the linguistic, community, and personal benefits of students’ bilingualism. One interviewee requested that the state advocate for the validity of one-way as well as two-way dual language education and consider changing terminology from Two-Way Immersion to Dual Language.

Interviewees also pointed to specific policy changes that would assist their programs. Several interviewees discussed the need for staffing support to develop, maintain, and expand their heritage language programming, as it is difficult to find educators who have the appropriate linguistic/cultural skills and who are licensed and available to teach full time and it can be difficult to hire international staff for a variety of reasons. One interviewee requested assistance in bringing teachers on specific types of visas for which timelines would be easier for teachers. A different interviewee noted that some districts have partnerships with different embassies to recruit teachers from various countries where the heritage language is spoken, but that there are challenges involved in hiring these teachers, and differences in curriculum between other countries and what is used in the U.S. context create some barriers to acquiring and retaining new staff members this way. Another interviewee argued that connections should be made with institutions of higher education in other countries and that these relationships could be leveraged to develop educator exchange programs, which would allow teachers to learn about different cultures and school systems and address some of the issues surrounding teacher shortages. A different interviewee mentioned that DESE currently only has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)[[6]](#footnote-6) with Spain and Portugal. However, this interviewee would like to hire teachers who more closely represent the backgrounds of the student population, few of whom are from Spain or Portugal. Another way that staffing could be more representative of local demographics would be for schools to hire more local teachers, and interviewees would welcome DESE’s assistance in recruiting these educators. Interviewees also noted that alternative pathways to licensure could help with staffing and emphasized how heritage language programs are unable to grow and thrive without qualified teachers.

Interviewees also noted that schools are ultimately assessed and judged on outcomes in English, and the use of standardized testing, especially when schools are pressured to make changes that undermine bilingual principles based on testing results, can be a barrier to serving multilingual learners. English Learner Education requirements also mean that there is often little room in English learners’ schedules for heritage language classes. One interviewee suggested that perhaps DESE could advocate for heritage language learners to access courses in their heritage languages and communicate that this can help their English skills, and that a social studies class in the heritage language might be able to meet an English Learner Education requirement, especially if high-leverage practices such as home language literacy with transfer to English are used.

Some interviewees also requested support for communicating with the families of heritage language learners and involving them in heritage language programming, with one interviewee noting that this is done differently in every district. Guidance/resources for doing this effectively were requested by multiple interviewees, and specific requests include a list of vetted resources to use for communicating with families who speak languages other than English, information about contracting with interpreters at the state level, and support and recommendations for encouraging families and other members of the heritage language community to participate in classroom or schoolwide activities. One interviewee also mentioned that when feedback is requested from families of heritage language learners, families often report that they are fully supported; however, because this feedback may be impacted by families’ cultural beliefs and norms in talking with schools, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly they need.

Finally, one interviewee mentioned that their school or district would like to expand the Seal of Biliteracy to include pathway awards, which could be supported by DESE, and that they would like to see more encouragement at the state level for collaboration between different language departments (e.g., ESL and world languages).

### Summary

 The interviewees emphasized both the strengths of their current programming for heritage language learners and the challenges they still face in developing, implementing, and sustaining these programs. Findings from the interviews show that Massachusetts has many dedicated educators who are working to meet the needs of heritage language learners, including incorporating students’ different language varieties and backgrounds, as was requested by focus group participants. However, the interviewees also noted that many students do not have access to heritage language programming, particularly speakers of Indigenous and minoritized languages as well as English learners and students with disabilities. Program articulation issues can also prevent students from reaching higher level classes. As was discussed in the focus groups and survey, interviewees emphasized the amount of time required to develop and align curriculum as well as find appropriate resources. This group, like those who participated in the focus groups and survey, also spoke about the need for advocacy to make sure all stakeholders understand the value of heritage language education. They requested various supports from DESE, including professional development; guidelines and resources, including sample units and help finding appropriate classroom resources; and changes to policies that would support staffing, English learner access to heritage language programming, and expanded heritage language programming. They would also welcome tools and supports for advocating for the value of heritage language programming and assistance in communicating with families. Like other educators who participated in the focus groups and survey, the interviewees were generally in favor of a heritage languages curriculum framework, which they would like to include elements such as culture, identity, representation, language development trajectories, and real-world applications. However, they noted that a framework would need additional supports and implementation resources to be effective.

