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Brookfield Public Schools
Board of Education Curriculum Committee
100 Pocono Rd.
Brookfield, CT 06804

Dear Committee Members,

It has been my pleasure to work with the foreign language department in Brookfield Public Schools as we have reviewed the foreign language program and explored ways to strengthen and improve it in order to graduate world-class citizens who are also global thinkers.

Over the past six months, I have visited the middle school and high school, observed foreign language classes, spoken informally with students, and met with foreign language teachers and building level administrators. I have also met with the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Genie Slone, and the Superintendent of Schools, Anthony Bivona, on three occasions, and am working with Liz Spencer, department chair.

The entire department also came to the Glastonbury Public Schools on May 15, 2012, to visit foreign language classes from grades 1-12 and I met with them to debrief on their experience. On June 25, 2012, all Brookfield foreign language teachers were invited to join Glastonbury teachers in a daylong workshop on 21st Century Skills taught by Barbara Lindsey, Director, Modern Language Center, University of Connecticut, and Lauren Rosen, Weblang, Inc.. The remaining department members and new liaison, Liz Spencer came to Glastonbury to visit the program for a day on September 19th. On September 27th I presented a daylong workshop on Foreign Language Standards and Assessments in Brookfield with the entire foreign language department in attendance. The discussion was rich and the results of which have helped to generate a significant part of this review.

The following is a summary of the process. It is in the form of a series of commendations and recommendations and is organized in six specific areas – Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Facilities, Leadership, and Advocacy.

Brookfield has a dedicated foreign language staff who has a strong desire to improve the foreign language program. Given the financial constraints of the budget, the department has identified and already taken significant steps to address some of the recommendations outlined in this report with little or no cost to the district. I believe that significant growth is possible in the department, with only a modest amount of additional financial resources, focusing more on time and support, to work together on improvements.

Learning a foreign language is an integral component to educating 21st century citizens to become productive members of our global society. Their study of a foreign language develops language and communication skills, cultural knowledge as well as critical 21st century skills that students need to be successful in the future.

Sincerely,

Rita A. Oleksak

Brookfield Public Schools
Foreign Language Department Review
2012-2013
Rita A. Oleksak – consultant

Curriculum

Commendations:

1. The world language staff has a strong desire to create the best possible world language program for the students of Brookfield.
2. The staff has recognized the need for an articulated, sequential, standards based foreign language curriculum.
3. The staff has content knowledge and world language skills to provide the program with a knowledge base to develop curriculum including a general understanding of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (5Cs) (see Appendix C).
4. The district currently offers foreign languages in grades 5-12.
5. The department recognizes the need to adjust the 7th and 8th grade foreign language courses for fall 2013 taking into account the instruction now occurring in 5th and 6th grade.

Recommendations

1. Vision- Vision is critical to the development of a strong foreign language program and it can only be fully developed through the collaboration of the foreign language staff on a regular basis. The opportunity to meet as a department, across the district, as well as within individual schools is critical to the continued development of a strong vision for the department.
2. To embrace the overarching goal of the program which is to graduate students who are proficient in at least one language in addition to English.
3. Curricular articulation and sequencing of courses- There is a need to improve the articulation of the curriculum between grade levels in the district. This includes immediate revisions to the 7th and 8th grade curriculum based on the addition of earlier instruction in grades 5 and 6.
4. Expansion of program- This includes the development of an elementary Spanish curriculum for the future extending Spanish to the younger grades.
5. Additional courses - Develop a new course offering for Mandarin.
6. Meet with counselors to discuss the foreign language program and determine a plan for students new to the district and/or those who drop out of the program, and/or want to switch to the study of another language.
7. Course descriptions – Revise course descriptions in the Program of Studies to be consistent and reflect an articulated program as well as show alignment with the standards, 21st Century Skills and the Common Core.
8. Course credit -Include middle school foreign language classes on the high school transcript.
9. Vertical and horizontal alignment – Provide opportunities for the teachers to work together across languages and levels to develop curriculum that allows students to build on their language proficiency as they progress through the program.
10. Curriculum mapping –

A. The teachers need to establish essential questions/themes for each grade level that are age, language, and culturally appropriate.

B. Units and lessons that relate to those essential questions/themes should then be modified, revised or new ones created accordingly. This will provide consistency and allow for greater articulation of the program, while integrating language, content, and culture throughout the curriculum.

