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Massachusetts World Language  
Standard Update Service  
Final Report

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## Introduction

World language education is a necessary component to prepare students for success in this culturally and linguistically diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ability to communicate in multiple languages and understand other cultures equips students to be college- and career-ready in multicultural campus and business environments.

*The Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework* (referred to as “the Massachusetts Framework” in this report) was adopted in 1999 and has not been updated since that time. To ensure the quality of Massachusetts’ world language education, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to research and provide recommendations on whether DESE should adopt the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (referred to as “the ACTFL Standards” in this report) or, instead, rewrite the existing 1999 Massachusetts Framework. To inform this recommendation, CAL examined three research questions:

1. What are best practices in world language standards and standards revisions?
2. What is the state of world language standards across the U.S.?
3. What are the needs of users in Massachusetts for world language standards?

To answer the first research question, CAL conducted a literature review that examined the social changes that have created needs for standards revisions, the theoretical framework of the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Standards, and best practices in creating and revising world language standards. CAL also prepared an annotated bibliography summarizing relevant research findings on this topic. A comparative analysis of world language standards in all states and the District of Columbia was conducted to examine current trends and inform Massachusetts’ standards revision process. Finally, an online survey was distributed to current and former world language educators in Massachusetts to better understand local user needs.

The following sections of this report present the findings of the review of literature, comparative analysis, and survey, followed by CAL’s recommendations for Massachusetts’ world language standards revision.

## Review of Literature

Since their original publication in 1996, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages world language standards have become one of the most widely adopted language frameworks at the state and district levels (Phillips & Abbott, 2011). The most recent edition, *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, was published in 2015 by the National Standards Collaborative Board. The ACTFL Standards target five goal areas – *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities*, or the “Five Cs”. The ACTFL Standards and ACTFL progress indicators have been revised several times since their inceptions, and most states have revised their world language standards in response to the changes in these standards and to other social influences.

This section of the report begins with an overview of the social changes that have driven world language standards revisions, followed by a review of literature on the ACTFL Standards. Specifically, the theoretical underpinnings of the ACTFL Standards and best practices and challenges when revising and implementing world language standards were examined. Finally, CAL investigated implementation of the Common Core State Standards to evaluate lessons learned from widespread adoption and subsequent revision of national educational standards. Articles referenced in this section are included in Appendix 1.

### Social Changes and Standards Revisions

Over the past several decades, society has undergone social, economic, and technological changes to which national and local educational standards have responded to best prepare students for success. Due to the international competition that individuals now face in academia and the workplace (Duncan, 2010; Pang, 2013), encouraging students to think like world citizens is of the utmost importance, which is reflected in many of the national educational standards (Curtain, 2013). One of the most influential frameworks, the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006), describes core subjects and skills students should master to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media, and technology skills. The Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) also emphasize college and career readiness, incorporating the use of technology in language arts and mathematics standards.

The field of world language teaching and learning has responded to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as well. The ACTFL Standards made major revisions to include greater attention to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in literacy, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). The student outcomes for developing these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are well aligned with other national frameworks (Phillips & Abbott, 2011), validating the importance of language learning for student success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Cox, Malone, & Winke, 2018). Other social changes have also impacted world language teaching and learning; the following paragraphs outline these changes and key revisions in the ACTFL Standards to address them.

The population of the United States is growing more diverse, as immigration continues to dramatically impact the demographic makeup of communities across the country. There are now nearly 350 languages spoken in the U.S. and one in five residents speaks a language other than English, including approximately 20% of K-12 students enrolled in public school (Heineke & Davin, 2018). The ACTFL Standards, in line with many other state standards, have consequently moved away from the use of the term “foreign languages” to describe languages other than

English, as many of the languages being learned are no longer considered “foreign” in this country (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015; Kramersch, 2014).

Advancements in technology have contributed to a growing sense of interconnectedness on a global scale. Computer-based technologies, including social media applications, multimedia resources, digital games, virtual realities, blogs, and podcasts allow learners to access authentic cultural materials and interact with people around the world (Chun, Smith, & Kern, 2016; O'Dowd, 2011; Zhao, 2013). The ACTFL Standards encourage educators to leverage technology to support language learning and enhance instruction, practice, and assessment. The standards state: “Access to a variety of technologies ranging from computer-assisted instruction to interactive video, DVDs, the Internet, email, social media, text messages, and apps will help learners strengthen linguistic skills, establish interactions with peers, and learn about contemporary culture and everyday life in the target country” (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 31). Applications of technology are also stated within each goal area and their progress indicators.

As the push to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in young learners has increased steadily in recent years, so has the desire to expose them to world languages. Although many learners still only have the option to study a language in high school, an increasing number of schools are providing world language instruction at the elementary level (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Several different program models have gained in popularity, including total immersion, two-way immersion, partial immersion, and content-based world language education (Gilzow & Rhodes, 2000). As these programs vary greatly from school to school, most notably in terms of entry point and length of study (Curtain, Donato, & Gilbert, 2016), there is a greater need for flexible benchmarks to monitor student progress. Although previously organized by grade level, the ACTFL Standards have updated their progress indicators in the 2015 version, making them adaptable to any beginning point, program model, or grade level (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015).

In addition to longer sequences of study, students are being exposed to an increasing number of languages (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Less commonly taught languages have seen significant increases in enrollment at both the K-12 (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2011) and postsecondary levels in recent years (Murphy, Magnan, Back, & Garrett-Rucks, 2009), and there is a considerable demand for programs in Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese (Christian, 2016). Over time, the ACTFL Standards have been updated in collaboration with numerous world language associations to include more references to less commonly taught languages throughout the text, as well as language-specific standards for American Sign Language, Arabic, Chinese, Classical Languages, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Scandinavian languages, Spanish, and Yoruba; standards for additional languages are already in development by other organizations (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, pp. 15-16).

ACTFL’s language-specific standards are packaged with the “generic” standards and may be purchased singly or as a complete set, with users “...encouraged to read across languages where they will find great ideas that they can adapt” (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 16). The language-specific standards are built upon the common ACTFL Standards and provide information about the national context for the teaching of that language, sample progress indicators with examples, and detailed learning scenarios. Based on time of creation, only the Hindi and Yoruba standards are aligned to the current edition (2015) in organizing progress indicators by proficiency level rather than grade.

## Theoretical Underpinnings of the ACTFL Standards

Effective educational standards need to be theoretically justified to reflect best practices in teaching and learning. Since the mid-1980s, the field of language education has moved away from grammar-based pedagogies and adopted the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980), the most advocated approach by researchers. The Communicative Language Teaching approach underscores the relationship of form and function, authentic contexts, and the roles of learners and teachers (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 31). ACTFL's approach to language teaching and learning is grounded in Communicative Language Teaching. The Five Cs underline teaching grammar in meaningful contexts and using language as a tool to access other cultures and disciplines (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) and therefore provide a good guideline for teachers to follow the Communicative Language Teaching approach.

The ACTFL *Progress Indicators for Language Learners*, or the *Can-Do Statements* (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2015), are also supported by research. Moeller and Yu (2015) pointed out that the *Can-Do Statements* allow learners to demonstrate autonomy, self-determination, and competence, which are three essential components in motivation theory. Perhaps more importantly, prominent researchers in the field of second language acquisition have long argued against the deficit model of language learning (Cook & Wei, 2016; Ortega, 2019), that is, holding second language learners against native speaker norms and monolingual norms (Holliday, 2006). By highlighting what learners *can* achieve, the *Can-Do Statements* reject the negative framing of second language learning and the construction of deficit.

Criticisms of the ACTFL Standards, and the Communicative Language Teaching approach in general, include the challenges they pose for non-native speaking teachers who may have limited access to authentic materials (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 32), which underscores the importance of technology in classrooms (Internet, social media, video, and audio). Another criticism centers on the mismatch between the communicative nature of this approach and assessment (McNamara & Roever, 2006). This issue is noted in several empirical studies cited in the annotated bibliography and in the survey results. Despite these criticisms, the ACTFL Standards are well-grounded in research and widely recognized by second language educators and researchers.

