2025

# Massachusetts Manual for Heritage Language Programs

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## I. Introduction

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Provides an overview of the topics covered in the manual
* Supports a shared understanding of key terms discussed in the manual
* Demonstrates the importance of heritage language programs in schools and districts
* Highlights the benefits of having heritage language programs for various stakeholders
* Establishes the foundation for effectively implementing heritage language programs

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.

As such, DESE is committed to supporting students to advance their linguistic and cultural proficiency in their heritage languages (HLs) and to supporting schools and districts in providing high-quality academic programs, including heritage language (HL) programs, that will advance students’ linguistic and cultural assets.

The purpose of this manual is to assist school and district leaders and administrators in effectively planning for, developing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining HL programs.

Specifically, this manual offers best practices and recommendations for:

* [Planning for, establishing, and structuring HL programs](#_II._Heritage_Language);
* [Determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs and placing students into appropriate HL courses](#_III._Determination_of);
* [Approaching curriculum, instruction, and assessment in HL programs](#_IV._Curriculum,_Instruction,);
* [Providing training and professional development for HL programs](#_V._Heritage_Language);
* [Engaging students, families, and communities in HL programs](#_VI._Student,_Family,);
* [Integrating and collaborating within schools/districts for HL programs](#_VII._Integration_and);
* [Advocating for HL programs](#_VIII._Advocacy_for); and
* [Evaluating HL programs](#_IX._Evaluation_of).

### Understanding HLs and HL Programs

To assist in understanding the nuances in terminology in this manual, the following information about HLs and HL programs should be referenced when using the manual:

Heritage languages (HLs)[[1]](#footnote-2): In the context of Massachusetts public schools, HLs are languages other than English used in homes, communities, and families.

Heritage language (HL) programs: In the context of Massachusetts public schools, HL programs are programs specifically designed for students with HLs and in which students with HLs are the primary participants.

HL programs are a vital component of comprehensive world languages (WL) education, which along with English Learner Education (ELE) programs is an essential part of the robust multilingual (ML) programming offered in Massachusetts schools/districts. The following diagram shows where HL programs are situated in the broader ecosystem of multilingual programming:

**Multilingual Programs in Massachusetts Schools and Districts[[2]](#footnote-3)**

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As shown in the diagram, ML programs include ELE programs, which may be comprised of Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programs, Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs (in the form of Two-Way Immersion (TWI) or One-Way Immersion (OWI) programs), and Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs. They also include WL programs, which may be comprised of World Language Immersion (WLI) programs, Foundational World Language (FWL) programs, and HL programs.

In Massachusetts, HL programs:

* can be offered at any grade level;
* can be offered in any HL, including HLs not taught in a school/district’s FWL programs; and
* may consist of a single HL course (at a minimum) or multiple HL courses at different levels.

Although each HL program will be unique and should be tailored to local needs, they differ from other types of language education programs in that they (1) are designed specifically for students with HLs; (2) include students with HLs as the primary participants; and (3) focus more exclusively on developing, maintaining, and/or strengthening students’ skills and abilities in the HL, as well as connections to and relationships with HL cultures and communities.

* It is important to note that HL programs differ from other types of WL programs, including FWL and WLI programs.
  + FWL programs may include monolingual English speakers or multilingual learners (including students with HLs). In FWL programs, students acquire and develop proficiency in the WL in an academic setting rather than in the home or community.
  + WLI programs may include monolingual English speakers or multilingual learners (including students with HLs). In WLI programs, WLs are tools for instruction rather than content being taught, as they are the languages of instruction for all subjects.
* It is also important to note that HL programs differ from ELE programs, including DLBE (TWI and OWI), SEI, and TBE programs.
  + HL programs are not substitutes for any ELE program services (including English as a Second Language (ESL) services), though students with HLs who are served in ELE programs, including English Learners (ELs), English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), and Newcomers should have access to HL programs in addition to ELE programs.

Varied stakeholders, including school/district leaders, teachers, other school personnel, students, families, and communities should be involved when establishing a HL program. Students, families, and communities, in particular, need to be centered in the program’s design and delivery, and they should be seen as equal partners in the program’s success.[[3]](#footnote-4) Their voices are critical at every point in the process, from planning for a program that has not yet been established, to evaluating a program that has already been implemented. Although stakeholder input and involvement are recommended for any type of program, they are especially important when developing a HL program to ensure access and equity and that the program reflects student, family, and community needs.

### Making the Case for HL Programs

As described in DESE’s Educational Vision:

* all students in Massachusetts, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities, will have equitable opportunities to excel in all content areas across all grades;
* culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices will support students to thrive by creating affirming environments where students have a sense of belonging, engage in deeper learning, and are held to high expectations with targeted support; and
* all students are known and valued; learning experiences are relevant, real-world, and interactive; and individualized supports enable students to excel at grade level (or beyond).[[4]](#footnote-5)

The vision emphasizes that, as a result of the education received in Massachusetts schools and districts, students will understand and value themselves and others, and also see themselves as valuable and involved members of their communities. They will understand differences and perspectives, think critically about the world around them, and feel empowered to play a role in their communities. Students and their families will have a sense of belonging in the school/district community and will be valued for what they bring to that community, including their languages.

HL programs are essential to ensuring that all students can engage in the inclusive, supportive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining learning experiences described in DESE’s Educational Vision. They provide a rich opportunity for students with HLs, their families, and their communities to feel represented in the school/district, and they support students through individualized and equitable learning opportunities that center their unique backgrounds, skills, and abilities.

The following benefits may be found when offering a HL program:

**Benefits for Students with HLs**

* Centering students’ cultural heritage and identity in their language learning and academic journey can support their understanding of self, sense of belonging, and confidence.
* Students are more likely to see themselves as valuable, involved members of their home and school communities and active participants in shaping their learning experiences.
* Greater student engagement leads to positive student outcomes within and beyond the classroom, including attaining the Seal of Biliteracy, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) credits (where applicable), and/or college credits (where applicable); developing deeper familial (including intergenerational) connections; and building relationships with HL communities.
* Students gain a better understanding of how they think, learn, relate, and communicate, including in multiple languages/dialects, and they have multiple options for how they access content and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
* Families and HL communities may have greater interest and involvement in helping students develop their HL skills, leading to more opportunities for students to use their HL in real-life situations at home or in their communities.
* Students are recognized, celebrated, and supported in attaining their goals related to linguistic, cultural, affective, social, academic, and community aspects of HL learning.
* Providing students instruction in the HL can help them develop both their skills in the HL and their skills in English, making HL programs particularly beneficial for diverse learners with HLs in cases where DLBE programs are not available.

**Benefits for Schools and Districts**

* Providing access to HL programs allows schools and districts to support the whole student and make students with HLs feel empowered and ready to learn.
* There is increased access and equity for diverse learners with HLs, including ELs, students with disabilities (SWD), ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.
* Greater awareness of and appreciation for HLs leads to a more inclusive, equitable, and connected school/district community in which all those with a cultural or familial connection to a language other than English feel safe and welcome.
* Schools and districts can develop robust, lasting partnerships with families and communities, as offering HL programs demonstrates that HLs and their speakers are valued and respected.

HL programs strengthen ML programming; ensure WL programs include and benefit all students; and develop world-ready students who can fully participate in their communities by using multiple languages and having competency in multiple cultures.

**Benefits for Families and Communities**

* When students have opportunities to learn the HL in school, they often develop a greater interest in and connection to the HL and HL cultures, resulting in deeper relationships with their families and communities.
* Students participating in HL programs may be more likely to engage in community-based service learning or other types of civic action in the HL to contribute to their communities.
* Access to HL education may lead students to use the HL more at home, which can support family communication when family members only use the HL or feel more comfortable using the HL than English.
* Students are more likely to develop high levels of proficiency in the HL, preparing them to pursue a career in which they can use the HL in support of their communities in the future.
* HL programs offer a space for community in the school or district that allows families to connect with and support each other; preserve their familial and cultural traditions; and positively contribute to their children’s education.

For more information about and research on HL programs, including their benefits and importance, see the [Massachusetts Heritage Languages Framework Study Final Report](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2023/04-heritage-languages.docx) and [Summary](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2023/04-heritage-languages-summary.pdf).

Despite the promising outcomes of HL programs, most students with HLs in the U.S. are not able to access HL programs, or any other type of program that would provide learning opportunities in the HL, and most schools/districts do not offer programs specifically designed for students with HLs.

Limited or no access to HL programs may:

* negatively impact students’ sense of identity and belonging; connections to self, family, and community; and achievement within and beyond the classroom;
* discourage students from continuing to learn the HL in school, as they may feel frustrated when participating in FWL programs in the language that are either too easy or too challenging;[[5]](#footnote-6)
* contribute to students’ language loss, resulting in limitations on their proficiency in the HL and requiring them to potentially take FWL courses to “relearn” their HLs later in life;[[6]](#footnote-7)
* cause students to believe that their background in the HL is not valued or seen as an asset in academic settings, which could reduce the likelihood of them pursuing college or career opportunities in the HL; and
* lead to issues of access and equity in students’ overall learning experiences.

Although students with HLs may be served in FWL courses, they bring unique knowledge, skills, and abilities that require different approaches to teaching and learning than those commonly found in FWL courses. To ensure students with HLs are valued and supported, and that learning experiences effectively build on their background knowledge, lived experiences, and linguistic/cultural assets, it is important to provide access to HL programs in Massachusetts schools and districts.

## II. Heritage Language Programming

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Discusses how to determine the need for heritage language programs
* Elevates the role of students, families, and communities when establishing heritage language programs
* Explores the process of establishing goals when designing heritage language programs
* Provides guidance and examples for how to structure heritage language programs
* Discusses articulation within and beyond heritage language programs
* Establishes the foundation for effectively implementing heritage language programs

As described in the [Introduction](#_I._Introduction), heritage language (HL) programs are programs specifically designed for students with heritage languages (HLs) and in which students with HLs are the primary participants. They can be offered in any language and at any grade level, consist of at least one HL course, and are part of world languages (WL) programming and the broader multilingual (ML) programming offered in Massachusetts schools and districts.

Although HL programs are often developed when a school or district’s Foundational World Language (FWL) program(s) includes a large number of students whose HL is the language being taught, HL programs can and should be offered in any HL represented in a school or district (to the extent possible), especially HLs used in historically marginalized communities whose languages are not already taught in a FWL program.

### Determining What Type of Program Best Serves Students with HLs

To determine what type of program best serves students with HLs, schools and districts should first identify what HLs are represented and the extent to which they are represented among students and the community. The following may be helpful for gathering this information:

* Language Surveys (LS)
  + Schools and districts may administer LS to incoming students to determine whether students are exposed to languages other than English outside of school or otherwise have a family history with a language other than English.
* Census Bureau’s American Community Survey
  + Schools and districts may find information about languages used in and around the school/district community, including how many 5- to 17-year-olds in the town or county use a language other than English in the home.
* Student self-identification as being a student with a HL
  + Schools and districts may hear directly from students that they have HLs, or they may hear students describing their family history with languages other than English or their use of languages other than English at home or in the community.
* Family and community perspectives/requests
  + Schools and districts may hear directly from families or community members about the desire for a HL program, or they may notice family requests for communications in languages other than English, indicating the family’s use of another language.
* Teacher observations
  + Schools and districts may hear directly from teachers, or otherwise consult with teachers, who can provide information about students’ backgrounds based on their own experiences working with students and their families.

After determining that a HL program would best serve students with HLs, schools and districts should determine:

* how many students of similar ages/grade levels have the same HL;
* how many of those students have similar backgrounds and skills and abilities in the HL;
* how many licensed teachers are available for a program;
* what (if any) additional supports or resources are needed for a program;
* if there is student, family, and community interest in and support for a program.

**Minimum Requirements to Establish a HL Program**

* Ability to group a sufficient number of students together to form at least one HL course
* At least one teacher who is able to teach at least one HL course
* Any necessary supports, including support from students, families, and communities

Additional information on [Participation and Placement in Heritage Language Programs](#_III._Participation_and); [Heritage Language Teacher Training and Professional Development](#_V._Heritage_Language); and [Student, Family, & Community Engagement in Heritage Language Programs](#_VI._Student,_Family,) can be found in the corresponding sections of this manual.

### Understanding Potential Students

When the decision has been made to establish a HL program, it is important to start planning for the program by considering the students who may be served, as this will ensure that the program’s goals, desired outcomes, and model/structure center students’ backgrounds, skills, and abilities.

Students with HLs may vary in terms of their skills in the HL; their previous educational experiences in the HL; their experiences with HL cultures; their connections to HL communities; and how they themselves identify (or do not identify) with aspects of the HL and HL cultures/communities.

When thinking about potential students in a HL program, consider the following:

* What are students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds?
* What types of connections do students have to the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities?
* How do students identify (or not identify) themselves with the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities?
* What exposure to the HL have students had, and how much exposure have they had?
* What prior educational opportunities have students had in the HL, and in what context?
* What levels of proficiency do students have in listening/viewing and speaking/signing in the HL?
* What levels of proficiency do students have in reading and writing in the HL?
* What are students’ strengths in the HL? Where might they benefit from additional support?

As it is determined that individual students would benefit from participation in the program and as these students are placed in the program, it is important to revisit these questions (in collaboration with students and their families) to ensure the program has been designed in a way that will best meet their actual needs.

### Establishing Goals & Desired Outcomes for HL Programs

In the early stages of establishing a HL program, schools and districts will also need to determine goals and desired outcomes for the program, which should:

* describe desired learning experiences students will have in the program;
* emphasize what the program wants for students as a result of the program;
* reflect potential, current, and/or future students’ backgrounds, skills, and abilities;
* inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program over time; and
* be developed collaboratively with varied stakeholders, including families and communities.

Ideally, schools and districts will already have an established linguistic vision (LV) prior to creating a HL program. A school or district LV describes how varied languages are represented and included in the school or district’s programming and community and serves as the foundation for any policies or practices related to language use in the school or district.

* If a school or district already has a LV, it is important to align HL program goals/desired outcomes with this LV. Starting with the LV can help create a shared sense of the knowledge, skills, or attitudes students should develop in the program to help fulfill that vision, as well as the kinds of experiences students should have and the impact the program should have.
* If a school or district does not already have an LV, it may be helpful to co-construct an LV and goals/desired outcomes for the HL program to support their alignment and also ensure that HLs are represented and prioritized in the LV. Having an LV can also help with integrating HL programs and establishing them as a regular part of educational programming; more on these topics can be found in the [Integration & Collaboration for Heritage Language Programs](#_VII._Integration_and) section of this manual.

Specific goals and desired outcomes will vary from program to program and should be based on the local context and needs. They may be related to the linguistic, cultural, affective, social, academic, and/or community aspects of HL learning, depending on students’ backgrounds and the school or district’s vision for the program.

At a high level, HL programs focus on developing, maintaining, and/or strengthening students’ skills and abilities in the HL and connections to and relationships with HL cultures and communities.

**Common High-Level Goals/Desired Outcomes**

* Building students’ proficiency in listening/viewing and speaking/signing in the HL
* Building students’ proficiency in reading and writing in the HL
* Strengthening students’ relationships with the HL and HL cultures
* Connecting students with members of HL communities
* Supporting students’ identity development as it relates to the HL
* Guiding students to achieve the Seal of Biliteracy in the HL

When developing program goals and desired outcomes, consider the following:

* How will access and equity be ensured in the program?
* What would help us achieve our LV through the HL program?
* What knowledge, skills, and abilities do students bring to the classroom?
* What knowledge, skills, and abilities should students gain in the HL program?
* What would a successful graduate of the HL program look like and be able to do?
* What attitudes about the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities do students bring to the program?
* What attitudes about the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities will students develop in the program?
* What kinds of learning experiences should students have in the program?
* What impacts should the program have on students, families, and communities?

Goals and desired outcomes for a HL program should be developed in collaboration with students and families, so it is important to involve potential students and families in this process during the initial planning stages, and then revisit goals and outcomes with students and their families after participation decisions have been made for the program. This ensures that student and family voices are centered in the process from the beginning, and that goals and outcomes are appropriate and aligned to the desires of those involved in the program during its implementation.

* To gather input from students and families, it may be helpful to establish student and/or family advisory groups or administer surveys about what is most important to those who may be served by the program.

Lastly, schools and districts should think about how situations in which (1) students speak varied dialects of the HL being taught (e.g., Northern/Southern Vietnamese); (2) students have a HL that is a similar language to the HL being taught (e.g., Mandarin/Cantonese); and (3) students have relationships with varied HL cultures and communities (e.g., Brazilian/European Portuguese) will impact program goals and desired outcomes.

* For example, if a Mandarin HL program is offered, and it is determined that students whose HL is Cantonese would benefit from participation in the program, it would be important to also elevate Cantonese HL communities in the goals and outcomes.

### Determining the Model/Structure of a HL Program

Schools and districts should next determine how the HL program will be structured, including what type of program model will be used and how many and what types of courses will be offered.

#### High-Quality HL Program Models/Structures

High-quality, robust HL programs include multiple courses and a pathway of learning that allows students to participate in upper-level courses in the HL program and/or upper-level FWL courses upon completion of the HL program, as well as opportunities to earn the Seal of Biliteracy.

The following vignettes demonstrate how HL programs can be structured with multiple courses:

**Vignettes: HL Program Models/Structures**

Greenville School District

Greenville is a suburban former mill town. About 17% of the residents of the Census area were born abroad, and about 25% speak a language other than English at home. Twenty years ago, Greenville School District noticed that there were many students in their Portuguese classes who had a HL background, and the district began a Portuguese HL program with one class at the high school level. The district expanded the program over time and now offers an extended sequence of Portuguese for Heritage Speakers courses beginning in 5th grade. Students then have the option to take Advanced Portuguese for Heritage Speakers 1 in 8th grade, extending to Advanced Portuguese for Heritage Speakers 5 in 12th grade. Students in the program also have the option to complete a two-course sequence in Medical Interpretation. The program tests students every two years for proficiency monitoring purposes, using a test that is approved for the Seal of Biliteracy. Most students earn the Seal in 10th grade.

Port. for Heritage Speakers   
(Gr. 5)

Port. for Heritage Speakers   
(Gr. 6)

Port. for Heritage Speakers   
(Gr. 7)

Adv. Port. for Heritage Speakers 1 (Honors)

Adv. Port. for Heritage Speakers 2 (Honors)

Adv. Port. for Heritage Speakers 3 (Honors)

Adv. Port. for Heritage Speakers 4 (Honors)

Adv. Port. for Heritage Speakers 5 (Honors)

Medical Interp. 1 (Honors)

Medical Interp. 2 (Honors)

+

+

Grade 5

Grade 6

Grade 7

Grade 8

Grade 9

Grade 10

Grade 11

Grade 12

Harborside Unified Schools

Harborside is a mid-sized city, and it has large numbers of families who speak Spanish and Portuguese at home. Harborside Unified Schools has an elementary school FWL program in Spanish and recently added an elementary school Portuguese FWL program. Both language programs meet once per week for 45 minutes and hope to expand in the future. At the middle school level, Spanish and Portuguese FWL classes are offered three times per week. Harborside High School offers three levels of Heritage Spanish in their Spanish HL program, after which students take Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language and Culture as part of the FWL program. They also offer three levels of Heritage Portuguese in their Portuguese HL program that can then be followed by an upper-level Portuguese IV course in the FWL program; this is offered as an alternative advanced option to an AP course, as there is not currently an available AP exam for Portuguese. Students generally test for the Seal of Biliteracy in 11th or 12th grade.

Heritage   
Spanish 1

Heritage   
Spanish 2

Heritage   
Spanish 3

AP Spanish Language & Culture

Foundational Spanish 1

Foundational Spanish 2

Foundational Spanish 3

Heritage Portuguese 1

Heritage Portuguese 2

Heritage Portuguese 3

Portuguese 4

Foundational Portuguese 1

Foundational Portuguese 2

Foundational Portuguese 3

Stafford Public Schools

Stafford is a suburb outside a major city. Stafford Public Schools offers a K-8 Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) Spanish program, as well as Spanish FWL classes in 7th and 8th grade, and Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese FWL classes in high school. The high school also offers Spanish Literacy for Spanish Speakers, Spanish Heritage Honors, Portuguese Literacy for Portuguese Speakers, Portuguese Heritage Honors, and French Heritage Honors. The literacy courses aim to prepare students with a HL for the Heritage Honors course by building skills in academic reading and writing. The Heritage Honors courses are built around the AP themes and continue to build academic reading and writing proficiency as well as other academic language skills. Most students test for the Seal of Biliteracy after completing the Heritage Honors course for their language.

Spanish Literacy for Spanish Speakers

Spanish Dual Language Bilingual Education Program

Spanish Heritage Honors

AP Spanish Language and Culture

French Heritage Honors

AP French Language and Culture

Portuguese Literacy for Portuguese Speakers

Portuguese Heritage Honors

**Reflection Questions**

* Would any of these program models/structures work well for your HL program?
* What models/structures would provide students with the highest quality HL education?
* How can your HL program increase access/equity through its model and structure?

Programs may choose to work towards models like these, or they may decide that another model best fits their context while still enabling students to gain high levels of proficiency and the Seal of Biliteracy. Having multiple course options and levels will be most feasible for programs with a larger number of students, which also likely have students with a wider range of backgrounds, skills, and abilities.

#### Determining the Model/Structure of a HL Program

Although HL programs often start with one course or a few courses and expand over time, the exact model/structure of a program will depend on a variety of factors, such as potential students in the program, program capacity, and the availability of resources.

In Massachusetts, the most common model for HL programs consists of two to three levels of HL courses (e.g., Heritage Spanish I, II, III), followed by a merged course sequence in which students from HL programs and students from FWL programs engage in higher-level courses together.

* This happens when students from FWL courses are ready to access and engage in courses at the same level as students from the HL program, who have participated in more rigorous learning opportunities in the language.

Additional course types that can be offered in HL programs include:

* Introductory or preparatory HL courses
  + Many students with HLs have strong speaking and listening skills and more limited literacy, and it is important to provide opportunities for these students to access and engage in HL education.
  + Programs may choose to offer introductory or preparatory HL courses if only one HL course can be offered to provide students with an opportunity to continue studying the HL and also prepare them for higher-level FWL courses in the HL.
  + Programs may also choose to offer introductory or preparatory HL courses as part of a more robust, extended sequence of HL courses in the program, as they can help students build their skills and serve as an entry point to additional HL courses.
* Honors, AP, or dual enrollment HL courses
  + Honors, AP, or dual enrollment options may encourage students to participate in HL programs. Students may feel intimidated by these course designations, however, so programs should ensure that students are well informed and encouraged to participate in them.
  + Programs may consider establishing AP or dual enrollment options if they find that students are completing the existing course sequence before their final year at the school or are ready for advanced content options that are not currently available.
* Language Arts or other content courses in the HL
  + Programs may choose to create Language Arts or content-area courses in the HL, especially for students who have already completed multiple HL courses and are seeking opportunities to continue studying their HL in more advanced courses.
  + If a program offers Language Arts or other content courses in the HL, these can be offered exclusively to students with HLs or made open to students who do not have HLs, such as Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) continuation students or others who demonstrate necessary levels of proficiency, as appropriate.
  + If programs want to offer these types of courses in more than one content area, they may need to request approval from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), as the program may be categorized as a DLBE program in this situation as opposed to a HL program and additional policies would apply.

