

DESE World Languages Newsletter

April 2021, Vol 3, No 1

From the Office of Language Acquisition

Dear World Language Educators,

It is a new day for world languages in Massachusetts. I am so pleased to announce that on April 20, 2021, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to adopt the 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework. This framework is the result of the thousands of hours of professional development in which world language teachers and leaders have invested since the publication of the 1999 framework and their dedication to see proficiency-directed updates. It is the result of professional organizations such as MaFLA and the Language Opportunity Coalition who have been advocating for an ACTFL-aligned and skills-driven framework for years. It is the result of the people of Massachusetts, who funded this project with their hard-earned tax dollars and who facilitated it by electing their state leaders. More specifically, this project came to be because over a hundred teachers, students, administrators, and other individuals and organizations from around Massachusetts freely gave their time and talents to this project. The result is a framework that we believe will serve all students, elevate all students, languages, and cultures, and stand the test of time. It is with great pride that I welcome you to this new era of world language education.

The good news does not end with the adoption of this framework. This spring, we approved assessments for eighty-one (81) languages which will no longer require students to complete a portfolio for the Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy. This summer, we will offer grants for proficiency in languages other than English for the first time. Next fall, we will continue quarterly World Language Leadership Network meetings and include space for those districts who earned grant money to discuss their projects.

It truly is a great time to be a world language teacher in Massachusetts! As always, with the announcement of so many new and exciting projects, we invite you to get involved to benefit your district and all districts with your knowledge, time, and talents. Please read on to explore opportunities to volunteer.

Contact Andy McDonie with any questions regarding World Languages or the MA State Seal of Biliteracy.

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Click here to join the [DESE World Language Mailing List](#)

In this Edition

The 2021 World Languages Curriculum Framework.....	2
Seal of Biliteracy Updates	4
Grants for Proficiency in Languages Other Than English	6
Recent Questions from Districts	7
FAFSA Information	9
Opportunities and Support for German Programs	9

The 2021 World Languages Curriculum Framework

On April 20, 2021, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted unanimously to adopt the revised World Language Content Standards in the [2021 World Languages Curriculum Framework](#). This was the second version of this framework to appear in front of the Board. They had previously reviewed the draft (the Public Comment Draft) on December 15, 2020 when they voted to send the framework to the public to receive comment.

The Public Comment Draft

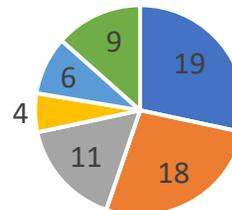
The Public Comment draft noted several major changes from the 1999 Framework. The most significant changes are listed below:

Proficiency Levels – The 1999 framework describes developmental stages of language proficiency, and it describes what each of those developmental stages would look like across varying grade levels. The Public Comment Draft adopts the proficiency levels as described by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and organizes the content standards by proficiency level rather than grade level.

Organization of the Content Standards – The Public Comment Draft reorganized the 1999 framework’s 5 Cs (communication, cultures, comparisons, connections, and communities) into three domains:

- **Communication** – fully encompasses ACTFL’s communication standard and describes *how* students use the language and behaviors;
- **Linguistic Cultures** – fully encompasses ACTFL’s cultures and comparisons standards and describes *what* students should know about language, culture, and identity;

Highly-rated aspects of the framework



- Social, Emotional, and Critical Consciousness
- Communication Standards
- Organization
- Intercultural Communication
- Non-communication standards
- Usability

- **Lifelong Learning** – fully encompasses ACTFL’s connections and communities standards and describes *why* students learn and use languages.

Representation of the Content Standards - The former framework hinted at the linguistic components used to identify levels of proficiency in a manner that was consistent with research in 1999. The Public Comment Draft inserted the following components into all content standards and color coded them for clarity:

- **Function** – The actual task that the student performs with the language
- **Context** – The types of situations in which students at varying levels of proficiency can perform the function (e.g., familiar, rehearsed, professional, etc.).
- **Text type** – The quantity and quality of language that students produce in order to perform the function (e.g., single words, isolated sentences, well-structured paragraphs, etc.).
- **Supports** – The type of support that students at varying levels of proficiency will likely need to perform the function (e.g., repetition, visual aids, etc.).