## World Language Standards Implementation—Best Practices and Challenges

A theoretically sound framework does not always guarantee successful learning. As Allen (2002) pointed out, “rewriting state frameworks and local curriculum is not enough to ensure that standards-based world language teaching and learning will take place in the classroom” (p. 518). Standards need to be supported by a curriculum, teaching plans, assessments, and professional development opportunities that align with them. Empirical studies have uncovered discrepancies between standards, assessments, and implementation that may be attributed to teachers' beliefs, their familiarity with the standards, and resources available to them (Allen, 2002; Kaplan, 2016; Phillips & Abbott, 2011).

In terms of implementing world language standards, perhaps one of the most prominent issues is that the Five Cs are usually not addressed equally in curriculum and instruction. The ACTFL Standards do not prioritize any goal area over the others, and underscore that they are interconnected and cannot be separated (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 27). They justify the inclusion of each goal area in language education based on language learners' diverse goals and reasons for language study (p. 27) and call for “...incorporating a balance of

the 5 Cs (the Goal Areas of the Standards), the weave of curricular elements, and the constant connection with the modes of communication” (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 35). Research has found, however, that the *Communication* goal area is by far the most emphasized, whereas *Communities* and *Connections* are the least frequently addressed, despite technological advancements that make connecting with target communities and authentic materials easier (Cox, Malone, & Winke, 2018; Kaplan, 2016; Kissau & Adams, 2016; Sarroub, 2001; Troyan, 2012). World language educators might not be aligning instruction to the standards because they do not view all goal areas as equally important, they do not understand how to implement the standards, they face logistical challenges, or a combination of these factors.

Another of the major implementation issues involves assessment in world language programs. A survey study revealed that less than half of the responding teachers completely align assessments to the ACTFL Standards (Phillips & Abbott, 2011). Many assessments still focus on discrete-point, grammar-based test questions, which creates a mismatch between the assessment construct and the teaching goals. Even when the assessments align with the Five Cs, they tend to focus on the *Communication* goal area, just like curriculum and instruction (Allen, 2002; Kaplan, 2016).

Professional development is a crucial element to ensure the successful implementation of standards, but time and budget often limit school districts’ options (Phillips & Abbott, 2011). District administrators also reported teachers’ unwillingness to engage in professional development opportunities (Phillips & Abbott, 2011). Most professional development events “focus on the *Communication* and *Cultures* goal areas, 99% and 56% respectively” (Phillips & Abbott, 2011, p. 12), while other goal areas are seldom addressed. In addition, although the use of Internet resources and computer-assisted instructional materials has significantly increased in world language programs (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010), teacher preparation programs have yet to prioritize methods for integrating technology into instruction (Abbott, Feal, & Looney, 2014).

In conclusion, updating world language standards does not stop with the standards revision itself. Relevant resources accompanying the standards need to be communicated and made accessible to teachers to provide three-dimensional support for instructional changes to take place.

## Lessons from Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) created in 2009 focus on Math, English Language Arts/Literacy, and college and career readiness. Since their creation, most states have adopted the CCSS to varying degrees, and the state of world language standards is not comparable to that of the CCSS in some ways. For instance, states were provided with significant more incentives to adopt the CCSS, including a \$4.35 billion competitive grant program designed to encourage education reform in these content areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). However, examining what happened after states adopted, revised, or withdrew from the CCSS may provide insights for adoption of national world language standards by individual states.

While 46 states initially adopted the CCSS, 7 states later repealed, withdrew, or started the process of repeal or withdrawal from Common Core. In 2016, Massachusetts contracted Abt Associates to produce a report on the revision processes of Math and English Language Arts standards across states. The report provided a detailed review of standard revisions in nine states. Results show that these states revised around a quarter of the content in the CCSS. Among the revisions, the majority (67%-69%) were minor clarifying changes. The next most common

revision type was addition to the standards (25%), while deletion was extremely rare (0-1.3%) (Abt Associates, 2016).

In August 2018, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute reviewed and rated Math and ELA standards in states that have revised the CCSS. For the states that made minor revisions, the report indicated that they mainly focus on the implementation of the standards, adopt the improvements other states made, and address specific issues in the national standards (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2018, p. 25). For the states that made substantive revisions to the CCSS, the report claims that "...most states that either failed to adopt or made non-trivial changes to the Common Core State Standards replaced them with standards that were weaker in both subjects" and while some states' revisions resulted in decent standards, other states "would have been better off if they had adopted the Common Core without making any revisions" (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2018, p. 25). One researcher attributed the low quality of standards to the lack of expertise in state governments: "If you have the right expertise in place, it's not that you can't develop strong, or potentially even better, standards. But it's the exception to the norm" (Iasevoli, 2018).

Drawing from these findings, when states plan to rewrite their own world language standards or adapt the ACTFL Standards, it is important to evaluate the expertise and resources available to determine the scope of revisions as well as look to learn from other states' experiences.



## Annotated bibliography

The following annotated bibliography presents a synopsis of articles, reports, and studies that address issues related to world language education and education standards in three areas: overview of world language standards; empirical studies on world language standards implementation; and Common Core State Standards.

### Overview of World Language Standards

**Cox, T. L., Malone, M. E., & Winke, P. (2018). Future directions in assessment: Influences of standards and implications for language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51, 104-115.**

This article examines the growing popularity of standards-based education and assessment in the United States and beyond. The researchers discuss the development and influence of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The study explores the emphasis of the “Five Cs” in both instruction and assessment, as well as their overall impact on language learning for both teachers and students from diverse backgrounds.

**Kramsch, C. (2014). Teaching foreign languages in an era of globalization: Introduction. *The Modern Language Journal*, 296-311.**

This article examines the changes in world language education caused by globalization. Kramsch argues the need for a more interpretive and reflective pedagogy in response to increased mobility, competition, cultural hybridity, growing diversity, and rapid change. The current state of world language education in the United States and the impact of globalization on American classrooms is also discussed.

**Phillips, J. K., & Abbott, M. (2011). *A decade of foreign language standards: Impact, influence, and future directions*. Alexandria: ACTFL.**

This report presents data from a variety of sources to examine the impact of the ACTFL Standards on educational institutions, curriculum development, assessment, classroom practices, professional development, and methods courses. The authors also provide recommendations for next steps in the future, including updating the bibliography, supporting dialogue among key stakeholders, and building stronger linkage between language instruction and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

### Empirical Studies on World Language Standards Implementation

**Allen, L. (2002). Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and the standards for foreign language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35(5), 518-529.**

This survey study examines 613 Midwestern world language teachers' beliefs about and familiarity with world language teaching and the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. While participants' beliefs are generally consistent with the standards, the results suggest that they could benefit from professional development opportunities. Participants' familiarity with the standards differ significantly based on two factors: rural or urban school location and membership in professional organizations.

**Kaplan, C. S. (2016). Alignment of world language standards and assessments: A multiple case study. *Foreign Language Annals*, 49(3), 502-529.**

This case study examines to what extent four high school teachers' assessment practices align with the *Ohio Learning Standards for K-12 World Language Programs*. Field notes, assessment artifacts, and interview data were collected over an eight-month period. The results indicate that the participants do not address goal areas in the standards in a balanced way. Presentational Mode in the *Communication* goal area is most frequently addressed in assessments. Participants' assessment practices were often determined by their individual beliefs and reported resource constraints.

**Sarroub, G. J. (2001). A collective case study of the implementation process of the Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks by six teachers. *The Modern Language Journal*, 85(4), 499-511.**

This case study examines how six K-12 teachers implemented the *Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks*. The results show that the teachers implement the Frameworks differently, depending on their experience levels and grade clusters they work with. Among the five goal areas, *Communication* was perceived as the easiest to implement by all teachers.

### Common Core State Standards

**Abt Associates. (2016). *Massachusetts English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks Review*. Cambridge, MA.**

This report was prepared for the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to inform the standards review process for Math and ELA standards revisions. The report describes the revision process, participants, analysis of the feedback, and key themes of the Math and ELA revisions.

**Thomas B. Fordham Institute. (2018). *The state of state standards post-common core*. Washington, DC.**

This report examines Math and ELA standards in states that have made major revisions to the Common Core States Standards. It critiques the general organization, content and rigor, and clarity and specificity of these states' standards and provides recommendations for improvement.

