

Procedures to be used by New Jersey School Districts for Approval of Instructional Programs Offering World Languages not Taught in Public School Districts

Background:

In August 2001, legislation was passed into law that required the Department of Education to establish a World Languages Instruction Committee to develop a plan which would provide students in public schools the opportunity to receive instruction in and graduation credit for a world language not taught in the public school district (*N.J.S.A.18A:35-4.18*).

In compliance with this law, the department established a committee that has developed an implementation plan to be followed by districts upon the written request of a student and his/her parent to be granted graduation credit for a language program offered by an external organization. An external organization, as defined by the World Languages Instruction Committee, refers to a non-profit organization such as a church or community group.

The procedures developed by the World Languages Instruction Committee are very similar to those outlined in *N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1ii*, known as *option ii* of the code regarding implementation of graduation requirements. All costs incurred by a student's enrollment in such a program are to be absorbed by the student's parents, or legal guardian.

Procedures to be utilized by School Districts

1. Require the organization offering the course for which the student is seeking approval to submit a request in writing to the high school principal who will assign the designated district staff to review its eligibility. This includes providing the necessary written documentation to support its request. The documentation should include the following:
 - Information about the organization and the population it serves (template attached);
 - A copy of the world languages curriculum;
 - Evidence of assessments used in the program to demonstrate increasing levels of student language proficiency in all skill areas; and
 - Credentials of teachers instructing in the program. This includes the type of certification the teacher(s) may possess (e.g., New Jersey, out-of-state, out-of-country).
2. Review the organization's world languages curriculum based upon specific instructional objectives set by the school district aimed at meeting or exceeding the revised 2004 *Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages*. The curriculum review should be conducted by a supervisor of world languages, or in

the case of districts that do not have content area supervisors, by a curriculum specialist in conjunction with a world languages teacher.

3. Verify that there are ample opportunities for students to demonstrate increasing language proficiency in all skill areas in the program (examples of assessments). This should be undertaken by district staff as directed in number 2 above.
4. Conduct an on-site visitation of the program to gather further data to support the organization's request for approval if deemed necessary by district staff.
5. Submit program documentation along with the district recommendation for approval to the local Board of Education upon receipt of a satisfactory program review by district staff. The local Board of Education must ensure that the program and related assessments are based on specific instructional objectives aimed at meeting or exceeding the Core Curriculum Content standards and must formally approve the program in the same manner as other courses.
6. Notify the organization in writing of program approval or disapproval. Organizations may use official approval letters and/or local School Board resolutions in subsequent communication with their constituents about the program.
7. Certify student completion of the program based on specified instructional objectives and assessment results (See detailed information on assessment in the next section.). This is the responsibility of the high school principal. Student proficiency levels must be determined and certified through the assessments recommended by the World Languages Instruction Committee.
8. Document the results of the assessment of the proficiency level attained by the student on the student's transcript by (a) awarding 5-credits for attaining the *Novice-Mid* level of proficiency and 10-credits for attaining the *Novice-High* level of proficiency*. Should the student attain a higher proficiency level (i.e., in the *Intermediate* or *Pre-Advanced* range), it is strongly recommended that additional credits be awarded by the district.

*The committee has determined that the *Novice-Mid* proficiency level would be the equivalent of a 1-year, 5-credit course; and that the *Novice-High* proficiency level would be the equivalent of a 2-year, 10-credit high school course of study. The current state proficiency level for world languages has been identified by the Department of Education as *Novice-High*.

9. Maintain a record of the approved program on file in the local district subject to review for monitoring purposes.

Assessment of Student Proficiency

- The committee has concluded that the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Oral Proficiency Interview* (OPI) would best serve for the assessment of students' spoken language ability for the awarding of credit because it is an internationally recognized measure for academic placement, student assessment, professional certification and hiring qualifications. Moreover, many of the languages that students would be studying outside of the public school district fall under the category of less commonly taught languages, and the OPI is available in many of these languages.
- For assessment of students' writing skills, the committee has concluded that the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Written Proficiency Test* (WPT) would be an excellent measure of written language ability.
- Other nationally and/or internationally recognized, commonly administered measures of assessment for languages that assess both spoken and written skills will be considered for approval by the World Languages Instruction Committee.

Additional Information

1. Costs

All costs incurred by a student's enrollment in a program offered by an external organization are to be absorbed by the student's parents, or legal guardian, and not by the school district.

2. Timelines

January 1: Deadline for submission of written requests to the high school principal by a student and his/her parent seeking to be granted graduation credit for a language program not offered in the local public school district

March 1: Deadline for external organizations to submit a complete application with supporting documentation to the local public school district for program approval

June 1: Deadline for district notification to the external organization of program approval or disapproval to enable students to receive credit for the world languages course during the academic year beginning September 1

Note: Districts may modify timelines upon request. Contact Cheri Quinlan, world languages coordinator, for additional information.

3. Program Re-Approval

External organizations must be notified by and make application to the local public school district for re-approval of language programs upon cyclical revision of the standards and assessment code (e.g., adoption of new standards and regulations regarding student assessment).

4. College Transcripts

With regard to college admission office evaluation of student transcripts, most colleges and universities will recognize the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Certificate rating for the awarding of credit. Some colleges may use the proficiency rating to waive college language requirements or to place students in more advanced courses. However, it is strongly recommended that students interested in pursuing language study in a less commonly taught language for credit through a non-public school program consult with the institution of higher education they are seeking to attend. The college will be able to verify their credit requirements for world languages and provide a list of languages that they will consider for admission purposes.

Recommendations

- Districts should encourage students who opt to study languages in out-of-district programs to also pursue the study of other world languages offered in the public school program when feasible.
- Districts may wish to consider adding the study of an additional world language to their current course offerings upon receipt of a substantial number of similar requests by students seeking to study a particular language.
- Upon review of applications submitted by external organizations, districts should give preference to programs that employ appropriately state certified teachers.
- Contact Cheri Quinlan, world languages coordinator, at: (609) 777-1478 or cheri.quinlan@doe.state.nj.us with any questions about the law or the procedures to be followed.

