

March 2, 2012

Dear Superintendents and School Principals:

***RE: Increasing World Language Opportunities for the Students of West Virginia***

As educational leaders, we are challenged to inspire our students to be healthy, responsible, self-directed, lifelong learners who have the knowledge and Global 21 skills necessary for living satisfying and productive lives. Specifically, because our children live and interact in an increasingly interconnected and global society, West Virginia schools must seek meaningful opportunities to support learners in developing diverse cultural perspectives and active communication skills in world languages. In addition to providing global economic competitiveness, research suggests language-learning correlates with high academic achievement on standardized tests, is beneficial in the development of student reading abilities, fosters creativity and divergent thinking, and helps to educate the whole child.

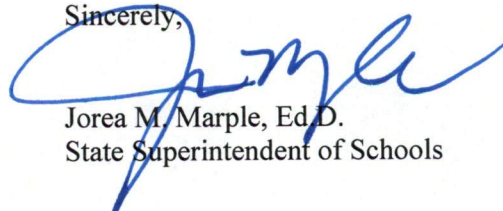
Despite the numerous academic, self-esteem and economic advantages, many schools, both locally and nationally, are slow to embrace change and expand world (foreign) language offerings even though federal guidelines identify foreign languages as a core subject. Across the state, about 60,580 students are studying a world language this school year. Most of those, about 65 percent, are at the high school level. About 34 percent are in middle school and less than one percent is in elementary schools. While this is a good start, we can and must do better for our students.

As we endeavor to continue the process of personalizing learning to meet the individual needs of all students, I encourage each county superintendent to provide leadership in establishing quality world language programs. I ask that you examine your current programs and look for opportunities to increase proficiency-focused language learning sequences. Specifically, I encourage elementary principals to initiate opportunities for students to acquire fundamental world language skills. Simultaneously, I urge secondary principals to review school world language enrollment and seek opportunities to increase program access to all students.

A variety of resources and guidance documents to assist you in moving your world language programs forward can be accessed through the West Virginia Department of Education. Additionally, Robert Crawford ([rcrawford@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:rcrawford@access.k12.wv.us)) and Debora Nicholson ([dlnichol@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:dlnichol@access.k12.wv.us)) from the Office of Title II, Title III and System Support are available to provide technical assistance upon request. Finally, I encourage you to investigate emerging grants, innovation funds, and appropriate allocation of federal program funding like Title I, Title II and/or Title III to support the strengthening of your world language programs.

Thank you for your continuous work to place the educational welfare of students at the core of all that you do. I am confident that working together we can cultivate our learners to be globally relevant. We owe it to our children to help them learn another language and gain a better understanding of the world in which they live.

Sincerely,



Jorea M. Marple, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Schools

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