Regardless of how many courses and what types of courses are offered in a HL program, schools and districts are strongly recommended to provide options for students with strong oracy skills and more limited literacy skills, as HL programs that require students to already possess literacy skills to participate risk excluding a large number of students with HLs.

It is also strongly recommended that all courses in HL programs be aligned to particular proficiency levels to support articulated, sequenced instruction that will build on students’ existing proficiency in the HL and support their attainment of high levels of proficiency, as well as the Seal of Biliteracy.

Lastly, schools and districts should think about how situations in which (1) students speak varied dialects of the HL being taught (e.g., Farsi/Dari); (2) students have a HL that is a similar language to the HL being taught (e.g., Spanish/Catalan); and (3) students have relationships with varied HL cultures and communities (e.g., Brazilian/European Portuguese) will impact the types of courses that are offered.

* For example, if the majority of potential students in the program have a Brazilian Portuguese background, it may be beneficial to offer courses focused on the HL and culture reflected in this HL community, such as Brazilian Humanities.

When determining the model/structure of the program, consult with potential students and their families and consider the following:

* What is the ideal number of courses to provide high-quality, rigorous programming?
  + How many courses are going to help students achieve high levels of proficiency?
  + How many courses are going to help students achieve the Seal of Biliteracy?
* What is the minimum number of courses needed to adequately support students?
  + What are potential students’ backgrounds, skills, and proficiency levels?
  + How will diverse learners (e.g., English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities (SWD), English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.) be served?
  + How many courses are needed to support all potential students?
* How many courses can currently be offered, based on students, teachers, and resources?
  + What is the minimum number of students required to start a new course?
  + How many potential students are there? How many courses could we have?
  + How many teachers do we already have in the school/district?
  + How many of these teachers are available and interested in teaching a course?
  + What relevant training do teachers already have, and what training is available?
  + What curriculum/materials are available? What can be developed or purchased?
  + How much funding and support is there for the program?
* How will courses connect and support students’ advancement and achievement in the HL?
  + How might HL and FWL courses merge at upper levels?
  + How might HL courses build on what students have learned in DLBE programs at earlier grade levels? How might HL courses lead students to participate in content-area DLBE courses at later grade levels?
  + If only one course can be offered, what will it be and how will it connect to other courses to help students access rigorous content in their HL?
  + If the course(s) in the program will culminate in an AP course, how does that impact when and how courses leading up to that course are offered?
  + What types of courses will engage students based on their interests and skills?
  + What types of courses will reflect students’ backgrounds, including the HL they speak, any dialects of the HL they speak, and their HL communities?
  + What types of courses will help prepare students for the Seal of Biliteracy, and how might the regularly scheduled Seal of Biliteracy testing in the school/district impact when and how certain courses are offered?
* How, when, and what types of additional courses might be offered in the future?
  + How can we ensure that the program offerings reflect changing needs over time?

After decisions have been made about what courses will be offered in a HL program, schools and districts should consider what type of credit students can earn by completing the courses. Districts which opt into MassCore can count HL courses toward WL requirements for MassCore, though any and all decisions about graduation requirements are locally made at the district level. Schools and districts should also think about how they will code HL courses in the Massachusetts Education Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS). Although it is not required, an EPIMS code is available for HL courses; the code is labeled as “Spanish for Spanish Speakers,” “Portuguese for Portuguese Speakers,” etc. Using this code will support DESE in collecting data that can more appropriately serve students and programs.

#### Ensuring Articulation Within & Across Programs

Regardless of how many courses are offered, HL programs should think about articulation within and beyond the program. Program articulation refers to sequenced instruction that allows students to effectively build upon their prior language knowledge and learning experiences.

There are two primary types of articulation:

* Horizontal articulation involves alignment across course sections in the same language at the same level. In a well-articulated program, students in a Heritage Spanish I course offered in the morning and students in this same level course offered in the afternoon have similar experiences so that both are equally prepared for any offering of Heritage Spanish II by the end of the year.
* Vertical articulation is alignment across levels of a course sequence that ensures learning proceeds smoothly throughout a student’s learning trajectory from course to course. In a well-articulated HL program, each course will build on previous courses and build to future courses, whether that be additional courses offered within the HL program or other courses that students may have previously taken or may take upon completing the program.

Having shared learning goals, curriculum design and assessment practices, and understanding of students’ strengths and areas where they need more support, as well as time for collaboration (including across course and grade levels) can support students’ learning experiences before, during, and after HL programs.

As HL programs and FWL programs often merge together at the upper levels, it is especially important for there to be articulation between HL programs and FWL programs. Students with HLs should also have the opportunity to access DLBE programs prior to or after participating in HL programs, and schools and districts with DLBE programs should therefore design the courses in their HL programs in a way that will also align with/build on what is taught in relevant DLBE programs. Articulation between HL programs and DLBE programs is important for ensuring that students with HLs have access to a well-developed K-12 pathway of language learning.

The following lists present similarities and differences between HL programs and DLBE programs:

Heritage Language Programs:

* Students with HLs are the primary participants in the program
* Focus is on developing students’ proficiency in the HL and connections to HL cultures and communities
* May include content area instruction, but this is not required nor is it the focus
* Districts may implement without DESE approval

Dual Language Bilingual Education Programs

* Multilingual learners, including students with HLs, and monolingual English speakers may participate
* Focus is on developing bilingualism and biliteracy in English and the target/partner language
* Must include instruction in language arts and at least one other content area in the target/partner language
* DLBE is a comprehensive English Learner Education (ELE) program model; DESE approval is required prior to implementation.

When articulating learning between HL programs and DLBE programs, it may be particularly helpful to engage in similar practices (e.g., using performance- and proficiency-based rubrics) and bridge the curriculum from content-based instruction to a focus on connections to cultures and communities. In some cases, students with HLs would benefit from participating in Language Arts or content-area courses in the HL that are offered as part of a DLBE course sequence as opposed to the HL program. In this situation, HL programs and DLBE programs will need to collaborate to ensure students with HLs have access to these courses. It is strongly recommended that students with HLs have opportunities to test into these courses, and additional preparatory courses should be offered as needed to help students with HLs prepare for and access them.

### Supporting Students with HLs When a Program Cannot Be Established

Although this section has focused on what to do when starting a program, there may be instances where a HL program is not yet feasible for a variety of reasons. This may especially be the case for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), Indigenous languages, other minoritized or endangered languages, and languages for which there is not currently a Massachusetts WL teaching license.

Even if a HL program cannot currently be offered, in the interim, there are several ways schools and districts can support students with HLs beyond formal HL programs:

* Online learning
  + Schools and districts might offer a “Virtual Heritage Language” course that allows students to engage in independent study of their HL through accredited online courses even if it is not being offered in a formal HL program. If this option is chosen, schools or districts should ensure that any online HL course options are rigorous, only offered if there are not enough students/staff for an in-person option, and involve close monitoring by the school/district.
* Extracurricular activities
  + Schools and districts might provide access to extracurricular activities in the HL, such as HL book clubs, community-service learning opportunities, or other after-school enrichment programs. Extracurricular options may also help students engage with HL cultures and build connections between the HL and other subject areas.
* Partnerships with community-based HL schools
  + Schools and districts might partner with local community-based HL schools to provide access to HL education outside of the mainstream school system, as these are schools students may already be participating in or have previously attended.
* Supports in FWL courses and programs
  + Schools and districts should support students with HLs who are participating in FWL courses or programs; see the [Massachusetts Quick Reference Guide on World Language Learning for Heritage Speakers/Signers](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/framework/qrg-heritage.docx) for more information.
* Access to the Seal of Biliteracy
  + Schools and districts should ensure students with HLs are included in any Seal of Biliteracy programs offered and provided with the necessary supports to access the Seal of Biliteracy, whether or not they are studying the HL in school.

Schools and districts should aim to provide all students with HLs with opportunities to achieve the Seal of Biliteracy, including for languages not offered in HL programs or other WL programs.

More information about collaboration within schools to support students with HLs can be found in the [Integration & Collaboration for Heritage Language Programs](#_VII._Integration_and) section of this manual, and the manual section on [Student, Family, & Community Engagement in Heritage Language Programs](#_VI._Student,_Family,) includes information about working with varied stakeholders, including community-based schools and other valuable community partners, in support of HL education.

Summary

Heritage language programs:

* are developed when a need for a heritage language program has been identified in the school/district
* should consist of as many courses as possible/needed and multiple pathways for entry
* need to be designed in collaboration with stakeholders, including students and families

Action Items

1. Gather information about potential students, teachers, and resources to determine if there is a need for a program and the minimum criteria have been met to establish a program.
2. Working with stakeholders (including students, families, and communities), consider what the program’s goals and desired outcomes might be, as well as how the program could be structured to allow for high-quality, rigorous learning opportunities in the heritage language.
3. If it is not possible to establish a heritage language program at this time, make a plan for how your school or district will support students with heritage languages in the meantime and how you can work towards offering a heritage language program in the future.

## III. Participation and Placement in Heritage Language Programs

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Explores methods of determining which students would benefit from participation in heritage language programs
* Highlights the importance of access and equity in determining if students would benefit from participation in heritage language programs
* Discusses how to engage stakeholders when determining which students would benefit from participation in heritage language programs
* Supports an understanding of how to place students into appropriate heritage language courses
* Provides recommendations for guiding students into heritage language programs

Heritage language (HL) programs provide key opportunities to create affirming environments that sustain and value students’ home cultures and languages while giving them opportunities to excel in content areas and connect with their communities. It is therefore critical to ensure that all students who would benefit from participation are given opportunities to participate in HL programs when they are offered. Any student with a HL would benefit from a HL program with appropriate and responsive conditions, and all students with HLs should be considered for participation in these programs without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, EL status, disability status, immigrant status, or country of origin. At the same time, schools and districts should consider the specific students and families in their communities when creating programs to ensure that programs are relevant and affirming. All students contribute unique strengths and perspectives to the classroom, and they should have opportunities to engage in learning that values and builds on their background knowledge, lived experiences, and cultural and linguistic assets. By embracing student diversity, programs can create stronger classrooms where all students have opportunities to share ideas and learn from each other.

Effective HL programs have well-defined, comprehensive, and inclusive systems for determining who will be served in HL programs and placing them into appropriate HL courses in the programs.

Appropriately and accurately determining if students would benefit from participation is a critical component of HL program success. It reduces the likelihood of students with HLs being placed in Foundational World Language (FWL) courses that may be too easy or difficult for them and increases the likelihood that students will receive access to the type of programming that builds on their existing strengths, supports their needs, and ensures they are known and valued, aligning with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s Educational Vision.

Unlike the identification of English Learners (ELs), which is legally governed by state and federal law, the process of determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs is not subject to any regulatory frameworks. Schools and districts should ensure that the process of determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs is clearly distinguished from EL identification procedures to avoid confusion and remain in compliance with EL regulations.

* As a reminder, not all students with HLs are ELs, though some students with HLs may also be ELs, English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), or Newcomers.

It is also important to remember that this process results in determining who would benefit from participation in a HL program, and there is a separate placement process in which students who would benefit from the program are placed into appropriate course levels within the program. More information about placement can be found later in this section of the manual.

Before deciding how to determine which students would benefit from participation in the program, schools and districts should:

* understand the students who potentially would be served by the program;
* define distinguishing characteristics between students with HLs and other learners; and
* consider if there should be any additional criteria for participation in the program.

Varied stakeholders should be involved in this process of understanding the linguistic landscape and thinking about what it means for the purposes of determining which students would benefit from participation. Schools and districts should already have some understanding of the linguistic landscape from when they determined the need for a HL program, though it is important to revisit this when determining which students would benefit from participation. The following list shares information about the different roles of different stakeholders in this process.

School and district leaders: Connect stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of language use in the school/district community

Teachers in multilingual (ML) programs, including HL, FWL, and English Learner Education programs: Observe students’ language use, ask students questions about their language use, and reach out to families and communities

Additional teachers and school personnel (e.g. special education providers, counselors): Ask students questions about their language use, reach out to families and communities, and provide information about HLs not currently taught in HL and FWL programs

Students: Share information about their own language use and languages used in the school/district community

Families and community members: Provide information about languages that students use at home and in the community

District data administrators: Find and share information from the learning management system (LMS) and maintain data about which students would benefit from participation in HL programs over time

When it comes to distinguishing characteristics between students with HLs and other types of language learners, students with HLs generally have some type of cultural or familial connection to the HL, which is not the case for other types of language learners. As students with HLs are incredibly diverse and can have a wide range of abilities in the HL, types and degrees of exposure to the HL, and relationships with HL cultures and communities, other distinguishing characteristics of students with HLs will emerge within each school/district’s local context. Considering these characteristics prior to determining which students would benefit from participation may be helpful in situations where it is difficult to determine if a student would be best served in the HL program or another program.

Based on the type and/or number of courses that can be offered in the HL program, schools and districts may decide that students who can be best supported by the program should have certain proficiency levels in certain skills/areas in the HL. This is a local decision, and it should be made in collaboration with varied stakeholders, including families.

* The decision to have additional criteria for participation, especially based on proficiency, should be approached with caution due to the potential for exclusion of students who would benefit from and otherwise qualify for the program if not for such criteria.
* This may include diverse learners, such as students with disabilities (SWDs) and students who speak minoritized dialects/varieties of the HL, who may need additional supports to demonstrate what they know and can do and their proficiency in the HL.
* Opportunities to enter the program through introductory or preparatory courses should be provided to students who are below desired proficiency levels to help them access the broader sequence of HL courses in the program.

In addition, schools and districts should think about how situations in which (1) students speak varied dialects of the HL being taught (e.g., Mexican/Argentine Spanish); (2) students have a HL that is a similar language to the HL being taught (e.g., Haitian Creole/French); and (3) students have relationships with varied HL cultures and communities (e.g., Brazilian/Cape Verdean Portuguese) will impact the criteria for participation.

* For example, if there are students whose HL is Haitian Creole who also speak French and would benefit from participating in a French HL program being offered, it is important that the criteria for participation allow for this, and explicit instructions for how to appropriately determine which students would benefit from participation should be provided in this situation.

After establishing criteria for participation, schools and districts need to decide what tools and methods they will use to determine which students would benefit from participation.

It is strongly recommended that schools and districts use multiple tools/methods to determine which students would benefit from participation, as using a combination of approaches:

* allows for cross-checking and verifying information from multiple sources;
* ensures a detailed, comprehensive understanding of students’ backgrounds and skills;
* provides robust information that is more likely to be accurate and accounts for factors beyond proficiency, such as students’ own interests in and motivations for HL learning;
* helps compensate for missing information, such as if a student was absent when relevant standardized assessments were administered or if a student has recently transferred to the school/district;
* provides alternate means of determining students’ proficiency levels, especially for those who struggle to demonstrate what they can know and can do in particular formats such as through standardized assessments; and
* increases the likelihood that all students who may benefit from the program will be appropriately guided to participate in the program.

The following list provides information about various tools/methods that may be used and the advantages and disadvantages of using them.

Tool/Method: Standardized language proficiency assessments  
Advantages: Easy access if already in use; may more accurately determine proficiency than other methods.  
Disadvantages: Can be expensive; not specifically designed for students with HLs; may not effectively capture skills of diverse learners (e.g., SLIFE and SWDs) and speakers of varied forms and dialects of the HL; do not include any perspectives.

Tool/Method: Student self-identification and selection of HL programs  
Advantages: Inexpensive; provides an opportunity for student voices and opinions to be considered  
Disadvantages: Students may not see themselves as students with HLs or may be unfamiliar with HL programs; provides limited perspectives and information about proficiency

Tool/Method: Student questionnaires about students’ HL use and exposure  
Advantages: Quick; can be administered and reviewed by staff with or without expertise in the HL  
Disadvantages: Students may choose not to disclose HL use; provides limited perspectives and information about proficiency

Tool/Method: Student interviews about students’ HL use and motivations for learning  
Advantages: Inexpensive; provides an opportunity for student voices and opinions to be considered; could support understanding of students’ proficiency in listening and speaking in the HL  
Disadvantages: Students may choose not to disclose HL use; provides limited perspectives and information about proficiency in some skills; time-consuming and may require training

Tool/Method: Teachers’ knowledge of students’ backgrounds and observations of students’ HL use  
Advantages: Provides an opportunity for teacher voices and opinions to be considered; can provide some information about proficiency; may be helpful at transition points across grades  
Disadvantages: Challenging to share information from observations across schools or even districts; time-consuming; provides limited perspectives

Tool/Method: Language surveys (LS) for families about students’ HL use and exposure and desires for HL programming  
Advantages: Provides an opportunity for family voices and opinions to be considered  
Disadvantages: Families may be hesitant to list other languages used at home; provides limited perspectives and information about proficiency

Tool/Method: Records of family requests for communications in languages other than English  
Advantages: Show what languages students may be exposed to at home without directly asking students or families  
Disadvantages: May not be inclusive of all home languages; do not guarantee language exposure; do not provide information about proficiency

Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to determining which students would benefit from participation, all incoming students with a language other than English on their LS and/or who are observed to have skills in a language other than English should be included in a school or district’s language proficiency testing practices and the process to determine which students would benefit from participation in HL programs. Continuing students should also be routinely tested in accordance with the school/district’s language proficiency testing schedule, and information gathered from LS should be reviewed for continuing students on an ongoing basis to supplement the results of the assessments.

While a more extensive process of determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs is likely to take place upon enrollment, whether that be at the beginning of the school year or mid-year for transfer students, it is important for schools and districts to be prepared to repeat elements of the process over time as needed, especially in situations where stakeholders disagree with the initial results.

Schools and districts should leverage existing practices for gathering student information, such as LS and the DESE-approved, standardized language proficiency assessments administered for the purpose of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy. These tools/methods are likely already being used and can provide valuable information for determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs, which can then be supplemented by student perspectives gathered through questionnaires or interviews and teacher observations.

The following vignette demonstrates how to leverage certain parts of DESE-approved assessments if they are not already being used in the school or district (or at all necessary grade levels).

**Vignette: Leveraging Parts of Assessments for Determining Which Students Would Benefit from Participation in HL Programs**

North Ridge Public Schools

North Ridge is a small city with a growing population of Spanish speakers. The high school in North Ridge Public Schools offers three levels of HL classes in Spanish, after which students take AP Spanish Language. Students also have the option of taking French, Italian, or American Sign Language FWL classes at the high school level. Standardized language proficiency assessments are only routinely administered to students after they have completed Level 2 or Level 3 of their high school language classes, for the purpose of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy, as the district has found them to be too expensive and time-consuming to administer at lower levels. To help determine which students would benefit from participation in HL programs, the district decided to also start administering just the reading and listening components of the assessments to students in 8th grade. This helps them save on costs and time and gives them information they need about incoming students’ oracy and literacy skills without requiring a more comprehensive use of the assessments.

**Reflection Questions**

* Are assessments for the Seal of Biliteracy already being used in your school or district?
* Would leveraging parts of these assessments work well for your school or district?
* How can your school or district prioritize access/equity when using this approach?

Lastly, if schools with HL programs have incoming students from multiple feeder schools, having shared questionnaires or learning management system (LMS) flags at the district level can further support/streamline the process of determining which students would benefit from participation.

When deciding what tools/methods to use and how to use them, consider the following:

* How will access and equity be ensured in this process?
* What type of information is needed to determine if students would benefit from participation?
* Who will be involved in determining which students would benefit from participation, and when will the process take place?
* How will information need to be gathered about students and from whom?
* What information is already being gathered? When and how is it being gathered?
* What tools/resources are needed and available? What is feasible?

As with all steps involved in establishing a HL program, varied stakeholders can and should be involved in the process of determining which students would benefit from participation. The following list shares information about the different roles of different stakeholders in this process.

Schools and District Leaders: Provide input on the criteria for participation and process of determining which students would benefit from participation, help coordinate and provide time/resources for the process

Teachers in ML Programs, including HL, FWL, and ELE programs: Provide input on the criteria for participation and process of determining which students would benefit from participation, administer questionnaires, conduct interviews, etc.

Additional teachers and school personnel (e.g. special education providers, counselors): Help with scheduling, guiding students through the determination process, and/or ensuring the use of appropriate accommodations

Students: Participate in the determination process

Families: Provide input on the criteria and process of determining which students would benefit from participation and participate in the process

District data administrators: Find and share information from the LMS and maintain data about which students would benefit from participation over time

### Placing Students in Appropriate HL Courses

In many cases, decisions about placement in a HL program will be made based on information gathered from the process of determining which students would benefit from participation or at the very least, supplemented and supported by this information. As a reminder, the placement process is not the same as the process of determining which students would benefit from participation, though the decisions made within each process may involve use of the same data on students’ backgrounds, skills, and abilities.

It may not always be immediately clear what course level is most appropriate, and it is important to note that some students may have lower proficiency levels in a particular skill/area but high levels of motivation to improve those skills/areas, which should be taken into consideration.

* A student who has strong listening skills but requires more support with speaking, reading, and writing may be better served in an introductory or preparatory HL course rather than a FWL course if they are interested in building these skills and such a course is available.
* A student who has strong speaking and listening skills but limited literacy skills may be better served in a HL program than a FWL program, even if they have lower proficiency levels in this area than what has been defined in the criteria for participation.

It is strongly recommended that HL programs include courses for students with HLs who may not have high levels of proficiency in all skills/areas, and these students should be considered early in the process of developing the program. If such courses are not offered, HL programs should work collaboratively with teachers within and beyond the program to ensure students have opportunities to prepare to later enter the HL program; this may involve being placed into a lower-level FWL course in the interim and provided appropriate supports and scaffolding as needed.

Placement processes should be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure their efficacy and to determine whether there are any students who should have been placed into the program but were not, as well as if any students have been placed into the incorrect level course in the program as a result of the methods being used. In addition, programs should evaluate the participation of and placement decisions for diverse learners, including ELs, SWDs, ELSWDs, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc. to ensure access and equity for all students with HLs.

Decisions about placement should prioritize students’ strengths over areas of struggle; be based on information gathered from a variety of sources and stakeholders, including students and their families; and made fairly and systematically. As with determining which students would benefit from participation, schools and districts should not use race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, EL status, disability status, immigrant status, or country of origin when making placement decisions.

When making placement decisions, HL programs should collaborate with teachers in other WL programs and ELE programs to support scheduling and to make it as easy as possible for students to move between classes if needed. For example, if students need to switch between a FWL course and a HL course (in the event that placement decisions were not accurately made), any efforts to schedule these classes at the same or similar times can make it feasible for students to move into the correct class mid-year and still have access to some form of education in their HL.