Social, Emotional, and Critical Consciousness – The Public Comment Draft explicitly linked the acquisition of languages and cultures to social and emotional growth as well as issues of social justice that are intrinsically linked to language and linguistic/cultural identity. The draft explicitly named these skills in the *Standards for World Language Practices* section of the Framework and implicitly embedded them in the *Content Standards*.

Terminology – The Public Comment Draft phased out the term *foreign language* and adopted the term *world language* in its place.

Structure – The Public Comment Draft’s structure is aligned to the format of other recent Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Feedback from the Public

The public comment period for the Draft Revised World Languages Curriculum Framework concluded on February 22, 2021. Consistent with recent framework revisions, DESE collected comments using a survey. The Department solicited feedback through newsletters, emails, tweets, the Commissioner’s weekly update, two virtual meetings with world language stakeholders, a virtual meeting with general curriculum leaders, and a meeting with world language teachers in training. We received 41 partial responses and 65 complete responses. Three additional respondents submitted feedback by email. The majority of respondents (88.5%) were not part of the development of the proposed revisions to the Framework, which indicates a new audience for feedback. Most respondents (76%) were teachers, and most respondents (77.9%) indicated that they work in high schools. The majority of respondents (81%) came from Eastern Massachusetts.

Overall, the public comment was highly supportive of the draft Framework. For example, 100 percent of respondents agreed that the vision sets forth a clear and compelling description of the importance of world languages and high-quality programming. In all the public comment, the lowest level of agreement with the revisions was 75 percent in the case of two standards, where commenters did not agree that the standard

aligned with the ACTFL proficiency benchmarks and indicators.

Respondents indicated that they particularly appreciated the social, emotional, and critical consciousness piece of the framework as well as the communication standards, but also mentioned the organization, intercultural communication, the non-communication standards and the practical usability of the document as favorite aspects.

Changes made in Response to Public Comment

The Department considered all comments from the public as well as suggestions from the Board and incorporated the following changes into the final version of the document.

Further clarification and support for communication standards

- **Comprehensibility** – In response to public comment and to align the standards more closely with the most common Seal of Biliteracy assessments, we added the linguistic component of comprehensibility to the content standards. Comprehensibility describes the success students have communicating their message and can be thought of as holistic accuracy.
- **Classical languages** – The final version includes additional language in the introduction to the content standards to support classical language programs. The new language clarifies that classical language courses should still use the target language to the maximum extent possible, but it also explains why target language use may be significantly less frequent than in modern language courses.
- **Supplemental Linguistic Components Summary** – This supplemental resource shows the progression of the individual linguistic components across proficiency levels.
- **Supplemental Standards at a Glance** – This supplemental resource provides a more teacher-friendly version of the content standards.
- **Graphic organizers** – The final version includes more graphic organizers and call-out boxes to

more clearly convey information within the framework.

What the Framework Does and Does Not Do – The final version of the framework includes this new section just prior to the Guiding Principles and establishes the capacity and the limitations of the framework. This section addresses:

- How the framework supports high-leverage teaching practices,
- Topical content that districts may select to implement the standards, and
- Language to support heritage language learners and students with disabilities.

Stronger articulation of high outcomes for all students

- **High levels of proficiency** – The vision aligns with language from the LOOK Act¹ to indicate that all students should reach high levels of proficiency. The term *high* is linked to Intermediate High, as that is the level that the Department has established for the Seal of Biliteracy.
- **Intermediate High as programmatic outcome** – The new section *What the Framework Does and Does Not Do* supports Intermediate High as the baseline programmatic outcome for world language programs in Massachusetts.

Next Steps

Now that the Board has adopted the content standards, the framework will undergo a final copy edit. State law² also requires that the Department provide the legislature’s Joint Committee on Education with 60 days

notice before the framework is implemented. The final version of the framework will appear on the Department’s website alongside the curriculum frameworks for all other disciplines on or before the end of that 60-day window.