11. Standards Based Curriculum – The curriculum should be aligned with the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (5Cs).
12. Common Core – The curriculum should also be aligned with the ACTFL Common Core Crosswalk for Foreign Language and English/Language Arts.
13. 21st Century Skills- The curriculum should also integrate the components of the ACTFL World Languages 21st Century Skills map. (see Appendix D and E)
14. Connections to other disciplines – Cross curricular/interdisciplinary connections can be made with language arts, social studies, science, as well as other subject areas to help guide the development of units of study for each grade level. The connections made across disciplines reinforce knowledge and skills in each subject area.
15. Collaboration- Include a Social Studies, English/Language Arts, and special needs teacher in curriculum planning to increase opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.
16. Curriculum Materials–Research, gather, and incorporate a variety of instructional materials (online editions of textbooks, children’s literature, flashcards, manipulatives, online sources, visuals, media) that are culturally, age, language and level appropriate for use with different units and lessons.
17. Professional development – The curriculum development, alignment, and articulation require professional development opportunities for teachers to collaborate and focus on integrating/determining essential questions, standards and 21st century skills into their curricular maps.
18. Virtual exchanges - Establish virtual communication opportunities with schools in other countries as well as other school systems in the United States.
19. Exchanges -Establish reciprocal exchanges with schools in France and Spain for students to host students from other countries and travel to that country.
20. Rigor, relevance, and relationships- The curriculum should be rigorous, relevant to students and foster positive relationships with students.
21. The high school needs dedicated time for foreign language teachers to meet together in small groups within the department in order to work on curriculum development once essential questions have been determined.
22. The middle school needs dedicated time for foreign language teachers to meet together in small groups within the department in order to work on curriculum development once essential questions have been determined.
23. The entire department needs time to come together to have professional conversations in order to build a sequential and articulated program, K-12.

Instruction

Commendations:

1. Support of administration – The administration has been willing and supportive of the recommendations presented throughout the review process and has begun to address them with staff.
2. Openness to change- Teachers display a general openness to change and the desire to find ways to strengthen their program.
3. Teachers are on board with the target language use position statement as presented by the national foreign language organization, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and see the importance of using at least 90% target language in the classroom.
4. Teachers have a foundation in foreign language pedagogy including knowledge of world language skills, culture, and activities that build student proficiency in the language.
5. Technology is available for use in the classroom including teacher iPads, interactive white boards, and online programs such as EdModo.

Recommendations:

1. Schedule – As the department continues to expand and broaden the program, changes will need to be made to the schedule for the foreign language classes at elementary, middle and high school levels. Things to consider include frequency of classes, and opportunities for the study of a second foreign language.
2. Elementary school schedule- Revise the elementary school Spanish schedule so that students receive Spanish instruction 5 times a week in grades 5 and 6.
3. Planning – The Standards for Foreign Language Learning (5Cs) need to be incorporated as the basis for all work and should be used in planning for instruction. In addition to their individual daily planning time, teachers will benefit greatly from adequate time to plan within their department and to collaborate with language teachers at other levels on units and lessons.
4. Instructional strategies – Teachers need to use a variety of instructional strategies in order to differentiate instruction based on the student needs, the content, and the objectives of the lesson. This will maximize student engagement and learning.
5. Student interest and engagement -The teacher also needs to include a variety of pair, small group, and whole class instruction in order to allow for greater opportunities for student learning and engagement.
6. Enrollment increase- Within the next couple of years, increase enrollment in the foreign language classes at all levels.
7. Classroom environment- The foreign language classroom needs to be print rich with posters, literature, student work, realia, **all** in the target language. This serves as a way to integrate culture into the classroom through visuals as a means to complement instruction.
8. Instructional materials – As the curriculum further develops, the department will need to evaluate and choose instructional materials such as textbooks that have online versions or apps, online sources, other media sources, literature, ancillaries, assessments and materials for other activities. These materials need to be age and culturally appropriate, and suitable for the language and level.

9. Technology integration – The teachers have technology available to them in the classrooms including interactive white boards and iPads. The teachers can plan for instruction with these technologies as they help promote students’ language learning.
10. 21st century skills – The foreign language teachers should incorporate 21st Century Skills into the language classroom as part of their instruction.
11. Exchanges and trips- Virtual communication as well as exchanges and trips with schools from different countries will allow for real life use of the target language. Skyping with partner schools, and preparing students for exchanges or trips, are examples for the future as the foreign language program continues to expand.