The following vignettes demonstrate various approaches to determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs and making placement decisions:

**Vignettes: Determining Which Students Would Benefit from Participation and Making Placement Decisions for HL Programs**

Alminster Independent School District

Alminster is a suburb of a larger city. There is a large Portuguese-speaking population in the district, as well as many Spanish speakers. For the past five years, Alminster Independent School District has offered four levels of Heritage Portuguese classes and two levels of Heritage Spanish classes at the high school level. To determine which students would benefit from participation, students are first asked to self-select these courses. To help students understand HLs and available course options and maximize the effectiveness of self-selection, the HL teachers from the high school present at an all-school meeting for 8th graders before self-selection takes place. If they select a HL pathway, students then take a school-developed language proficiency test. Based on the results, students who would benefit from participation are then placed into the appropriate level course within the HL program. The district’s LMS includes information on the languages students use at home, so teachers also use this information to further support the process of determining which students would benefit from participation and making placement decisions and encourage students to pursue the appropriate language pathway for them.

Madison Area Schools

Madison is a small city. Within Madison Area Schools, almost 40% of residents speak a language other than English at home, and approximately 27% of residents speak Spanish at home. In this district, language instruction begins in middle school, where FWL learners and students with HLs are in the same classes. The high school offers courses in multiple languages, including Spanish for Heritage Speakers courses. This HL program has been offered for over 15 years. The district administers standardized language proficiency assessments to all 8th graders to determine which students would benefit from participation and make placement decisions, and a locally-designed placement test is used with newly-enrolled high school students. The guidance department also uses the LS to determine if students may have HLs and should be directed to the WL department for the placement test. The WL department interviews newly-enrolled students to understand their speaking and listening skills and determine appropriate course placement, including into HL courses. Teacher observations are also used to supplement the placement tests in order to best reflect students’ skills and interests.

Nelson Charter District

Nelson is a suburb outside of a major city. The high school in Nelson Charter District offers three levels of Heritage Spanish and three levels of Heritage Portuguese. In Nelson, all 8th graders take a standardized language proficiency assessment. Students self-select whether they would like to take a HL course or a FWL course, and if they select a HL course, the assessment data is used to confirm which students would benefit from participation and place them in the appropriate level course. Students also have the option to observe a HL course to help determine which level may be right for them. If students feel they have not been placed into the appropriate course, they can discuss with teachers to determine an alternative placement. Teachers frequently discuss appropriate course placements with students and among themselves to ensure that placements will appropriately build upon students’ existing skills. The WL department also works with the ELE program to ensure that ELs are placed into suitable upper-level FWL/HL courses and coordinate course schedules.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would any of these approaches work well for your school or district?
* What tools/methods would be most helpful in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity using multiple tools/methods?

#### Providing Equitable Access to HL Programs for All Students

While HL programs are designed for students with HLs, schools and districts should provide equitable access to HL programs for all students who would benefit from participation in these programs and meet the criteria for participation. This may include students who have completed Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs; students who previously lived in another country where the HL is spoken, such as children of military servicemembers or children whose parents held jobs in other countries; and students who completed well-articulated K-8 FWL programs.

In these situations, it may not always be clear if students would benefit from participation in HL programs and what decisions to make when placing students into HL programs. For example, as DLBE programs expand to higher grade levels and HL programs extend to younger grade levels, it may become more difficult to make decisions about appropriate placement for graduates of DLBE programs.

* Students who graduate from DLBE programs whose HL is the program’s target/partner language may have skills or proficiency profiles that no longer align with the existing HL course options and therefore have a desire to pursue upper-level FWL courses.
* Graduates of DLBE programs who do not have the program’s target/partner language as their HL may have a deeper connection to the language being taught than students in FWL programs and therefore have a desire to pursue courses offered in the HL program.

In these cases, schools and districts should work together to determine if adjustments should be made to the placement process. Guidance should also be shared with students and families to help them decide what program would be the best fit based on their skills, interests, and needs. Opportunities should be provided for staff to coordinate across programs to share data and intake practices; develop placement guidance for students exiting DLBE programs and entering HL programs; and ensure all learners have access to and are placed into appropriate programs, while continuing to prioritize access and equity for students with HLs regardless of program type.

In addition, there may be cases where students enter DLBE programs after participating in HL programs. For instance, some middle and high schools allow students who demonstrate sufficient language proficiency to participate in DLBE continuation courses, such as Language Arts or other subject-area courses in the target/partner language. Students who complete HL programs may be able to participate in such courses. This situation is especially likely when there are large local communities of HL speakers of the DLBE target/partner language, so programs should be attentive to local demographics and potential and future students when planning course sequences.

The following vignette demonstrates how HL and DLBE programs can work together for placement:

**Vignette: Collaborative HL & DLBE Program Placement Practices**

Fairview Public Schools

Fairview is a mid-sized city. Within Fairview Public Schools, approximately 23% of students are designated as ELs, and 51% have a language background other than English. The district offers a bilingual preschool program for students from Spanish-speaking families and a K-8 Spanish DLBE program. The high school also offers HL classes in Spanish, Portuguese, and French. All students in Fairview take a standardized language proficiency assessment in 8th grade to determine if they should be placed into HL or FWL courses in high school. This data is combined with other data to ensure accurate placement. Students in Fairview who complete the Spanish DLBE program meet the criteria to participate in Spanish HL classes, and the district uses information from the DLBE program to ensure they are placed correctly. The district also uses information from their LMS, including LS data, to determine which students would benefit from participation and make placement decisions.

**Reflection Questions**

* Are DLBE programs offered in the languages of HL programs in your school or district?
* Would this collaborative approach to placement work well for your school or district?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity using this type of approach?

### Guiding Students into HL Programs

Regardless of the approaches used for determining which students would benefit from participation and making placement decisions, it is important to also create a plan to help guide students into HL programs. These efforts are a critical part of ensuring success when determining which students would benefit from participation and making placement decisions, as well as the likelihood that students will choose to participate in programs when the opportunity is provided.

Many individuals can help guide students into HL programs, from informing them that programs exist to encouraging their participation. The following list offers suggestions for different ways that varied stakeholders can help guide students with HLs towards HL programs.

School and district leaders:

* Promote the HL program within the school/district, including among students, families, and communities
* Ensure that all school personnel are aware of the program and the criteria for participation in the program
* Keep varied stakeholders informed about the HL program over time

Teachers:

* Encourage students to participate in the HL program
* Seek opportunities to showcase student work in the program and allow students to serve as program ambassadors
* Promote the HL program within the school/district, including among students, families, and communities

School counselors:

* Inform students of course options in the HL program
* Share program benefits, such as opportunities for advanced credits
* Support and guide students to the process of determining which students would benefit from participation and/or the placement process

Family liaisons or other outreach personnel:

* Promote family interest/involvement in the HL program
* Share program benefits, such as opportunities for advanced credits
* Share family language information to support the process of determining which students ould benefit from participation

Students:

* Share personal experiences with the HL program with other students
* Create videos, posters, and brochures about the program
* Serve as ambassadors and present work at showcase events

Families:

* Share personal experiences with the HL program with other families
* Support students’ HL use at home and in their communities
* Encourage students to participate in the program

It is important to remember that varied stakeholders, including students and families, may initially be skeptical of HL programs. Students may feel singled out or not like being associated with a HL, or families may feel that association with the HL will lead to stigmatization for their child. Students may also view their placement in HL courses, including introductory or preparatory HL courses, as a remedial placement.

To address these concerns, and to minimize the extent to which stakeholders have these concerns, schools and districts should ensure that the educational environment is safe, inclusive, and truly celebrates multilingualism and multiculturalism as envisioned by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) Educational Vision.

It may be helpful to conduct a climate study to gather information about varied stakeholders’ experiences interacting with and engaging in the school/district community. This can help schools and districts ensure the climate provides real and perceived safety for all stakeholders, including students and their families. It is also important to communicate with students and families and analyze the root causes of these feelings to ensure that the school/district is providing clear, asset-based information about HL programming. These concerns can be addressed by:

* sharing information about the advantages of HL programs and leveraging interesting projects from the program;
* showcases of student work from the program and/or testimonials from former students;
* opportunities to earn honors, AP, or college credit and the Seal of Biliteracy;
* engaging recruitment pitches or activities to promote student and family interest in HL programs; and
* notifying families of the privacy protections in place for students’ educational records.

Although schools and districts should encourage all students with HLs (as appropriate) who would benefit from participation in HL programs to join them, students should not be prevented or dissuaded from studying a different language if they are so inclined. Schools and districts should also (to the extent possible) offer opportunities for students to participate in more than one WL course/program, while simultaneously incentivizing participation in HL programs. More information about best practices for advocating for HL programs can be found in the [Advocacy for Heritage Language Programs](#_VIII._Advocacy_for) section of this manual.

Summary

Processes for determining which students would benefit from participation in heritage language programs and placing students into heritage language programs:

* should be objective, robust, and based on potential students and their skills in the heritage language
* involve multiple sources of information and stakeholders, including students and families
* reflect considerations for common proficiency levels and course options in the program

Action Items

1. Consider methods that are currently used to learn more about students’ backgrounds and skills and determine how they can be used and supplemented for determining which students would benefit from participation and making placement decisions for heritage language programs.
2. Explore ways to center student and family perspectives, as well as other sources of information, when determining which students would benefit from participation and making placement decisions to ensure access and equity for all potential students served by the program.
3. Determine how diverse learners, including students with strong speaking and listening skills and more limited literacy skills in the heritage language, can be provided with pathways to enter heritage language programs, and plan ways to guide students to appropriate course options.

## IV. Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment in Heritage Language Programs

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Explores the Vision and Guiding Principles for heritage language programs
* Discusses considerations for applying the Practices and Content Standards from the 2021 World Languages Curriculum Framework in heritage language programs
* Explores options for curriculum in heritage language programs
* Shares examples of instructional approaches, instructional strategies, and learning activities that may be used in heritage language programs
* Provides recommendations for assessment in heritage language programs

As noted in the [Introduction](#_I._Introduction) section, heritage language (HL) programs are a vital component of comprehensive world languages (WL) education, which along with English Learner Education (ELE) programs is an essential part of the robust multilingual (ML) programming offered in Massachusetts schools/districts. As HL programs are a type of WL program, the [2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/world-languages/2021.pdf) is the guiding document for curricular considerations and content standards in HL programs. This section of the manual provides the following supports to ensure that the Framework is applied in a way that reflects the backgrounds, skills, and abilities of students with HLs:

* Vision and Guiding Principles for HL programs, both of which are parallel to those included in the Framework, but with adjustments and additions that center students with HLs;
* Considerations and recommendations for using the Practices and Content Standards from the Framework in HL programs; and
* High-level best practices for curriculum, instruction, and assessment for HL programs.

### Understanding the Vision for HL Programs

All students with HLs will develop a high level of linguistic proficiency in their HL, deepen their connections to HL cultures, and build strong relationships with HL communities. Students with HLs will be empowered to use their HL to tell their own stories, understand the stories of others, and engage with and advocate for their communities. Students with HLs will have opportunities to explore, affirm, and build their identities as multilingual users of the HL and members of HL cultures and communities. As described in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s Educational Vision, students with HLs will be known and valued, and HL programs will have relevant, real-world, and interactive learning experiences that empower them to attain academic knowledge and skills and engage with the world. All educators share responsibility for the success of students with HLs and coordinate across subject area boundaries to provide students with access to high-quality HL education.

World-ready students with HLs fully participate in their local, national, and global communities by proficiently using multiple languages and demonstrating competency in multiple cultures. Having developed proficiency in the HL and deepened connections to varied and diverse[[7]](#footnote-8) HL cultures and communities, they are aware of and responsive to the world around them. They are empathetic listeners/viewers, recognizing that all forms and varieties of a language are valid and should be respected, and that all language learning is an ongoing process. They demonstrate insight into the nature of culture, language, and communication, having reflected on their own experiences with multiple languages and cultures. They use their multilingual, multiliteracy, and multicultural skills, including practices such as code-switching and translanguaging, to interact with and create meaning from texts, engage with diverse communities, and tailor their communication to varied audiences and situations. They examine many disciplines from diverse perspectives, having used multiple languages and cultural competencies to research and discuss other content areas. They have a deep and critical understanding of their own identities and their role in the world, having explored their identities within and across multiple languages and cultures. Having used their language and cultural skills to invest in their local communities, they are equipped to be civically engaged advocates.

To that end, students in HL programs of all ages and at all levels of proficiency will use their HL to:

* communicate with speakers/signers of the HL, especially those in their schools, families, and communities;
* explore and celebrate the products, practices, and perspectives of multiple cultures, including their own HL culture and the cultures of HL communities;
* compare languages and cultures across all communities of which they are members, including HL communities, as well as additional communities in which they participate;
* expand their academic knowledge of other disciplines;
* explore and develop their multilingual and multicultural identities;
* embrace and expand their multilingual, multiliteracy, and multicultural skills, including practices such as code-switching, translanguaging, etc.;
* serve and lead in their academic, local, and global communities, including HL communities;
* achieve their goals within and beyond the school, including within their communities;
* become lifelong beneficiaries of the opportunities that proficiency in multiple languages can offer them; and
* become agents of change that advocate for their communities and promote equity, global awareness, and multicultural understanding.

### Understanding the Guiding Principles for HL Programs

1a. Effective HL programs design programs specifically for the students and families in their communities.

Effective HL programs seek to understand potential, current, and future students in order to design programming that is tailored to students’ strengths and that builds on their interests and existing skills and abilities. They use data, including input gathered from students with HLs, families, and communities, to create programs that are linguistically and culturally sustaining and in alignment with stakeholder interests and needs, in accordance with DESE’s Educational Vision. As noted in DESE’s Educational Vision, all students should be known and valued, which includes their unique identities, strengths, interests, needs, languages, exceptionalities, and backgrounds. Students bring varied strengths and perspectives to the classroom, and by celebrating these differences, programs create stronger classrooms where students can learn from each other.

1b. Effective HL programs invite, include, and support all students with HLs who may benefit from participation in HL programs, without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English Learner (EL) status, disability status, immigrant status, or country of origin.

Effective HL programs recognize that all students with HLs can benefit from HL education, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, EL status, disability status, immigrant status, or country of origin. They understand that appropriately and accurately determining if students would benefit from participation is a critical component of program success, as it increases the likelihood that students receive access to the type of programming that builds on their existing strengths and ensures they are known and valued, aligning with DESE’s Educational Vision and the vision for HL programs. Effective HL programs have established methods and criteria for determining which students would benefit from participation, and these have been developed in collaboration with students, families, and other stakeholders and consider ways for all students, regardless of proficiency level, to enter and access programming.

1. Effective HL programs lift up all students, elevate their linguistic and cultural strengths, and empower them to act with cultural competence and critical consciousness.

Effective HL programs center students in program design, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that they see their lives and their experiences reflected in the course topics, curricular materials, and course offerings. In effective programs, students use the HL to tell their own stories and to explore their own identities related to the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities. Effective programs uphold the value of all cultures and languages, including the HL and cultures. They disrupt stereotypes that misrepresent members of any culture by providing accurate and affirming representations of their histories, identities, expressions, values, beliefs, products, and practices.[[8]](#footnote-9) They embrace the varied vocabularies, syntaxes, and accents of all languages as they are signed, spoken, and written around the world, including English and all its rich dialects. They value linguistic assets in students who are speakers/signers of languages and dialects other than what is commonly thought of as standard American English or standard versions of the HL. They embrace dialects and language varieties that are common among multilingual speakers, such as Chicano English and U.S. Spanish. Effective programs also embrace alternative forms of communication in the HL, including the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) practices and devices. In so doing, effective programs emphasize the inherent worth and dignity of all students, cultures, and languages.

Effective HL programs are asset-based, building on students’ existing strengths and skills. They use strategies that activate students’ background knowledge and leverage students’ prior learning, wherever and however it occurred, to help them achieve high levels of proficiency in the HL and deepen their connections to HL cultures and communities. Effective HL programs also foster students’ sense of agency. They center student voice in the choices that they make and ensure that students have opportunities to apply their multicultural competencies and critical perspectives to contribute to classroom, school, and community environments that benefit all. Effective HL programs actively seek student perspectives and provide opportunities for student voice and advocacy in program design, implementation, and evaluation. They offer students opportunities to make choices and impact programmatic decision making.

1. Effective HL programs support students in attaining high levels of linguistic proficiency in their HLs and strengthen students’ relationships with the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities.

Effective HL programs understand that students enter their programs with pre-existing knowledge, skills, and abilities in the HL and pre-existing relationships with HL cultures and HL communities; effective HL programs build on these strengths and relationships. Students with HLs develop high levels of proficiency over extended periods of time, and HL proficiency development depends on multiple factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, level of exposure to the language, opportunities to use the language at home or in the community, and the number of people with whom the student uses the language. Students with HLs may also have varied understandings of and relationships with HL cultures and HL communities, which may impact their interest in and motivation for learning the HL. To promote high levels of proficiency in the HL and strengthen connections with the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities, well-articulated HL programs should begin as early as possible and offer as many courses as possible. Effective HL programs provide students with multiple pathways to enter the program, including introductory or preparatory HL courses. They also support students in accessing advanced courses in the HL, including higher-level HL courses, courses in which students from HL programs and students from Foundational World Language (FWL) programs engage with higher-level content together, and content-area courses in the HL offered through Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs.

1. Effective HL programs are communicative and support purposeful, meaningful, authentic, and affirming interactions in the HL that respect and value students’ linguistic diversity.

Effective HL programs recognize that students with HLs generally receive input in the HL at home or in the community, contributing to their linguistic proficiency. This input may be in a regional variety of the HL, and linguistic variation should be embraced in the classroom to affirm the value of students’ linguistic backgrounds. Students with HLs may also bring varied language practices, such as codeswitching or translanguaging, to the classroom. Effective programs respect and support these authentic, multilingual practices while still maintaining mostly HL use in the classroom in order to maximize students’ opportunities to use the HL. They ensure that HL use is communicative and meaningful, in which the HL is used to accomplish a purpose such as exchanging information and ideas, interpreting relevant authentic resources, meeting needs, expressing and supporting opinions, and building positive relationships with teachers, peers, and community members.[[9]](#footnote-10) They also provide opportunities for students with HLs to use their HL in real-world contexts, including their own communities and broader HL communities.

1. Effective HL programs measure linguistic proficiency in all communicative skills and modes.

Effective HL programs regularly measure students’ proficiency in the HL through the use of assessments and ACTFL’s proficiency benchmarks and performance indicators, upon which the 2021 World Languages Curriculum Framework is based. Although not designed specifically for use in HL programs, the ACTFL proficiency benchmarks and performance indicators can be applied to all languages, age groups, program types, and learning environments and therefore can be used in HL programs to support the measurement of proficiency. Effective HL programs understand that students’ HL proficiency may vary widely among the skills (listening/viewing, speaking/signing, reading, and writing) and modes (interpretive, interpersonal, presentational, and intercultural) of communication. They assess students’ proficiency in all skills, including multiliteracy skills, and all modes of communication to inform instruction and leverage students’ strengths to build proficiency in additional areas. Effective programs understand that proficiency measurement presupposes that student work being evaluated is communicative and demonstrative of what students can do with the language rather than what they know about the language. They should thus provide students with many opportunities to use the HL in a variety of contexts to properly measure performance.

1. Effective HL programs foster risk-taking and mistake-making toward growth in linguistic proficiency and cultural competency.

Effective HL programs focus on what students can do, rather than focusing on perceived errors or what students cannot do. Students with HLs often face expectations that they will already have high levels of proficiency in all skills and modes of communication in the HL, regardless of the opportunities they may or may not have previously had to learn and practice particular skills such as literacy or formal presentational speaking.[[10]](#footnote-11) By fostering risk-taking and mistake-making in an understanding environment, effective HL programs can encourage students with HLs to use their language skills. This can further help them improve their skills by lowering their affective filter in situations where the HL is used, allowing them to absorb more comprehensible input.[[11]](#footnote-12) Even within a single level HL course, students may have varying degrees of comfort speaking in or otherwise using the HL. Effective HL programs thus foster classroom environments of respect for all as they invite and encourage students to take risks with the language and to attempt communication, even if it is likely to contain mistakes. They also teach and model that mistakes are indispensable when developing proficiency in a language, and they encourage students to be bold in their communicative attempts. At the same time, effective programs honor linguistic diversity, recognizing that different varieties of languages are not mistakes. They seek to become informed about the language varieties used in students’ homes and communities and distinguish between forms that are unique to a particular dialect and true mistakes which are not used in any dialect of the HL.[[12]](#footnote-13)

1. Effective HL programs deliver meaningful, relevant, and cross-disciplinary content to motivate students to develop their academic skills and abilities in the HL and build proficiency.

Effective HL programs acknowledge that students most effectively expand their proficiency when they seek to make meaning during communication,[[13]](#footnote-14) and the effectiveness is enhanced when the content of the communication is both accessible and of high interest to students. Effective programs therefore center student interests and voice when selecting topics and use those topics to advance students to the next level of proficiency. This is especially important for students with HLs, who are likely to have pre-existing motivations for pursuing language courses. When decisions about content are a result of student input and collaborative effort among educators across disciplines, there is an opportunity for students to use their HL to reinforce knowledge gained in other disciplines and use their language skills in an immediate and practical way.

1. Effective HL programs differentiate instruction and content, so that they are accessible, rigorous, and appropriate for all students.

Effective HL programs respect all ways that students have previously developed proficiency in their HLs as well as the differences in students’ language varieties. They provide instruction and materials at a level of proficiency at and slightly above the proficiency level of the students. Since growth in language proficiency is measurable, effective programs understand exactly what their students can do with language and what students will need next. They design to meet their students at the proficiency level they demonstrate and to advance them to higher levels of proficiency, and they use instructional techniques that activate and build upon students’ prior knowledge. Differentiation is imperative in HL programs because students often enter courses at varying levels of proficiency and further develop their proficiency at different rates and across different skill areas. Differentiation is further imperative because ELs, students with disabilities (SWDs), English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), and Newcomers require specific differentiation and should be equitably participating in HL programs. Effective programs also select content that is meaningful to students. They elevate student choice and voices so that the content reflects the students, their families, and the communities being served. They support students’ authentic multilingual practices; center students’ cultural experiences and backgrounds when selecting materials; and scaffold access to authentic resources as needed.

1. Effective HL programs foster partnerships with families and local communities and connect students to their peers in the classroom, their communities, and speakers/signers of the HL throughout the world.

Effective HL programs ask and support students to apply their language skills to practical uses within and outside of the classroom and promote multilingualism and multiliteracy. They invite students to form a community with their classmates as they communicate in the HL. They also collaborate with families and local communities to understand their priorities for students’ language learning; foster connections between classrooms and the wider community that provide students with opportunities to explore HL cultures and communities; and introduce students to ways to use their HLs in their communities and careers. Beyond their own local communities, effective HL programs leverage technology and, when possible, travel to support students in using their language and critical thinking skills throughout the world.

1. Effective HL programs promote social and emotional growth and support students in understanding and developing their identities as it relates to the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities.

