

## MEMORANDUM

**FROM:** Steven L. Paine  
State Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** Title III Directors, Foreign Language Contacts, School Counselors

**DATE:** August 24, 2006

**RE:** ELL Students Attaining Foreign Language Credit

For the past several years, West Virginia schools have experienced an increase in the number of enrolling students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). During this same period, the foreign language graduation requirements (see Policy 2510 §126-42) have also increased. The intent of Policy 2510 is that students who graduate from a West Virginia high school demonstrate oral and written proficiency in at least two languages. Since many ELL students are already proficient in their native language and are learning English as a Second Language (ESL), this guidance document clarifies the following three options by which ELLs may obtain the necessary foreign language credit:

### **Option 1: Transcript Evaluation**

Students who enroll in West Virginia schools with foreign transcripts that, upon evaluation, show the student earned high school level credit in the native language should receive the appropriate number of attained credits to be counted toward the foreign language requirements.

- Example - A transcript from a Chinese high school shows the student completed Chinese Language Arts 9 and 10; therefore, two foreign language credits are awarded.

When accessing this option, schools should issue the foreign language credit under the course title of the appropriate language with placement of the grade awarded on the original transcript (e.g. A, B, C, D) in the student's record.

### **Option 2: Testing out**

Students who have no formal transcripts showing previously earned native language credits coursework may demonstrate their native language proficiency by testing out of a foreign language course that is currently offered by the district. The testing out procedures must address both oral and written proficiency.

- Example - The school Spanish teacher administers an oral and written exam (equivalent to Spanish I and II) to a native Spanish-speaking ELL student. The

student successfully passes the exam and receives two foreign language credits for Spanish.

When accessing this option, schools should issue the foreign language credit under the course title of the appropriate language with placement of the grade awarded on the test (e.g. A, B, C, D) in the student's record.

### **Option 3: Demonstrating Proficiency in Native Language and ESL**

Students who speak a language that is not taught in their county's foreign language program may obtain equivalent foreign language credit by:

1. Demonstrating at a minimum, mid-range Novice for Level I and mid-range Intermediate for Level II in both oral and written proficiency in his/her native language. The student's level of native language proficiency must be documented in a Performance Evaluation Portfolio (see Attachment A, "*Guidelines for Developing Student Assessment of Foreign Language*").
  2. Demonstrating at a minimum, mid-range Novice for Level I and mid-range Intermediate for Level II in both oral and written proficiency in English. The student's level of English proficiency must be documented through:
    - a. The successful completion of the appropriate number of ESL courses OR
    - b. Obtaining a Composite level score of four on the WESTELL exam.
- Example - After successfully demonstrating proficiency in Arabic through the prerequisite Performance Evaluation Portfolio, a native Arabic-speaking student takes two consecutive ESL courses and is awarded two foreign language credits OR
  - Example - After successfully demonstrating proficiency in Arabic through the prerequisite Performance Evaluation Portfolio, a native Arabic-speaking student takes the WESTELL exam, achieves a Composite level score of four and is awarded two foreign language credits.

When accessing this option, schools should issue the foreign language credit under the course title of the appropriate language with the placement of a Pass/Fail grade in the student's record. A list of all course codes for scheduling is available at <http://wveis.k12.wv.us/wveis2004/documents/CourseCodes.pdf> . For languages that are not listed in the Course Codes manual, please contact the West Virginia Department of Education (see contact information below). Costs for completing the Portfolio Performance Evaluations will be the responsibility of the school/county.

If you have further questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact Amelia Courts (304-558-2691 or [aadavis@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:aadavis@access.k12.wv.us)) or Debbie Harki (304-558-2696 or [dharki@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:dharki@access.k12.wv.us)). Thank you.

SP:adc

Attachment

# ATTACHMENT A

## Guidelines for Developing Student Tests of Foreign Language Proficiency

### **Test Rater Selection**

Individuals chosen to rate foreign language proficiency tests should be highly literate and proficient in the respective language. Institutions of higher education and faith-based organizations are potential resources for locating test developers and raters.

### **Test Development**

An evaluation instrument that is intended to measure a student's proficiency in a second language should include the following:

### **Skills Measured**

1. Test items or performance tasks that measure both oral and written language use through the four skills of;
  - a. **Listening comprehension**
  - b. **Speaking**
  - c. **Reading**
  - d. **Writing**
  
2. Test items or performance tasks that measure **communication** proficiency should include all of the following modalities:
  - a. **Interpersonal** communication—two-way language interaction with others to provide and obtain information
  - b. **Interpretative** communication—understanding and interpreting spoken and written language on a variety of topics
  - c. **Presentational** communication—conveying information to listeners and readers for a variety of purposes
  
3. Test items or performance tasks should be designed to assess a student's knowledge of the **culture** of the target language. While this often proves challenging in a testing situation, test developers should include items that address the **perspectives, practices, and contributions** of the target language.