Assessment

Commendations:

1. There are mid terms and finals for foreign language classes at the high school.
2. Formal and informal assessments are used in class to measure and monitor student performance and progress.
3. Teachers have identified assessment as a need in the department.
4. The high school has Common Learning Time (CLT) for foreign language teachers to meet together for 83 minutes every four days in small groups within the department for data team work.
5. The middle school meets with grade level content teachers for 43 minutes one time per week for data team work.

Recommendations:

1. Link between curriculum and assessments- As district wide assessments are developed, they should be connected to the essential questions that have been established for the curriculum. This will provide a backwards planning framework and vertically and horizontally align the world language program.(see Appendix A)
2. Assessments – As the curriculum is revised and further developed, the assessments should reflect what teachers want students to know and be able to do at each level. The assessments should give students opportunities to demonstrate how well they are able to function in the language.
3. Assessments connected to instruction- Assessment tasks should be designed to evaluate speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills within the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication as they relate to comprehensibility, comprehension, language control, vocabulary, cultural awareness, and communication strategies. These tasks should be aligned with the curriculum, which should be standards based.
4. District wide assessments- Common assessments should be developed and collaboratively scored by teachers. These should be directly linked to improving instruction.
5. Vertical and horizontal articulation – As the curriculum becomes more vertically and horizontally aligned and expands to the younger grades, assessments need to be created at each level and for each language. This serves to further guide the articulation of the program and sequence as students progress through the courses.

6. Grading – Once assessments are developed for units by grade level, scoring guides and rubrics for these assessments/skill areas which include identified criteria need to be developed, distributed to students and consistently followed.
7. Collaboration – Time is needed for teachers to work together on developing assessments, and rubrics, as well as scoring them across the district.
8. Higher level thinking skills – Assessments should focus in part on higher level thinking skills and not be predominantly focused on recall. Incorporate the 21st Century skills when determining ways to assess students.
9. Standards for Foreign Language Learning – The assessments need to be based on the standards for foreign language learning.
10. Performance assessments may be developed to assess students' performance in different skills areas and modes of communication as they undertake real world tasks.

Facilities

Commendations:

1. Foreign language teachers have classrooms at both the middle and high schools.
2. All foreign language classes are offered in a dedicated space for foreign language.
3. Technology is available for use in the classrooms and buildings including access to interactive white boards and iPads.
4. Materials storage- There is a dedicated storage area in the high school for keeping materials organized which allows for sharing of materials between teachers and across levels as appropriate.

Recommendations:

1. Classroom environment – The foreign language classrooms should be print rich, culturally appropriate, with posters, signs, realia in the target language.
2. Multimedia language lab – In order to provide students with dedicated opportunities for interpersonal language practice, the installation of a digital, multimedia language lab is a goal within the next 1-2 years. The language lab allows student pairing for interpersonal chats, discussions, or messaging that can be collected/recorded. The lab also allows for teacher monitoring of student activities and teacher directed use specific internet sites. In the lab, teachers can use video lessons, model with students or pairs of students, and also control oral testing for speaking assessments.
3. Multimedia language lab support – The installation of the lab should be followed by specific teacher training in the lab in order to optimize student use and engagement.
4. Training – Specific training for the technology and equipment available is needed for use in foreign language classrooms. This includes specific apps for foreign language, google docs for teachers since they have access to it as well as interactive white board training as its use relates to foreign language instruction.
5. Materials storage- There should be a dedicated storage area in the middle school for keeping materials organized which would allow for sharing of materials between teachers and across levels as appropriate.

Leadership

Commendations:

1. The support of the Central Office administration and Board of Education to undertake this review is noteworthy.
2. Leadership of a department head – Elizabeth Spencer, the English Language Arts department head, has also provided leadership to the foreign language department.
3. Support of principals – The principals at Brookfield High School and Whisconier Middle School and the assistant principal at the high school have been supportive of the foreign language program.