## Conclusion

The focus groups, survey, and interviews revealed that many Massachusetts educators strive to celebrate the assets that heritage language learners bring to their districts, schools, and classrooms. Heritage language programs (more so than world language programs and English Learner Education programs) are often successful in supporting students to develop linguistic and cultural proficiency as well as self-confidence, though there are many areas of need for these programs to achieve their full potential and best meet the needs of the students they serve. Stakeholders do not always recognize the value of heritage language education, and numerous barriers prevent students from receiving services, including limited opportunities for students to access appropriate heritage-specific programming across languages, age/grade levels, and proficiency levels. Teachers working with heritage language learners also must spend a great deal of time to create curriculum and find appropriate resources for their students, and the development of one’s heritage language is not always adequately or consistently supported in the language classroom due to the challenges encountered by the teachers working with heritage language learners and the lack of supports these teachers receive or resources they have access to within and beyond the classroom. Instructional guidance, programming guidance, assistance with staffing, tools for advocacy for the value of heritage language education, and support for finding resources would all help schools/districts create or expand programs to better serve their heritage language learners. If accompanied by such resources and guidance, a Massachusetts Heritage Languages Framework could be a valuable tool to guide teachers and administrators in the development, implementation, and evaluation of heritage language programming.

# Discussion

The literature review, comparative analysis, and analysis of educator practices and perspectives all revealed that heritage language learners are a diverse, heterogenous group and that many definitions are used to identify who is considered a heritage language learner in different contexts. While most of the commonly used definitions from the literature emphasize learners’ cultural connections to the heritage language, some also include mention of some degree of linguistic proficiency in the language. The 22 states that define “heritage language learner/speaker” are similarly varied, with most definitions including some mention of the acquisition of the language outside the classroom, about half including some degree of linguistic proficiency in the language, and a few mentioning a cultural connection to the language. The focus group participants and survey respondents agreed that heritage language learners generally have a familial or cultural connection to the language and noted that their proficiency levels may vary across skills, which is a common finding in the literature and features in about half of states’ definitions. However, the Massachusetts educators who participated in this study also noted that native speaker students who have an educational background in the language and have immigrated to the United States are often included in the common usage of “heritage language learner,” while this group is less commonly included in definitions of this group of learners found in the literature.

Information gathered from all research activities also confirmed that there are no national standards, curriculum frameworks, or proficiency scales for heritage language learners. This was stated in the literature, and findings from the comparative analysis showed that few states have developed standards specifically designed for this group of students. Among states that do have such standards, the standards are not uniform and may only provide specific supports for heritage language learners of certain languages, such as Spanish. Similarly, no national organizations had heritage language frameworks or standards, while only one of the examined districts/programs had a curriculum framework. This echoes findings from the literature review and the analysis of educator practices and perspectives that while there are limited resources available for Spanish heritage language education, materials designed for the teaching and learning of other heritage languages are even more scarce. Researchers nonetheless advocate for the importance of certain goals for heritage language education, including maintaining the home language, acquiring academic skills, growing literacy skills, cultivating positive attitudes towards the heritage language, and developing cultural awareness. In the comparative analysis, twelve states provided information about heritage language program goals, which include many of the same goals from the literature review. Educators who participated in our survey rated the effectiveness of their programming in supporting students to achieve similar goals, including developing cultural proficiency, developing proficiency in listening/viewing and speaking/signing, developing proficiency in reading and writing/glossing, building connections with the heritage language community, and developing personal or cultural identities. When comparing findings across program types, respondents working in heritage language–specific programs provided higher ratings for the effectiveness of their program in supporting students to achieve these goals than respondents working in world language programs and/or English Learner Education programs. This echoes findings from the literature review indicating that heritage-language specific programs, as well as well-designed dual language and developmental/maintenance bilingual programs, are ideal for meeting the unique needs of this group of students as opposed to other types of language education programs such as transitional bilingual programs or traditional world language programs.