Some examples of Communication tasks that address the different skills and modalities follow in **Table I**.

### **Performance Expectations**

1. Student performance expectations should be measured against the Performance Descriptors of the West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives for Foreign Languages, Policy 2520.7, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2520.7.doc>, at the levels of Mastery or above for the **Communication** and the **Culture** standards.
2. For further clarification on measuring a student's oral proficiency, refer to the rating scale in **Table II**. Students completing Level I of a foreign language course should function well within the Novice range; students completing Level II of a foreign language should function well within the Intermediate range.

### **Awarding Credit**

1. A student will receive a grade of "Pass" or "Fail." The passing percentage of 65% or higher is in accordance with the West Virginia Department of Education's Uniform Grading Policy 2515.
2. Upon successful completion of the test, a student will be awarded graduation credit for the course; however, the students Grade Point Average **will not be affected** by the inclusion of the course credit.

**TABLE I:  
Examples of Communication Tasks**

**Suggested Communication Tasks:**

**Listening**

- Understanding to respond (**Interactive**)
  - Conversation
  - Oral or written response to an oral message (e.g., returning a voice mail message)
- Understanding to act (**Interpretive**)
  - Response to command, directions

**Speaking**

- Creating responses (**Interactive**)
  - Conversations
- Providing information to an audience (**Presentational**)
  - Providing information (e.g., giving directions, a speech, an announcement)
  - Creating an oral summary of a written message (e.g., passing on pertinent information to an individual or group)

**Reading**

- Comprehending to respond (**Interactive**)
  - Letters, invitations (e.g., writing an RSVP to a social function, replying to an e-mail)
  - Voice mail responses (e.g., creating an oral response to a written message /statement)
- Comprehending to act (**Interpretive**)
  - Following instructions, directions (e.g., tracing a route on a map from written directions)

**Writing**

- Responding to an oral, visual or written prompt (**Interactive**)
  - Letters, invitations, correspondence
- Creating text for an audience (**Presentational**)
  - Informational writing (e.g., announcements, news articles, etc., in which a response is not needed/expected)

**TABLE II:**

<b>NOVICE</b>	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>	<b>ADVANCED</b>
<b>Language Production</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Isolated Words</li> <li>– Memorized phrases</li> <li>– Attempts sentences with some success</li> <li>– Basic objects, people, places, and predictable topics</li> <li>– Long pauses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Simple conversation at sentence level</li> <li>– Uses language creatively</li> <li>– Everyday topics and some academic topics</li> <li>– Describes successfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Paragraph-level discourse</li> <li>– Topics of personal and general interest, and academic topics</li> <li>– Narrates successfully</li> <li>– Organizes and connects speech smoothly</li> <li>– Emerging ability to hypothesize on abstract topics</li> </ul>
<b>Grammar</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Memorized phrases</li> <li>– Little to no awareness of syntax</li> <li>– May join 2-3 words</li> <li>– May use verbs, but often lacking or unconjugated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Verbs, conjugated, but may be inaccurate</li> <li>– Many other grammatical inaccuracies</li> <li>– Mostly present tense, though awareness of other tenses may be evident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Good control of present, past and future tenses</li> <li>– Some patterns of error may persist</li> <li>– Errors seldom interfere with communication</li> <li>– Increasingly complex structures</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– High-frequency expressions</li> <li>– Specific topic areas</li> <li>– Basic objects, places, kinship terms</li> <li>– Search for common words</li> <li>– Use some native language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Vocabulary for questioning and making simple statements</li> <li>– Concrete topics of personal interest and some academic subjects</li> <li>– Lacks detail</li> <li>– Attempts circumlocution</li> <li>– May use native language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Vocabulary for discussing a variety of topics, both social and academic</li> <li>– Some idiomatic usage</li> <li>– Includes detail</li> <li>– Effective circumlocution</li> <li>– Rarely uses native language.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Isolated words</li> <li>– High-frequency phrases</li> <li>– Familiar questions and commands</li> <li>– Some new sentences with strong contextual support</li> <li>– Slower rate of speech, frequent repetitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sentence-level speech in new contexts, sometimes with contextual support</li> <li>– Few problems with everyday topics</li> <li>– Fairly normal rate of speed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Main ideas and details</li> <li>– Aware of connectors</li> <li>– May have difficulty with highly idiomatic speech</li> <li>– Normal rate of speech</li> </ul>

Scale based on CAL Oral Proficiency Exam (COPE)  
 Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA)  
 Main Levels of Rating Scale  
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and

*American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines, Revised 1999*

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