## Comparative Analysis

To examine current trends in state world language standards and inform Massachusetts' standards revision process, a comparative analysis was conducted. The analysis began with a web search of current and previous world language standards in the other 49 states and Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> (see Appendix 2). The standards collected were analyzed for year of revision and key changes made from the previous version, alignment to ACTFL Standards, and inclusion of language-specific standards (see Appendix 3). A detailed analysis of the standards revision process was conducted for a subset of states with current or recently completed revisions.

### Standards Revision Processes

The dates of the current version of state world language standards range from 1996 to 2020. Since the publication of the 2015 ACTFL Standards, 28 states have either updated or are in the process of updating their standards. The 9 states undergoing the revision process at the time of this report are Arkansas, California, Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, and Wisconsin. Major changes to new state standards include revised goal areas, progress indicators, and terminology. Many new state standards also added 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, references to different program models, and language-specific standards.

A total of four states--Illinois, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Rhode Island--have adopted the 2015 ACTFL Standards in their entirety. When states use language from the ACTFL Standards in the creation of their own standards, they may choose to collaborate directly with ACTFL. A director at ACTFL characterized the typical steps to this process as follows:

*“Most states (for example, Wisconsin, Delaware and Kansas) send a request for us to review and provide input on their proposed re-configuration/variation on the ACTFL Standards and Can-Do statements. We frequently review and provide feedback, but there is no official endorsement by ACTFL. In addition, we facilitate copyright issues on behalf of the 17 language organizations that constitute the Standards Collaborative Board, and that board is the legal author of the standards. There’s no fee, and the timeline really depends on the other work we have. The copyright requires facilitation with the 17 organizations.”*

The world language standards revision processes of 12 states were analyzed using data collected from public data sources (Department of Education websites and reports) and interviews with state world language specialists and Department of Education directors. In this data set, the duration of the world language standards revision process ranged from nine months to three years, with an average length of two years. This wide range of reported time spent could be attributed to the varying definitions of the revision process in each state. Some states included preparation, background research, and implementation in their timelines, while others reported only the time it took for the standards revision itself. For example, Montana’s timeline begins with a six-month window for research and review, while Tennessee’s timeline begins with their educator advisory team convening and making revisions. Figure 1 shows the length of world language standards revision processes by state.

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<sup>1</sup> In the following sections of this analysis, Washington, D.C. is counted as a state. There are therefore 50 total states for which world language standards were analyzed.

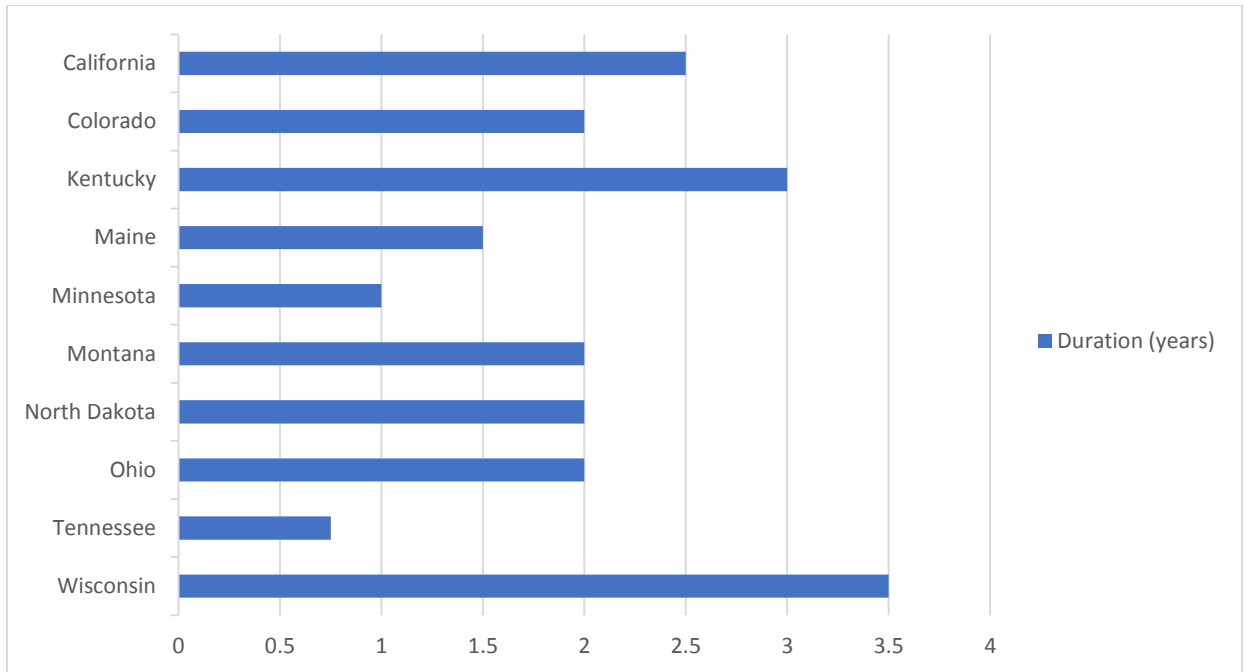


Figure 1. Duration of world language standards revision process

As discussed in the literature review, the standards revision process does not stop with the publication of the revisions. Because three-dimensional supports are needed to facilitate successful implementation of the new standards, states' involvement in standards revisions should, and in the cases examined usually did, go far beyond the text revision itself. For example, Ohio's revision process took two years, and schools were not expected to fully implement the new standards until three years later. During this period, the Ohio Department of Education also developed a model curriculum to facilitate the implementation of the new standards. Table 1 shows a comprehensive timeline of Ohio's standards revision process.

Table 1. Timeline for Ohio standards revision

Date	Step
June 2010	Teacher discussion group was formed. 50 diverse world language educators provided input on what they liked about the current standards, and what revisions they would make.
August 2010	Advisory group (12-13 members) was formed. The advisory group analyzed the focus group results and considered legislative mandates, trends, and innovations in the field.
November 2010	Teacher working group (15-20 world language educators) was formed and revision began.
November-April 2011	First draft writing. The teacher working group met 5-6 times.
May 2011	First draft reviewed by groups of nationally acclaimed world language education experts.
July-September 2011	Second draft writing
September-November 2011	14 focus groups were conducted across the state to collect feedback

<b>Date</b>	<b>Step</b>
November 2011-January 2012	Online public review
January-March 2012	827 comments from focus groups and online public review were incorporated into a third draft
April 2012	Achievement committee review
May 2012	Final review
<b>June 2012</b>	<b>Ohio's new Learning Standards for K-12 World Languages were adopted by the State Board of Education.</b>
2012-2014	School districts revised local curricula
2013-2014	Model curriculum development
June 2014	Model curriculum approval
2014-2015 school year	Schools in Ohio fully implemented the new standards.

Each analyzed state's standards revision process included three essential elements: assembling a committee of standards experts, conducting reviews and revisions, and gathering public feedback. For all states, the core revision committee consisted of 10-20 educators, but the committee selection process varied by state. Educators in the North Dakota committee were nominated by the Foreign Language Association of North Dakota. By contrast, in Montana's planned standards revision, the application to join the content standards revision team is open to the public and posted on the Office of Public Instruction website.

The selection criteria in most states emphasize the diversity of the team. Ohio reported the most diverse stakeholder groups. The committee was formed with members that represent:

*"All languages, all levels of teachers including elementary, middle, high school, and post-secondary. All types of schools, including public, private, charter; all types of learning environments including urban, suburban, and rural; all socio-economic groups, all geographical regions of the states. And many other stakeholders including teachers' unions, administrators, higher education, and teacher preparation programs, technology specialists, special education specialists, differentiated instruction specialists, parents, school board members."*

While committee membership varied by state, most states' selection criteria included a variety of these groups. The diversity of the committee helps ensure that the standards are applicable to a variety of learning environments, and states also take their unique context into consideration. North Dakota, for example, with its large Native American population, included representatives from Native American languages in addition to other commonly taught world languages on its committee.

All states researched reported a public comments step in the revision process, although the methods vary. Kentucky contracted a third party to seek recommendations on the drafted standards and Maine held public hearings. Wisconsin used forums, focus groups, and media exposure to ensure wide participation. Other states, such as Colorado, posted the standards online for public feedback and review. Colorado reported having received 8,000 comments from the public feedback period.