Effective HL programs have a unique opportunity to focus on how students communicate, make sense of their own identities, manage themselves, and relate to others. They provide students with opportunities to explore their own cultures, make connections and comparisons between cultures, and understand the relationship between language, culture, and identity. As students with HLs often live multicultural lives, effective HL programs allow students to think about and reflect on their own relationships to different cultures, including HL cultures, and offer additional opportunities to connect with their communities, including HL communities. Effective programs encourage students to examine not only the words they are producing, but also the unspoken communications and contexts that accompany language. They encourage positive relationship-building as they promote communicative activities inside and outside of the classroom that allow students to learn about themselves, their peers, and their communities. They ask students to think critically about their own cultural context as they participate in multiple cultures. Effective programs understand that expanding one’s linguistic proficiency and exploring one’s own and additional cultures is a deep and important form of social and emotional growth, and they support students as they engage in that development.

1. Effective HL programs promote multilingualism as a benefit and advocate to strengthen HL education.

Effective HL programs are strong proponents of the benefits of multilingualism for all students, including diverse learners, such as ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc. They inform all stakeholders about the benefits of HL education to increase support for and engagement in HL programming and tailor their messaging to be accessible and persuasive to various audiences. They engage deeply with students, families, and communities to understand their priorities for students’ HL education and incorporate their perspectives in program design, implementation, and evaluation. They advocate for ways in which HL education is particularly suited to expanding the multilingual, multiliteracy, and multicultural skills of students with HLs and coordinate with other programs to support students’ academic achievement and social-emotional wellbeing.

### Using the Practices in HL Programs

**Practice 1: Interpretive Communication – Understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.**

When developing students’ interpretive communication skills, effective HL programs:

* incorporate authentic texts from varied HL cultures, acknowledging that these cultures may not be the dominant culture of a country where the language is used;
* use a variety of authentic materials, including multimedia materials, to support students’ 21st-century skills; and
* scaffold tasks for all students, including SWD/ELSWD, and leverage interpretive reading activities to support the development of students’ academic literacy skills in the HL.

**Practice 2: Interpersonal Communication – Interact and negotiate meaning in spontaneous spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, ideas, feelings, opinions, and perspectives.**

When developing students’ interpersonal communication skills, effective HL programs:

* leverage students’ strengths in interpersonal communication to scaffold other areas, including building skills in academic conversation;
* encourage students to negotiate meaning across differences in language varieties; and
* honor multilingual, multiliteracy, and multicultural skills (e.g., code-switching, translanguaging) and the use of AAC and additional modes of communication while supporting students in critically examining their own and others’ language practices.

**Practice 3: Presentational Communication – Present information, concepts, ideas, feelings, opinions, and perspectives to inform, explain, persuade and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media[[14]](#footnote-15) and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.**

When developing students’ presentational communication skills, effective HL programs:

* facilitate engagement and connections between students and communities, such as through projects to develop community-facing materials;
* invite students to present in a variety of formats to support students’ 21st-century skills and be responsive to students’ unique needs, including those of SWD, ELSWD, etc.; and
* leverage presentational writing activities to support the development of students’ academic literacy skills in the HL.

**Practice 4: Intercultural Communication – Interact appropriately with others in and from another culture.**

When developing students’ intercultural communication skills, effective HL programs:

* build upon students’ existing intercultural skills developed at home and in their communities;
* facilitate students’ explorations of their own cultures and identities to provide a strong foundation from which to relate to additional cultures; and
* provide opportunities for students to interact with members of HL communities.

**Practice 5: Cultures – Build upon cultural competence and understanding**.

When developing students’ skills in the domain of cultures, effective HL programs:

* embrace the multicultural perspectives that students with HLs bring to the classroom, gained from their experiences at home and in their local communities, as well as additional communities in which they may have lived;
* support students in exploring the relationships among products, practices, and perspectives of multiple cultures, including their own and others; and
* facilitate reflections on the relationships among cultures, languages, and identities, as well as preservation of students’ HL cultures.

**Practice 6: Comparisons - Develop insight into the nature of language and culture to interact with cultural competence.**

When developing students’ skills in the domain of comparisons, effective HL programs:

* expand students’ knowledge of the HL and cultures and facilitate their explorations of their own communities, language varieties, and identities to provide a strong reference point for comparisons;
* explore multiple varieties of English and the HL, as well as exploring varied HL cultures; and
* facilitate reflections on the concept of culture and the nature of language, building on students’ existing multilingual, multiliteracy, and multicultural skills, including practices such as code-switching and translanguaging.

**Practice 7: Connections - Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations.**

When developing students’ skills in the domain of connections, effective HL programs:

* use high-leverage practices to help students transfer their academic skills, including literacy, across languages;
* collaborate with other programs to reinforce students’ learning across content areas, including collaboration among all service providers to support SWD/ELSWD; and
* incorporate authentic informative texts in the HL from varied contexts and content areas.

**Practice 8: Communities – Interact and communicate with intercultural competence and confidence to engage and responsibly collaborate with a variety of multilingual communities at home and around the world.**

When developing students’ skills in the domain of communities, effective HL programs:

* center HL communities as a key source of information and motivation for studying the HL;
* emphasize intergenerational connections to family and community members and provide opportunities to interact with communities within and beyond the classroom; and
* guide students to recognize their linguistic and cultural strengths, set goals for growth, and reflect upon their progress in using the HL for enjoyment, enrichment, career advancement, and building diverse relationships.

**Practice 9: Social and Emotional Well-being – Develop and employ social and emotional skills that are inextricably linked to language and culture acquisition.**

When developing students’ skills in the domain of social and emotional well-being, effective HL programs:

* facilitate students’ self-awareness and self-management through exploration of and reflection on the ways that students’ HL and cultures shape their understanding of themselves and their identities, as well as the use of metacognitive strategies to reflect on how they learn and take ownership of their learning;
* incorporate insights from sociolinguistics when facilitating social awareness, including engaging students in reflection on the nature of language and age-appropriate reflection on others’ perceptions of their language use; and
* empower students to make responsible communication decisions, including choosing the most appropriate variety of the language for a given context, and promote relationship skills through use of the language with peers and communities.

**Practice 10: Social Justice – Empower students to think and act with critical consciousness.**

When developing students’ skills in the domain of social justice, effective HL programs:

* value all language varieties that students bring to the classroom and deconstruct linguistic discrimination;
* embrace the lived experiences of all types of students with HLs, including (but not limited to) ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.; and
* facilitate opportunities for students to advocate on behalf of their communities within and beyond the school/district community.

### Applying the WL Content Standards in HL Programs

All HL programs should be aligned to the Massachusetts World Languages Content Standards from the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework. When using these content standards in HL programs, it is important to remember:

* Students with HLs may have stronger proficiency in one skill (such as listening or speaking), which can scaffold proficiency in other skills (such as reading or writing). Thus, programs should adjust proficiency expectations for students to respond to students’ current level in each standard and scaffold them to advance toward standards reflected in the next proficiency levels. Programs should also scaffold for students based on their disability needs.
* Students with HLs are generally already members of and participants in HL communities. Thus, references to “target-language culture” and similar phrases should be interpreted as referring to students’ HL cultures as well as the varied and diverse HL cultures of additional HL communities.
* Students with HLs are already multilingual. Thus, references to “the language studied and their own” or similar phrases should be interpreted as referring to the HL and students’ additional languages (including but not limited to English), or students’ variety of the HL and additional varieties.

Schools and districts will likely apply the standards in pursuit of HL-specific learning goals. When doing so, it may be helpful to first think about integrating HL goals into the standards that are the primary focus of the HL program and then determine how the other standards can be adapted to support those same goals. Regardless of the focus of the program, schools and districts should ensure that all standards are addressed in HL programs, as the practices from each domain do not develop in isolation. Programs should not focus on one to the exclusion of the others, even if one standard or a set of standards are the primary focus of the program, and the standards should be adapted as needed to best support HL teaching and learning.

The following vignettes demonstrate how HL-specific learning goals can be integrated into the content standards:

**Vignettes: Integrating HL-Specific Learning Goals into the Content Standards**

Wessex Area Schools

The French Heritage Language Program in Wessex Area Schools focuses on the development of academic literacy in French. The program emphasizes building students’ skills in interpretive and presentational communication, particularly reading and writing, with the goal of all students earning the Seal of Biliteracy. Guided by strong collaboration with local community organizations such as the community health center and radio station, the French Heritage Language Program has adopted a project-based curriculum in which students research a need in the community. Students use authentic texts to gather information and connect it to other content areas. To support students’ interpersonal communication skills, they also interview community members and have classroom discussions about the topics. Then, the students practice presentational writing by creating materials to be shared in the community, such as flyers, brochures, and articles. They also practice presentational speaking skills by recording with the community radio station. Last year, one project focused on precautions for flu season, which the health center identified as an area of community need. Students researched flu precautions; interviewed community members to find out what questions they had about the flu; and prepared posters, brochures, and a radio segment to inform the community about how to prevent and treat the flu.

Deer Park Public Schools

The Portuguese Heritage Language Program in Deer Park Public Schools has a cultural focus. Deer Park builds their courses around the Linguistic Cultures standards, selecting standards and culturally-relevant authentic resources that offer students opportunities to analyze the products, practices, and perspectives of Lusophone cultures and the relationships between their cultures and their identities. Once the cultural goals and accompanying Linguistic Cultures standards are selected, teachers choose the Communications and Lifelong Learning standards that will support students’ explorations of these cultures and the authentic texts. The Portuguese Heritage Language program also aims to strengthen students’ relationships with local Portuguese-speaking communities. Guest speakers visit the class either virtually or in-person. A recent favorite was a visit from an artist who creates Carnival costumes. The students discussed Carnival traditions in varied cultures and made their own Carnival masks.

Marshland Public Charter School

Marshland Public Charter School emphasizes social justice in its programming, and its Spanish Heritage Language Program aims to empower students to advocate for themselves and their communities. The tenth-grade class recently completed a unit on food deserts. They read articles about food deserts in Spanish and listened to a recording of a speech by a food justice activist in a nearby city. They discussed their own experiences with access to fresh food and interviewed family members about the barriers to food access in HL communities. The class also worked together to prepare questions for the owner of a local convenience store which has a small selection of fresh items and wrote an email to him. Once the class understood the barriers to providing and accessing fresh food options, they brainstormed possible solutions. The class voted to write a report for the town council that explained the problem and asked them to re-route one of the town bus lines to be closer to several stores and markets. They wrote the report in Spanish first, and then created a bilingual (Spanish-English) version to send to the town council. They also created a form letter in Spanish to share with the community to encourage them to petition the town council for the updated bus route.

**Reflection Questions**

* Which standards are the focus in your school or district’s HL program(s)?
* How might you integrate HL-specific learning goals when adapting the standards?
* How can your school or district increase access and equity when applying the standards?

When determining how to apply the content standards in HL programs, refer to the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Alignment Guides for [Course Planning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/course-alignment-guide.docx) and [Unit Planning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/unit-alignment-guide.docx), as well as the [how-to document](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/how-to.docx) with instructions for how to use the guides, and consider the following:

* What are the proficiency expectations for the course or program?[[15]](#footnote-16)
* What are students’ current proficiency levels in each of the standards?
* How could the program scaffold towards the next proficiency level in each standard?
* What are students’ current areas of strength? How could these strengths be leveraged to support learning in other areas?
* What backgrounds and additional assets do students bring to the classroom?
* How can student diversity be centered in the course, program, or classroom?
* How do the linguistic components of each standard apply to students with HLs?
  + What do students need and want to do in their HL?
  + What topics are familiar or relatable to students?
  + What topics are of interest and/or relevant to students?
  + What settings are familiar to students? In what settings (personal, social, academic, and/or professional) do students aspire to interact in their HL?
  + What types of words and phrases might students have practiced and memorized?
  + What degree of HL use is appropriate in various community-based situations, and what multilingual practices are appropriate in these settings?
  + What text types will be familiar to students?
  + What methods of organizing texts and genre conventions are authentic in the HL?
  + How do the supports which students need or use vary across standards?
* How can the school or district support teachers to determine whether a student’s dialect is easily comprehensible to users of that particular dialect?
* How can comprehensibility expectations acknowledge the higher expectations that audiences may have for students with HLs, while also deconstructing linguistic bias?
* What essential questions will enable students to engage with course and unit topics within and beyond the classroom?
* What culturally relevant authentic resources can support course and unit goals while centering student diversity?
* How can technology support students’ learning and enhance their 21st-century skills?
* How can the Linguistic Cultures and Lifelong Learning domains, including the Social and Emotional Well-Being and Social Justice standards, be incorporated throughout the program?
* Are there any other standards that might support students to build connections to other content areas, including Language Arts, WIDA, or other content area standards?

### Making Curricular Choices in HL Programs

The curriculum of a HL program is the standards-based sequence of learning that guides students to further develop their linguistic and cultural skills, gain necessary knowledge, and achieve high levels of proficiency and competency in the HL and HL cultures. HL programs should use curricula that will best support the students who will be served in the program and that will help the program achieve its goals. Schools and districts may develop their own curricula for their HL programs, use commercially available resources and curricula, or use some combination of locally developed and commercially available curricular materials.

As curriculum development is a time-consuming and costly effort, it may be helpful to first review existing options (such as commercially available curricular materials or materials that have already been developed in the school or district) to determine if they will best fit the needs of the program.

* Existing options include those that are in the HL being taught in the program (i.e., Spanish curriculum that may be used in a Spanish HL program) and those in related languages (i.e., Spanish curriculum that may be adapted for use in a Portuguese HL program).

When reviewing potential curricula, consider the following:

* Does the curriculum…
  + reflect the backgrounds, skills, and abilities of students with the HLs?
  + reflect potential, current, and future students’ lived experiences?
  + reflect families’ and communities’ priorities for students’ learning?
  + reflect intersectional identities, such as those of multilingual students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities (e.g., LGBTQ+, undocumented, Afro-Latino/a/x or Indigenous backgrounds, etc.)?
  + build on students’ strengths and connect them to other skills?
  + include varied HL dialects/varieties? If not, does it affirm their value?
  + align with the Vision and Guiding Principles for HL Programs?
  + support use of the WL Content Standards in HL Programs?
  + incorporate all of the Practices for HL Programs?
  + include supports for developing students’ academic literacy skills?
  + provide opportunities for student reflection on their own identities?
  + provide support for intersectional identities, such as discussion protocols and culturally affirming content?
  + provide opportunities for students to connect with HL cultures and communities?
  + systematically build to high levels of linguistic proficiency and cultural competency?
  + provide varied means for students to demonstrate learning?
  + include resources to help teachers measure learning, set clear expectations, and adjust instruction as needed?
  + support students in attaining the Seal of Biliteracy?
  + support teachers in providing varied means of accessing content to meet the needs of SWDs and those working above or below grade level?
* Is the curriculum…
  + linguistically and culturally sustaining?
  + standards-aligned and proficiency-based?
  + designed for students with HLs? If not, can it be adapted for them?
  + engaging and relevant to potential, current, and future students?
  + appropriate for the language levels and age levels of students in the program?
  + easily supplemented with additional resources as needed?
  + suitably paced for the length of the course?
  + accessible for diverse students with HLs, including ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, and Newcomers?
* How is diversity presented in the curriculum? Who is included and excluded?[[16]](#footnote-17) Are intersectional identities reflected?
* Are essential features of the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities incorporated in the curriculum?
* Are authentic materials included? Do they reflect a variety of registers and genres?[[17]](#footnote-18)

If the answer to most questions is “yes,” then the curriculum can likely be used, with any necessary modifications and additional supports. If not, schools and districts may need to develop their own curriculum.

When developing curriculum for HL programs, schools and districts should use backward design and the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Alignment Guides for [Course Planning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/course-alignment-guide.docx) and [Unit Planning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/unit-alignment-guide.docx), as well as the [how-to document](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/how-to.docx) with instructions for how to use the guides.

When using the guides for HL curriculum planning, it is important to:

* center students’ backgrounds, interests, and experiences in the curriculum;
* remember that HL proficiency targets may vary by domain and practice, and that students’ existing HL skills and multilingual practices should be reflected in the curriculum; and
* incorporate HL cultures and communities in the curriculum, as well as culturally relevant authentic resources reflecting students’ language varieties and local HL communities.

When a school or district can only offer one section of a HL course, such as may be the case in a low-incidence school/district and when there are only enough students across all grade levels in a school to create one class section, it may be helpful to create a spiral curriculum. In this model, key concepts are revisited over time in increasing depth and complexity. Thus, students taking the class for the first time and the third time both engage with the same topics and concepts, but in a manner suitable for each of their language skills. Programs like this may also consider developing a curriculum cycle that matches the length of the program, such as a three-year cycle of units for a middle school that serves three grade levels.

Schools and districts should also consider situations in which (1) students speak varied dialects of the HL being taught (e.g. Salvadoran/Dominican Spanish); (2) students have a HL that is a similar language to the HL being taught (e.g., Cape Verdean Creole/Portuguese); and (3) students have relationships with varied HL cultures and communities (e.g., Brazilian/European Portuguese) when determining the most appropriate curriculum for their HL program(s).

The following vignette demonstrates how students with a HL similar to the HL being taught in the program can be effectively included in the program:

**Vignette: Students with a HL Similar to the HL Being Taught**

*Emeryville Public Schools*

Emeryville is a coastal town with a large population of Portuguese speakers and a growing number of Cape Verdean Creole speakers. Emeryville Public Schools offers a Portuguese HL Program in the district high school. The district determined that students who speak Cape Verdean Creole would benefit from participation in the program, and these students participate in the three available levels of Portuguese HL courses. To make sure the classroom is inclusive for these students, teachers elevate Cape Verdean culture in the curriculum, facilitate opportunities for all students to connect with Cape Verdean communities, incorporate authentic materials from Cape Verde and the Cape Verdean diaspora, and ensure Cape Verdean dialects of Portuguese are embraced and discussed. To support teachers, the district has offered different professional development and training opportunities. The district partners with a local college to offer Cape Verdean Creole classes so that teachers can recognize when students are using Creole words or grammar and help students leverage their Creole skills in the Portuguese program. The district has also partnered with a community organization that offers Creole classes and community events to help teachers incorporate Cape Verdean culture and local communities in their classrooms. Each year, the Emeryville ML department offers professional development workshops and ensures that specific trainings are offered for HL teachers. The department has also worked with the media center to purchase several bilingual books that are written in Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole for use in the program.

**Reflection Questions**

* Do any students in your context have a HL that is similar to the HL being taught?
* Would any of these strategies support students and teachers in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity when working with students with a HL similar to the HL being taught?

Any curriculum that has been developed for HL programs should also be reviewed and evaluated using the same questions for reviewing existing curricular materials. This will help ensure alignment with the students, families, and communities being served in the program and alignment to the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Practices for HL programs, as well as the WL content standards for use in HL programs.

If there is not a suitable existing option, and it is not possible to develop curriculum for the program (such as may be the case for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), Indigenous languages, and additional minoritized or endangered languages for which few options and resources may exist), schools and districts should leverage open educational resources, such as those available from the federally-funded Language Resource Centers (LRCs), to support program design and implementation. While curricular materials may be more difficult to find and create for these languages, HL education for students with these HLs is nonetheless extremely valuable and should be supported to the extent possible.

As with all steps in the process of establishing a HL program, curriculum selection or development should be done in collaboration with varied stakeholders. The following list shares information about the different roles of different stakeholders in this process.

School and district leaders:

* Obtain funding for curriculum purchases or teacher time to develop curriculum
* Coordinate among departments to develop complementary curricula
* Reach out to other districts to gather information about curricula they use

Teachers in ML programs, including HL, FWL, and ELE programs:

* Plan curriculum
* Search for or share authentic resources
* Coordinate within and across departments to create a smooth sequence of learning within and across programs
* Share information about what students are learning in various programs so HL programs can leverage students’ knowledge and skills

Additional teachers and school personnel (e.g., special education providers, counselors):

* Share information about what students are learning in other content areas so HL programs can work on complementary topics and skills
* Share information about accommodations that should be incorporated into the curriculum
* Share information about literacy development

Students:

* Share their priorities for language learning
* Share information about their interests

Families and community members:

* Share their priorities for students’ HL learning

### Delivering Instruction in HL Programs

Instruction is at the core of students’ experiences in HL programs. While all instructional decisions in HL programs should be based on students’ backgrounds, skills, and abilities, they will vary from program to program. Decisions about instructional approaches, strategies, and activities should be made in support of each HL program’s visions and goals, as well as student, family, and community priorities for learning.

When planning for learning, HL programs should consider ways to engage students in interactive, relevant, and real-world tasks that offer them opportunities for authentic communication, problem solving, and making meaning of complex ideas, as described in DESE’s Educational Vision. It may also be helpful to use the guiding questions about instruction found in the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Alignment Guides [how-to document](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/how-to.docx) to help ensure instruction is delivered effectively and in alignment with the WL content standards.

Schools and districts should also consider situations in which (1) students speak varied dialects of the HL being taught (e.g., Moroccan/Syrian Arabic); (2) students have a HL that is a similar language to the HL being taught (e.g., Haitian Creole/French); and (3) students have relationships with varied HL cultures and communities (e.g., Brazilian/European Portuguese) when planning and delivering instruction in HL program(s).

* For example, if there is an Arabic HL program that uses Modern Standard Arabic, and students with a variety of Arabic dialects participate in the program, the program should consider approaches, strategies, and learning activities that will feature different Arabic-speaking communities, leverage students’ dialect knowledge, and give students the opportunity to engage with a variety of authentic resources.

Although the HL should be the primary language of instruction in HL programs and students should be provided with high levels of comprehensible input in the HL during class time, it is important to remember that students with HLs generally receive some level of input in the HL outside of the classroom (e.g., at home or in the community,) and use varied language practices in their daily lives (e.g., code-switching, translanguaging). Students with HLs may therefore benefit from using all of their languages, including English, in the HL classroom. In these cases, English should be used purposefully and contextually in ways that align with students’ lived experiences and allow them to expand their multilingual range. Regardless of the approach taken, HL programs should ensure that input is comprehensible, that students have the opportunity to make meaning with the HL, and that tasks are structured to require students to use increasingly complex language over time.

#### Instructional Approaches

There are a number of pedagogical approaches that may help guide effective teaching and learning in HL programs, and it may be useful for programs to incorporate the principles and practices from multiple approaches.

