# Module 2: The Framework Through the Lens of Proficiency

* 1. **Start Module**
     1. **Part 1: Welcome**

Welcome to the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework Implementation Training Series! This training is brought to you by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in collaboration with the Center for Applied Linguistics. These Online Learning Modules are one component of the Implementation Training Series and are designed to support you in understanding and using the 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework.

You are in Module 2: The Framework Through the Lens of Proficiency. This module will discuss proficiency-based approaches to language teaching and highlight ways in which proficiency is addressed through the Framework.

* + 1. **How do I navigate this module?**

First, let’s talk about how to navigate this module. To navigate between the slides of this module, you can click here: on the NEXT button, to see the next slide, and here: on the PREVIOUS button, to go back to the last slide. Please note that on slides that have interactive features, such as clickable icons or tabs to learn more, you will not be able to click NEXT to see the next slide until you click on each of these features.

At the bottom of each slide, you will also see the volume button to make the audio louder or quieter; the closed-captions button to turn on closed captions and read along with the audio; a seek bar, and a replay button.

You can click on the seek bar to control which part of the screen you want to see, and you can click on the replay button to replay the entire slide.

On the left, you can see the menu. You can click on any title to navigate to the slide you want to view. The menu also has a search bar, here. If you are looking for a particular topic, you can search for it. For example, if you want to learn about the Framework, you can type the word “Framework” into the search bar, and the menu will display all slides that mention the Framework.

On the top right, you can click here on the Resources button where you can find a transcript of the full text of this module as well as a one-page summary.

* + 1. **What are the goals of this module?**

Now let’s talk about the goals of this module. At the end of the module, you will be able to answer these questions:

* + What is proficiency and why is it important for world language education?
  + How can I use proficiency to guide instruction?
  + What is the relationship between proficiency and the Massachusetts World Languages Framework?

**1.2. Part 2: Proficiency**

* + 1. **What does it mean to be proficient in a language?**

World language proficiency is defined as the ability to use a language in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. When we talk about having proficiency in a world language, we are often referring to having a variety of skills, abilities, and competencies related to listening, reading, speaking, writing, signing, and/or viewing in the language. In addition to linguistic proficiency and the “how” of communicating in languages other than English, world language learners are expected to acquire cultural proficiency to effectively communicate in the language and interact with target-language cultures in an increasingly interconnected world.

* + 1. **Why should students acquire proficiency in multiple languages?**

Language enriches our lives in a variety of ways, making it important to acquire proficiency in multiple languages. World language proficiency facilitates increased and greater access to the history, products, practices, perspectives, and collective wisdom of different cultures. Acquiring proficiency in different languages and cultures helps facilitate relationship-building with diverse peoples and communities, introducing student to the wealth of human creativity, knowledge, and interaction from around the globe. Proficiency in more than one language leads to overall cognitive benefits and advantages, including higher levels of empathy than those who do not speak multiple languages. There is also evidence that world language proficiency is critical for domestic and international success, as diverse linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills are needed across sectors and industries both in the United States and abroad. Finally, proficiency in multiple languages and cultures encourages cross-cultural communication and advocacy, encouraging students to engage with and contribute to an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

* + 1. **How do students benefit from proficiency in multiple languages?**

Click on each icon to learn more about what proficiency in another language can do for your students.

* + It can motivate students to fully participate in local, national, and global communities.
  + It can support students in developing critical understandings of their own identities and roles.
  + It can encourage students to examine different academic disciplines from diverse perspectives.
  + It can help students gain insights into the nature of culture, language, and communication.
  + It can teach students to empathetically view and respond to the world around them.
    1. **How do we acquire linguistic proficiency?**

Humans acquire language through input and sustained communicative attempts. The quality and quantity of language used in our homes, as well as our own individual cognitive development causes us to acquire our first language at our own rate and pace. Similarly, in world language classrooms, the acquisition of linguistic proficiency is not one-size-fits-all, and students may acquire proficiency in different ways and at different rates. Proficiency can also vary across different communicative modes and standards, so you may find that students are more proficient in certain aspects of the language or culture than others throughout the learning process. The rate at which students acquire proficiency in a world language depends on the quality and quantity of comprehensible input (at or just above the student’s proficiency level) they receive and the sense of safety they perceive in attempting their communicative output. Other factors which will affect the rate at which students acquire language include (but are not limited to) students’ age and grade levels, the type of language program offered, the nearness and familiarity of the language, the amount of time students have been interacting with the language, and the amount of time spent on each standard or communicative mode in the classroom.

* + 1. **How do we measure a student’s linguistic proficiency?**

Massachusetts follows the 2012 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines to describe what students can do with the language. Click on the link to learn more about the Guidelines.