Budget totals as well as compensation for participants also varied by state. Outside of travel and hotel costs, participants were usually not compensated. Many states granted licensure hours or certification hours to participants. Ohio also compensated schools for the cost of

substitute teachers when an educator participated in the revision working group. Colorado reported that educators who volunteered their time spent 80-100 hours each on this project.

Ohio's total budget for the standards revision was about \$55,000. As a part of Minnesota's revision process, a report on world language competencies was conducted with a reported cost of \$11,640.74. This cost includes staff time in obtaining faculty and staff input, analyzing data from surveys, analyzing current practices, and preparing the written report. Colorado contracted ACTFL for a report on the alignment between the current Colorado world language standards and the ACTFL Standards at an estimated cost of \$2,000-\$3,000.

## Alignment with ACTFL Standards

### Goal Areas

Figure 2 shows the alignment of goal areas in state world language standards to the Five Cs of the ACTFL Standards. A total of 30 states adopted all Five Cs in their standards, 7 states eliminated or collapsed one or two goal areas, and 12 states structured their standards very differently from the Five Cs. One state, Vermont, incorporated the Five Cs and added an additional goal area in its standards.

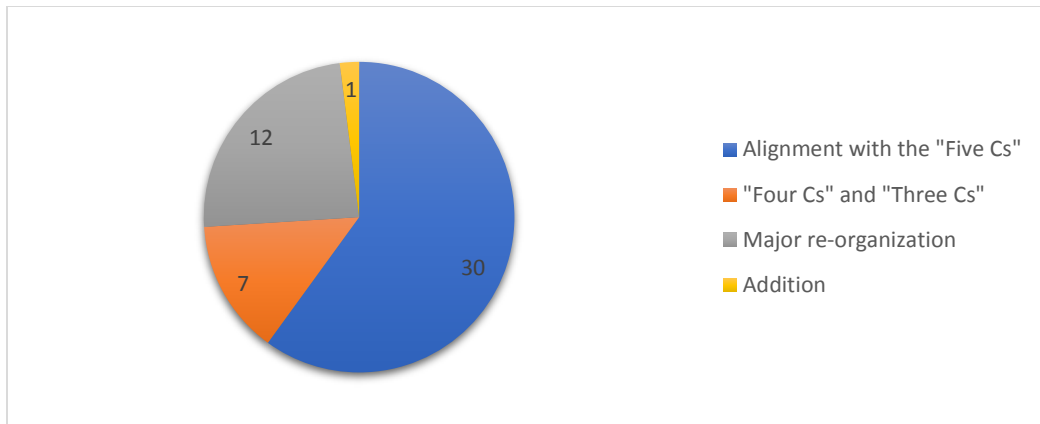


Figure 2. State goal area alignment with the Five Cs

### Overall Alignment with the Five Cs

Among the 30 states that included all Five Cs in their standards, the degree of alignment to the ACTFL Standards varies. Illinois, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Rhode Island provide a direct link to the ACTFL Standards on their Department of Education websites. Maine provides a link to the ACTFL Standards in addition to their 2007 standards, which they plan to revise in 2019. Other states such as Delaware, Kansas, Maryland, New Hampshire, and Washington created their own language standards documents in which they include the specific language of the Five Cs.

Most states that aligned their goal areas to the Five Cs made slight modifications, including minor wording differences (for example, "explore" instead of "investigate") or further explanation of each area. Some states also added language-specific expectations to the goal areas. For example, Oklahoma included explanations of how each goal area can be adapted for Classical Languages and Native American Languages. Other states, however, refer to separate language-specific standards in these cases (see section on Language-Specific Standards below).

Many states provide justifications for aligning their standards with the Five Cs. For example, Nevada highlights how the 2015 ACTFL Standards are aligned with other prominent national standards and Idaho states that the standards provide “a clear articulation of the power of language learning within an increasingly global economy” (Idaho World Language Executive Standards Revision Committee, 2015, p. 1) .

Elimination and Consolidation

A total of 19 states modified the Five Cs in some way in their standards. Modifications include the elimination of one or more goal areas, the integration of some goal areas into others, and a major re-organization of the structure. *Communication* is the only goal area included in the standards for all 19 states, and *Cultures* is also commonly included. Figure 3 shows the number of states that exclude each ACTFL goal area from their standards.

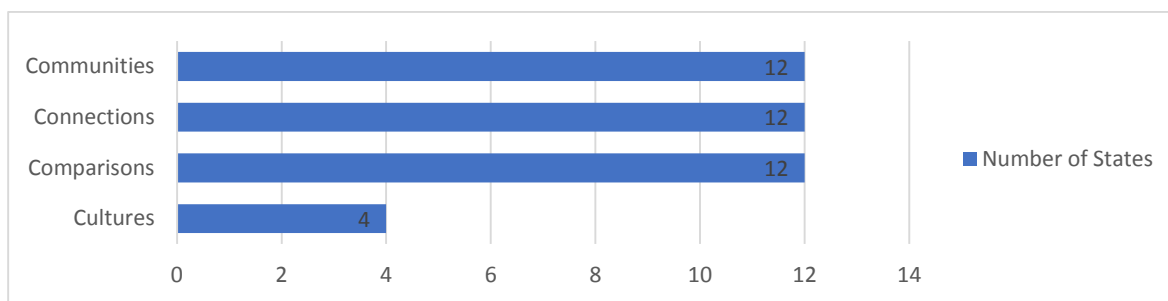


Figure 3. Goal areas excluded from state standards

Some state world language standards make no mention of a certain ACTFL goal area. Colorado has four standards: Communication in Languages Other than English; Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures; Connections with Other Disciplines and Information Acquisition; and Comparisons to Develop Insights into the Nature of Language and Culture. These standards correspond to the first four goal areas in the Five Cs, while *Communities* is not explicitly addressed. Some states, however, integrate specific goal areas into other named standards. Pennsylvania, for example, incorporated elements of ACTFL’s *Comparisons* and *Connections* goal areas into its *Communication* and *Cultures* standards.

Major changes to the structure of the Five Cs are seen in standards in 12 states. Most of these states organized their standards around the *Communication* and *Cultures* goal areas. These states divided the *Communication* goal area into Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational sub-standards and/or Reading, Listening, Writing, and Speaking domains, but the ACTFL sub-standards in *Cultures*, *Connections*, *Comparisons*, and *Communities* were omitted. Figure 4 shows the organization of Arizona’s World Language Standards, which follows this model.



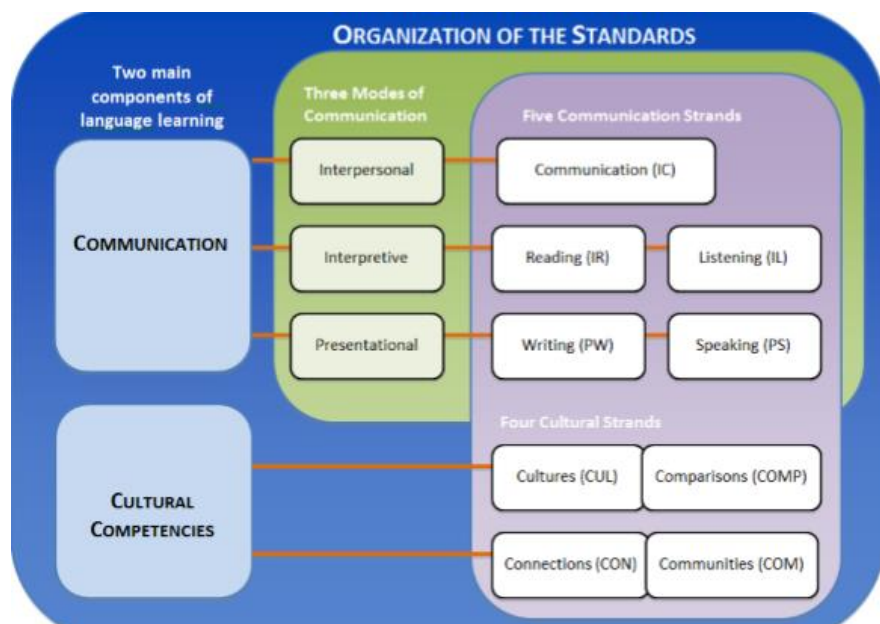


Figure 4. Organization of the Arizona World and Native Languages Standards

Oregon (2010), Wyoming (2013), New Jersey (2014), and Iowa (2016) only include the *Communication* goal area in their standards, broken down into Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational Modes, as well as Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking domains. Iowa and Wyoming specify that *Culture* is embedded throughout *Communication* in their standards. Oregon quoted the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP)’s Foreign Language NAEP Assessment Framework (see Figure 5) to justify the structure of its standards, stating that *Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities* are “the basis for instructional activities and are fully embedded within the world language communication objectives.”