Recommendations:

1. World Language department leadership is key to providing continued direction for the world language program and overseeing multiple aspects of the program. The preference would be to hire a foreign language expert to oversee the program. This person would be responsible to:
 - a. Oversee Budget K-12 for the foreign language department
 - b. Guide curriculum development initiatives, including revisions to current programs/courses and offering of new/additional courses in foreign language
 - c. Provide leadership and support for staff
 - d. Recruit dual certified, highly qualified staff
 - e. Plan and implement professional development for collaboration between elementary, middle and high school teachers for increased vertical and horizontal curricular alignment
 - f. Increase communication among staff
 - g. Communicate with administration to provide a world language perspective
 - h. Actively become involved with foreign language professional organizations for access to materials, resources, and colleagues in the foreign language community including the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language (NECTFL), Connecticut Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CT COLT), the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), and the National Association for District Supervisors for Foreign Language (NADSFL).
 - i. Coordinate advocacy initiatives within the community and the schools that promote foreign language learning.
 - j. Help guide and support common assessment initiatives within the department.
 - k. Actively seek out available grant opportunities.

Advocacy

Commendations:

1. Website – The high school foreign language department has a website highlighting the program with course offerings. The programs of study, which include descriptions of the foreign language courses offered at the middle and high school, are posted on the website.

2. Teacher websites – The teachers have individual websites which include pertinent course information and language specific details.

Recommendations:

1. Communication with the greater community – Press releases, newspaper articles, website postings, school to home letters are all ways to send out information about the foreign language program and highlight achievements of students.
2. Foreign Language Website – Create a foreign language website to function as a public resource as well as a vehicle for advocacy.
3. Teacher websites – Whisconier Middle School teacher websites should be identified specifically by the language taught.
4. Develop talking points for counseling department to promote the study of foreign language and illustrate the importance of foreign language learning for further study in college, for careers, for communication, as well as other frequently asked questions about foreign language study.
5. Events – Run foreign language specific events that are open to the community. These events can highlight student work, showcase student performances, celebrate cultural occasions, while promoting language learning and the district's foreign language program.
6. Statewide events - Participate in the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (CT COLT) annual events for various languages and levels such as the Poetry Contest, Poster Contest, Essay Contest, and Rhyme Celebration.
7. National initiatives – Participate in national initiatives such as Discover Languages Month in February sponsored by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), International Education week, as well as language specific initiatives.
8. Competitions and contest – Participate in state, regional, and national language specific assessments such as Grand Concours (American Council on the Teaching of French), National Spanish Exam (American Council on the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese).
9. Clubs and activities – Offer foreign language before or after school extracurricular activities/clubs at the elementary, middle and high schools.
10. Celebrations of student success – Highlight students' successes and achievements by recognitions in school through PSA announcements, honoring a student of the month, offering departmental awards for achievement in foreign language classes.
11. Professional organizations – Encourage membership for teachers in foreign language professional organizations so they increase their awareness and are provided with resources and advocacy materials and networking opportunities beyond the district level.

Brookfield Public Schools Foreign Language Program Goals

Immediate

- consistent use of target language,
- embrace the goal of graduating students who are proficient in at least one language in addition to English,
- classrooms that are culturally appropriate with print rich materials,
- review of current research, pedagogy, and language documents (Standards, Common Core Crosswalk with foreign language, The Keys to Assessing Language Performance, etc.)
- use of all available professional development and meeting time to bring the entire department together to begin to build an articulated program
- review middle school schedule to allow for daily instruction in Spanish in 5th and 6th grades
- continue to offer a minimum of three World Language choices to high school students

Short term- 1-2 years

- expansion of elementary Spanish program to the younger grades
 - 1.0 FTE to deliver Spanish to grades K-1 for 15 minutes 3 days per week
 - 1.0 FTE to deliver Spanish to grade 2-3 for 15 minutes 3 days per week
- introduce a Mandarin program 1.0 FTE
 - For 2013-2014: .2 FTE at Whisconier (one section for grade 7), .2 FTE at Brookfield High School in year 1 (grade 9), with .2 for curriculum development and planning and .4 middle and high school after school support for students, after school clubs, and in school activities/performances in year one
 - For 2013-2014: .4 FTE at Whisconier (7th grade section and 8th grade section) and .4 at Brookfield High School (grade 9 and grade 10) and .2 curriculum development and after school student support.
- dedicated funds for curriculum development for an elementary Spanish program
- dedicated curriculum development time for foreign language in light of 21st century skills and the new Common Core State Standards
- establishment of a multimedia language lab at the middle school

Long term – 3-5 years

- provide World Language department leadership with 1 FTE World Language Department Curriculum Specialist
- add Spanish to 4th grade for 15 minutes 3 days per week
- dedicated funds for curriculum development for a Mandarin program
- establishment of a multimedia language lab at the high school

