Module 10: Cultures Standards

This module provides an overview of Practice 5: Cultures, discusses the Massachusetts World Languages Standards for Cultures, and highlights ways to address the Standards.

Practice 5: Cultures

This Practice involves gaining cultural competence and understanding. In this Practice, students acquire knowledge about the products, practices, and perspectives of many cultures, including target-language cultures and their own, and how these shape and interact with identity. Proficiency in Cultures encourages students to respect and uphold the value of all cultures and languages, helps students develop global competence and critical consciousness, and supports students in effectively communicating in the target language and participating in their communities.

Cultures Standards

The Massachusetts World Languages Standards for Cultures describe the skills that students can demonstrate at different levels of proficiency in Cultures. The Cultures Standard at each proficiency level contains between two and three different Functions, numbered from 5.a. to 5.c along with the proficiency level abbreviation. The chart below shows how Functions progress across proficiency levels within the Cultures Standards. Check marks in a new row indicate Functions that emerge at higher proficiency levels and check marks with a plus sign indicate new, more rigorous features of a previously acquired Function.

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

Addressing the Standards

Recommendations to effectively address the Cultures Standards include embedding Cultures into unit goals/objectives, summative assessment tasks, and learning activities and experiences, rather than teaching about culture in isolation; providing opportunities to explore diverse cultural products, practices, and perspectives through authentic resources; and discussing culture in the target language to the extent possible based on students’ developmental and proficiency levels. When designing assessments and learning experiences across the communicative modes, educators should highlight diversity within and among target-language cultures, provide opportunities for students to act with cultural competence, and help students understand cultural perspectives by moving beyond surface-level aspects of culture. To align with Massachusetts’ vision for Deeper Learning, educators should provide students with opportunities to engage with cultural products, practices, and perspectives in a way that demonstrates Mastery, Identity, and Creativity.

Two Lenses: Proficiency and Equity

Proficiency and equity serve as the foundation of the Cultures Standards. The Standards are organized by proficiency level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, and they are addressed by investigating, explaining, and reflecting on different aspects of culture to develop cultural competence. Specifically, they are designed to support students to use the target language to interpret authentic cultural products as well as to engage in conversations and presentations based on their new or deepened knowledge and understanding. In terms of equity, the Cultures Standards center and affirm students’ identities and cultural behaviors; encourage students to interact with cultural products, practices, and perspectives that carry significance for them; support students in recognizing and correcting stereotypes, systems, and privileges that harm members of different cultures; and promote a deeper understanding of and respect for diverse peoples, cultures, and communities.

Additional Resources

[ACTFL Resource on Integrating Cultures into Language Instruction](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/standards/Cultures.pdf) • [California Department of Education Resource on Teaching Cultures](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/fl/cf/documents/wlfwteachtheculturesstds.docx) • [Massachusetts Deeper Learning Initiative](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/overview.html) • [NFLC Virtual Summit Resources on Cultures](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=nflc+virtual+summit+cultures) • [STARTALK Resource on Integrating Culture, Content, and Language](https://www.startalk.info/educators-principles-integrating/)