The following are some of the most common approaches to instruction in HL programs:

* Macro-Based Teaching
  + Macro-based teaching builds on students’ existing background knowledge in the HL and incorporates topics of interest. Learning begins with engaging with the meaning of authentic resources and then involves the teaching of grammar and vocabulary as needed based on function or context.
* Critical Language Awareness Pedagogy
  + Critical language awareness is a framework that centers students’ dialects and guides them to examine language ideologies that devalue certain varieties of the HL. Learning empowers students to make informed choices about using additional dialects and helps them explore the relationships between language and culture.
* Multiliteracies Pedagogy
  + Multiliteracies pedagogy views literacy as the process of making and interpreting meaning through diverse, multimodal communication. Learning involves analyzing texts to explore how they express meaning, reflecting on linguistic diversity in the HL across texts, and creating texts with existing patterns and conventions.
* Community-Based Service Learning
  + Community-based service learning combines community-focused activities with reflection and learning. Students use their HL skills to address community needs, and they connect to their communities, recognize their role in their communities, and use their local language variety to achieve community and program goals.
* Language Arts Approaches
  + Language arts approaches ask students to analyze texts, examine the language forms that are used, and create their own texts. HL teachers may draw on language arts standards to reinforce activities and collaborate with English Language Arts teachers to help students leverage their academic literacy skills across languages.
* Project-Based Learning
  + Project-based learning provides students with opportunities to complete real-world projects which can be shared beyond the classroom, including within local HL communities. Learning activities scaffold toward the completion of each project, and project-based learning allows for student choice and differentiation.
* Content and Language Integrated Learning
  + Content and language integrated learning in HL or FWL courses combines language learning and content learning. Access to content is supported by targeted language instruction, and common content areas include social studies, history, or literature of HL cultures.
* Task-Based Language Teaching
  + Task-based language teaching focuses on students’ completion of meaningful tasks with the HL. Learning involves exploring a topic and modeling, completing a task, planning how the task will be reported to the class, reporting back to the class about how the task went, and follow-up analysis and practice.

#### Instructional Strategies

As with approaches, specific instructional strategies (i.e., methods used to guide students towards the learning objectives for a course, unit, or lesson) will vary from program to program and depend on the students being served in the program.

Some examples of instructional strategies used in effective HL programs include:

* activating prior knowledge with advance organizers and anticipation guides;
* beginning with authentic resources before working on specific vocabulary;
* using authentic resources that reflect multiple and intersectional identities to ensure students feel represented, and incorporating strategies such as discussion protocols to support students in exploring their identities;
* creating meaning maps and other graphic organizers for engaging with texts and resources;
* genre-chaining (i.e., moving from a more familiar type of text on a topic, such as a podcast or personal email, to a less familiar type of text, such as a formal article on the topic);
* close reading by carefully analyzing the content and form of a text to understand how they work together to make meaning;
* positioning students as experts, elevating student voice in the classroom, and embracing their prior linguistic and cultural knowledge, skills, and experiences;
* using word walls, which display words that students select for reference on meaning, spelling, variation between dialects, and other aspects; and
* differentiating the content, process, product, and/or pacing of activities.[[18]](#footnote-19)

As students with HLs bring diverse backgrounds, skills, and abilities to the classroom, HL programs should plan for differentiation in all aspects of HL teaching and learning. This will help ensure that instruction is appropriate and accessible for all learners of HLs, including ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, and Newcomers.

The following vignette demonstrates how to differentiate learning for students with HLs:

**Vignette: Differentiation in a HL Course**

Fieldstone Public Schools

Fieldstone Public Schools offers a Heritage Portuguese 1 and 2 at the high school. In Heritage Portuguese 1, some students are at a Novice High for all skills and some students are at a Novice High in listening and speaking and Novice Low in reading and writing. Each class begins with ten minutes of free voluntary reading. There is a large selection of books and graphic novels in Portuguese, so students can choose books appropriate to their own levels and interests. After free voluntary reading, students are often grouped into learning centers, with a mini-lesson being provided to one group while another group completes activities independently. Other days, free voluntary reading is followed by a whole class exploration of an authentic resource. They discuss in small groups and then students complete a presentational activity about the topic they discussed. The activity is designed with choice boards, so students have a choice of how they present the information.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would this approach to differentiating instruction work well for your program?
* What types of differentiation would be most helpful for instruction in your context?
* How can your program increase access and equity through differentiated instruction?

When reflecting on the use of differentiation in HL programs, consider the following:

* Has instruction reflected all students’ backgrounds, skills, and abilities?
* Has instruction been delivered in ways that build on all students’ strengths and abilities?
* Have all students been allowed to demonstrate their abilities in their preferred learning modality and environment? Have students’ language practices been valued and supported?
* Have students who need more help with what is being taught been provided with additional supports to ensure they are able to fully access and participate in learning?
* Have students who have already mastered what is being taught been provided alternatives that vary in complexity while working with similar content/skills?

Additional strategies for differentiating instruction and addressing specific learning challenges in WL programs, including HL programs, can be found in the [Massachusetts Quick Reference Guide for World Language Learning for Students with Disabilities](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/framework/qrg-swd.docx).

#### Learning Activities

Learning activities are also a critical component of effective instruction in HL programs. These are the things that students do, inside or outside of class, to engage with the material and build their own understandings of what is being taught. As described in DESE’s Educational Vision, learning experiences should offer students opportunities to solve problems, think critically, ask questions, make meaning of complex ideas, and demonstrate their learning. Students in HL programs should also have opportunities to interact with their peers and communities, make sense of complex ideas together, and develop academic language skills in the HL.

The following are some examples of potential learning activities for HL programs:

* Students may read a short story or memoir where the author explores how her HL culture affected her identity. They analyze the way the author structures the narrative and her use of figurative language. Then, they write journal reflections on their own identities related to their HL, cultures, and communities.
* Students may watch a book review video on social media and read book reviews online and on a newspaper’s website, both in the HL and in English. They then compare and contrast the different ways that the authors structure their reviews and the impact of each review on the audience. After critically thinking about the reviews, students create their own book reviews in the format of their choice on a book they have read.
* Students may engage in community-based service learning at a local community center where members of the community can attend programs and receive services. To help them prepare for service opportunities, students first interview community members to explore what the community needs and how they may be able to use their HL skills to support and advocate for the community. They provide tutoring services, volunteer in the center as support staff for events, and help with family and community outreach activities. They also reflect on their experiences through journaling and small group discussions during class to build appreciation for their role in the community.
* Students may map the linguistic landscape in local HL communities through photos of signs, murals, public notices, and other elements. They analyze what languages and language varieties are represented, and they identify areas where the community would benefit from greater linguistic representation, whether practical (e.g., government forms, safety signage) or artistic (e.g., murals). They then advocate for this representation by writing letters to local officials, giving a speech to the school committee, or creating a petition.
* Students may discuss and develop materials for HL school clubs. They start by discussing what clubs they already belong to and how these clubs could incorporate (if they do not already) the HL and HL cultures. They then review authentic examples of recruitment posters for these types of clubs from other schools and within HL communities. Students also review the vocabulary and other elements of the posters to serve as examples and prepare posters for their own clubs in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways to encourage additional students with HLs to join. Students then present in small groups about their clubs, supported by their posters. While one group member talks, the rest of the group fills out graphic organizers. After each group member speaks, students fill out a brief exit ticket explaining which club they would like to join and why.

The following vignettes further demonstrate what learning activities may look like in HL programs:

**Vignettes: Potential Learning Activities in HL Programs**

Axelrod Public Schools

Axelrod Public Schools offers a Heritage Mandarin I course at the high school. One of the main themes of the course is ideas of respect across cultures, and the current unit focuses on respect for elders. First, the class engages with the topic by discussing ways they show respect to elders, such as holding the door for someone using a walker, using polite terms, and giving up seats on public transportation. Then, the class reads an authentic text in Mandarin about respecting elders. They compare and contrast ways that respect is shown in Chinese and U.S. cultures, including HL communities, using a graphic organizer. The class then participates in role-play activities to practice using polite forms of address and gestures such as bowing as appropriate in these different contexts. In honor of the Senior Citizens’ Festival, they write notes in Mandarin to residents of a local Chinese nursing home, and a visitor from the nursing home, a retired professor, visits the class to speak about Confucius’ teachings on respect for elders and how this may look when interacting with elders in local HL communities.

Meadowbrook School District

Meadowbrook is a suburb of a large city. Meadowbrook School District is home to an active Armenian-American community and offers three levels of Armenian HL courses at the high school level. Cultural comparisons are a key theme in the Armenian 3 course. In one unit, students engage in a class discussion of different cultural values in their local Armenian-American communities and then listen to a podcast in Armenian where the host discusses the role of different values in Armenian and Armenian-American culture, as well as their advantages and disadvantages. After listening, students identify the main ideas and supporting arguments, and well as specific terms and phrases the host uses. They also discuss the podcast’s intended audience, what the audience’s prior opinions might be, and how the host addresses these factors. Students then add vocabulary from the podcast to the class word wall and analyze the arguments made in the podcast. They also share their own experiences with and perspectives on the cultural values discussed.

Wolverley School Department

Wolverley is a small city with a large Newcomer population, mostly from Guatemala. Wolverley offers a Spanish HL Program that begins in the middle school and continues through all four years of high school. The eighth-grade Spanish HL class is creating a guide to their school to help newly-arrived students with HLs feel more comfortable. First, students talk with their peers in the Newcomer program to find out what information would be (or would have been) helpful for them on the first few days of school. Students also have access to a chat forum with pen-pals in Guatemala. They chat with the pen-pals to compare and contrast their school experiences to help anticipate what they may need to explain to incoming students. Students then use this information to create a new student guide.

Belle Isle Public Schools

Belle Isle is a mid-size coastal town with high levels of linguistic diversity. Belle Isle High School recently began a Vietnamese HL program consisting of two year-long courses. In Heritage Vietnamese II, students discuss the Vietnam War. They start by reading about the event in a textbook from Vietnam and compare how the event is presented in that textbook with how it is presented in their U.S. textbooks for their world history and U.S. history courses. Students then watch a Vietnamese movie about the war. They then compare these materials in a class discussion about different perspectives on the same events, and they also discuss whose perspectives are prioritized and whose are excluded from these materials. After the discussion, students write an essay reflecting on why they think the event was presented differently in each context, and what impact this may have on different members of their local HL communities.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would any of these types of learning activities work well for your program?
* What learning experiences would be most valuable for students in your program?
* How can your program increase access and equity when planning learning experiences?

Schools and districts may also consider the ways that extracurricular activities can work together with HL classes to promote students in engaging with HL cultures and building connections between the HL and other content areas.

* For example, students in the Spanish club may engage with different Spanish-speaking cultures through watching Argentine movies, reading a book by a Salvadoran author, or learning traditional Mexican dances. They might share these cultural activities with other students at an international night or other showcase event.
* Students in the garden club might build connections between their Portuguese and Environmental Science classes by comparing climate conditions in their current town and different regions of Brazil and determining which plants would be suitable in each location.

When developing learning activities, consider the following:

* developing tasks based on a variety of authentic resources from different dialects, including multimedia resources such as social media, music, and oral histories;
* creating activities that require students to use all skills (listening/viewing, reading, writing, and speaking/signing) and modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, presentational, and intercultural), especially those skills which they may have fewer chances to practice outside the classroom;
* developing activities that integrate skills and modes; offering opportunities for students to build academic speaking/signing, writing, and presentational communication skills;
* providing models of successful performance for different activities;
* ensuring activities align with assessments and support students in practicing and preparing for assessments;
* teaching grammar in context to support students’ understanding of authentic resources and ability to complete activities;
* providing a framework for analyzing academic texts and engaging in academic conversations;
* sharing activity types among different classes to provide a consistent experience for students; and
* integrating personal expression and community connections into learning activities.

### Using Assessments in HL Programs

Assessment is a process of setting clear goals for learning and measuring progress towards those goals, and it should be empowering for students and teachers and help guide instruction. Students participating in HL programs should have opportunities to engage in both formative and summative assessments in the program, as well as standardized language proficiency testing as part of the school or district’s Seal of Biliteracy testing programs. Although there may be limitations to assessment in some programs (such as may be the case for LCTLs, Indigenous languages, and additional minoritized or endangered languages), assessment is still highly recommended and schools and districts should leverage open educational resources, such as those available from the federally-funded LRCs, to support the use of assessments in these programs.

When planning for assessment, HL programs should consider using interactive, relevant, and real-world assessment tasks that provide students with multiple options for how they demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have developed, as described in DESE’s Educational Vision. It may also be helpful to use the guiding questions about assessment found in the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Alignment Guides [how-to document](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/implementation/how-to.docx) to help ensure assessment is used effectively and in alignment with the WL content standards.

Any assessments used in HL programs should be assets-based and reflect the backgrounds, skills, and abilities of the students being served in the program. Assessment tasks should be authentic and performance-based, allowing students to show what they can do in the HL to understand and interact with HL cultures and communities, not only what they know about the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities. When assessing students, HL programs should ensure that students have had ample opportunities to practice the skills and modes of communication they will be assessed on, and it is important that classroom-based assessments also be designed in a way that prepares students for proficiency testing for the Seal of Biliteracy.

The following vignettes demonstrate what assessments may look like in HL programs:

**Vignettes: Assessment in HL Programs**

Harbor City Schools

Harbor City is a small city. Harbor City Schools offers a middle school Korean Heritage Language class. Students in this class are at the Novice Low to Novice Mid level for interpretive reading, and their teacher wants to assess what students have learned so far in their unit about birthday celebrations in the HL culture. For a formative assessment, he shared a social media post from a K-pop idol thanking her fans for donating rice to celebrate her birthday. He asked students to identify key vocabulary and some basic facts from the text, including the words “birthday” and “rice,” the main topic of the post, the date of the idol’s birthday, and the amount of rice donated. Because this was a reading assessment rather than a writing assessment, and considering the students’ level of writing proficiency, students could answer open-ended questions in English or Korean and could answer closed-ended questions by highlighting words in the text. Based on the results, the teacher realized that students needed more practice with verbs related to birthdays, such as “give” and “celebrate,” since only a few students were able to identify these words, and he made a plan to spend more time on these aspects of the unit.

Eastpoint Educational District

Eastpoint is a suburb of a major city. Eastpoint Educational District offers a high school Hindi Heritage Language class. Students in this class are at the Novice High to Intermediate Low level for interpersonal communication. Their recent unit focused on tea in India, including its history and modern-day tea culture. For the interpersonal summative assessment for the unit, the teacher asked students to work in pairs. The students had a conversation about their family tea traditions, their own preferred ways to drink tea, and a type of tea they would like to try. Each student was required to ask and answer at least four questions and to react to what the other student said. Each of these skills was practiced throughout the unit with small dialogues that were scaffolded with sentence frames and conversation starters. While one pair of students was speaking, the rest of the class worked on independent activities so the teacher could listen to and evaluate the conversation.

Parkline Metropolitan Schools

Parkline is a mid-size city with a large Spanish-speaking population from Central and South America. Parkline Metropolitan Schools offers Spanish Heritage Language classes at multiple levels at the high school. Students in the tenth-grade class are at an Intermediate High proficiency level in all modes of communication, and they are finishing a unit on hospitality. The final assessment for the unit involves multiple tasks in multiple modes. First, for the interpretive task, students read two articles with advice for hosting a party: one from a magazine aimed at homemakers in Northern Mexico, and one from a website aimed at young professionals in Buenos Aires. They create a graphic organizer to compare the articles, including the content, presentation, images, intended audience, and assumptions (such as whether the reader has a house or an apartment). For the interpersonal task, students discuss the two articles with a partner and compare the articles to their own experiences with parties in HL communities. Finally, for the presentational task, students write their own guide on hosting to share with the local community centers who are planning for new events in local HL communities.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would these assessments work well for your program?
* What assessments would be most valuable for students in your program?
* How can your program increase access and equity when planning for assessment?

As with instruction, it is important to differentiate assessments in HL programs to ensure that they are appropriate and accessible for all types of learners, including diverse learners, such as ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, and Newcomers.

Schools and districts should also consider situations in which (1) students speak varied dialects of the HL being taught (e.g. Dominican/Chilean Spanish); (2) students have a HL that is a similar language to the HL being taught (e.g., Haitian Creole/French); and (3) students have relationships with varied HL cultures and communities (e.g., Brazilian/European Portuguese) in order to equitably assess students and use the results of assessment to promote student learning.

* For example, a Spanish HL program that serves students with both Dominican Spanish and Chilean Spanish as their HLs should ensure that teachers are familiar with both varieties of Spanish and any regional varieties that are common among students, so that dialect variations are not considered mistakes. Assessments should offer opportunities to use Dominican Spanish, Chilean Spanish, and the accompanying cultural norms, and to change between them when appropriate, such as for intercultural communication.

The following vignette demonstrates how assessment can be approached with diverse learners:

**Vignette: Approaching Assessment with Diverse Learners in HL Programs**

Southbrook School District

Southbrook School District offers a Portuguese Heritage Language class at the high school. There are students whose families come from Portugal and Brazil, and students have a wide range of proficiency levels in reading and writing, from Novice to Intermediate. There are several SWD in the class. To support all learners, the teacher uses differentiated assessments and reminds her students that she is interested in progress, not perfection. She uses some elements of Universal Design for Learning, such as numbered steps for all assessment tasks and simple instructions. She also makes sure students receive necessary accommodations, such as extended time or digital formats for assessments. Her assessments generally include an element of choice, as well. For instance, students can choose two out of four authentic resources to engage with for an interpretive reading task, so they can choose those that are more suited to their level. She makes sure that both Brazilian and European Portuguese are represented in assessments and is aware of both varieties, so she recognizes when a student is using a different variety rather than making a mistake. She also uses student self-assessment in her classroom and asks students to set individual goals to track their own progress for some of the formative assessments, making it clear to students that progress is what she cares about most in the classroom.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would this approach to differentiating assessment work well for your program?
* What types of differentiation would be most helpful for assessment in your context?
* How can your program increase access and equity through differentiated assessment?

In addition to assessments themselves, HL programs should have established approaches to and tools for evaluating student performances. When evaluating student performances on assessment tasks in HL programs, consider the following:

* using tools, such as rubrics and checklists, that provide clear information about the expectations for task completion and students’ performances on the task;
* sharing tools for evaluating performances with students and families and/or co-creating tools with students and families to ensure they are getting the information they want from students’ performances;
* ensuring tools do not penalize or prioritize specific varieties or dialects of the HL and that they elevate the experiences and strengths of all types of learners, including ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.;
* emphasizing student growth over time when sharing results and considering growth when assigning grades based on students’ performances;
* focusing evaluation criteria on communicative success rather than specific grammar and mechanics, although these can be incorporated to support communicative goals; and
* providing meaningful feedback that gives students information about where their work stands in relation to course or unit goals and next steps towards those goals, while ensuring that feedback is provided in a way that reflects students’ preferences.

Summary

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment in heritage language programs:

* help fulfill the Vision and Guiding Principles of heritage language programs and apply the Practices and Content Standards to students’ classroom experiences
* should build on students’ existing skills while allowing them to expand their linguistic proficiency and explore their own heritage language culture and additional cultures
* offer students opportunities to show what they can do in the heritage language across skills/modes of communication and engage with heritage language communities

Action Items

1. Consider how the Vision, Guiding Principles, Practices, and Content Standards can be applied to your heritage language program to support student learning.
2. Working with stakeholders, evaluate options for curriculum and ensure they are appropriate, accessible, and linguistically and culturally sustaining based on the potential, current, and future students in the program. Consider coordinating with teams in the school/district who have experience with the Massachusetts CUrriculum RAtings by TEachers (CURATE) curriculum review process.
3. Collaborate with heritage language teachers, as well as other departments when relevant, to plan the instructional approaches, strategies, learning activities, and assessments your program will use in alignment with the Framework and best practices for heritage language teaching and learning.

## V. Heritage Language Teacher Training and Professional Development

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Elevates the importance of training and professional development to effectively support students with heritage languages
* Shares guidance for understanding the heritage language training and professional development needs of varied stakeholders
* Explores the process of designing and delivering heritage language training and professional development in schools/districts
* Provides recommendations for heritage language training and professional development topics, approaches, and activities
* Discusses how to access additional heritage language training and professional development opportunities and resources

Teacher training and professional development (PD) are essential components of heritage language (HL) program capacity building and program implementation and success. Schools and districts are strongly encouraged to provide training for HL teachers and PD for all school/district personnel working with students with HLs.

This includes (but is not limited to):

* School and district leaders, including leaders of HL programs;
* Teachers in HL programs and other multilingual (ML) programs, including Foundational World Language (FWL) and English Learner Education (ELE) programs;
* General education teachers, literacy specialists, and instructional coaches;
* School counselors, special education staff, and librarians and media specialists; and
* Seal of Biliteracy coordinators and district data administrators.

By providing targeted, sustained HL training and PD opportunities, schools and districts are making a valuable investment that will have immediate and long-lasting impacts on all stakeholders in HL programs, including students with HLs, families, and communities.

### Understanding HL Training & PD Needs

All school/district personnel working with students with HLs need to have (at a minimum) an understanding of students with HLs, their families, and communities, as well as benefits of HLs and HL programs and how to support and ensure access and equity for students with HLs beyond HL programs.

Teachers working in HL, FWL, and ELE programs also need to have an understanding of differences between their programs, how to collaborate and ensure articulation between their programs, and ways that students with HLs can be supported in all types of ML programs.

While the needs of HL teachers will vary, depending on the local context and teachers’ prior training and experiences, the following list describes seven key components of HL teacher development based on the knowledge and skills needed for effective HL teaching:[[19]](#footnote-20)

Ideologial: Beliefs, perspectives, and ideologies about the HL, including varieties of the HL, and HL cultures and communities, and how these impact approaches to HL programming

Cultural: Connections between the HL and HL cultures, students’ cultural funds of knowledge, and how one’s own funds of knowledge impact their perceptions of HL cultures

Socioaffective: Identities and emotions related to the HL and HL cultures, as well as proficiency in the HL, and how classroom practices can impact students’ feelings about HL learning

Linguistic: Characteristics of and trends in HL use, acquisition, and proficiency development, as well as linguistic diversity, and how these impact approaches to HL teaching and learning

Curricular: Curricular approaches and materials for HL programming and how to ensure approaches/materials respond to and reflect the students and HL communities being served

Pedagogical: Pedagogical approaches and materials for HL programming and how to ensure approaches/materials respond to and reflect the students and HL communities being served

Professional: Engagement in varied HL PD opportunities and reflective practices for HL teaching, as well as how these can help identify and solve current issues in HL programming

To better understand professional learning needs of varied school/district personnel, including HL teachers, schools and districts may consider conducting a needs assessment. Needs assessments can be conducted using a survey or through discussions and should gather information about:

* what is already known about students with HLs and HL programs;
* what is already being done in support of students with HLs and HL programs;
* areas of interest and need as it relates to students with HLs and HL programs;
* any preferences for the delivery of HL training and PD opportunities; and
* any prior experiences with training and PD related to HL education.

### Designing HL Professional Learning Experiences

Based on the results of the needs assessment, schools and district should determine what topics to cover in HL training and PD opportunities. The following list provides potential topics to consider within different topic areas, including understanding students with HLs and HL programs; establishing HL programs; teaching and learning in HL programs; supporting students with HLs and HL programs; and engaging with students with HLs, families, and communities.

