

## **World Languages – Frequently Asked Questions**

1. What is the difference between world language and foreign language?

Nothing at all! What was traditionally referred to as foreign language is now often called world language by many organizations. Both terms can be used synonymously in reference to any second language taught in the classroom. In Pennsylvania classical languages (Latin and Greek) are also considered world languages.

2. Is a second language required for graduation in Pennsylvania?

Currently there are no statewide graduation requirements in Pennsylvania for a second language. Graduation requirements are determined by the individual school district.

3. Must a school district provide a world language for its students?

Yes, according to Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code all Pennsylvanian schools are required to provide at least two world languages for students.

22 Pa. Code § 4.25. Languages

(a) World language programs must prepare students to be proficient in meeting the World Language Standards issued by the Department and available on its web site. Every school district shall provide planned instruction in at least two languages in addition to English, at least one of which shall be a modern language, and at least one of which shall be offered in a minimum 4-year sequence in the secondary program (middle level and high school).

(b) World language planned instruction under subsection (a) may be offered beginning at any grade level, including the elementary grades.

(c) World Language Standards issued by the Department will address the ability of students to communicate in a language other than English, including the ability to understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics and to develop knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

(d) As used in this section, the term “world language” means the study of the language, cultures, traditions and histories of different communities of people who communicate in languages other than English. American Sign Language is a world language.

4. How would a school district go about starting an elementary world language program?

In order to start a world language program in an elementary school, the first step is to contact the local school board. It is also advisable to obtain information on grants, funding and pilot programs that would be helpful in starting an elementary world language program. The Pennsylvania Department of Education website ([www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us), keywords World Languages) is a good place to start.

5. What are the benefits of learning a second language for students of any age?

Students participating in a world language program in the elementary schools have shown improvement in:

- Pronunciation in the first and second languages
- Higher scores on standardized assessments
- Listening skills
- Basic skills – reading, writing, speaking and comprehension
- Cognitive development
- Multi-cultural understanding
- Self-concept

Students participating in a world language program in the secondary schools have shown improvement in:

- SAT and ACT scores
  - Career development
  - All of the above benefits mentioned for elementary schools
- (Information gathered from North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Instructional Services Division News Information and Resources Second Languages)

6. Is there a statewide assessment program for world languages?

No. Currently, there are statewide assessments in math, English language arts and science in Pennsylvania. All other areas of curriculum, including world languages, are assessed by the individual districts.

7. What models of world language programs are available?

There are five main models:

- Immersion – all the curriculum is taught in the second language
- Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) – the target language is taught for designated periods of time
- Foreign Language Exploratory (FLEX) – several languages are taught prior to students' selection of a language for further study
- Traditional/Stage Level – students are engaged in increasingly complex communication through reading, writing, speaking and listening in the target language
- ESL/Bilingual Education – academic content is taught in two languages with varying amounts of each language used