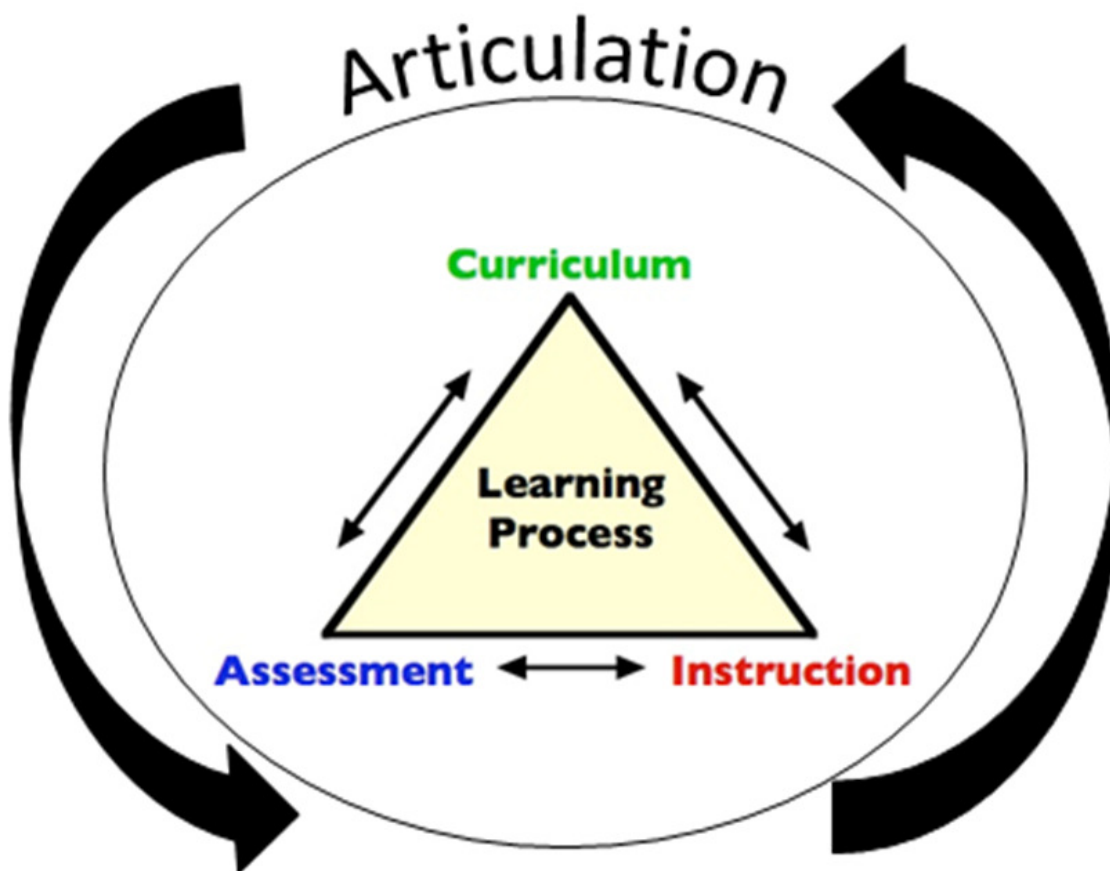
References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). (2006). Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century. Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).
- Sandrock, P. (2010). *The Keys to Assessing Language Performance: A teacher's manual for measuring student progress*. Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).
- Curtain, H. & C. A. Dahlberg. (2010). *Languages and Children: Making the Match*. 4th edition. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Appendix