Topic Area: Understanding Students with HLs and HL Programs

* Understanding students with HLs (e.g., backgrounds, skills, identities)
* Understanding families and HL cultures and communities
* Understanding the benefits of HLs and HL programs

Topic Area: Establishing HL Programs

* Determining which students will benefit from HL programs
* Determining placement into appropriate courses in HL programs
* Ensuring access to HL programs for diverse learners
* Establishing goals and desired outcomes for HL programs
* Determining the model/structure of HL programs
* Recruiting, hiring, and training teachers of HL programs
* Partnering with students, families, and communities in HL programs
* Acquiring funds for developing and sustaining HL programs
* Maintaining and/or expanding on HL programs over time
* Promoting and advocating for HL programs at different levels

Topic Area: Teaching and Learning in HL Programs

* Understanding HL acquisition, development, and use
* Understanding HL identity development and social-emotional needs
* Understanding and supporting linguistic diversity in HL programs
* Developing/selecting curriculum and materials in HL programs
* Using appropriate instructional approaches for HL teaching
* Measuring student growth and progress in HL programs
* Ensuring antiracism and bias reduction in HL programs
* Including varied HL cultures and communities in HL programs
* Ensuring equity for diverse learners in HL programs
* Developing students’ academic literacy skills in HL programs
* Providing differentiated, individualized supports in HL programs
* Understanding differences between FWL, ELE, and HL programs
* Teaching language arts and other content areas in HL programs
* Determining appropriate proficiency level outcomes in HL programs
* Engaging in professional learning and reflection in HL programs

Topic Area: Supporting Students with HLs and HL Programs

* Understanding beliefs about the HL in the school/district community
* Ensuring access/equity for diverse learners with HLs
* Increasing collaboration between HL programs and other programs
* Increasing collaboration between HL programs and additional personnel
* Integrating students with HLs and HL programs in the school/district
* Supporting less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), Indigenous languages, and additional low-incidence HLs

Topic Area: Engaging Students with HLs, Families, and Communities

* Creating safe learning spaces for students with HLs and their families
* Conducting outreach for students with HLs, families, and communities
* Encouraging voice, advocacy, and ownership among students with HLs
* Engaging families in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways
* Building effective partnerships with members of HL communities
* Building effective partnerships with local organizations

When selecting topics to cover in HL training and PD, consider the following:

* What topics will elevate the importance of access and equity for students with HLs?
* What are the most important/desired topics to cover in training/PD for varied personnel?
* Who will be delivering the training/PD? Will external training/PD specialists be needed?
* What resources are needed and available? Will resources need to be purchased?
* What topics (if any) can be grouped together in a single training/PD opportunity?
* How can topics connect over time if multiple training/PD opportunities are offered?

Once topics have been selected, schools and districts should determine what approaches to use when delivering HL training and PD, including when, how often, and in what format opportunities will be provided, as well as what types of activities or experiences will be included.

Decisions about approaches should be made based on the results of the needs assessment and the topics that will be covered, as some approaches will be better suited than others for exploring different topics and ensuring learning experiences are meaningful and effective.

Schools and districts may choose to provide a variety of HL learning opportunities, both informal and formal, such as meetings, workshops, training sessions, coaching sessions, mentor programs, study groups, and professional learning communities (PLCs).

Regardless of the format of delivery, it is important to provide HL training/PD opportunities that:

* allow for continuous and consistent professional learning over time;
* provide teachers and personnel with practical, actionable learning opportunities;
* support collaboration within and across teams, departments, and/or programs;
* include opportunities for additional coaching, mentoring, or other expert supports;
* encourage self-reflection and the development of relevant professional goals;[[20]](#footnote-21) and
* elevate the importance of access and equity for students with HLs, including diverse learners (English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities (SWD), English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.).

When possible, schools and districts with HL programs are strongly encouraged to develop PLCs for HL teachers, as these communities provide ongoing, sustained opportunities for collaboration, collective inquiry, and professional learning. Effective PLCs also serve as a source of support for HL teachers, as they are a space in which teachers can share best practices and strategies and work together to identify and solve any issues with HL programming.

When establishing PLCs for HL teachers, it may also be helpful to consider doing the following:

* inviting participants to facilitate or co-facilitate sessions to share their own expertise;
* providing office hours or supports for participants who cannot attend scheduled meetings;
* having varied cohorts of educators from year to year who can support onboarding over time;[[21]](#footnote-22)
* building connections with networks/PLCs convened as part of FWL or ELE programs; and
* supporting participants in sharing knowledge/materials with the school/district community.

Activities in any HL training/PD offering should support participants with acquiring, applying, and reflecting on new knowledge and skills that will support students with HLs and HL programs. They should also connect theory and practice and help participants think about how new and known concepts relate to their lived experiences and the context of their school/district and HL program. Lastly, they should encourage participants to critically analyze their own positionality as it relates to the HL program and provide opportunities for interaction with and learning from members of HL communities.[[22]](#footnote-23)

Examples of effective activities that can facilitate this type of learning experience include analyzing materials and student work; journaling or autobiography writing; self-reflection and/or assessment; shadowing and classroom observations; coaching/mentoring sessions; and collaborative resource development or participatory research projects.[[23]](#footnote-24) It may also be helpful to provide opportunities for HL teachers to collaborate with HL teachers from other schools and districts to learn more about their experiences, successes, and lessons learned. This could take place in the form of a PLC, with regularly scheduled meetings and/or online platforms for sharing information over time, or it could involve teachers visiting and training with different schools/districts and coming back to share and teach others what they learned through their own teacher-led training or PD session.

### Accessing Additional HL Training & PD Opportunities

In addition to providing their own HL training/PD opportunities, it is also important for schools and districts to encourage and connect school/district personnel, especially HL teachers, with external opportunities for professional learning.

These may include webinars; courses, workshops, or institutes; college/university coursework or degree programs; certificate programs; professional conferences; membership in professional teacher associations or organizations; independent study; and regularly scheduled Office of Language Acquisition (OLA) Leadership Network meetings, which are inclusive of leaders from all ML programs, including HL programs, across the state.

The [Appendix](#_XII._Appendix) to this manual includes a list of U.S.-based institutions of higher education, as well as nationally and internationally recognized language organizations, that provide HL training and PD opportunities.

Summary

Heritage language training and professional development opportunities:

* are essential for ensuring high-quality design and delivery of heritage language programs
* should be for all school/district personnel working with students with heritage languages
* need to be based on the local context/needs and provided on an ongoing basis over time

Action Items

1. Conduct a needs assessment to gather information about stakeholders’ knowledge, practices, and needs related to working with students with heritage languages, as well as their preferences for any potential heritage language training and professional development opportunities.
2. Create a heritage language training and professional development plan that outlines who will be participating, what topics will be covered, what approaches will be used, how participants will acquire new knowledge and apply what they have learned, and how the plan will be evaluated over time. Consider coordinating with leaders of Foundational World Language and English Learner Education programs to provide integrated professional learning experiences for all educators working in multilingual programs.
3. Build connections with local colleges, universities, and language organizations to learn more about external heritage language training and professional development opportunities and resources that may inform or complement the school/district’s offerings.

## VI. Student, Family, & Community Engagement in Heritage Language Programs

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Elevates the importance of students, families, and communities in heritage language programs
* Provides guidance for engaging students, families, and communities in heritage language programs
* Explores methods for encouraging student voice and ownership in heritage language programs
* Discusses approaches to gathering family input in designing and delivering heritage language programs
* Shares recommendations for potential community partnerships in heritage language programs

As described in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s Educational Vision, students in Massachusetts schools and districts will see themselves as valuable and involved members of their communities and will be empowered to advocate for themselves and others in their communities and beyond. The vision also emphasizes that students will be active participants and have a voice in shaping their learning experiences, and that students and families will have a sense of belonging in the school/district community and will be valued for what they bring to that community, including their languages. In addition, students will engage with the world, including local communities, and create positive change through civic action in those communities.

To fulfill this vision, it is important for schools and districts to effectively engage students with heritage languages (HLs), their families, and their communities. Students, families, and communities should be at the center of heritage language (HL) programs and seen as equal partners in program success.[[24]](#footnote-25) Effective HL programs reflect and respond to the interests and needs of students, families, and communities, making it essential for schools and districts to build strong relationships and partnerships with this group of stakeholders. Schools and districts should work collaboratively with welcome centers and varied school personnel in this process—HL teachers should not be held solely responsible for student, family, and community engagement, as it is a shared responsibility of all school personnel working with students with HLs, their families, and their communities.

### Engaging Students in HL Programs

Student engagement in HL programs may:

* foster pride, confidence, and leadership;
* encourage student interest and investment in the program;
* provide opportunities for students to engage in innovative thinking to solve challenges;
* help students become aware of their strengths, be self-aware, and be self-advocates;
* allow students to play a role in advocating for equity in the classroom and community;
* encourage students to understand and think critically about local events and systems;
* ensure that learning experiences are relevant and engaging based on students’ interests;
* help students enjoy and look forward to their learning experiences; and
* promote a sense of student ownership, autonomy, and agency.

To effectively engage students in HL programs, schools and districts should provide opportunities for student voice and advocacy throughout the lifecycle of a program, including when planning for, developing, implementing, sustaining, and evaluating the program. Students should be involved in and consulted when determining what type of program best serves students with HLs; determining the criteria for determining which students will benefit from HL programs and their placement into appropriate HL courses; and determining how the HL program will be structured, as well as what types of learning goals will be prioritized and what types of learning experiences will be offered.

The following vignettes demonstrate helpful student engagement methods and activities:

**Vignettes: Student Engagement in HL Programs**

Old Mill Public Schools

Old Mill is a suburban town, and it has large numbers of Portuguese speakers of European Portuguese, Brazilian, and Cape Verdean heritage. Old Mill Public Schools has a Portuguese HL program at the high school level. To help ensure that students are engaged in the program and have a voice in how the program is delivered, the district convenes student advisory groups, in which students in the program and those who are interested in the program have frequent, ongoing opportunities to meet with peers and HL teachers. During advisory group meetings, students can share ideas, concerns, and recommendations related to HL programming. Members of the advisory group are also invited to participate in larger school committee meetings as student leaders, helping to raise awareness about the HL program and giving students a chance to represent the program.

East Dunsbury Township Schools

East Dunsbury is a large city. Within East Dunsbury, approximately 35% of residents speak a language other than English at home. In this district, students have the opportunity to participate in Spanish HL programs at the middle and high school levels, and the district is also considering starting additional HL programs in additional languages in the future. The Spanish HL program has been offered for several years, and students often take multiple courses in the program and continue with the program over time. Each year, the district invites students to contribute testimonials or be featured in student spotlights so that they can share their experiences in the HL program and also be recognized and celebrated for their achievements.

Colonial Ridge School District

Colonial Ridge School District is a rural district with a growing number of Spanish speakers. They offer two levels of Spanish Foundational World Language (FWL) courses at the high school and recently established a Spanish HL course at the high school. The district has noticed that many students who speak Spanish as a HL are choosing not to take the Spanish HL course, and those who do seem like they are not as engaged in the course. The district decided to start administering student interest surveys at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the year to all potential and current students in the HL course. The survey gathers student input on different aspects of the HL program to see what they like and dislike, as well as information about how students want to get involved in making future decisions about the program.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would any of these engagement methods/activities work well for your school or district?
* What methods/activities would be most helpful for student engagement in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity through student engagement?

As noted in the [Heritage Language Programming](#_II._Heritage_Language) section, schools and districts need to understand students’ backgrounds, skills, and abilities when designing and delivering HL programs, including their skills in the HL; their educational experiences in the HL; their experiences with HL cultures; their connections to HL communities; and how they themselves identify (or do not identify) with aspects of the HL and HL cultures/communities. This information is also critical for determining how to best engage students in HL programs, including what opportunities will be most appealing to them when it comes to supporting decision making for the program.

* Schools and districts should consider providing students with leadership opportunities related to the HL program, such as opportunities to serve as student ambassadors, peer translators, and/or leaders of youth-led cultural events in partnership with HL communities.

### Engaging Families in HL Programs

Family engagement in HL programs may:

* encourage family interest and investment in the program;
* support student achievement and engagement within and beyond the program;
* promote a sense of value, safety, and belonging in the school/district community;
* encourage families to support students’ use and development of the HL outside of school;
* allow families to connect and build support systems in the school/district community;
* strengthen connections between students’ heritage and their educational experiences;
* help families see themselves as experts, leaders, and partners in students’ learning; and
* build trust and confidence between schools and families.

To effectively engage families in HL programs, schools and districts should first recognize the role and importance of families in planning for, developing, implementing, sustaining, and evaluating the program.

* Families are perhaps the first and best resource for connecting with, understanding, and supporting students with HLs, and they may also have a wealth of knowledge about the HL and HL cultures, as well as connections to HL communities.
* Families directly contribute to how often and in what ways students are engaging with the HL outside of the classroom and therefore have a major role in students’ development of proficiency in the HL and their motivation for HL learning.
* Family engagement and involvement in HL programs may lead to greater student and/or community engagement and involvement, making them essential to HL program success and sustainability over time.

Schools and districts should also ensure that the educational environment is safe, inclusive, and truly celebrates multilingualism and multiculturalism as envisioned by DESE’s Educational Vision. The school climate should provide real and perceived safety for all stakeholders, including families, to ensure they feel comfortable participating in school/district activities and programs regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, immigrant status, or country of origin. As noted in the [Participation and Placement in Heritage Language Programs](#_III._Participation_and_1) section, schools and districts may conduct a climate study to learn more about how families feel when they are engaging in school/district spaces and what improvements may be needed to ensure their safety. It may also be helpful to collaborate with school welcome centers to ensure that families of students with HLs feel welcome in the larger school/district community.

Finally, schools and districts should make sure that they understand families of potential, current, and future students participating in HL programs. This step is critical to ensuring that any and all family engagement efforts are equitable, linguistically and culturally responsive, and respectful of diverse languages, norms, and values. It also helps ensure that family opinions and perspectives are centered in the design and delivery of HL programs.

* Schools and districts may conduct home visits (with the support of interpreters as needed), or they may ask families to share voice messages, photos, or videos that can provide valuable information about and insights into their backgrounds and lived experiences.
* Schools and districts may invite families to participate in moderated conversation groups with families of similar linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds, which simultaneously helps families to connect with one another and build a sense of community.
* Schools and districts may learn about families through classroom activities, such as asking students to interview family members as part of a unit on identity, especially when seeking to understand families that speak a minoritized language or families that are less directly involved in the school/district community.

Family members may vary in terms of their personal, professional, and educational backgrounds; their skills in and relationship with the HL; their experiences with HL cultures; their connections to HL communities; how they identify (or do not identify) with the HL and HL cultures/communities; and their experiences with the U.S. school system and family engagement activities within the school/district community. They may also vary in their proficiency in and comfort using English for communication with teachers and additional members of the school/district community, though this should not be assumed and should be based on family input and/or records of family requests for communications in a language other than English.

When thinking about families of potential, current, and future students, consider the following:

* What are family members’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds and experiences?
* What are appropriate ways to engage with families based on backgrounds/experiences?
* What types of connections do families have to the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities?
* How do families identify (or not identify) with the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities?
* What experiences have families had with school/district family engagement activities?
* What barriers might families encounter when participating in family engagement activities?

When engaging with families, it be helpful to start by conducting outreach activities to provide foundational information about HL education and the HL program. Outreach activities can also provide valuable insights about family preferences for providing input, receiving information, and engaging with the program. Schools and districts may choose to work with multilingual district outreach personnel, such as family liaisons, when connecting with families, and it may also be helpful to work with interpreters and/or cultural brokers (i.e., individuals trusted by families who have knowledge of or experience with families, their cultures, and their communities) as needed.[[25]](#footnote-26)

Outreach can be done one-on-one through conversations in person or on the phone, via text or messaging apps or in emails, or when conducting parent-teacher conferences or participating in home visits as part of larger school/district family engagement activities. It can also be done during regularly scheduled school events, such as open houses or back to school nights; during events specifically designed for HL program outreach, such as inviting families of potential students to hear testimonials from families of current students in the program; and/or in spaces outside of the school that may be frequented by families of students with HLs, such as adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, family literacy programs, or events that may be culturally relevant to HL communities. Lastly, outreach can be done through groups that families may already be participating in as part of their involvement in the school/district, such as English Learner Parent Advisory Councils (ELPACs) and Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPACs).

During outreach activities, schools and districts should prioritize showcasing student voices from the HL program through testimonials or spotlights and demonstrate student work produced in the program. They should also ensure that there is language justice in communication with families by using plain language, avoiding overly academic terminology, and hiring translators and interpreters from the same communities that students and their families belong to. User-friendly, accessible language should be used when sharing information about the HL program (with consideration for preferred methods of communication, such as Wi-Fi-based rather than phone service-based), and it is important to ensure that the varied relationships with and views that families have about the HL are respected and included in communications about the program.

* For example, families may themselves feel a deep connection to the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities and have a strong desire for their students to participate in HL programs to encourage them to have this type of connection with their heritage.
* In other instances, families may be more concerned with the value and practicality of the HL and want their children to participate in HL programs primarily due to the opportunities this may provide them in the future as it relates to college and careers.[[26]](#footnote-27)
* There may also be families who have a difficult relationship or negative experiences with the HL, HL cultures, and HL communities; families who feel that association with the HL will lead to stigmatization for their child; or families who have concerns that students will be taught to focus on a particular dialect of the HL at the expense of their home variety, all of whom may not want their children in the program.

Based on information gathered when conducting outreach to families, schools and districts should develop a more detailed and robust family engagement plan for families of potential, current, and future students in the HL program. When developing engagement plans and during any family engagement activities, it is important to encourage contributions and feedback from families.

The following vignettes demonstrate ways to effectively gather input from families in HL programs:

**Vignettes: Gathering Family Input in HL Programs**

Essex Crossing Public Schools

Essex Crossing is a small city with a large Spanish-speaking population. The high school in Essex Crossing Public Schools offers a Spanish HL program with three course levels that leads into AP Spanish Language. Many families in the district have busy schedules and do not have time to meet on a consistent basis or engage in regularly scheduled activities in the district community. To ensure that their voices are heard when planning for the HL program and how it engages with families, the district administers an interest survey at the beginning of every school year. The survey gathers input on different aspects of the program, ways that families would like to get involved in the program, and preferences for the type and frequency of engagement activities.

Lakeside-Hawthorne School District

Lakeside-Hawthorn School District is located in a mid-size city with families who speak Spanish, Portuguese, and French at home. The district has robust HL programs in Spanish and Portuguese at the high school level, as well as opportunities for students to enroll in FWL classes in these languages in elementary and middle school. Families of students in the HL programs are very active in the school/district community, and they are invested in the success of the programs and their outcomes. The district invites all families of students with HLs to participate in an annual series of listening sessions, where they come together during a structured event to hear more about and provide feedback on existing programs, including the program’s approaches to family engagement. The district also invites families to share ideas about establishing new HL programs to ensure their voices are included when making decisions about expanding HL programming.

West Halford Public Schools

West Halford is a large city. Many students in West Halford Public Schools speak a language other than English at home, including Spanish, Mandarin, or an Indigenous language. Students have can participate in Spanish Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs or FWL courses before high school, and during high school they can enroll in a Spanish HL program with two levels of courses. The district convenes a HL parent advisory group for families of students with HLs so that they can share thoughts, concerns, and recommendations about HL programming and family engagement activities throughout the year. The group also provides families with an opportunity to build a sense of community in the district, whether or not a HL program is currently being offered in the language spoken in their homes.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would any of these ways of gathering family input work well for your school or district?
* What ways of gathering family input would be most helpful in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity when gathering family input?

Additional family engagement activities that may be effective include:

* hosting student-led storytelling events and/or family activity nights in their HLs;
* inviting families to participate in oral history projects in the school/district community;
* hosting multilingual panels and inviting families to participate as speakers on the panels;
* providing trainings and workshops on topics of interest related to the HL program;
* offering paid or volunteer roles for families with HLs in the school/district community;
* establishing HL family social opportunities, discussion groups, and/or support networks;
* creating family leadership and mentoring programs within the context of the HL program;
* providing opportunities for families to engage in HL community service-learning activities;
* inviting families to participate in school/district- and state-level HL advocacy efforts; and
* hosting events to connect families with needed community resources and organizations.

When designing and conducting family engagement activities, schools and districts should ensure that home languages and linguistic/cultural assets are valued; communication is meaningful and accessible; and relational trust is established through deep understanding and mutual respect.[[27]](#footnote-28) It is important to remember that a student’s HL may be the primary language of their family member(s) and translation and interpretation services are available to support communication in the HL as needed. In addition to formal translation and interpretation services, schools and districts may find it helpful to use family engagement platforms that provide translation support in varied languages other than English to ensure that all families are able to engage with the program. It is important to remember, however, that informal translation support does not replace the need for high-quality translation for important or systematically published materials and communication with families.

### Engaging Communities in HL Programs

Community engagement in HL programs may:

* encourage greater family engagement in and connections to the program;
* support families in accessing needed community resources and organizations;
* deepen students’ and families’ relationships with members of HL communities;
* help students understand and think critically about local events and community systems;
* allow students to see themselves as valuable and involved members of their communities;
* provide opportunities for students and families to engage in civic action in their communities;
* help programs gather and maintain information about community resources and services;
* support schools/districts in building valuable, sustainable community partnerships; and
* allow students and families to develop their own partnerships within their communities.

When planning for community engagement, schools and districts should consider what types of resources, services, and organizations would be most helpful for students and families, as well as what types of partnerships would be most helpful to the HL program.

Potential community partners for HL programs include (but are not limited to): community-based HL schools; local colleges and/or universities; public libraries in the community; places of worship in the community; HL cultural centers and organizations; immigrant and refugee support providers; social service agencies and organizations; community health centers and clinics; family, parenting, and community education centers; community newspapers and media outlets; and local businesses and non-governmental organizations.

The following vignettes demonstrate varied types of community partnerships in HL programs:

**Vignettes: Community Partnerships in HL Programs**

Glenmore Unified School District

Glenmore is a mid-sized city. Students in Glenmore Unified School District have an opportunity to take Heritage Spanish or Heritage Portuguese classes at the high school level. These classes focus on advancing students proficiency in the HL, as well as deepening their connections to HL cultures and communities through community-service learning. The district has established strong partnerships with community organizations that allow students to engage in a variety of service-learning activities to help them achieve this objective of the HL programs. Community partners include community-based HL schools, where students provide tutoring or mentoring services in the HL; charitable organizations, where students contribute to fundraising campaigns in local HL communities; and local community centers, where students translate marketing materials into the HL to help recruit participants for programs.

Greater Beacon Hill Public Schools

Greater Beacon Hill is a suburb outside of a major city. There is a large Spanish-speaking population in the district, as well as many Portuguese speakers. Greater Beacon Hill Public Schools have been providing Spanish and Portuguese HL programs at the high school level for a few years. The Spanish and Portuguese HL programs each include higher-level courses in the HL, including Medical Interpreting courses. The district partnered with a local interpreting company that provides services in the HL so that students can gain insights into potential careers using their HL and have access to internship opportunities that may lead to careers. They have also partnered with a neighborhood clinic, where students can volunteer to use their HL skills in a healthcare setting with the supervision of someone who has completed an accredited interpreter training program in the HL, allowing students to gain hands-on experience and support their HL communities.