These guidelines include five major levels of proficiency, four of which are referenced in the 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Framework. The levels below Distinguished that are included in the Framework are Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice, and they describe a continuum and hierarchy of proficiency as demonstrated by the image on the slide. Three of these levels, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are further divided into three sublevels, High, Mid, and Low. Click on each level to learn more.

* Novice: In general, students at this level are able to understand and produce isolated words, memorized phrases, and short messages about highly predictable, everyday topics. They may not be easily understood.
* Intermediate: In general, students at this level are able to create more with the language and communicate about familiar topics related to their daily lives using sentence-level discourse.
* Advanced: In general, students at this level engage in conversation in a clearly participatory manner and are able to narrate, describe, and communicate about a variety of concrete topics using paragraph-level discourse.
* Superior: In general, students at this level are able to communicate with accuracy and fluency, providing opinions and hypotheses about a variety of concrete and abstract topics using extended discourse.
  + 1. **How can I help students attain and advance their language proficiency?**

To help students attain proficiency, it is important to use proficiency-based approaches to language teaching and learning that encourage your students to communicate and interact in meaningful and contextually appropriate ways for real-life purposes. This should begin in the earliest levels of instruction and continue throughout the student’s world language education. We will discuss these approaches in greater detail in Part 3 of this module.

We recognize that adopting a proficiency-based approach to language teaching and learning may be a big change for some educators or departments. For more information about and support for making this shift as a department, see the Additional Resources section of the one-page summary of this module.

* + 1. **Discussion/Reflection**

The following questions are designed to help you discuss or reflect on what you have learned so far in this module. If you are completing this module in a group, you may find it helpful to talk about these questions with your colleagues and take this opportunity to share your insights and experiences. If you are completing this module on your own, you can independently reflect on these questions and consider ways in which they apply to your own teaching context and experiences.

The questions for discussion and reflection are:

* How has developing linguistic and cultural proficiency helped your students?
* What are some of the differences in when and how your students acquire proficiency?
* What do you use to measure proficiency in your classroom?

**1.3. Part 3: Proficiency-Based Language Teaching**

* + 1. **What is proficiency-based language teaching?**

Proficiency-based language teaching is a framework for language teaching. It is not a methodology, as you can and should use various instructional methods and activities that are best suited to your teaching style and context. This approach to language teaching is a way of framing language learning with the overall goal for our students being able to communicate meaningfully and appropriately for real-life purposes.

Click on each number to learn more about the characteristics of proficiency-oriented language instruction according to University of Minnesota’s Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

When using a proficiency-based approach to language teaching, curriculum is designed to include a balance of content (the topics of communication), function (the purpose of communication), and accuracy (the ease of comprehensibility of communication). Curriculum also centers student diversity, including (but not limited to) students’ interests, needs, and abilities.

Within this framework, instruction is designed to allow students to learn and practice all linguistic skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, signing, and viewing), with some activities geared toward single domains and others that link different domains together. It also includes achievement and proficiency-oriented tasks that reflect different skills and abilities. Finally, culture is built into all aspects of instruction, authentic resources are explored in meaningful ways, and grammatical concepts are taught in context to support the overall goal of successfully communicating in the language.

Assessment aligns with curriculum and instruction when using a proficiency-based approach to language teaching, and feedback provided on student performances is targeted, actionable, and related to students’ individual goals and objectives.

* + 1. **What are the benefits of proficiency-based language teaching?**

There are many benefits of proficiency-based language teaching. First, it is highly adaptive and flexible, as you can and should use a variety of methods, strategies, and activities for instruction and assessment in proficiency-based classrooms. Second, this framework is student-centered and assets-based with a focus on what students can do and where they want to go in their language learning. The overall goal of being able to communicate meaningfully and appropriately in the language is one that is shared by many students, as they are often learning a language in the hopes that they can use it in their daily lives, in their communities, or in future careers. Proficiency-based language teaching prioritizes students’ interests, needs, and abilities, allowing you to really focus on your individual students and center student diversity in your classroom. This aligns with the final point on this slide, which is that this approach is respectful and inclusive of diverse types of learners, which is essential to effective world language education.

* + 1. **How do I use a proficiency-based approach to language teaching?**

To effectively use a proficiency-based approach to language teaching, it is important to get to know your students, create appropriate goals for your students, use high-quality teaching strategies and practices, prepare students for communicating in the language, and continuously assess students over time. Click on each of these components to learn more.