The definitions of heritage language program models vary across states. While 17 states provide some type of definition of “heritage language program” or related terms, they incorporate different characteristics in their definitions, including the student population, program structure, program goals or focus, program language and/or grade levels, and inclusion of ESL/ELD services. All definitions, however, included at least two of these characteristics. While some definitions discuss culture, others focus on acquiring literacy and academic language skills, sometimes to transition to advanced non-heritage language classes. A few provide detailed descriptions of instruction, but most provide more general program information., and several states note considerations for Indigenous language programs, including the importance of consultation with Indigenous communities. The complex relationship between heritage language education, world language programs, and English learner education was demonstrated by the varying locations of information, as state program model definitions and resources for heritage language education were located on both world language and English learner education web pages. Often, program models were defined in one area while resources were provided in the other. This reflects the previously-discussed findings from the literature review that heritage language programs are defined as one possible Language Instruction Educational Program type by the U.S. Department of Education, and ELE programming, even when not defined as a heritage language program, is one of the few ways many heritage learners have to access to instruction in their heritage languages.

There are both benefits and drawbacks to including heritage language programs as part of either world language or ELE programming. If heritage language education is grouped with world language programming, it may have a broader reach, enabling students who are not identified as English Learners to access programming in their heritage languages. This can also be advantageous given the stigma against being identified as an EL that was noted in the survey; as world language education is less stigmatized than English learner education, parents and students may be more willing to identify students as heritage language learners if they will receive services within a world language program. However, the literature review indicated that research has shown academic benefits for ELs who continue to develop skills in their heritage languages, as described below, so it may be advantageous for heritage language education to be categorized with English learner education to enable these students to receive as many services as possible. Schools also have procedures in place for identifying English learners, whereas this study showed that procedures for identifying heritage language learners are inconsistent across the state and the country as a whole. In terms of staffing, world language educators have relevant subject expertise in the target language, but the literature review noted that educators in English learner education programs may be more familiar with some cross-applicable techniques, such as particular scaffolding approaches. In addition, the comparative analysis revealed that more resources for heritage language education are available from other states and organizations under the umbrella of world languages than English learner education, and it may be particularly challenging to develop and deliver heritage language programs as part of ELE programming given the need for ELE programs to meet Title III requirements. In contrast, world language programs are generally able to be more flexible, and it should be noted that many heritage language learners who choose to study their home language in school will eventually take traditional world language classes that are not specifically designed for heritage language learners due to program articulation issues, as elaborated below. Above all, the literature review and the analysis of educator practices and perspectives emphasized the importance of serving heritage language learners’ needs regardless of the specific program model or way in which programs are categorized.

Across the literature review and comparative analysis, detailed information about program types and outcomes was relatively scarce. According to the literature, dual language programs have generally been shown to benefit heritage language learners’ academic achievement in both their home language and English, but researchers have found barriers to heritage language learners’ participation in these programs and there is often a lack of articulation between these programs and language programs offered at the secondary level. Heritage language learners who are identified as English learners are often educated in transitional bilingual programs, which are not associated with positive outcomes in the heritage language, but which may be the only way they can access instruction in the language. The comparative analysis showed that most districts offering heritage language programming do so at the high school level, though these options (across languages, grade levels, and proficiency levels) remain limited and there is often a disconnect between heritage language courses and other types of language courses offered to heritage language learners before and during high school. Findings from the literature review also indicated that even when heritage language courses exist, there may only be short course sequences available, requiring students to transition into mixed classes after completing them if they choose to continue studying the language. In the comparative analysis, three states described three levels of heritage language courses, and three states specifically noted that their HL courses are intended to articulate with non–heritage language courses, including Advanced Placement. The Massachusetts educators who participated in this study similarly noted that program articulation is a challenge, and that their schools are not always able to provide as many courses as they would like and do not always successfully transition students to upper-level, non-heritage classes. Participants also advocated for additional language programming to serve heritage language learners, including dual language programming. Participants in the focus groups in particular advocated for beginning language classes at a younger age, a finding that was shared with researchers from the literature review. The literature review also indicated that while community-based heritage language schools (some of which offer early language programming) may lead to positive student outcomes, there is often a lack of coordination between community-based schools and the public school system, and this topic did not emerge as a prominent finding in the analysis of educator practices and perspectives.