Bridgeport School District

Bridgeport is a mid-size suburban area, in which nearly all students and their families speak a language other than English at home. Students in Bridgeport School District currently have the opportunity to participate in Spanish or Portuguese HL programs at the middle school level, though there are several additional HLs represented in the district. Many of the families of students with HLs have expressed a desire for more support in accessing educational, healthcare, and family support services from trusted providers who are familiar with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The district developed partnerships with organizations offering these services in local HL communities and hosts an annual event for representatives from each organization to come to the school to meet with families and connect them to needed resources. In partnership with one of the organizations providing immigrant and refugee services, they also co-design and deliver a welcome class about resources and services for newly arrived students and families.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would any of these community partnerships work well for your school or district?
* What types of community partnerships would be most helpful in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity with community partners?

Schools and districts should also consider how they are already connected to HL communities, what relationships they have with these communities, and what community needs could be addressed through school-community partnerships. Families may be able to help further connect schools and districts with organizations or opportunities, or they may at least have ideas and recommendations for how to establish these connections. If a school or district has family or community liaisons with experience working in HL communities, these individuals may also be able to help HL programs establish community partnerships. Additional school personnel, such as counselors and service providers, should also be considered when identifying who in the school/district has a pre-existing relationship to or connection with HL communities.

After identifying potential community partners, schools and districts should reach out to potential partners to start building relationships and understanding how partnerships could be designed to benefit both the HL program and HL communities. As with building relationships with families, it is important to develop mutual respect and trust when working with community partners and ensure that the partnership’s goals and activities are aligned with community needs.

The following vignette demonstrates how to effectively engage with partners, both when establishing and participating in school-community partnerships:

**Vignette: Effectively Engaging with Community Partners in HL Programs**

Roxmere City School District

Roxmere is a small city where approximately 28% of the residents speak a language other than English at home. Roxmere City School District has a robust Spanish DLBE program for students in elementary and middle school, and offers Spanish Literacy and Heritage Spanish courses in the HL program at the high school level. The district has a partnership with a local public library that provides programs in Spanish for the community, including family-oriented Spanish immersion activities and Adult Education Spanish Literacy classes. When establishing the partnership, the district approached the library to learn more about their programs and needs and how they could support each other in promoting the use of Spanish in the community. The district and the library worked together to develop a shared vision and goals for engagement, as well as how the district and the library would each be held accountable for their contributions to the partnership. As a result, students from the district’s HL program are able to volunteer as tutors and support staff in the library’s programs, and the library shares books and resources, participates in district family engagement events, and conducts trainings during parent advisory meetings to support home literacy practices in Spanish. The district and the library meet on a monthly basis to check in on how things are going and continuously monitor and evaluate the partnership over time.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would this approach to engaging with community partners work well for your school or district?
* What engagement strategies or practices would be most helpful in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity when engaging with community partners?

Summary

Student, family, and community engagement in heritage language programs:

* is the shared responsibility of program leaders and the school/district community
* should respond to varied stakeholders’ interests, needs, and desires
* requires an understanding of and commitment to access and equity

Action Items

1. Gather information about students, families, and community partners to determine how to approach engagement and what opportunities might be provided for each group of stakeholders to get more involved in the program.
2. Make a plan for student engagement based on students’ interests and preferences; if establishing a student advisory group, work collaboratively with students to determine the vision for the group, its goals and objectives, and how the group will work together to accomplish these goals and objectives.
3. Determine how, when, and who will start conducting outreach to families and community partners. Leverage upcoming opportunities to interact with families and get in touch with school/district personnel who may have connections to community organizations.

## VII. Integration and Collaboration for Heritage Language Programs

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Explores opportunities for integrating heritage language programs into the school/district community
* Affirms the shared responsibility that all educators have for students with heritage languages
* Discusses the concept of institutionalization of heritage language programs in schools/districts
* Provides recommendations for collaborating with other multilingual programs
* Shares considerations for collaborating with other programs and school personnel

Students enrolled in Massachusetts schools should be known, valued, and supported through both culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices, and learning experiences should value and build on students’ background knowledge, lived experiences, and cultural and linguistic assets. All educators thus have a shared responsibility for recognizing, celebrating, and supporting multilingual learners, including students with heritage languages (HLs), and should therefore be equally committed to and invested in the success of heritage language (HL) programs.

### HL Programs Being Part of the School and District Culture

To ensure high-quality implementation and sustainability, HL programs should be well-integrated into school and district plans, policies, and practices. It is critical for HL programs to be understood and appreciated at the institutional level, and HL programs should be considered essential for serving all students in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s Educational Vision and fulfilling school and district visions, missions, and goals. Demonstrated efforts to promote and include HL programs as a regular part of world languages (WL) programming should be made from the district level down to the school level to enhance program impact and success, as well as support for the establishment of HL programs.

To integrate HL programs into schools and districts, it is important to first increase awareness of and appreciation for HLs. To do so, schools may consider becoming a Language Friendly School in which all languages used by school and district stakeholders, including students, families, and communities, are welcomed, and the use of varied languages in the school or district is seen as an opportunity rather than a challenge. Language friendly schools embrace and promote linguistic and cultural diversity and create spaces for diverse voices to be heard.[[28]](#footnote-29)

The following vignette demonstrates ways to become a language friendly school:

**Vignette: Language Friendly School**

Silver Creek Public Schools

Silver Creek is a mid-size suburban area. Nearly all students in Silver Creek speak a language other than English at home. Nearly 90% of the people in the area speak Spanish, and Portuguese, French, Mandarin, and Haitian Creole are also spoken in the community. The middle school in Silver Creek Public Schools has been offering HL programs in Spanish and Portuguese for a few years, but they do not have the resources to offer HL programs in the other languages used by students and families. To help elevate the importance of HLs and make all HLs feel valued, the school worked with students, teachers, administrators, families, and communities to assess how varied languages are represented and perceived in the school. They then set shared goals for how to better encourage the use of varied languages in the school and developed new practices in support of these goals. Practices included visually displaying languages throughout schools, inviting students and teachers to deliver morning announcements in varied languages, and establishing leadership opportunities in varied languages, such as a language ambassador program for students with HLs to help support incoming students and families with the same HL. The school plans to monitor and evaluate these practices over time to ensure they are effective and respond to any changing demographics or changes to HL programming from year to year.[[29]](#footnote-30)

**Reflection Questions**

* What are the varied languages currently represented in your district and community?
* How does your district currently recognize, welcome, and value varied languages?
* How can your school increase access and equity by being a language friendly school?

Additional recommendations for integrating HLs schoolwide include:

* providing opportunities for students with HLs to share their languages and cultures and feel a sense of pride in the assets they bring to the school;
* ensuring there is a multi-tiered network of support, including support from HL teachers, other language and/or general education teachers, for HL use and programming
* hiring HL speakers for various roles in the school (e.g., counselors, paraprofessionals, literacy specialists, instructional coaches, family liaisons);
* making efforts to bring families and members of HL communities in as guest speakers and support personnel for school activities;
* providing tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment or extracurricular activities where students have an opportunity to further engage in their HLs;[[30]](#footnote-31)
* ensuring that HL teachers and programs are represented in school committees (including professional development committees) and teacher advisory groups; and
* ensuring families of potential, current, and future students in HL programs are represented in parent advisory groups, including English Learner Parent Advisory Councils (ELPACs) and Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPACs).

Ideally, integration efforts will lead to the institutionalization of HL programs, which refers to the official acceptance of these programs within the mainstream school system. For HL programs to be accepted and established as a routine part of educational programming offered to Massachusetts students, they must be:

* Seen as valuable and belonging
  + Schools and districts believe in the value of HL programs; view HL programs as an essential component of the school/district community; and accept HL programs as legitimate and necessary for providing access and equity for students with HLs.
* Used widely throughout schools and districts
  + Schools and districts of all sizes and in all contexts provide access to rigorous, high-quality HL programs when there is a need for such programs, and HL programs are offered in multiple languages, at multiple grade levels, and via multiple pathways.
* Expected to continue over time
  + Schools and districts assume that HL programs will continue from year to year as is done for any other type of programming; provide supports to develop, maintain, and expand HL programs over time; and invest in the continuity of HL programs.
* Stable and routinized
  + Schools and districts consider HL programs to be a regular part of their educational programming; ensure stability for HL programs over time; and prioritize HL programs when planning for, implementing, and evaluating multilingual programming.
* Sustainable with or without specific individuals
  + Schools and districts ensure that HL programs are not reliant on specific individuals to continue; establish policies/practices that support sustainability despite staffing changes over time; and embed HL programs into the school/district community.
* Allocated time, space, personnel, funding, and resources
  + Schools and districts provide HL programs with the necessary tools and supports; emphasize the importance of HL programs in broader school/district planning and budgeting; and respond to changing needs of HL programs from year to year. [[31]](#footnote-32)

At the state level, DESE values HL programs, expects HL programs to continue over time, and provides funding and resources to ensure the HL programs’ stability and sustainability, and HL programs are widely used throughout Massachusetts schools and districts.

It is important for schools and districts to also contribute to the institutionalization of HL programs in their local contexts in support of the broader statewide institutionalization of HL programs. This process takes time and requires dedication from school and district leaders; advocacy efforts and collaboration with HL teachers, students, families, and communities; and the collective support and commitment of the entire school/district community.

### Coordinating with Other ML Programs

Another way to increase the visibility of HLs and make HL programs an integral part of the school community is through strong collaborative partnerships between HL programs and other programs. Successful HL programs regularly collaborate with other multilingual (ML) programs that are offered in the school/district, including Foundational World Language (FWL) programs, Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs, and other English Learner Education (ELE) programs.

#### FWL Programs

As HL programs are part of robust WL programming in Massachusetts, there are numerous ways in which HL programs can collaborate with FWL teachers/programs. HL teachers should be included in regularly scheduled WL department meetings to improve coordination between courses, especially for making placement decisions and developing and delivering cohesive programs. As students participating in HL programs may take more advanced courses together with students from FWL courses following the HL program, it is especially important for HL teachers to work with FWL teachers for articulation between programs and the continuity of students’ language learning experiences. It may also be helpful for HL teachers and FWL teachers to share themes across their curriculum, such as Advanced Placement (AP) themes, to further support students’ transitions between courses/programs.

In addition, FWL teachers are well-versed in the WL content standards and can be a resource for HL teachers as they adapt and apply the WL content standards in HL programs. HL teachers can also serve as a resource for FWL teachers, as many practices used in HL programs are universal best practices that can also create more culturally and linguistically sustaining FWL courses. Lastly, HL teachers may be particularly helpful to FWL teachers who have students with HLs in their own classrooms, in the event that HL programs are not available for all HLs represented in the school community or students have otherwise been placed into FWL courses instead of the HL program.

#### DLBE Programs

As noted in the [Heritage Language Programming](#_II._Heritage_Language) section of this manual, students participating in HL programs may have previously participated in DLBE programs or will in the future, making it important to collaborate on articulation efforts and gain a better understanding of incoming students and their abilities. Schools and districts are encouraged to create articulated pathways that connect DLBE and HL programs across grade spans, ensuring students can continue to develop their HL skills and attain the Seal of Biliteracy. In addition, DLBE teachers often have a wealth of experience using an assets-based approach to instruction and recognizing and honoring students’ “funds of knowledge,”[[32]](#footnote-33) both of which are critical components of effective HL education. They are also skilled in supporting students’ acquisition of knowledge across content areas in languages other than English and may have helpful recommendations for HL teachers who are teaching content area HL courses, as well as those who are working to make connections to other disciplines in their HL programs. Lastly, it may be helpful to engage in shared intake and orientation processes for multilingual families to best support their understanding of the options when both DLBE and HL programs are offered.

#### Other Types of ELE Programs

Collaboration with other ELE programs is also essential, as students participating in HL programs may also be classified as English Learners (ELs) and simultaneously participate in both types of programs. Research with Massachusetts educators has shown that ELs may have limited access to courses in languages other than English due to the amount of time in their schedules dedicated to ELE programming. It is therefore important for HL teachers and ELE teachers to coordinate class schedules to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in HL programs as appropriate and if desired.

Having a background in a HL does not necessarily mean that a student has the high levels of proficiency required to access opportunities that are routinely accessed by students with HLs who are not ELs, such as AP courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, or the Seal of Biliteracy.

Diverse learners participating in ELE programs, including (but not limited to) English Learners (ELs), English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), and Newcomers should have equitable access to the school/district’s curriculum and opportunities, including HL programs.

HL teachers may also find it helpful to collaborate with ELE teachers when selecting materials for instruction so that students have opportunities to interact with the same stories in both languages and to support students with HLs in interacting with their peers outside of the HL classroom.

### Sharing Responsibility Beyond ML Programs

In addition to other ML programs, HL programs should seek opportunities to collaborate with general education teachers and other school personnel, including (but not limited to) counselors, literacy specialists, instructional coaches, special education providers, librarians/media specialists, and Seal of Biliteracy program coordinators.

#### Content Teachers

Effective HL programs provide opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary projects that allow them to use their HL when conducting research and/or presenting findings in the content areas. This requires collaboration between HL teachers and general education teachers and allows students to build deeper connections to other disciplines in their HL courses and also leverage their linguistic and cultural skills in other courses, such as history or science courses. HL teachers can also collaborate with general education teachers from the arts, music, and/or social studies departments, for example, to host events, such as multicultural fairs or celebrations that reflect student’s diverse backgrounds and highlight the value of their languages and cultures. Integrated learning experiences should be provided to students with HLs, as these experiences can help students showcase their linguistic and cultural assets in school/district spaces beyond the HL classroom.

In addition, HL teachers have a deep understanding of their students’ backgrounds and lived experiences, which can be helpful for general education teachers when activating prior knowledge and introducing academic language and vocabulary in the content areas. Lastly, as many HL programs emphasize the development of students’ literacy skills, HL teachers can benefit from collaboration with English Language Arts teachers who have expertise in best practices for language arts instruction that may transfer to the HL classroom.

#### School Counselors

Partnerships between HL teachers and counselors are an essential part of ensuring that diverse learners, including ELs, students with disabilities (SWD), ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc. are encouraged to study their HLs and that students with HLs can participate in and place into appropriate HL courses.

As HL programs often aim to support students in developing and making sense of their identities as it relates to their HL and HL cultures, counselors may also serve as a resource for HL teachers and can provide recommendations for engaging in identity work in the classroom.

Alternatively, HL teachers may be able to provide counselors with a better understanding of students’ interests, affective needs, and future plans for college and careers, leading to improved supports in these areas outside of the classroom. When working with counselors, it is important to build trust and rapport, demonstrate value for one another’s expertise, and work together toward shared goals and solutions.

#### Literacy Specialists

Literacy specialists, including those with experience working in multilingual programs and/or those who have had multilingual experiences themselves, are also important collaborators in HL programs, especially in HL programs that focus on building students’ reading and writing skills to prepare them for upper-level courses in the HL (e.g., AP courses), as well as the Seal of Biliteracy. They may be able to provide training or share instructional strategies or activities designed to support multilingual learners’ literacy development, and if they are speakers of the HL, they may also be able to help create materials or curriculum that reflect how literacy is developed in the HL, which may be quite different from literacy development in English.

Literacy specialists may also be able to help connect HL programs with local resources and advocate for the inclusion of HLs in any school- or district-wide literacy programs. To the extent possible, schools and districts should employ bilingual or multilingual literacy specialists who are able to provide support in the HLs being taught, as well as other HLs represented among students and in the community.

#### Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches, especially those with experience or expertise in HL education, can build HL teacher capacity and support ongoing professional development (PD) efforts for educators working with student with HLs. In addition to modeling effective approaches to HL teaching and learning, providing feedback on HL teachers’ classroom practices, and assisting with HL program planning and implementation, they may be able to foster greater collaboration and alignment between HL programs and other courses or programs. Instructional coaches can also support HL teachers’ understanding and use of data for making decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment to best support students over time. As with literacy specialists, schools and districts should (to the extent possible) employ bilingual or multilingual instructional coaches who are able to provide support in the HLs being taught, as well as other HLs represented among students and in the community.

#### Special Education Staff

As with teachers working in any language education program, HL teachers should work with special education providers to support SWD who are participating in HL programs. Special education providers can provide insights into best practices for individualizing, differentiating, and adapting instruction based on students’ strengths and needs. HL teachers may be valuable partners in the evaluation process, as they can share more information about students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds and how these backgrounds may intersect or interact with students’ disabilities, as well as how receptive they (and their families) may be to special education services. It is important for HL teachers and special education providers to align their goals, ensure access to necessary services without compromising goals for language learning, and collaborate in creating a comprehensive system of support for students with HLs with disabilities. For more information about supporting SWD in world language programs, including HL programs, see the [Massachusetts Quick Reference Guidance on World Language Learning for Students with Disabilities](https://www.doe.mass.edu/worldlanguages/framework/qrg-swd.docx).

#### Librarians and Media Specialists

Connections to school librarians and/or media specialists can be particularly beneficial for HL programs, as it is important for school libraries to provide students with access to books and resources in their HLs and ensure all materials are linguistically and culturally appropriate for students from diverse backgrounds, including students with HLs. For some HLs, it can be difficult to find authentic resources that are both age- and level-appropriate for students participating in HL programs, and librarians and/or media specialists may be able to provide additional support or recommendations for finding materials. If HL teachers share what is being taught in HL programs with librarians or media specialists, they can also advocate for the inclusion of more HL-specific resources in the libraries or media centers to address students’ unique learning goals and raise awareness of HLs in the school community. Media specialists may also be able to bring in guest speakers, guest readers, or local authors to engage students in their HLs and promote the value of HLs to the broader school community.

#### Seal of Biliteracy Coordinators

Lastly, successful HL programs have established partnerships with Seal of Biliteracy coordinators and programs in their school or district. They work together to ensure that all students with HLs are included in Seal of Biliteracy testing and have an equal opportunity to earn the Seal of Biliteracy as other types of language learners. They share information about students’ attainment of the Seal, collaborate in connecting students with relevant resources and supports, and promote the Seal in a way that speaks to students’ interests and motivations for language learning and achievement.

When working with any of the educators or school personnel described in this section, HL programs may find it helpful to include them (as appropriate) in data discussions, program planning sessions, and other team-building activities, as well as designing learning activities and exchanges between students in different courses/programs.

In effective HL programs, robust collaboration within and across HL programs is supported at the school and district level, and it is important for school/district leaders to ensure that HL teachers are included and represented in any efforts to build teacher collaboration school- or district-wide. To support and encourage collaborative partnerships between HL programs and other programs and personnel, schools and districts should:

* design whole-school/district and/or interdisciplinary PD opportunities;
* provide regularly scheduled time and dedicated resources for collaboration;
* offer opportunities for co-teaching, co-planning, collaborative PD, sharing of best practices and resources, teacher research projects, and/or peer observations and feedback;
* establish policies, procedures, and systems for ongoing cross-curricular planning;
* promote articulation within and across programs to build cohesive learning experiences;
* engage staff in working groups and professional learning communities (PLCs); and
* encourage collective inquiry around the perception of HLs and HL programs, as well as the use of linguistically and culturally sustaining practices throughout the community.

Summary

Heritage language programs:

* are essential parts of the school/district community
* need to be valued, used widely, expected to continue, stable, sustainable, and supported to become a routine part of school/district programming
* collaborate with Foundational World Language, Dual Language Bilingual Education, and other English Learner Education programs, as well as other school personnel, as part of their shared responsibility for supporting students with heritage languages

Action Items

1. Work with school and district leaders, teachers, students, families, and communities to integrate heritage language programs and heritage languages into the school/district culture and community, as well as school- and/or district-wide policies, practices, and procedures.
2. Advocate for the institutionalization of heritage language programs in the school/district by raising awareness of heritage language programs, why they are important, and how they benefit varied stakeholders in the school/district community.
3. Build partnerships within the school/district to encourage greater collaboration between heritage language programs and other multilingual programs, other types of programs, and school-based personnel who are in a position to work with and/or support students with heritage languages.

## VIII. Advocacy for Heritage Language Programs

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Demonstrates the importance of advocacy in developing and sustaining heritage language programs
* Provides high-level guidance for engaging in advocacy efforts for heritage language programs
* Discusses areas of focus when participating in internal and external advocacy work
* Shares examples of potential advocacy strategies and activities for heritage language programs
* Explores how to collaborate with varied stakeholders in heritage language program advocacy

Advocacy is a critical component of program development, sustainability, and success, and it is important for leaders of heritage language (HL) programs to engage in a variety of advocacy efforts on an ongoing basis when designing and implementing programs.

Engaging in advocacy work may:

* lead to the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of HL programs over time;
* increase student, family, and community interest and investment in HL programs;
* support the institutionalization of HL programs in the school/district community;
* encourage collaborations between HL programs and other programs/personnel;
* help ensure access and equity for all students who would benefit from the HL program;
* encourage school/district leaders to provide resources and supports for HL programs;
* contribute to the development of effective partnerships with community organizations;
* support HL programs in acquiring grant funds and other state or district funds; and
* allow HL programs to adapt to ongoing changes in the program’s context and needs.

Advocacy efforts will likely involve educating varied stakeholders about the HL program, helping them understand the importance of the program, and encouraging them to get involved in and/or support the program in some way.

Advocacy efforts should first be made within the school or district community, to promote and advocate for programs among students with HLs, families, teachers, administrators, and additional school personnel. Efforts should then also be made outside of the school or district community with members of the larger community, as well as state-level leaders and local politicians who may have an interest in or be able to support HL programming.

When engaging in advocacy work, HL programs should consider what stakeholders already know about HL programs, what information is going to be seen as most valuable to each stakeholder, and what the best method of communication will be for sharing that information.

* Students and families may respond well to hearing about HL programs from students who have participated in the program themselves. They may be interested in knowing what types of learning experiences can be expected in the program and how the program might benefit them, including any opportunities that will be available to earn honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or college credit and the Seal of Biliteracy within the program or as a result of the program. It may be helpful to create a video or presentation in which students discuss their experiences before and after the HL program and share stories of how the program has impacted their lives.
* School and district administrators may respond well to hearing how HL programs are an essential part of providing educational programming in alignment with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s Educational Vision. They may also appreciate knowing HL programs can support students in attaining high levels of proficiency in the HL, as well as the Seal of Biliteracy, and that participation in HL programs may positively impact student achievement in areas beyond the program. It may be helpful to share data from the program, such as growth in scores from standardized language proficiency assessments, or research that provides a rationale for the program.
* Community members may respond well to hearing how HL programs encourage students to engage in civic action within the local community, and how service-learning opportunities may be included in the program. They may also be interested in knowing that HL programs partner with community organizations to engage in mutually beneficial activities that allow students to contribute their knowledge, skills, and abilities to addressing community needs. It may be helpful to invite existing community partners to participate in a panel to share their experiences working with the HL program and how it has impacted their organization and the community.

As with any outreach and engagement activities in the school/district community, advocacy efforts should be made in the language that stakeholders are most comfortable and familiar with using the support of interpreters as needed.