Quick Reference Guides

are now available for:

- Assessment
- American Sign Language
- Classical Languages
- Elementary Programs
- Heritage Language Learners
- Languages with Diverse Written Representations (LDWRs)
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Students with Disabilities

[Click here to see them all.](#)

With the framework in place, the Department’s attention will turn to implementing the framework and supporting the framework with additional resources. Please keep an eye out for volunteer opportunities that we will make available to support the implementation of the framework, and please consider being a part of this effort. The framework is complete. Now the real work begins

Seal of Biliteracy Updates

The Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy recognizes the linguistic skills of students who demonstrate high levels of proficiency in English and at least one other language. Students demonstrate their language proficiency in English through the ELA MCAS and a nationally

recognized assessment in one or more languages other than English. When no nationally recognized assessment is available for a particular language, or if a student has a disability which would preclude them from truly demonstrating their proficiency on an approved

¹ See M.G.L. c. 69, §1Q; 603 CMR 31.07.

² See M.G.L. c. 69, §1D; M.G.L. c. 69, §1E

assessment, portfolios may replace an assessment for languages other than English (See [Seal of Biliteracy Guidance](#) to learn more about portfolios). Since the program officially began in 2019, nearly 3,000 graduates have earned the Seal. Our most recent data reflects that 163 districts are participating in the Seal of Biliteracy program this year.

approved assessments for more languages, staff from the Office of Language Acquisition and Department staff who specialize in interpreting the law and associated regulations worked together to research how to approve more language assessments and still comply with the state’s laws and regulations around the Seal of Biliteracy. As a result of this collaboration, the Department began accepting 2-domain assessments (speaking and writing)

Languages with Approved Assessments				
Afrikaans	Chinese	Gujarati	Lithuanian	Somali
Albanian	(Cantonese)	Haitian Creole	Macedonian	Spanish
American Sign Language (ASL)	Chinese (Mandarin)	Hausa	Malay	Swahili
Amharic	Chuukese	Hebrew	Malayalam	Swedish
Arabic (various dialects)	Croatian	Hindi	Marathi	Tagalog
Armenian	Czech	Hmong	Mongolian	Tajik
Azerbaijani	Danish	Hungarian	Navajo	Tamil
Baluchi (Western)	Dari	Ibo	Nepali	Telugu
Bambara	Dutch	Ilocano	Norwegian	Thai
Bengali/Bangla	Ewe	Indonesian	Oromo	Tibetan
Bosnian	Fante (Akan)	Italian	Pashto	Tigrinya
Bosnian/Croatian	Farsi (Persian)	Jamaican Patois	Polish	Turkish
Bulgarian	Finnish	Japanese	Portuguese	Turkmen
Burmese	French	<u>Karenni</u>	Punjabi	Twi (Akan)
Cambodian	French Canadian	Kazakh	Romanian	Ukrainian
Cape Verdean	Ga	Kinyarwanda	Russian	Urdu
Creole	Georgian	Korean	Samoan	Uzbek
Chin (Hakha)	German	Kurdish	Serbian	Vietnamese
	Greek (classical)	Laotian	Sinhala	Wolof
	Greek (modern)	Latin	Slovak	Yoruba
		Latvian	Slovenian	<u>Yup’ik</u>

New Language Assessments

While portfolios increase access to the Seal of Biliteracy for students who speak/sign languages that are not commonly taught in Massachusetts, approved assessments are the most reliable means for students to demonstrate proficiency. Prior to this year, the Department approved 4-domain assessments (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) for 20 languages. Exceptions were made to the 4-domain assessments for classical languages, languages that have no written system, and languages that are entirely visual (e.g., American Sign Language). In an effort to provide

for languages for which have no approved 4-domain assessments. Under this policy, the Department approved four more assessments (ALTA, Avant World Speak, OPI/WPT, and TISUS) which account for 81 new languages. Please see the list of approved assessments

Equity Impact

The original 20 approved languages were mostly European languages. The 81 new languages better reflect the rich diversity of the languages spoken in homes and communities throughout Massachusetts.

on the [Seal of Biliteracy website](#) for complete information.

Grade 10 ELA MCAS

In order to earn the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy, students must earn a minimum score of 472 on the Next-Gen Grade 10 ELA MCAS (240 on Legacy MCAS). Students who score slightly below those threshold scores and who are able to take the ACCESS for ELs assessment may also be eligible (See [Seal of Biliteracy Guidance](#) for more information). The requirement that students take and pass the MCAS to earn the Seal is stated in the law³. No student can earn the Seal of Biliteracy without taking the MCAS and earning the required scores.