As previously described, there are no widespread curriculum frameworks for heritage language education in the U.S. Relatedly, the Massachusetts educators who participated in this study noted that heritage language teachers spend a great deal of time and effort creating curricula that are adapted to their students and finding authentic resources from students’ heritage cultures. For many languages, commercial curriculum resources are not available, and even when they are, teachers must still adapt them for their particular students. Thus, while educators across the focus groups, survey, and interviews all mentioned a desire for curriculum resources, including model curriculum units and/or a scope and sequence, many also believed it was important that teachers have time and training to create and adapt curricula for their particular situations. Similarly, participants reported that they would like assistance in finding authentic sources that are accessible and appropriate for students. Although participants reported challenges with locally developing their heritage language curriculum, they also emphasized how this process allows them to ensure that their students’ backgrounds, interests, and needs are represented in the classroom. This theme was most commonly discussed by the focus group participants and interviewees, who described their school or districts’ efforts to value and incorporate students’ language varieties, family histories, and cultural knowledge into curriculum and instruction. This was a common finding in the literature as well, where researchers emphasized the importance of an assets-based approach that values students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge. Research suggests that an additive approach that incorporates many varieties of the heritage language, uses authentic bilingual forms such as translanguaging, and celebrates students’ cultural backgrounds and interests can help students expand their linguistic proficiency while supporting their social-emotional needs. Research also suggests that incorporating social-emotional learning standards in the classroom may be beneficial for heritage language learners’ academic achievement and general wellbeing, and many of the educators who participated in this study described the ways they work to incorporate social-emotional learning in their classrooms. Social-emotional considerations may also prevent students from accessing heritage language programming, as some participants noted that students may have a painful relationship with their heritage languages, face stigma from family members and L1 speakers, or experience issues with self-confidence or absenteeism that could prevent them from fully participating in heritage language classes.

Findings from this study show that there are many other barriers to students accessing heritage language education. The literature review findings indicate that few Spanish heritage language speakers receive heritage language services, and learners of other languages receive fewer still. Educators who participated in our interviews noted that this is a particularly acute concern for heritage speakers of Indigenous and minoritized languages, and survey respondents noted that it can be difficult for schools to offer services in low-incidence languages and in languages for which there are limited resources and supports. Across the focus groups, survey, and interviews, educators identified English language education requirements for English learners as another barrier to students accessing heritage language services. English learners are often required to take many ELE classes, leaving little time in their schedules for heritage language courses or causing scheduling conflicts with available classes. One survey respondent also mentioned that students at lower levels of English proficiency have historically been excluded from early language learning opportunities in their heritage language, such as those provided by dual language programs. Interviewees also noted that students with disabilities may be excluded from heritage language classes, whether due to scheduling issues or attitudes that these classes would not be beneficial or appropriate.

 Identification is another barrier to students accessing heritage language education. A wide variety of approaches to identifying heritage language learners were reported by the Massachusetts educators who participated in this study, with some participants reporting that their schools or districts rely on EL identification or students’ last names for identification purposes. While using Home Language Surveys would identify more potential heritage language learners than EL status alone, survey respondents did identify some potential shortcomings of this approach, including Home Language Surveys that do not offer space to list all languages a student uses at home, Home Language Survey responses that mention languages to which students have minimal actual exposure, and Home Language Survey responses that do not include the use of other home languages due to the fear of being identified as an English learner. Even if students are properly identified, placement can be a challenge for heritage language programs. According to the literature review, researchers have acknowledged this challenge and recommend using a combination of methods to place students, including interviews, language-use surveys, and language-based tests that are tailored to local contexts and the language being taught. Researchers also note that placement should account for students’ social as well as academic needs, especially when deciding which level of a world language class to place students in if a suitable heritage language course is not available. Educators who participated in our study highlighted this concern as well, noting that it can be difficult to place students who are significantly stronger in some skills than others in order to challenge them appropriately while helping them build necessary skills.

