

WORLD LANGUAGE FAQ (UPDATE 9.12.14)

Original Legislation:

Sec. 1278a(2) Beginning with pupils entering grade 3 in 2006, the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed during grades 9 to 12 at least 2 credits, as determined by the Michigan Department of Education, in a language other than English, or the pupil has successfully completed at any time during grades K to 12 coursework or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to 2 credits in a language other than English, based on guidelines developed by the department. Schools must consider American Sign Language (ASL) to be a language other than English.

New Legislation:

HB4465 (Section 2) (1) the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy shall not award a high school diploma to a pupil unless the pupil has successfully completed during K to 12 at least 2 credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English or course work or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to 2 credits in a language other than English, based on guidelines developed by the department.

For pupils who graduate from high school in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, or 2020 only, a pupil may partially or fully fulfill 1 credit of this requirement by completing a department-approved formal career and technical education program or curriculum or by completing visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the requirement under subsection (1) (a) (iv). The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy is strongly encouraged to ensure that all pupils complete at least one credit in a language other than English in grades K to 6. For purposes of this subsection, all of the following apply:

- (a) American sign language is considered to be a language other than English.*
- (b) The pupil may meet all or part of this requirement with online course work.*

What Research Says

Students, who learn a second language, benefit in practical ways. They are better able to communicate with native speakers in this country and in other nations; they have a better understanding of other cultures; and they are better prepared for potential careers. Moreover, students' learning skills in general are enhanced through foreign language study.

Students who study two years of a language other than English score significantly higher on the SAT verbal and math test than students who do not complete two years of a language. Higher wages are also linked to students who studying a language other than English for two years.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: *Are world languages included in the Michigan Merit Curriculum?*

A: Yes. The 2014 Merit Curriculum legislation (HB 4465) states that *a pupil must successfully completed during K to 12 at least 2 credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English or course work or other learning experiences that are substantially equivalent to 2 credits in a language other than English.*

A pupil may partially or fully fulfill 1 credit of this requirement by completing a department-approved formal career and technical education program or curriculum or by completing visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the requirement under subsection (1) (a) (iv).

2. Q: *To which graduating class does the change in the world language requirement apply?*

A: A board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy may request as an option that pupils graduating in 2015 meet the world language requirement, but are not bound by law to require that pupils graduating in 2015 meet the world language requirement described in HB4465.

The board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy must require that pupils graduating in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, or 2020 meet the world language requirement described in HB4465.

There is no guidance beyond 2020. Districts may assume that the modifications in HB 4465 will remain in place.

3. Q: *How can students meet the requirement?*

A: Students may select one of three options to meet the requirement:

Option #1: Two-credit world language requirement:

- By completing two credits in a world language at the high school level in the same world language
- By completing formal instruction in the same world language provided by their school district over the course of the K-8 experience or a combination of a K-8 experience and 9-12 experience.
- Through learning beyond the K-12 classroom: formal study abroad, study abroad programs, college coursework, home or heritage languages, online courses, or other life experiences.

Option #2: One (1) credit World Language and one (1) credit *career and technical education program*:

- By completing one credit at the high school level in a world language
- By completing formal instruction in a world language provided by their school district over the course of the K-8 experience or a combination of a K-8 experience and 9-12 experience.
- Through learning beyond the K-12 classroom: formal study abroad, study abroad programs, college coursework, home or heritage languages, online courses, or other life experiences.

AND

- By completing one (1) credit of a department-approved formal career and technical education program.

Option #3: One (1) credit World Language and one (1) credit in visual or performing arts in addition to the current MMC requirement:

- By completing one credit at the high school level in a world language
- By completing formal instruction in a world language provided by their school district over the course of the K-8 experience or a combination of a K-8 experience and 9-12 experience.
- Through learning beyond the K-12 classroom: formal study abroad, study abroad programs, college coursework, home or heritage languages, online courses, or other life experiences.

AND

- By completing visual or performing arts instruction that is in addition to the current MMC requirement.

4. Q: *How does the new language of HB4465 impact elementary programs?*

(HB4465 states that students must complete in K to 12 at least 2 credits that are grade-appropriate in a language other than English based on guidelines developed by the department.)