Figure 5. The Foreign Language NAEP Assessment Framework

Addition

Addition to the Five Cs is not common in state world language standards. Vermont is the only state to include all Five Cs and an extra goal area titled “Curiosity, Cooperation and Challenge-Approach to Learning,” which encourages students to use different methods outside of the classroom to promote life-long learning. Other state standards expand on the Five Cs by adding sub-standards within specific goal areas. For example, although the standards for



Kentucky, South Carolina, and Utah do not include *Comparisons, Connections* and *Communities*, they list additional standards in the *Cultures* goal area. These standards focus on products and practices, discussing ways of thinking and connecting one’s culture with the target culture.

#### Progress Indicators

The 2015 ACTFL Standards updated and changed the framing of sample indicators for student progress, organizing them by proficiency level in line with the revised 2012 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. These progress indicators are identified by performance range (Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced) rather than by grade level as in the 1999 and 2006 editions of ACTFL’s *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, with delineation of grade level ranges within the proficiency ranges in the goal areas of *Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities*. Figure 6 shows the number of states whose standards organize progress indicators by ACTFL proficiency level, grade level, a combination, or other performance level framework. Figure 7 shows the number of states that utilize each type of progress indicator framework by year of standards publication.

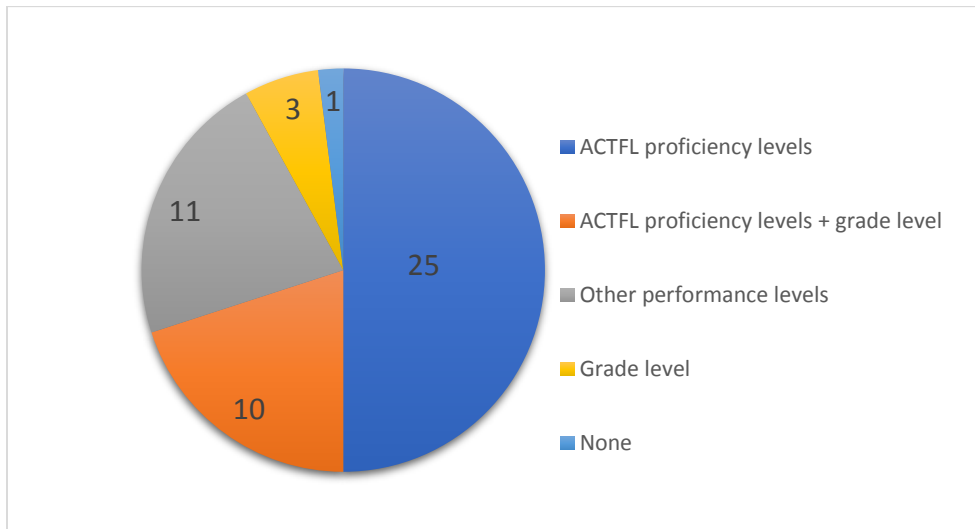


Figure 6. Progress indicator framework in state standards by type

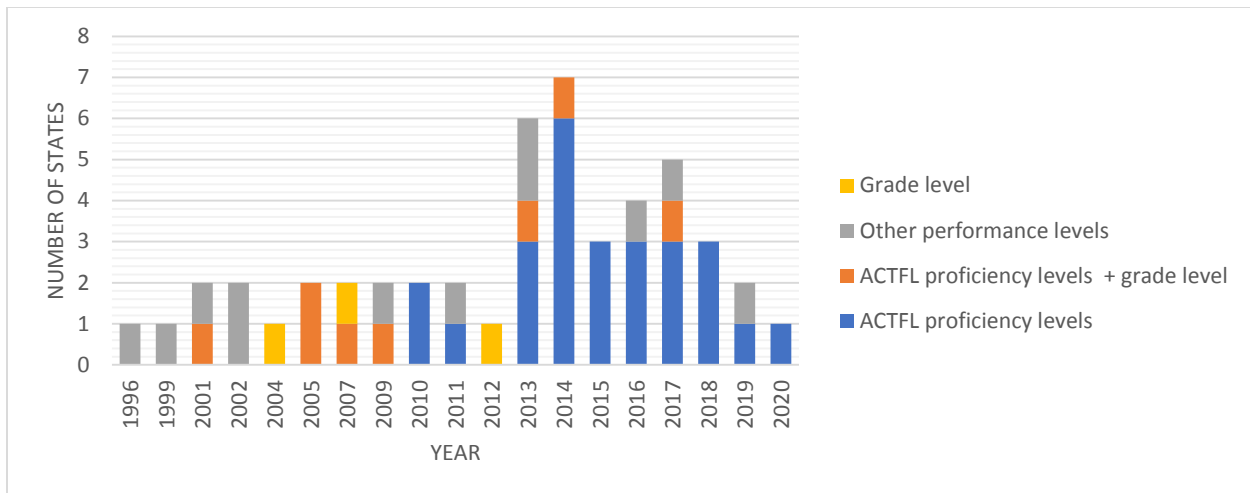


Figure 7. Progress indicator framework in state standards by year of publication

As these figures show, many states have reacted to ACTFL’s revision to progress indicators, with most states that revised their standards in the past five years adopting the ACTFL progress indicators. A total of 35 states use the ACTFL progress indicators in their standards, 10 of which use a combination of ACTFL proficiency levels and grade levels. For example, the District of Columbia uses ACTFL proficiency levels for high school. Lower grades are labeled by both grade and ACTFL junior proficiency levels (e.g., “Grades PK-1 Junior Novice Low”). There are 11 states that reference other types of performance levels. Some of these states use numbered levels, while others use performance ranges, such as beginning, developing, and expanding.

Many states provide justifications in their standards for shifting from grade level indicators to those organized by proficiency level. Nevada and Louisiana note in their standards that many factors outside of grade level impact a student’s proficiency level, including developmental differences among languages, frequency of instruction, and the program model. The standards for Kentucky, South Carolina, and Utah, which use nearly identical text, explain that learning a language is not one size fits all and proficiency can develop at different rates for different learners.

While Maine, Ohio, and Vermont standards organize their progress indicators by grade level without reference to the progress indicators of the 2015 ACTFL Standards, each state mentions ACTFL as a resource. The Maine Department of Education provides a link to the 2015 ACTFL Standards alongside its state standards, the Vermont Department of Education links the ACTFL website on its World Languages page, and Ohio’s standards state that the progress indicators within each grade cluster are somewhat aligned with the progression of the ACTFL proficiency descriptors.

### From “Foreign Language” to “World Language”

One of the major revisions to the 2015 ACTFL Standards is the replacement of the term “foreign language,” used in both the title and text of previous editions of the standards, with “world language.” The standards explain this change in terminology as follows:

*The term ‘World-Readiness Standards’ also signals that the languages being learned are no longer ‘foreign’—they are the languages of many of our learners and many of our local communities. Often the languages taught within our schools are not ‘foreign’ to many of our students (e.g., Italian, Chinese, or Spanish) nor are they ‘foreign’ to the United States (e.g., Native American languages, American Sign Language, Spanish, or French)... Rather than focusing on what is different and unfamiliar, the goal of these Standards is to make learners confident in situations where they interact and communicate with or within other cultures. (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 16)*

Figure 8 shows that, at the time of this report, 40 states use the term “world language” in the title of their standards, while 5 states continue to use the term “foreign language” and 5 states use some other terminology, including “second language”, “modern language”, “languages other than English,” and “non-native languages.”