The Seal of Biliteracy for Post-Secondary Credit

In Massachusetts, each individual institution of higher education (IHE) determines if and how it may award credit for prior learning. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is in ongoing consultations with the Department of Higher Education to expand post-secondary credit for students who earn the Seal. Currently six community colleges and one public four-year university have language about awarding credit for

the Seal of Biliteracy on their website, and more and more IHEs are beginning to study the practice. The seven IHEs with policies for the Seal of Biliteracy are:

- Bunker Hill Community College
- Cape Cod Community College
- Middlesex Community College
- Mount Wachusett Community College
- North Shore Community College
- Northern Essex Community College
- Salem State University

This list is expanding every month!

Graduates who have earned the Seal of Biliteracy should make their IHE aware of their Seal status upon enrollment in these colleges and universities. This list does not include private or out-of-state institutions.

Is your college/university not on the list? Consider talking to language department leaders to ask about this amazing and equitable opportunity for students. Higher Education faculty, contact Pat Marshall at Pmarshall@dhe.mass.edu for more information

Grants for Proficiency in Languages Other Than English

This summer, we are offering grants to assist districts in promoting proficiency in languages other than English. The proposed grant has two goals: 1) To provide districts with high-quality data regarding world language proficiency in their districts and 2) To provide educators with professional development experiences to better foster world language proficiency in schools. To qualify for Goal 1, districts must use funds to purchase STAMP, AAPPL, and/or ALIRA assessments to gather data about proficiency and to engage in collaborative, data-driven conversations throughout the year. To qualify for Goal 2, districts must seek out and purchase professional development opportunities for identifying ACTFL proficiency levels, using the target language 90% of the time or more, and/or leveraging authentic resources for

Get Ready for Summer Grants

The window for applying for grants is short, and so is the window for spending the money. In order to get ahead start districts should think about:

Goal 1:

- Which assessments to purchase
- When they want to administer the tests
- What they hope to learn from the data

Goal 2:

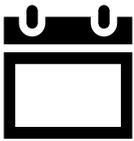
- What kind of professional development they want
- Which PD providers can meet their needs
- How to facilitate ongoing PD

³ See M.G.L. c. 69, §1Q

communication. Goal 2 districts must also agree to participate in local professional development opportunities and to provide time for reflection. More information about requirements will be posted on the [World Languages website](#) soon after the grants have been formally approved. These grants are summer grants, meaning that the money must be spent no later

than 8/31/2021. Services purchased (e.g., the actual PD experience or the actual assessment administration dates) may fall after that date, but the purchase must be complete on or before August 31. To receive the most up-to-date information, please ensure you are subscribed to the World Languages mailing list [by clicking here](#) and entering your information.'

Recent Questions from Districts



Since the Grade 10 ELA MCAS has been canceled since 2019 and is not scheduled to be administered again until later this spring, do students still have to take it to earn the Seal of Biliteracy?

Yes. The law requires that students demonstrate English proficiency on the Grade 10 ELA MCAS in order to earn the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy. Unless and until the state legislature makes provisions for this circumstance, the requirement for the MCAS remains in place.

Will the spring 2021 MCAS count for 2021 graduates to earn the State Seal of Biliteracy?

Yes. Any juniors or seniors who has not already met the English requirements for the Seal through the Grade 10 ELA MCAS should take the spring 2021 MCAS. Even though results will not be returned until after graduation, districts may award the Seal retroactively to students who met all testing and graduation requirements prior to graduation, even if testing results arrive later.

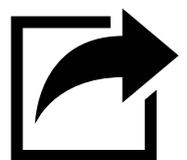


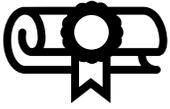
My student passed a state-mandated ELA assessment in another state. Does that count toward the Seal of Biliteracy?

No. In order to earn the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy, students must meet all of Massachusetts' requirements. Massachusetts law requires students to take and pass the Grade 10 ELA MCAS.

What if my student met the world language criteria for another state's seal of biliteracy?

It depends. If a student took an assessment that Massachusetts approves and earned a score that qualifies in Massachusetts, then that assessment score may be applied for the Seal of Biliteracy. If the student took an assessment that Massachusetts does not approve, or if the other state accepts lower scores on a MA-approved assessment for the seal, then their scores do not qualify. Students must meet Massachusetts' criteria.