* When getting to know your students, it is important to consider their identities and experiences, as well as their interests, needs, and abilities. You may find it helpful to administer a survey to your students at the beginning of the year to learn more about them, or perhaps you can include activities or projects in your curriculum that will allow you to further explore students’ identities throughout the course of instruction.
* Students need appropriate goals and objectives in proficiency-based classrooms, and it is important to set proficiency level expectations for your students at the beginning of the year and adjust these as needed throughout the course of instruction. Make sure to set realistic individual learner goals based on where students are and where they will be at the end of the course.
* Proficiency-based language teaching relies on high-leverage instructional strategies and practices in the classroom. These practices, which will be described in greater detail on the next slide, are designed to support you in advancing student learning and helping your students develop linguistic and cultural proficiency.
* Students must be prepared for real-world interactions and communication in proficiency-based classrooms, and it is important to expose students to authentic resources and provide opportunities for students to practice communicating in the language in real-world situations. You may find it helpful to use authentic, scenario-based learning activities and performance assessment tasks that encourage students to use the language in meaningful and realistic ways.
* Assessment is an essential component of proficiency-based language teaching. To assess students’ progress toward and achievement of proficiency, you should plan for and use formative and summative assessments in your classroom. Formative assessments are those that are used during the course of instruction to check for student learning, and you may find the information gathered to be helpful for planning future instruction. Summative assessments, on the other hand, are used at the end of a unit or sequence of units, and these assessments will help you determine if students have achieved overall proficiency targets and course goals or objectives. Both types of assessment should focus primarily on what students can do with the language, that is, how they are able to communicate meaning and accomplish tasks with language. Students' grammatical accuracy and comprehensibility are just a subset of their performance.
  + 1. **What are core practices for proficiency-based world language learning?**

The high-leverage teaching practices presented in this module are also commonly referred to as ACTFL Core Practices for proficiency-based world language learning. Click on each image to learn more.

* Students become proficient in a language by using it, and world language education should be conducted almost exclusively (90% or more) in the target language in all language programs and levels by students and teachers alike. Target language use is necessary to help students acquire proficiency, but it is not sufficient, as students must be able to understand what they are seeing, hearing, and reading in the classroom. It is therefore important to provide comprehensible input in the classroom, and there are many strategies to help make your target language input comprehensible via additional visual support and verbal and nonverbal cues. Click on the boxes to learn more about ways to make target language input more comprehensible.
* Authentic resources are critical for proficiency-based language learning, as they are written by speakers of the target language for speakers of that language and thus are culture-rich, real-world examples that model correct language use. These resources are interesting and engaging for students and provide important information and insights into the target language, culture, and community. Click on the boxes to learn more about ways to select, adapt, and use age-appropriate authentic materials.
* The ability to communicate in the language is the overall goal of a proficiency-based approach to language teaching, and students therefore benefit from oral or signed interpersonal communication tasks that prepare them to communicate in real-life interactions. Tasks should be low-stakes and promote growth over time by gradually increasing the amount and type of language you are asking students to produce. You may find it helpful to create opportunities for students to speak in pairs, small groups, and as a whole group in ways that are spontaneous, meaningful, and authentic for your students. Click on the box to learn more about designing communicative tasks.
* When planning and developing your curriculum, it is important to use backward design by first identifying learning outcomes that will then inform your assessments and your instruction. This approach to planning helps ensure that your lessons, units, and courses are developed intentionally and purposefully, and it makes it easier for you to create learning experiences that ultimately move students towards their goals. Click on the box to learn more about planning with backward design.
* When using a proficiency-based approach to language teaching, grammar is implicitly and meaningfully taught within communicative contexts rather than taught explicitly as done in traditional approaches to language teaching. This way, students are learning how to actually use different grammatical concepts and functions when communicating. Click on the box to learn more about teaching grammar in context.
* Feedback is essential for supporting and advancing students’ proficiency in a world language. It provides information about how students are doing in their efforts to reach their goals, it helps to clarify and correct any misunderstandings, and it helps students monitor their overall language development while validating and celebrating their growth over time. You may find it helpful to integrate different types of feedback into teaching practice, including teacher-led feedback and feedback from fellow students. Click on the box to learn more about providing effective feedback.
  + 1. **What resources can I use to support proficiency-based instruction?**

There are several state and national resources that you can use to support proficiency-based instruction. Click on each tab to learn more about these resources.