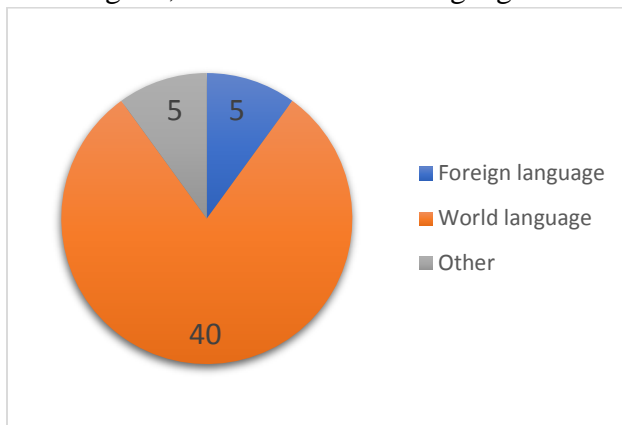


Figure 8. Terminology for languages other than English in state standards

Colorado, Alabama and the District of Columbia, in alignment with ACTFL, state in their standards that the term “world language” better reflects the changing demographics of U.S. learners and communities, as many of the languages being taught are no longer considered “foreign” within the United States. Other states, including Delaware and Nevada, indicate that the shift to “world language” is inclusive of all learners and a celebration of the diversity found within their states.

The 5 states that continue to use the term “foreign language” in their standards--Arkansas, North Dakota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Wyoming--last updated language standards between 1996 and 2013, and each is modeled on the 1999 ACTFL *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Arkansas, Nebraska, and Wisconsin are currently undergoing standards revision.

Of the states still utilizing “foreign language” in their frameworks, only North Dakota explains the reasoning to use this term in their 2001 revised standards, stating that:

*“A world language is one used widely outside the boundaries where it is spoken as a native language. When interpreted in this way, the term world language seems to leave out the very languages that have most often been overlooked or excluded by our*

*traditional wording: Native American languages and others of ethnic importance in North Dakota, such as Norwegian.” (p. 2)*

The North Dakota standards indicate that the term “foreign” refers to any language other than one’s native language and English is the native language of most of the people in their state, and that “foreign” is widely used both at the state and national level, including by ACTFL. Based on this 2019 analysis of state language standards, however, this is clearly no longer the case.

## 21st Century Skills

Another key change to the 2015 ACTFL Standards is added attention to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Similarly, 20 of the 39 states that have revised their world language standards since 2006 explicitly reference the skills needed to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in their current standards. Most of these state standards reference the essential role that world languages play in developing college- and career-ready individuals equipped to compete in today’s global marketplace. Some states, including Ohio and North Carolina, make detailed connections with other national frameworks and provide a list of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are incorporated into their world language standards. Indiana’s standards include a direct link to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Map (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011) illustrating the many ways that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills can be integrated into world language education.

## Program Models

The 2015 ACTFL Standards, as in previous editions, reference the variety of different language program models and learning opportunities available in elementary and middle schools and how these can lead to different trajectories and proficiency outcomes. In their current standards, 18 states reference different models of world language learning to provide information about articulation and proficiency attainment. These models include immersion programs, dual language programs, FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School), FLEX (Foreign Language Exploratory or Foreign Language Experience), heritage language programs, and traditional language programs.

Kansas, Michigan, Oklahoma, and the District of Columbia outline the structure of all program models available in their state. Michigan also includes a chart detailing the ideal number of sessions per week, the length of sessions, and the total hours of instruction for each type of program. Figure 9 shows the District of Columbia’s world languages program articulation chart from its 2009 standards, which presents the expected proficiency outcomes for students in different grade clusters by program model.

Language Study Programs	Elementary School		Middle School	High School / 9-12 (Articulated Proficiency Level)					Targeted Outcomes
	K-3	4-6	6-8	Level 1 Novice - Low to Mid	Level 2 Novice - Mid to High	Level 3 Intermediate - Low to Mid	Level 4 Intermediate - Mid to High	Level 5 Intermediate - High to Pre Advance	Advanced Placement (AP)
<b>Immersion</b> (Daily/language acquired through core subjects)	Immersion			Exempt		Mandatory 2 CU Requirement		Continue as Elective	AP
<b>Dual Language</b> (Daily/language acquired through core subjects and reinforced in English)	Dual Language			Exempt		Mandatory 2 CU Requirement		Continue as Elective	AP
<b>FLES</b> (3 days/week in the target language only)	FLES Levels 1 and 2 Mandatory CU Requirement Met by Grade 8			Exempt		Continue as Elective			AP
<b>Heritage Language Learners Program of Studies</b> (Pull-out)			Pull-out Program	Exempt		Mandatory 2 CU Requirement		Continue as Elective	AP
<b>Traditional</b> (Beginning in High School)				Mandatory 2 CU Requirement		Continue as Elective			Intermediate - Mid to High

Figure 9. World Languages Program Articulation Chart for District of Columbia students

### Language-Specific Standards

In collaboration with numerous teachers' associations, the 2015 ACTFL Standards included language-specific standards for American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Classical Languages, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Scandinavian languages, Spanish, and Yoruba. Of those languages, the standards for Hindi and Yoruba were newly developed for the 2015 publication.

In their current world language standards, 13 states include language-specific standards. Some states indicated that they included separate standards to adapt to changing demographics in their communities or to address language-specific issues. Tennessee, for example, chose in their revised standards to remove adaptations for ASL (used throughout their previous version) and instead refer to a language-specific set of standards from the American Sign Language Teachers Association.

Although the majority of the language-specific standards included in state frameworks are for Classical Languages (10 states), ASL (9 states), and commonly taught languages, such as French, German and Spanish (each included in 3 states' standards), some states include standards for less commonly taught languages and specific populations. Indiana's framework includes standards for East Asian languages, heritage speakers, and workplace Spanish, while Georgia has standards for Spanish for native speakers as well as standards for reading and literacy for native speakers of any language. Arkansas has the most comprehensive set of language-specific standards, comprising ASL, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Latin, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Spanish for heritage and native speakers.

## Survey

The Center for Applied Linguistics designed an online survey in SurveyMonkey to seek feedback from Massachusetts educators on potential updates to the 1999 *Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework*. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions and open-response items and contained routing logistics. The Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA) sent a recruitment email with the survey link to members subscribed to their mailing list; the email also encouraged recipients to distribute the survey to other world language educators. The recruitment email was sent by MaFLA on April 5, 2019 with reminders on April 11 and April 21, and the survey closed on April 22. The recruitment email was also circulated to DESE distribution lists.

Appendix 4 includes the raw randomized survey data, with responses on languages of instruction and school districts disassociated from other responses to ensure anonymity. The survey collected 485 complete responses of 716 total responses received; incomplete surveys are not included in this analysis. Discrepancies with total numbers in the following sections are due to the question types. Some questions allow multiple selections (e.g. “What language(s) do you work with?”), resulting in a total number greater than 485. In addition, some questions were skipped based on prior responses, resulting in a total number less than 485.

### Background Information

The following tables show respondents’ language teaching experience.

*Table 2. Employment status of respondents*

Current language educator	463	95.5%
Retired or former educator	22	4.5%
Total	485	100%

*Table 3. Years of language teaching experience*

Less than 1 year	6	1.2%
1-5 years	49	10.1%
6-10 years	81	16.7%
11 years or more	348	71.8%
Other*	1	0.2%
Total	485	100%

\*One respondent transitioned from teaching world languages to ESL (English Second Language)

*Table 4. Primary role in foreign language education*

Classroom teacher	429	88.5%
District coordinator	37	7.6%
School administrator	14	2.9%
Teacher in training	3	0.6%
Other*	2	0.4%
Total	485	100%

\*One respondent is a high school Spanish tutor and one respondent did not specify

Table 5. Language(s) worked with

Arabic	4
American Sign Language	7
Chinese	35
French	167
German	18
Italian	28
Latin	59
Portuguese	15
Spanish	352
Other *	9
Total	694

\*“Other” included Ancient Greek, Armenian, Japanese, Khmer, and Russian.

Table 6. Grade level(s) worked with

Pre-K	8
Kindergarten	19
Elementary school	49
Middle school	179
High school	358
Higher Education	13
Total	626

Respondents who indicated that they are current educators were asked about their school district county, language program type, and entry point for language instruction. Those who indicated they are retired or former educators skipped this section. The entry point for language instruction in most respondents’ school districts is middle school, and 90% of respondents work in traditional language programs.