We want to print the Seal of Biliteracy insignia on transcripts, but we need a black and white version. What can we do?

The Department now offers black and white versions of the insignias. Find them on WBMS, alongside the color insignias.

A student was already in the portfolio process for one of the 81 new languages. Are they permitted to complete the portfolio?

Yes. Students who have already begun the portfolio process may (but are not required to) submit a portfolio for one of the 81 newly approved languages.

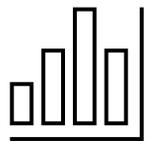


Does the Department provide awards, medals, pins, stoles, etc. for Seal recipients?

No. It is the district’s prerogative and responsibility to procure physical awards for students. Many districts go through their diploma printers to procure certificates, pins, medals, etc. The Department only provides the digital insignia.

How do I report data regarding the Seal of Biliteracy?

The official data report goes through your district’s data administrator who submits information via the annual SIMS report at the end of the year. Your data administrator will need to know the names of graduates who earned the Seal and whether they earned the regular Seal or the Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction. This official data report is a requirement for all districts who participate in the program. Please note, graduates who earn the Seal via the 2021 spring MCAS will not count toward your district’s reports, as the reporting window will have already closed. Your district should still award the Seal, but that award will not count toward your district’s SIMS data.



To help the Department better support the Seal of Biliteracy program, districts are also encouraged to fill out a voluntary data report. Please fill out this [Seal of Biliteracy District Profile](#) to begin the process. You will receive more information after you submit the district profile.



How does the new World Languages Framework support less common languages, programs, and traditionally underserved students?

Please check out our [QRGs on the World Languages website](#).



Is World Languages really a core discipline?

Yes. State law recognizes that world languages is a core discipline.⁴

⁴ See M.G.L. c. 69, §1D

FAFSA Information

Fewer high school seniors have filled out the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) this year than in the previous two years, and DESE, the Executive Office of Education, the Department of Higher Education, [MEFA](#) (the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority), [MassEdCO](#), [American Student Assistance](#), [uAspire](#), and others are working together to help more students complete the FAFSA and keep college an option. A

statewide "Worth It" campaign began on Thursday, April 15, and statewide and regional resources and events for April and May are posted online at www.mass.gov/financialaid. If you know high school seniors who haven't filled out the FAFSA yet, please encourage them and their families to connect with their school counselor and use the resources at www.mass.gov/financialaid to help keep college an option this fall!

Opportunities and Support for German Programs

The Goethe Institute and AATG are providing support and opportunities for German programs through their initiative, SPARK for German. SPARK for German, a joint project of the American Association of Teachers of German and the Goethe-Institut, provides professional development for future German instructors and enables students across the United States to start learning German at an early age. SPARK offers a playful approach to German lessons in after-school programs—providing early access to language instruction and creating opportunities for students to learn German into advanced levels. SPARK's long-term goal is to increase demand and build capacity to integrate German into the regular curriculum in immersion, elementary, middle, and high school programs, thus building a K-16 pipeline.

How does SPARK work?

Colleges, universities, and high schools (a.k.a. SPARK Labs) work with SPARK to provide training for students taking German to become SPARK instructors. Under the guidance of teachers and faculty members, these instructors subsequently teach German to young learners in after-school or other community-based programs.

What does SPARK offer?

- Ready-to-use, flexible, and adaptable teaching units designed for use with elementary, middle, and high school students
- Professional development opportunities and German language courses for advanced high school students and undergraduate and graduate students interested in pursuing a German teaching career
- Certificates of completion for successful instructors and participants
- Comprehensive program support from professional coordinators and other SPARK Labs around the country

Are you interested?

We invite high schools and colleges to get complete information about the program on our website (www.sparkforgerman.org) and to apply to become part of the next Labs cohort. Don't delay – we are currently offering introduction workshops for new SPARK Labs that will prepare you to start the program in the 2021-22 academic year.

Questions?

Contact SPARK Co-Directors Susanne Rinner (Susanne.rinner.extern@goethe.de) and Thomas Flanagan (Thomas.flanagan@goethe.de) with any questions. We hope you are ready to spark interest in German and the cultures of the German-speaking world in your community and to ensure continuous growth of your German program!