* The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines describe what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. Click on the link to explore the Proficiency Guidelines and learn more.
* The ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners describe language performance in standards-based, performance-oriented learning environments and are organized in line with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the three communicative modes. The descriptors are designed to help educators set appropriate goals and objectives for their students. Click on the link to explore the Performance Descriptors and learn more.
* The NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements align with the Proficiency Guidelines and Performance Descriptors and describe what students can do at each proficiency level for each communicative mode. Click on the link to explore the Can-Do Statements and learn more.
* The Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA) provides a high-quality, proficiency-focused professional learning community for world language educators. MaFLA annually offers a state conference, Core Practice Institutes, a Summer Proficiency Academy, and regular webinars for world language educators in Massachusetts. Click on the link to learn more about MaFLA programming.
* The Department provides Quick Reference Guides (QRGs) to support proficiency-based instruction in several specialized world language contexts, including elementary instruction, American Sign Language, languages with diverse written representations (LDWRs), such as Korean, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian, classical languages, heritage languages, and students with disabilities. Click on the link to view and download the QRGs.
  + 1. **Discussion/Reflection**

The following questions are designed to help you discuss or reflect on what you have learned so far in this module. If you are completing this module in a group, you may find it helpful to talk about these questions with your colleagues and take this opportunity to share your insights and experiences. If you are completing this module on your own, you can independently reflect on these questions and consider ways in which they apply to your own teaching context and experiences.

The questions for discussion and reflection are:

* What is your experience using proficiency-based approaches to language teaching?
* Which core practices have you used in your classroom, and which would you like to use more?
* What resources do you find most helpful for proficiency-based instruction?
  1. **Part 4: Proficiency and the Framework**
     1. **How does the Framework support proficiency-based language teaching?**

The Framework supports proficiency-based language teaching by emphasizing the importance of linguistic and cultural proficiency, by providing a structure, standards, and practices that promote proficiency aligned to the national ACTFL standards and proficiency levels, and by supporting districts to design programs in which students meet or exceed the high levels of proficiency to obtain the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy. Massachusetts recognizes that students receive additional tangible benefits when they are not only proficient in more than one language but even more when they are officially recognized for their biliteracy.

* + 1. **What supports for proficiency-based instruction are included in the Framework?**

Within the Framework, there are a number of specific supports for proficiency-based instruction. Click on each support to learn more.

* There is a table of recommended topics for different proficiency levels, which is located on p.9 of the Framework.
* There is a list of high-leverage teaching practices for proficiency, which is located on p.10 of the Framework.
* There is guidance on determining proficiency outcomes, which starts on p.23 of the Framework.
  + 1. **How do the Framework’s structure, standards, and practices promote proficiency?**

Click on each icon to learn more about ways in which the Framework’s structure, standards, and practices promote proficiency.

* Proficiency serves as the foundation of many of the Guiding Principles, including Guiding Principles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.
* The Practices are grouped by the role they fulfill in allowing students to demonstrate proficiency in the language. Domain 1 – the communication practices - speaks to how students communicate in languages other than English. Domain 2 - the linguistic cultures practices - describes what students must know about various cultures to effectively communicate; and Domain 3 – the connections, communities, social emotional, and social justice practices - expresses why students communicate in languages other than English.
* The Standards, which are organized by level of linguistic proficiency, describe the processes and skills students acquire as speakers/signers of world languages throughout the elementary, middle, and high school years to proficiently navigate a linguistically and culturally diverse world. Organizing the standards by proficiency level allows educators to understand the type of language that is appropriate for their students without regard to age or grade level.
  1. **Part 5: Conclusion**
     1. **What did we learn in this module?**

We have now come to the end of Module 2. Let’s summarize the topics this module covered. In Module 2, we learned what proficiency is and why it is important for world language education; how to use proficiency to guide instruction, and what the relationship is between proficiency and the Massachusetts World Languages Framework.

You can check the Resources section for a one-page summary of the topics covered in this module.

* + 1. **Check for Learning**

Complete the following check for learning to see what you have learned in this module. After answering each question, click submit to check your answer against the expected response. You will have two opportunities to answer the questions correctly, and if you do not answer correctly, you will see the correct response before being prompted to move on to the next question.

* + 1. **Question 1**

True or false: World language proficiency is defined as the ability to use a language in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context.

* + 1. **Question 2**

Drag each descriptor to match the corresponding ACTFL proficiency level.

* + 1. **Question 3**

True or false: Proficiency-based language teaching requires all educators to use the same teaching methods, strategies, and activities.

* + 1. **Question 4**

Which of the following are core practices of proficiency-based world language teaching? Select all that apply.

* + 1. **Question 5**

How does the Framework support proficiency? Drag the correct response to the empty space.

* + 1. **What’s next?**

We hope you will also join us for the next module, Module 3: The Framework Through the Lens of Equity.

* + 1. **Thank you!**

Thank you for completing this module and showing your commitment to providing high-quality world language education by learning more about the 2021 Massachusetts World Languages Framework!