Table 7. County of school district

Barnstable	11
Berkshire	5
Bristol	24
Essex	43
Franklin	9
Hampden	13
Hampshire	11
Middlesex	155
Norfolk	66
Plymouth	46
Suffolk	20
Worcester	60
Total	463

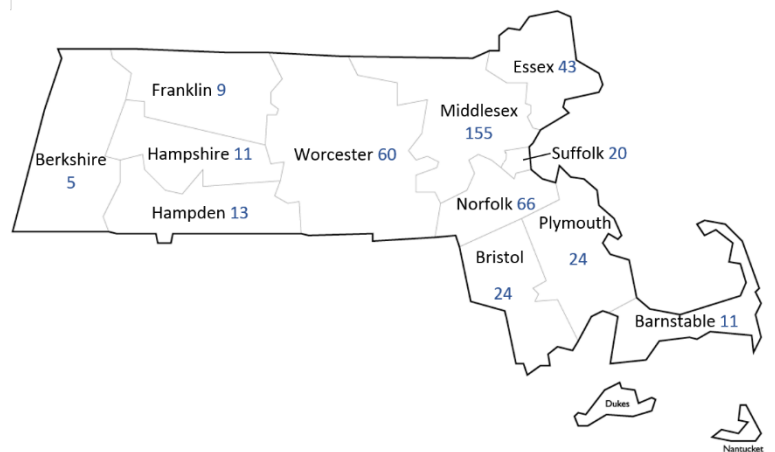


Table 8. Program type

Foreign language	417	90.1%
FLES, FLEX	18	3.9%
Partial immersion	12	2.6%
Full immersion	7	1.5%
Other*	9	1.9%
Total	463	100%

\*“Other” included programs with multiple program types.

Table 9. Entry point for language instruction in school district

Pre-K	8	1.7%
Elementary school	95	20.5%
Middle school	289	62.4%
High School	60	13.0%
Not sure	11	2.4%
Total	463	100%

## Familiarity with the Standards

Familiarity with the Massachusetts Framework and ACTFL Standards

Respondents reported their general familiarity with the Massachusetts Framework and the ACTFL Standards. Table 10 and Figure 10 show that in general, respondents are more familiar with the Massachusetts Framework than the ACTFL Standards. Half of the respondents are “very familiar” with the Massachusetts Framework, and very few (3%) respondents are not familiar with it at all. In contrast, 22% of the respondents are not familiar with the ACTFL Standards at all.

Table 10. Educators’ familiarity with the standards

	<u>Massachusetts Framework</u>	<u>ACTFL Standards</u>
Very familiar	241	197
Somewhat familiar	230	182
Not familiar at all	14	106
Total	485	485



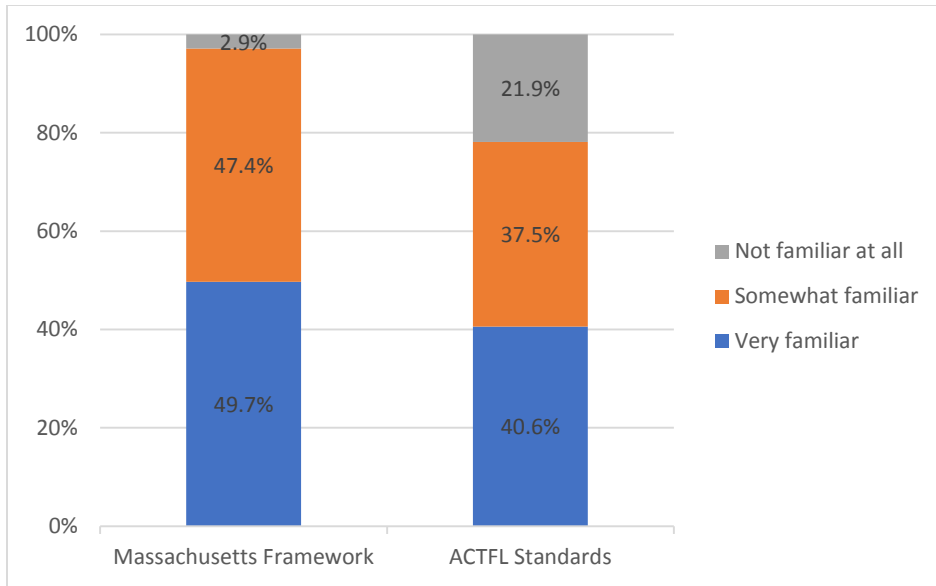


Figure 10. Educators' familiarity with the standards

Familiarity with the Proficiency Levels in the Massachusetts Framework and ACTFL Standards

Respondents also reported their familiarity with the proficiency levels in the Massachusetts Framework (developmental stages) and the ACTFL Standards (performance descriptors). Although respondents are more familiar with the Massachusetts Framework in general, Table 11 and Figure 11 show that they are more familiar with the ACTFL performance descriptors. Almost 60% of respondents are “very familiar” with the ACTFL performance descriptors, compared to 43% with the Massachusetts developmental stages.

Table 11. Educators' familiarity with the proficiency levels

	<u>4 Developmental Stages</u>	<u>ACTFL Performance Descriptors</u>
Very familiar	208	279
Somewhat familiar	233	172
Not familiar at all	44	34
Total	485	485

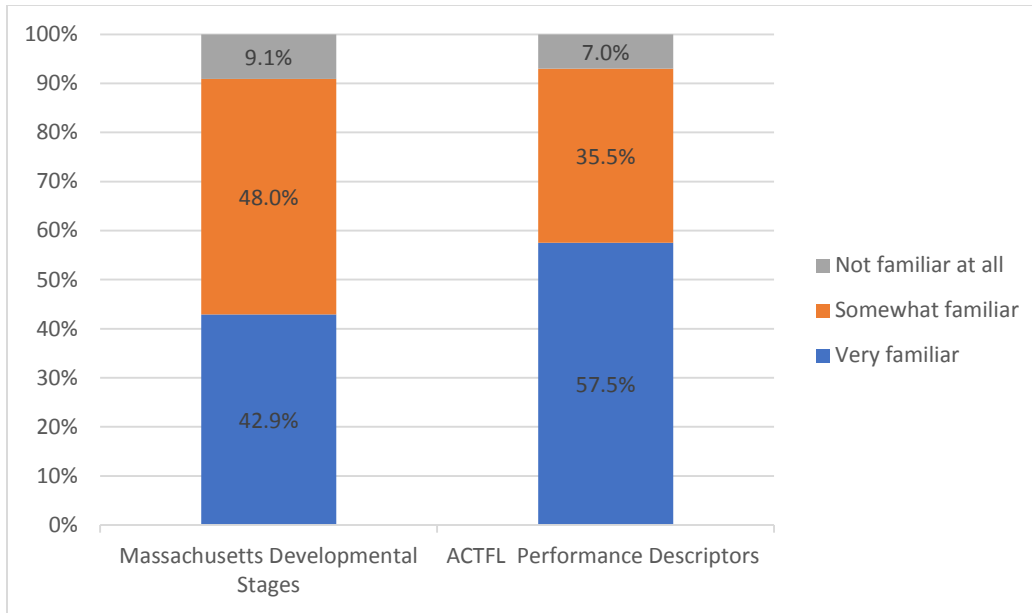


Figure 11 Educators' familiarity with proficiency levels

Respondents also have a clearer understanding of the learning outcomes in each proficiency level in the ACTFL Standards than the levels in the Massachusetts Framework. Table 12 and Table 13 show that more respondents “strongly agree” that they understand what students can do at each ACTFL proficiency level compared to each Massachusetts developmental stage.

Table 12. Familiarity with Massachusetts Framework developmental stages

I understand what students can do at...	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Strongly agree	148	132	108	108
Agree	250	257	256	250
Disagree	44	52	71	71
Strongly disagree	20	20	21	25
N/A	23	24	29	31

Table 13. Educators' familiarity with ACTFL performance descriptors

I understand what students can do at...	Novice level	Intermediate level	Advanced level	Superior level
Strongly agree	242	223	188	156
Agree	177	191	204	212
Disagree	21	22	38	55
Strongly disagree	12	12	12	15
N/A	33	37	43	47

In open-ended comments, many respondents stated that they are not familiar with the Massachusetts Framework because they only use the ACTFL performance descriptors, which are more up-to-date and user-friendly:

*“I used to (understand what students can do at each level) but since the framework are so old I have not consulted them in years.” (District Coordinator)*

*“I find the ACTFL levels of proficiency easier to follow.” (High school French teacher)*

*“I think it would be helpful to align the language of these stages with proficiency levels rather than the numbers.” (Middle school French teacher)*

For both sets of standards, respondents are more familiar with the lower proficiency levels, as most students do not reach the higher proficiency levels in their programs, especially in lower grades.