Time and staffing were other recurring themes when discussing challenges involved in working with heritage language learners across the focus groups, survey, and interviews, and these themes also appeared in the literature. While participants in this study noted the potential for collaboration among heritage language, world language, and English Learner Education programs, many said that they lacked time to coordinate with different departments. In addition, as previously discussed, planning curriculum and searching for resources are time-consuming activities, and while hiring more staff to support these efforts (as well as developing new heritage language programs or expanding on programs) would be helpful, participants noted that they already have difficulties recruiting and hiring qualified teachers. Findings from the literature review also demonstrate that teacher preparation is a widespread issue for heritage language programs, as there are few training programs specifically designed to prepare educators for heritage language teaching and many teacher preparation programs do not provide any type of training on best practices for meeting the needs of this group of students. The comparative analysis confirmed that there are only a handful of programs providing degrees or certificates in heritage language teaching, and that most of these are specific to Spanish as a heritage language.

In terms of desired resources and supports, the Massachusetts educators who participated in this study had generally positive reactions to the idea of a heritage languages curriculum framework, though some educators were more in favor of having a model curriculum or other curricular resources and noted that implementation resources would be needed to increase the usability and effectiveness of a framework if one is developed. Participants expressed a desire for the framework to highlight heritage cultures and represent the linguistic and cultural diversity of heritage language speakers/signers. Educators who participated in the interviews also requested an emphasis on the importance of students’ identities as they relate to the heritage language, and both focus group participants and interviewees requested information about what proficiency levels look like for heritage language learners, including one interviewee who requested information about expected language development over time. Educators who participated in the survey also requested that a framework include guidance and information for different program models, information about staffing, and information about assessment. In addition, a few survey respondents believed a framework should include advocacy for heritage language learning, which could perhaps be accomplished by a mission statement. Participants in the study were also in favor of additional resources for heritage language programming. While all resources would be welcome, especially recommendations for and access to authentic resources, participants reported resources for literacy development as a particular area of need. They reported a desire for leveled readers, information about the science of reading in different languages, training on teaching literacy and decoding skills, and information about how to leverage students’ existing literacy skills. Some participants requested a how-to guide for effectively developing and/or implementing a heritage language program, and some participants reported a need for guidance on placement for heritage language learners. Overall, participants were strongly in favor of receiving more practical guidance, materials, and supports for teaching heritage speakers/signers across program types, and some participants expressed an interest in learning more about appropriate assessment practices when working with this group of students.

Similar to the gaps reported by the educators who participated in this study, findings from the literature review demonstrate that there is a lack of commercially-available heritage language resources. However, the comparative analysis showed that thirteen states provide some type of heritage language education resources, including five that provide expected proficiency outcomes for heritage language programs, eight that provide guidance for instruction and programming, and one that provides a professional learning community for heritage language educators. Numerous language education organizations likewise provide guidance for instruction and programming, research articles or briefs on topics relevant to heritage language teaching and learning, and professional learning opportunities, though it is important to note that these learning opportunities are typically in offered in the form of short courses, workshops, or webinars.

Robust professional development on heritage language teaching and learning remains limited, and the Massachusetts educators who participated in this study also had generally positive reactions to receiving more professional development on heritage language education. Participants in the focus groups and interviews requested training on differentiation, literacy development, assets-based approaches, differences between heritage language and L2 instruction, and advocating for heritage language programs. In addition to these topics, survey respondents also indicated an interest in training on general best practices, finding resources, ways to support heritage learners in non-heritage specific world language classes, heritage language identity and culture, curriculum development, leveraging heritage language learners’ existing skills to develop new skills, translanguaging, proficiency models for heritage learners, critical consciousness, assessment, writing, and grammar. They would also like training on identifying heritage language learners. In addition to this type of heritage-specific training, there was a consistent desire across groups to visit model programs and learn from their successes.