A: The K-12 course of language study must follow the Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmarks. Course content should be based on the language functions described in the benchmarks equivalent to Level 1 or Level 2 of a high school course (Novice High). The methodology used in language instruction should be age/grade-appropriate.

NOTE: Seat time alone in a K-8 program does not ensure equivalent high school level 1 and 2 language proficiency. A student's ability to demonstrate the use of language functions described in the Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmarks determines credits.

5. Q: *Can a student use middle school Visual/Performing Arts (VPA) courses to meet the language requirement? (Ex. 7th or 8th grade band, orchestra, choir, art, etc.)*

A: Yes, only if the middle school VPA course is equivalent to the high school VPA course.

6. Q: *What is an "equivalent learning experience" in grades K-12?*

A: Students may demonstrate a one-year or two-year equivalent proficiency as demonstrated on a district-approved assessment.

7. Q: *What characterizes two-year equivalent proficiency?*

A: *Two-year equivalent proficiency* is characterized by the ability to function in highly predictable situations using words, phrases, and complete sentences. Upon completion of two credits of high school instruction, students can communicate with people who are accustomed to interacting with non-native speakers. Students can communicate in a variety of **contexts** relating primarily to oneself, family, friends, home, neighborhood, community, and country and carry out a variety of language **functions** including socializing, identifying and describing, exchanging information and exchanging opinions. For a more detailed list of contexts and functions appropriate to *two-year equivalent proficiency*, see the *Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmarks*.

8. Q: *How is “Two-year equivalent proficiency” demonstrated?*

A: Students, who fulfill the requirement by successfully completing two credits in the same world language at the high school level, demonstrate proficiency through district formative and summative assessments.

Students who intend to fulfill the requirement by completing formal instruction in the same world language in a K-8 experience will need to be assessed prior to their entrance into high school. The assessment will need to determine a proficiency level.

- If a student demonstrates at least *two-year equivalent* proficiency, he/she has completed the equivalent of the two-course credit requirement.
- If a student demonstrates one-year equivalent proficiency (the equivalent of one credit), he/she will need to complete a second credit at the high school level.
- If a student does not demonstrate at least one-year equivalent proficiency, he/she will need to complete two credits at the high school level.

Students who intend to fulfill the requirement through learning beyond the K-12 classroom (formal study abroad, study abroad programs, college coursework, home or heritage languages, online courses, or other life experiences) will need to provide formal documentation of equivalent proficiency in the language being used to fulfill the requirement.

9. Q: *Will there be a statewide test to assess student proficiency at the end of the two-credit sequence?*

A: There are no plans to institute a statewide test for students who have completed the two-credit sequence in a world language. Students who successfully complete the two-credit sequence in the same world language have fulfilled the requirement.

10. Q: *Can students meet the requirement by completing the first credit in one language and then completing the second credit in a different world language (Example: Year 1 in Spanish and Year 2 in Chinese)?*

A: No, the two credits must be in the **same** world language. Research indicates that students benefit from continuous and extended sequences of language study in the same world language.

11. Q: *Are there state standards for world languages that reflect the two-year equivalent proficiency level?*

A: Yes. State world language standards and benchmarks are contained in the document *Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmarks*. The *Standards* parallel the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*. The *Benchmarks* are written for three proficiency levels: Novice High, Intermediate Low-Mid, and Pre-Advanced. The *Michigan World Language Standards and Benchmarks* are available here. Once you have reached the home page type the phrase “World Language Standards and Benchmarks” into the search box at the top right of the page. You can then download and print out a copy for your use.

12. Q: *Is there additional information available about how to implement the World Language Requirement?*

A: Yes. The *Michigan Merit Curriculum Credit/Experience Guidelines for World Languages* contains information about implementing the requirement and provides a glossary of terms and suggested curricular models. The *Guidelines* are available on the Academic Standards page. Once you have reached the home page type the phrase “World Language Guidelines” into the search box at the top right of the page. You can then download and print out a copy of the *Guidelines* for your use.