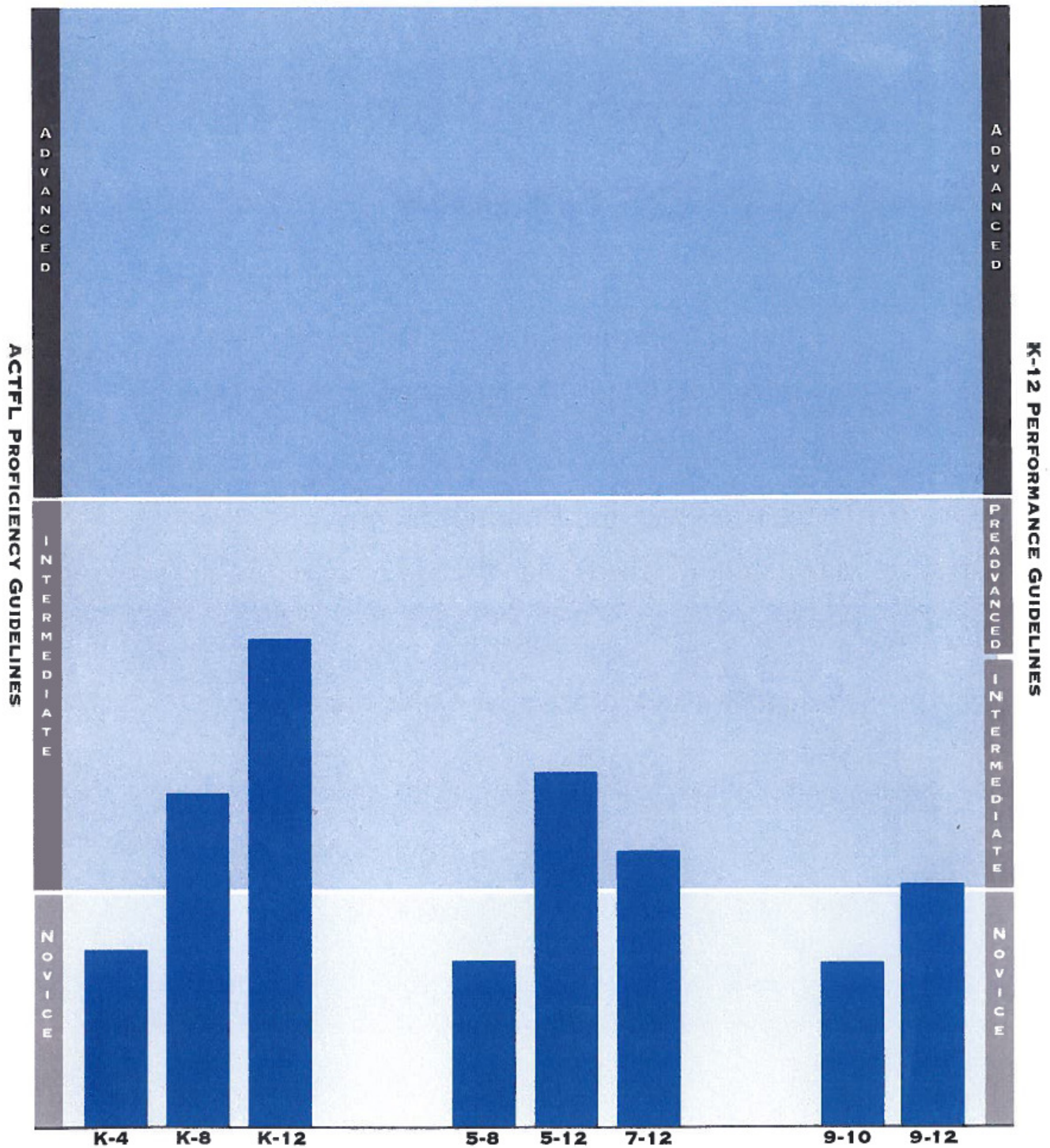
- A. Curriculum Assessment Instruction diagram (GPS 2012)
- B. ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners
- C. National Standards for Foreign Language Learning
- D. 21st Century Skills document (GPS 2012)
- E. Link to ACTFL 21st Century Skills Map
<http://nadsfl.wikispaces.com/file/view/ACTFL+2012+P-21+worldlanguages+skills+map.pdf>
- F. Common Core Crosswalk with ACTFL Standards
<http://nadsfl.wikispaces.com/file/view/ACTFL+Aligning+Common+core+ELA+with+WL+Language+Standards+2012.pdf>

Appendix A



Appendix B

Visual Representation of Anticipated Performance Outcomes As Described in the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners¹



Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Communication

Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

A word cloud featuring various skills and literacies. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some words being larger and more prominent than others. The colors of the words include shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and brown. The words are: Accountability, Information Literacy, Adaptation, Collaboration, Productivity, 21st Century Skills, Media Literacy, Creativity, Innovation, Critical Thinking, Communication, Leadership, Self Direction, Social Cross Cultural Skills, Flexibility, Problem Solving, Technology Literacy, Responsibility, and Initiative.

Accountability
Information Literacy
Adaptation
Collaboration
Productivity
21st Century Skills
Media Literacy
Creativity
Innovation
Critical Thinking
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Leadership
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Flexibility
Problem Solving
Technology Literacy
Responsibility
Initiative