Finally, educators who participated in this study request supports for advocating for the value of heritage language education to various stakeholders. They noted that this advocacy could help them start new programs, strengthen existing programs, and encourage more students to participate in heritage language courses. This echoes findings from the literature review, such as one study that found that a lack of course publicity and lack of support from advisers led to heritage language learners choosing world language classes instead of heritage language classes. Similarly, another study found that successful, growing post-secondary heritage language programs actively recruited students and publicized their course offerings, while unsuccessful programs had no such recruitment or publicity activities. Based on the findings from the comparative analysis, few states or organizations have published information about or resources for advocating for the value of heritage language education. One state provides grants for the development or expansion of heritage language programs and a professional learning network for educators working in these programs and/or those who are interested in learning more about them, which may contribute to advocacy efforts, and one organization’s guidelines for best practices in community-based heritage language schools suggests practices such as educating the public about the importance of heritage language education and forming meaningful partnerships with other members of the community.

# Recommendations

Recommendations for the state of Massachusetts to consider are based on findings found/compiled across the three research activities in this study: the literature review, comparative analysis, and focus groups, survey, and interviews with Massachusetts educators. It should be noted that developing these resources will require a significant investment of time, personnel, and other resources, and their development may be gradual and build over time. These recommendations are not presented in order of priority; we recommend that DESE consider available resources and the potential impact of different interventions when deciding on a timeline and allocating resources to the realization of these recommendations.

## Advocate for the value of heritage language education.

An advocacy campaign could help additional stakeholders understand the value of heritage language education, including educators, administrators, guidance counselors, community members, families, and students. These efforts could be assisted by developing shared definitions of the terms “heritage language” and “heritage language learner” or “heritage speaker/signer,” as well as providing a one-page resource that shares information about the common characteristics and needs of this group of students and why they benefit from heritage-specific programming. Advocacy materials could also emphasize the shared responsibility of heritage language education across world language and English learner education departments and the importance of collaboration across these departments to serve learners’ needs. It is recommended that DESE also provide supports for reaching out to families of heritage language learners, with special attention to those who experience barriers (e.g., linguistic, cultural, technological) in communicating with schools or districts. Given DESE’s desire to provide equitable supports and learning opportunities for heritage language learners, the Office of Language Acquisition could consider partnering with DESE’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee to further promote these courses and programs.

DESE could also consider several policy changes to help support heritage language programming:

* Expanding language programming for young learners, including additional support for dual language programming across languages for which there are a large population of heritage language learners in the state;
* Providing more assistance with staffing, including Memoranda of Understanding with additional countries, support for pathways to teaching careers for local language speakers, and partnerships with teacher preparation programs;
* Adjusting EL requirements so that English learners are able to fit heritage language classes in their schedules and/or providing opportunities for heritage language arts or social studies classes to meet some of the requirements for English learners; and
* Increasing funding and institutional support for developing, maintaining, and expanding heritage-specific programming across languages for which there are a large population of heritage language learners.

## Develop a heritage languages curriculum framework

In order to best meet the needs of educators working with heritage language learners in Massachusetts, it is recommended that DESE create a heritage languages curriculum framework. As this framework is likely to be used by educators who are familiar with world language standards, and in order to facilitate program articulation between heritage language–specific and traditional world language classes, it would be beneficial to follow the model of other states and use a structure similar to the existing Massachusetts World Languages Content Standards while incorporating specific considerations for heritage language learners.

One option would be to use the same content standards as the World Languages Curriculum Framework and provide additional supports for using these standards with heritage language learners, such a heritage-specific Vision and Guiding Principles as well as callout boxes or other supports that explain how each standard can be applied when working with heritage language learners. This option may be most beneficial for educators working with mixed classes of heritage and non-heritage learners, as it would allow for the use of one set of content standards for both types of students, though this approach may not address some specific aspects of heritage language education, such as the unique proficiency development of heritage language learners and the heritage-specific goals that researchers have proposed.