13. Q: If a student wants to fulfill the World Language requirement by studying a language that is not offered by the LEA, can the student dual enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution that does offer the language?

A: Yes.

(d) "Eligible course" means a course offered by an eligible postsecondary institution that is not offered by the school district in which the eligible student is enrolled, or that is offered by the school district but is determined by the board of the school district to not be available to the eligible student because of a scheduling conflict beyond the eligible student's control; that is an academic course not ordinarily taken as an activity course; that is a course that the postsecondary institution normally applies toward satisfaction of degree requirements; that is not a hobby craft or recreational course; and that is in a subject area other than physical education, theology, divinity, or religious education. However, until the 2006-2007 school year, for an eligible student who has not achieved state endorsement in all subject areas under section 1279 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1279, an eligible course is limited to a course in a subject area for which he or she has achieved state endorsement, a course in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or a course in fine arts as permitted by the school district. Beginning with eligibility to participate under this act during the 2006-2007 school year, for an eligible student who has not achieved a qualifying score in each subject area on a readiness assessment or the Michigan merit examination, as applicable for the student, an eligible course is limited to a course in a subject area for which he or she has achieved a qualifying score, a course in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or a course in fine arts as permitted by the school district

Here is the FAQ that further clarifies the use of dual enrollment for advanced courses.

Q: Do students have to “exhaust” the high school’s curriculum before they are eligible for postsecondary enrollment?

A: No. State law requires the postsecondary course(s) eligible for tuition support be course(s) not offered by the district, but does not require students to take all available high school courses before enrolling in postsecondary courses. However, if the district offers college level equivalent courses (Advanced Placement or IB), these courses have precedence over an entry-level postsecondary course with similar content. Also, high school credits granted to a student under this Act shall be counted toward the graduation and subject area requirements of the school district.

14. Q: Can districts pass the cost of test-out assessment on to the student/parents?

A: No. The district may not pass the cost of test-out assessments on to the student/parent.

15. Q: What is the obligation for LEAs to provide language program service to Private-Non-Public?

A: The same obligation the district has for other core subjects.

16. Q: If a high school student studies abroad for a year while in high school and receives instruction in another world language, is the student eligible to present the official school transcripts or take the exam to earn credit? OR does this only apply for incoming 8th graders?

A: A high school student may submit any translated transcripts for coursework he/she completes while studying abroad to be reviewed by the high school counselor. If the student has received course credit for a language course from the school abroad, then a Michigan school may accept the credit.

If no language credit has been received for a specific language course and the school core subjects were taught in the language in the school abroad, then the student may submit a translated school transcript/report card for review by the school counselor. The student may use this documentation to meet the requirement but not receive high school credit. However, if the student wants to receive high school credit for this experience, the student will need to receive a passing grade on a district approved testing out assessment.

17. Q: How can a district use student transcripts from other countries to meet the language requirement?

- A:** An official transcript/report card *documenting continuous and successful school experiences (Grades 1-8) of at least one academic year in which classes were conducted in the language for which credit is sought*, may be used to meet the language proficiency requirement. The district has two choices:
1. Designate on the student's transcript that he/she has "met the requirement", or
 2. Grant credit for this experience or
 3. Require the student take a test-out assessment to receive high school credit.

An official transcript *documenting continuous and successful school experiences (Grades 9-12) of at least one academic year in which classes were conducted in the language for which credit is sought*, may be used to meet the language proficiency requirement. The district has three choices:

1. Designate on the student's transcript that he/she has "met the requirement", or
2. Grant credit for this experience or
3. Require the student take a test-out assessment to high school grant credit.

18. Q: Can a proficiency test be given in high school (9-12) and have a student meet the requirement of proficiency WITHOUT actually getting two high school credits? For example, if a student takes a proficiency exam after Spanish I, could they receive one HS credit, but meet the MME graduation requirement.

- A:** It is possible for a student to receive one credit earned by passing a course (first or second credit) and one test out assessment that meets the requirement for proficiency (equivalent to first or second credit).

The district determines the assessments it approves for test out assessment for high school courses. If the student tests out of the first or second credit of world language using a district approved test out assessment, the student usually earns credit for the course.