Possible strategies and activities for program advocacy include:

* ensuring HL teachers are included in school/district leadership teams, committees, etc.;
* creating a campaign to raise awareness of HLs in the school/district and HL programs;
* preparing and sharing marketing materials, reports, or presentations about the HL program;
* convening HL program listening sessions for members of the school/district community;
* distributing information about HL programs through school/district social media accounts;
* creating and sharing the link to a HL program website with student testimonials/spotlights;
* conducting visits to feeder schools to speak with potential students for the HL program;
* hosting recreational events or attending events of potential HL program stakeholders; and
* participating in school/district committees, town halls, and lobbying opportunities.

Successful advocacy efforts highlight student accomplishments as a result of the HL program, and programs should consider leveraging existing opportunities to celebrate student accomplishments to also help demonstrate the program’s importance and its value in the school/district community. These may include ceremonies in which students receive medals for attaining the Seal of Biliteracy, inductions into language honor societies, and other showcases of student work produced during the program. It is also important to regularly collect and share data about the program for advocacy purposes, including how many and which students have earned the Seal of Biliteracy as a result of the program; more information about collecting and analyzing program-level data can be found in the [Evaluation of Heritage Language Programs](#_IX._Evaluation_of) section of the manual.

Leaders of HL programs may also find it helpful to leverage or replicate advocacy efforts made in other multilingual (ML) programs in the school or district, including Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs. There may be opportunities for collaboration across programs, as well as co-advocacy work that is mutually beneficial for both programs.

* For example, if a DLBE program in a school/district has access to instructional materials in the HL, the HL program may be able to experiment with these materials and then demonstrate why these materials are needed in their program as well.
* They could also work together to raise awareness about the importance of their programs or the need to further develop or expand their programs, especially if the programs are both critical components of students with HLs’ pathways to advancing their proficiency and attaining the Seal of Biliteracy.

Although advocacy efforts are critical for establishing a HL program, as schools and districts need to understand the value of a program to approve the program and provide any necessary resources for its development, it is also important to remember that advocacy efforts should continue even after a program is established. Leaders of HL programs may create stakeholder advocacy groups to support advocacy efforts over time, and varied stakeholders in the HL program, including students, families, and community members, should be invited to participate in these groups and any related activities. It may also be possible to involve families in HL program advocacy efforts through groups that they already are participating in (e.g., English Learner Parent Advisory Councils (ELPACS), Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPACS)), which can also allow help in sharing information about the HL program more broadly among families in the school/district community.

The following vignette demonstrates how HL program advocacy work can be included in ELPACs:

**Vignette: Collaborating with ELPACs for HL Program Advocacy**

Deerfield Highlands Public Schools

Deerfield Highlands is a mid-sized city. The most commonly spoken language other than English is Spanish, and there are a growing number of French and Haitian Creole speakers of Haitian descent in the city. Students in Deerfield Highlands Public Schools can take Spanish Foundational World Language (FWL) courses in middle school, and the district offers Spanish FWL classes and three levels of Spanish HL courses at the high school level. The Spanish HL program has been offered for several years, and leaders of the program work closely with families in the district’s ELPAC to support program advocacy efforts over time. ELPAC members, many of whom have children in the Spanish HL program, meet on a monthly basis and represent the ELPAC at school committee and district-level meetings, where they are empowered to advocate for continued support to sustain the HL program from year to year. The district has also supported French and Haitian Creole-speaking families in the ELPAC who have learned about HL programming through the meetings and have expressed a desire for a HL program in one of these languages. Members who have children in the Spanish HL program work together with French and Haitian Creole-speaking families to share how to advocate for a program, and the district helps organize an event where ELPAC members can voice their desire for a French or Haitian Creole HL program among school/district leaders.

**Reflection Questions**

* Would collaboration with ELPACs work well for advocacy in your school or district?
* What types of collaborative advocacy efforts would be most helpful in your context?
* How can your school or district increase access/equity when including families in advocacy work?

Summary

Heritage language program advocacy efforts:

* should be made within and beyond the school/district community
* often involve sharing information about the varied benefits of heritage language programs
* benefit from collaboration with families and communities involved in the program

Action Items

1. Think about advocacy needs based on the current status of your program (e.g., if the program has not yet been developed, if the program is in development, if the program is already being implemented, etc.).
2. Working with stakeholders, consider who will be the primary audience for your advocacy efforts and make a plan for how to engage them, what type of information to share about the program to appeal to their interests and needs, and what the goals and objectives are for these efforts.
3. Make a plan for advocating for the program beyond these initial efforts, including how varied stakeholders will be involved in advocacy work and how messaging and practices will be tailored for internal advocacy vs. external advocacy.

## IX. Evaluation of Heritage Language Programs

Section at a Glance

This section of the manual:

* Provides an overview of how to effectively evaluate heritage language programs over time
* Shares guidance for how to plan for and conduct a heritage language program evaluation
* Discusses intended outcomes of an evaluation and evaluation approaches
* Describes potential criteria for success and how to collect and analyze evaluative data
* Demonstrates how evaluation findings can be used to make data-drive changes

Program evaluation is the process of asking questions and gathering data to improve the quality of and create meaningful change in a program. It can be a powerful tool for:

* ensuring a HL program is equitably benefiting all students with heritage languages (HLs);
* providing insight into how well a HL program is functioning;
* determining if students are reaching learning objectives in a HL program;
* supporting HL program planning and decision making;
* identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement in a HL program;
* ensuring accountability in a HL program;
* engaging stakeholders in a HL program; and
* demonstrating a HL program’s value.

It is also an essential component of HL program capacity building and program implementation and success. HL program evaluations should be conducted on a regular basis and ideally within the context of a school or district’s broader multilingual (ML) programming. Schools and districts may consider integrating HL program evaluations into required English Learner Education (ELE) program reviews (which occur at least once every two years) to form a more comprehensive evaluation of ML programming as a whole.

To ensure that a HL program evaluation is useful, meaning that the findings from the evaluation will be used as intended[[33]](#footnote-34), it is important for HL programs to involve a variety of stakeholders, including:

* school and district leaders;
* current or future HL teachers;
* other teachers and school personnel;
* students participating in HL programs;
* families of students participating in HL programs; and
* members of local HL communities.

HL program evaluations should reflect and respond to stakeholders’ interests and needs, deepen stakeholders’ understanding of what is happening in the program, and involve ongoing, appropriate communication with stakeholders from beginning to end. High-quality HL program evaluations require support and commitment from school/district leaders, and evaluations of HL programs must be feasible and practical, accounting for the time, capacity, and resources (including training) that are needed to effectively carry out evaluation activities.[[34]](#footnote-35)

Students, families, and members of HL communities should be at the center of the evaluation’s design and implementation and seen as equal partners in the evaluation’s success.[[35]](#footnote-36) To meaningfully engage these stakeholders in the evaluation process, it may be helpful to provide opportunities to participate in evaluation advisory groups or other opportunities to provide their input. It is important to capture their voices at key points throughout the evaluation to ensure that it is carried out in an equitable way and representative of the varied perspectives of those being served by the program.

When planning for a HL program evaluation, schools and districts should use backward design to first identify intended outcomes of the evaluation and how they will approach the evaluation to increase the likelihood of those outcomes. Well-developed plans should include a detailed timeline and provide clarity and direction for the evaluation. They also include (at a minimum):

* criteria for program effectiveness and success;
* how they will know if the program is meeting the criteria;
* what specific evaluation data will be collected;
* how it will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted; and
* how evaluation findings will be used to make program improvements as needed.[[36]](#footnote-37)

In addition, it is important to plan for follow-through after the evaluation has been completed, such as how and when evaluation findings will be revisited over time. This will also lead to an ongoing cycle of evaluation from year to year.

When developing an evaluation plan, it is important to remember that if an evaluation does not account for all students, including diverse learners, in all aspects of planning and implementation, it may give false impressions of program effectiveness and success. This includes English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities (SWD), English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.

The following vignette demonstrates how not accounting for all students (including diverse learners) leads to misleading findings about program effectiveness and success:

**Vignette: How Evaluations Can Produce Misleading Findings About Program Effectiveness & Success**

*Maple Glen School District*

Maple Glen is a large city where English, Spanish, and Mandarin are the most commonly spoken languages, and there are also a large number of students whose HL is an Indigenous language. Students in Maple Glen can enroll in a Spanish-English dual language program during elementary school, and students can take Spanish or French Foundational World Language (FWL) courses in middle school. The Spanish HL program at the high school level offers two levels of HL courses, and students can also take FWL classes in Spanish, French, or Italian. The district conducted an evaluation of all ML programs, including the HL program at the high school, using a standard evaluation tool developed at the district level that prioritizes the number of students participating and engaging in ML programs as a measure of effectiveness and success. Using this tool, evaluation findings initially indicated that the Spanish HL program was a success because it was growing over time, with more and more students accessing the program each year. Upon closer examination, the district found that only five percent of SWD ever accessed the program, and that special education (SPED) services often take place at the same time as HL courses because the HL program was never involved in SPED scheduling discussions. The district also noticed that their Language Survey (LS) only gave families space to indicate one language, so students whose families used both an Indigenous language and Spanish were not being appropriately considered as having Spanish as a HL. These students otherwise met the criteria for participation but were not accessing the program, as they were often excluded from the process of determining if students would benefit from participation in the HL program.

**Reflection Questions**

* Have you experienced a situation like the one described here? What was the outcome?
* How does your district currently account for all students when evaluating programs?
* How can your school/district prioritize access and equity in evaluation planning?

Schools and districts should elevate the participation and experiences of diverse learners with HLs throughout every step of the evaluation to ensure the evaluation’s outcomes; approaches; criteria for success; methods of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; and plans for using findings prioritize access and equity for all students. This will help ensure that evaluation findings about program effectiveness and success are accurate and representative of all students participating in HL programs, as well as those who are not participating in HL programs but would benefit them.

### Determining Intended Outcomes and Evaluative Approaches

In terms of high-level intended outcomes of HL program evaluations, all evaluations should:

* explore how well the program has been designed and implemented;
* determine the program’s impact on various stakeholders in the program;
* prioritize the access/engagement of all students with HLs, including diverse learners;
* identify any disparities in who is served and how they are being served in the program;
* provide insights into areas of strength and struggle that will lead to meaningful change;
* inquire into how the program could be expanded (including for more languages); and
* contribute to an ongoing commitment to seeking ways to provide rigorous, high-quality HL programs to historically marginalized linguistic communities.

Additional intended outcomes that are specific to the program, as well as how the evaluation will be designed and approached in pursuit of these outcomes, should be based on the local context and needs of each HL program and its stakeholders.

* Schools and districts with smaller HL programs with fewer resources may choose to focus on one or two potential areas for growth, as they may only be able to make a limited number of changes and must select specific aspects of the program that they suspect need further exploration or improvement.
* Schools and districts with larger HL programs with robust administrative support and resources may choose to conduct a more comprehensive evaluation that examines all parts of the program, especially if they know they will be able to make changes to multiple parts of the program based on the findings.
* Schools and districts that choose to evaluate HL programs alongside their ELE program review(s) may leverage this [program evaluation tool](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/castaneda-three-pronged-test.docx), which prompts schools and districts to self-evaluate their ELE programs during the review process by responding to questions about program design, resources, and outcomes based on data.

When determining program-specific evaluation outcomes, consider the students with HLs being served in the school or district, especially diverse learners, as well as the following:

* What is working well in the program?
* What has been challenging in the program?
* What is considered most important in the program?
* What requires more in-depth examination in the program?
* What (if any) are the immediate concerns about the program?
* What are the program’s short- and long-term goals?

When determining how to approach the evaluation, consider the following:

* What approach will prioritize access and equity in the evaluation?
* What approach will center the experiences of diverse learners in the program?
* What approach will help reveal information about who is being served well in the program, who is being underserved in the program, and who is being excluded from the program?
* Who will be involved in the evaluation and how will they be involved?
* How much time is there for the evaluation, and what tools/resources are available?
* In what context is the evaluation taking place? Is there an ELE program review happening?
* What will the evaluation focus on? What are the intended outcomes of the evaluation?
* Are there any school or district-specific program evaluation procedures to follow?

Overall, HL program evaluations should not lose sight of the big picture: for what purpose the HL program was created, how well it is serving that purpose, and how well it is supporting students with HLs (including ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.), as well as their families and communities.

### Identifying Criteria for Success

Criteria for effectiveness and success in a HL program evaluation may vary and will depend on the school or district’s priorities; the desires and interests of stakeholders in the HL program; and the evaluative approach and intended outcomes.

While student progress and growth in terms of language proficiency (as measured by assessments) may be part of a HL program evaluation, there are a variety of other criteria that can demonstrate the extent to which a program is effective or successful.

Potential criteria include:

* student attendance;
* student participation;
* student engagement;
* student and teacher retention rates;
* student, teacher, and family/community satisfaction;
* family/community involvement;
* student attainment of the Seal of Biliteracy;
* student achievement in other courses or programs;
* appropriateness of curriculum, materials, and assessments;
* alignment between courses in the HL program and with other courses or programs;
* quality of instructional methods, strategies, and activities;
* application of the World Language (WL) content standards or other standards in use;
* quality of HL teacher training and professional development (PD); and
* program sustainability or expansion.

As a reminder, all criteria for effectiveness and success should account for all students with HLs, including diverse learners participating in the program and those who are not participating in the program but would benefit from the program.

* For example, any criteria related to student participation should emphasize equitable engagement in which all types of students with HLs are accessing and continuing in the program at equitable rates.

Schools and districts should collaborate with local stakeholders to determine which criteria are most important to their program, in alignment with their intended outcomes for the evaluation, and measurable considering the time and resources available.

### Collecting Evaluative Data

After determining the criteria for effectiveness and success, schools and districts need to determine how they will know if HL programs are meeting those criteria. To determine if criteria are being met, schools and districts can sometimes gather one type of information (e.g., attendance records), and other times it is helpful or necessary to gather more than one type of information.

The following list provides a few examples of types of information that could be considered for some of the criteria listed above:[[37]](#footnote-38)

Student participation: Student, teacher, and family/community perspectives; the frequency/type of student participation in the classroom; rates of attendance at related extracurricular activities

Appropriateness of curriculum, materials, and assessments: Student, teacher, and family/community perspectives; the extent to which they center student diversity; the extent to which they facilitate learning in pursuit of objectives

Quality of teacher training and PD: Teacher perspectives; rates of attendance at the trainings; the adequacy of instruction before and after the trainings

Once this has been determined, data collection methods can be selected to ensure that the type of information needed can be appropriately gathered. As a reminder, data collection methods should be selected in collaboration with varied stakeholders, and they should allow for information to be gathered about all types of students with HLs being served in the program or who would benefit from the program.

The following list provides information about the advantages and disadvantages of data collection methods that may be used in a HL program evaluation.

Data collection method: Assessments

Advantages: Provide information about students’ skills or proficiency, including comparisons between students and over time

Disadvantages: Relevant assessment data may be limited or unavailable; does not evaluate perspectives

Data collection method: Surveys

Advantages: Quickly and anonymously gather insights from many stakeholders, especially about well-defined aspects of the program

Disadvantages: Less effective for generating new ideas or exploring open-ended topics; can have issues of attrition and completion

Data collection method: Interviews  
Advantages: Help generate new ideas and explore topics in-depth from stakeholders with specific knowledge of or experiences with the program  
Disadvantages: Not anonymous; may feel threatening or burdensome to participants; time-consuming

Data collection method: Observations  
Advantages: Allow for a direct view into what is happening in the program at one point in time and over time  
Disadvantages: Observer may influence behavior; interpretations may be subjective; time-consuming

Data collection method: Document reviews  
Advantages: Explore what is happening in the program without interrupting the program’s day-to-day routine  
Disadvantages: Relevant documents may be limited or unavailable; does not evaluate perspectives

Data collection method: Journals  
Advantages: Help examine how stakeholders’ feelings about the program change over time  
Disadvantages: Requires ongoing, regular participation; time-consuming

As with determining which students would benefit from participation in HL programs, schools and districts should use multiple methods when collecting data for HL program evaluations and as many methods as are practical for their context and that will give them the information they need.

When planning for data collection and selecting data collection methods, consider the following:

* What methods will help prioritize access and equity in the evaluation?
* What methods will center the experiences of diverse learners in the program?
* What methods will help reveal information about who is being served well in the program, who is being underserved in the program, and who is being excluded from the program?
* What type of information is needed to know if the program is meeting criteria?
* What data collection method(s) are able to gather the information needed?
* Who will be collecting the data and when? Who will be participating?
* What tools/resources are needed and available?
* What considerations are there related to consent and privacy?

### Analyzing Evaluative Data

Once data has been collected, it is important to analyze the data so that conclusions can be drawn about what the data mean in relation to the program’s purpose, how well it is serving that purpose, and how well it is supporting all students (including ELs, SWD, ELSWD, SLIFE, Newcomers, and students from additional marginalized or minoritized communities, such as Asian/AAPI students, Black/African American students, Latino/a/x students, Indigenous students, immigrant students, multiracial students, etc.), as well as families and communities.

Depending on the type of data collected, analysis may involve counting numbers of responses and doing calculations, such as determining averages, medians, or modes, or identifying themes and key points from written responses, transcripts, or descriptions.

It may be helpful to create a data analysis plan to help guide this process with clear procedures and instructions, especially when involving stakeholders (such as students, families, and communities) who may not be as familiar with the steps involved.

When planning for and determining how to approach data analysis, consider the following:

* What is the goal and focus of the analysis?
* What approaches will help prioritize access and equity in the evaluation?
* What approaches will center the experiences of diverse learners in the program?
* What approaches will help reveal information about who is being served well in the program, who is being underserved in the program, and who is being excluded from the program?
* Who will be analyzing the data and when?
* What type(s) of data will be analyzed?
* How will data be prepared for analysis?
* What analysis methods should be used?
* What tools/resources are needed and available?
* What considerations are there related to anonymity and confidentiality?

During analysis, schools and districts should disaggregate evaluative data by race, ethnicity, first language, EL status (including, but not limited to, ELSWD, SLIFE, and Newcomers), disability status, and low-income status to ensure all students are being equitably served in and are benefiting equitably from the program, so that decisions being made as a result of the evaluation benefit those students who are most in need of change or additional supports.

### Making Data-Driven Changes

After analyzing evaluative data, schools and districts can make interpretations of the data that will give the results meaning and help make recommendations about the data-driven changes to make in the program, including any improvements needed to increase access and equity in the program.

Changes can vary from small adjustments to one aspect of the program to major changes and improvements across multiple aspects of the program. In most cases, a program’s evaluation plan will outline what types of changes could potentially be made based on the findings. In other cases, intended changes may be less clear from the plan alone, or evaluation data may yield results that can lead to unexpected changes in areas that were not considered before.

To ensure findings are used and lead to meaningful change, schools and districts should:

* prioritize access and equity when interpreting findings;
* share findings broadly and in multiple formats with varied stakeholders;
* discuss findings with stakeholders, including students, families, and communities;
* ensure all stakeholders receive and comprehend key information based on desires/needs;
* develop a detailed and comprehensive post-evaluation action plan with stakeholder input;
* continuously revisit evaluation findings and recommendations with stakeholders over time;
* proactively support/encourage the use of evaluation findings for program improvement; and
* monitor progress and follow up to ensure that changes are efficiently and effectively made.

Summary

Heritage language program evaluations:

* are essential for capacity building and program implementation and success
* involve school and district leaders, teachers, students, families, and communities
* lead to recommendations for data-driven changes and improvements to the program

Action Items

1. Provide stakeholders (e.g., school and district leaders, teachers, students, families, communities) with information and/or training about program evaluation to build their understanding of evaluation and support their involvement in upcoming heritage language program evaluations.
2. When planning for a heritage language program evaluation, work with stakeholders to create an evaluation plan that centers their interests and needs and includes the who, what, when, why, and how of the evaluation.
3. When implementing a heritage language program evaluation, maximize the potential for change and the usefulness of the evaluation by keeping stakeholders informed, involved, and engaged in gathering and examining data, as well as creating recommendations based on the findings of the evaluation.

## X. Conclusion

Heritage language (HL) programs help to recognize and celebrate the linguistic and cultural skills, assets, and backgrounds that all students bring to Massachusetts schools and districts. They are an important part of the language-learning landscape, and like all language programs, they should be robust, high-quality, and well-supported.

This manual provides best practices for the establishment, design, and structuring of HL programs; student participation and placement in HL programs; curriculum, instruction, and assessment in HL programs; teacher training and professional development for HL programs; student, family, and community engagement in HL programs; integration and collaboration of HL programs with other programs and personnel; advocacy for HL programs; and evaluation of HL programs.

With these resources and the support of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, schools and districts are well-positioned to develop and sustain HL programs and provide affirming education for all students with heritage languages (HLs).

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## XII. Appendix

### HL Training & Professional Development Providers[[38]](#footnote-39)

1. ACTFL
2. American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ)
3. American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP)
4. Assessment and Evaluation Language Resource Center (AELRC)
5. Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
6. Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL)
7. Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL)
8. Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA)
9. Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools
10. George Mason University
11. Hebrew in North America/National Association of Hebrew Teachers (NAHET)
12. International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA)
13. Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA)
14. Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages & Cultures (MCTLC)
15. National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL)
16. National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL)
17. National Foreign Language Center (NFLC)
18. National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC)
19. New Jersey Bilingual Educators (NJBE)
20. New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT)
21. Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL)
22. Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA)
23. Professionals in Education Advancing Research and Language Learning (PEARLL)
24. Slavic and Eurasian Language Resource Center (SEELRC)
25. Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT)
26. University of Houston
27. University of Nebraska Omaha
28. University of Pittsburgh
29. University of Wisconsin Whitewater
30. Washington Association for Bilingual Education (WABE)

1. Many definitions of the term HLs exist, and it is difficult to define in many contexts; in the context of Massachusetts public schools, a HL is any language other than English used in homes, communities, and families. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Note: The diagram of ML programs in Massachusetts schools and districts includes many of the ML programs offered, but does not necessarily include a comprehensive list of ML programs. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Lynch, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Carreira, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. King et al., 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Following the model of the 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework, this document uses the terms *diverse* and *diversity* in their broadest senses to include all members of a language group or culture and accounting for the various peoples and perspectives that exist within said culture or language group. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Glynn et al., 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. ACTFL, n.d. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Polinsky, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Karapetian, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Beaudrie & Loza, 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. VanPatten, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. See Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Curriculum Framework for guidance in effectively incorporating appropriate media. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. DESE is currently developing guidance about proficiency expectations for varied WL courses and programs, including HL programs; refer to this guidance when it becomes available for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Beaudrie & Loza, 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Beaudrie & Loza, 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Carreira & Chik, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Lacorte et al., 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Darling-Hammond et al., 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Center for Applied Linguistics, 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Lacorte, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Lacorte et al., 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Lynch, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Jones & Thomas, 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Little, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Cuba et al., 2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Le Pichon & Kambel, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Le Pichon & Kambel, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Seals & Peyton, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Kagan et al., 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, forthcoming [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Davis, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Davis, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Lynch, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. McKay, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Venezia, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. This list of heritage language training and professional development providers is based on findings from the 2023 Massachusetts Heritage Languages Framework Study. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)