Another option would be to develop new content standards for heritage language education. It is recommended that, like the models of other states, these content standards include suggested course topics specific to heritage language learners as well as detailed information about students’ language development and standards targeting their specific needs and abilities. However, it should be noted that additional research may be required to develop such standards, as there are no existing models at the national level. This option may be most beneficial for heritage language–specific courses and programs, as it would help educators better understand the unique learning expectations in this context and thus support them in developing or identifying appropriate curricula for their programs that align with these expectations. If new content standards are developed, it is recommended that the structure of the framework remain as close as possible to the World Languages Curriculum Framework to facilitate program articulation and collaboration across department types, as noted above.

In either case, any modifications or additions made to the existing Massachusetts World Languages Content Standards for the purposes of heritage language education should be clearly marked for ease of use.

It is recommended that the heritage languages curriculum framework include the following components, with acknowledgement that some components may need to be developed and added over time:

* Vision and/or mission statement for heritage language education that celebrates the assets heritage language learners bring to the classroom and advocates for the importance of heritage language learning;
* Guidance for effective identification and placement of heritage language learners into different types of language programs, including a recommendation to use more than English Learner status as an identification tool and explore options such as the Home Language Survey;
* Information about heritage language culture and identity, including the importance of and strategies to ensure representation of the diversity of heritage speakers/signers and places where heritage languages are spoken;
* Best practices for curriculum and instruction in different types of programs, including guidance for developing, maintaining, and expanding heritage-specific programs and appropriately differentiating for heritage speakers/signers in world language or ELE classes; and
* Information about what proficiency looks like for heritage language learners, which may include a multilingual perspective of proficiency and expected proficiency outcomes for different types of programs.

## Provide targeted resources and sustained professional development opportunities

Targeted resources and sustained professional development opportunities will support all types of educators working with heritage language learners in understanding and best meeting the needs of this group of students.

Recommended resources include:

* Implementation resources for the heritage languages curriculum framework
* Guidance for adapting the MA World Languages Curriculum Framework for heritage language programs
* Heritage Language Leadership Networks with school/district leaders across the state
* Sample scope and sequence for heritage language courses and programs across languages for which there are a large population of heritage language learners, as well as guidance on adapting these for Indigenous or minoritized languages
* Model curriculum units for heritage language courses and programs across languages for which there are a large population of heritage language learners, as well as guidance on adapting these for Indigenous or minoritized languages
* Guidance on creating and sustaining partnerships with heritage language communities
* Assistance with finding authentic resources from different regions in which heritage languages are spoken

Recommended professional development topics include:

* Developing teacher-designed heritage language curricula
* Differentiating instruction for heritage language learners of different proficiency levels
* Supporting heritage language learners in traditional world language classes
* Translanguaging and providing support for students to develop their full linguistic repertoire
* Teaching language arts and other types of content area instruction in the heritage language
* Teaching decoding in the heritage language and leveraging students’ existing literacy skills
* Understanding differences between heritage language learners and L2 learners
* Incorporating culture and identity when working with heritage language learners

When developing the framework and/or the resources described in this section, DESE may want to consider conducting research with heritage language learners currently enrolled in heritage language courses and programs across the state to incorporate student voices and ensure that their perspectives and needs are reflected in the guidance provided for developing, maintaining, and sustaining heritage language programming.

The recommendations provided in this report reflect the needs of Massachusetts educators, identified through the focus groups, survey, and interviews, as well as current trends and practices in heritage language education as identified in the literature review and the comparative analysis. A state advocacy campaign and heritage languages curriculum framework supported with robust resources and sustained opportunities for professional learning will support schools and districts in providing high-quality academic programs to advance all students’ linguistic and cultural proficiency in their home language(s).

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1. ACTFL is a nonprofit organization that supports language teaching. Their resources include the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. MATSOL is the Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ACTFL is a nonprofit organization that supports language teaching. Their resources include the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. MABE is the Multistate Association for Bilingual Education. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. WIDA is a consortium of 41 states, territories, and federal agencies as well as associated programs. Their resources include standards and assessments for multilingual learners. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. MOUs allow teachers from other countries to obtain a specialized visa to work in Massachusetts schools. More information can be found at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/licensure/exchange-visitor/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)