*“As the point of entry for our students is 9th grade, we do not get much beyond stages 1 and 2.” (High school Spanish teacher)*

*“My students don't reach those stages so I've never had to become familiar with them.” (Middle school Spanish teacher)*

## Standards Implementation

Respondents next answered questions about their experiences in implementing the Massachusetts Framework and the ACTFL Standards. Respondents who indicated that they were “Very familiar” or “Somewhat familiar” with the Massachusetts Framework in the previous section were asked to rate five statements about the implementation of the Massachusetts Framework from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” Table 14 shows the statements presented to respondents. Similarly, respondents who indicated familiarity with the ACTFL Standards rated parallel statements about the ACTFL Standards.

*Table 14. Statements about implementation*

---

It's important to follow the Framework when I plan my lessons.
The Framework standards apply to my teaching context.
I find the Framework helpful in planning lessons.
I use the Framework to guide assessment.
It's easy to find good textbooks aligned to the Framework.

---

Results show that respondents have more positive opinions about implementing the ACTFL Standards, agreeing more with the statements about implementing the ACTFL Standards than those corresponding to the Massachusetts Framework. Figure 12 and Figure 13 only present the answers from current educators, as these questions are more applicable to educators who are currently using the standards. The figures show that 45% of respondents “strongly agreed” that the ACTFL Standards applied to their teaching context, as opposed to only 9% for the Massachusetts Framework. Likewise, around 40% of respondents “strongly agreed” that the

ACTFL Standards are important to follow and helpful when planning lessons and guiding assessment, as opposed to 6-8% for the Massachusetts Framework.

In addition, over 50% of respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that it is easy to find good textbooks that are aligned with the Massachusetts Framework, use the framework to guide assessment, and plan lessons. These percentages of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” are much lower for the corresponding statements about the ACTFL Standards.

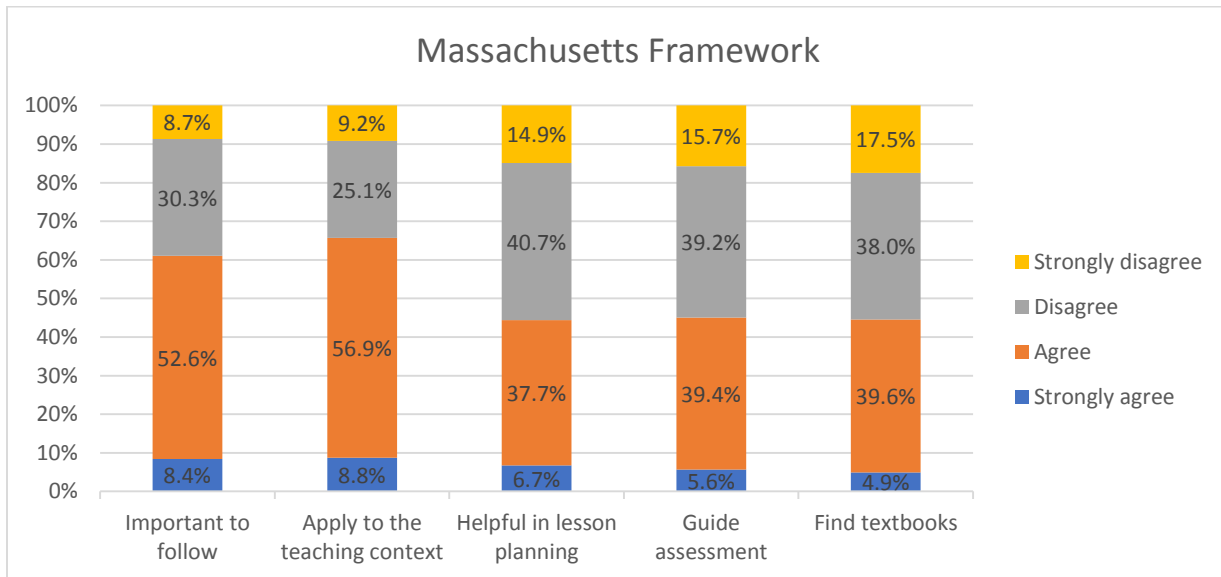


Figure 12. Current educators’ opinion on Massachusetts Framework implementation

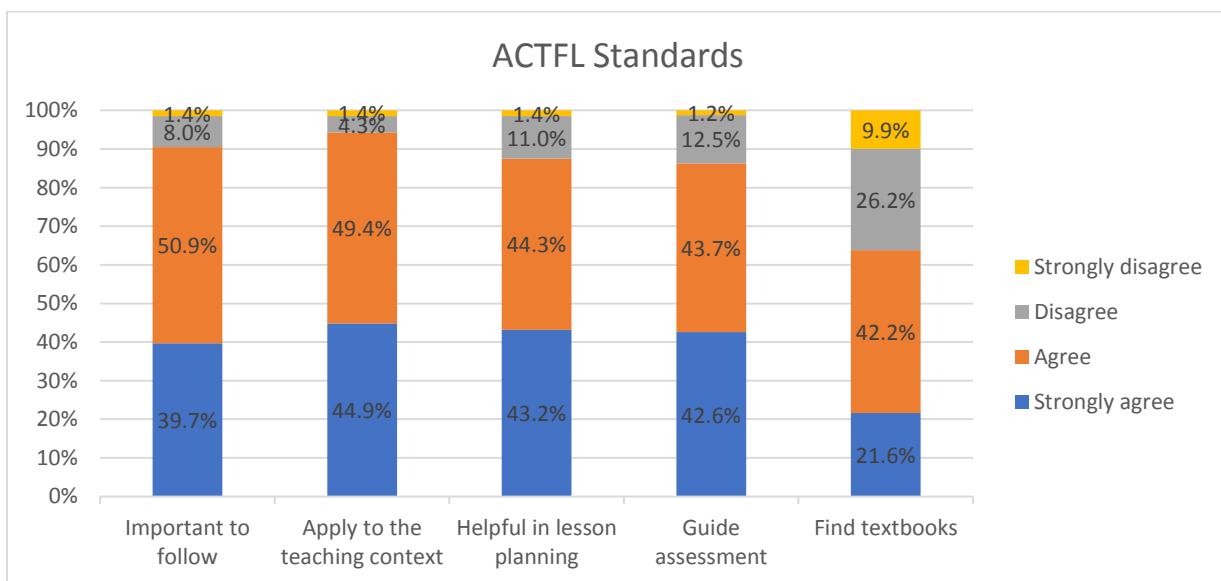


Figure 13 Current educators’ opinion on ACTFL Standards implementation

Respondents who disagreed with one of more of these statements elaborated on the challenges they encountered in implementing the Massachusetts Framework and assessing

language proficiency in line with the Massachusetts Framework. Their comments were coded into categories, with responses of highest frequency shown in Table 15 and Table 16.

*Table 15. Most frequently mentioned challenges in implementing the Massachusetts Framework*

Difficult to apply	88
Outdated	52
Lack of time	42
Not aligned with ACTFL	40
Lack of resources	23

*Table 16. Most frequently mentioned challenges in assessing language proficiency in line with the Massachusetts Framework*

Difficult to apply	58
Not proficiency-based	40
Lack of time	30
Lack of samples/rubrics	28
Outdated	22

Respondents commented that they found the Massachusetts Framework difficult to apply to their own teaching contexts because resources surrounding the framework often do not align with it. As a result, a large amount of time is needed to find or create appropriate teaching materials and assessment tools:

*“Textbooks often lead with grammar first rather than through the natural approach we use. If we could have a textbook that provided the input and interaction needed to acquire language, we’d be all for it!” (District Coordinator)*

*“Resources are hard to find. Everything is conjugation of verbs and instructions in English.” (Elementary school Spanish teacher)*

### Reference to Other Standards

As Figure 14 shows, around 65% of respondents indicated that they reference other standards in addition to the Massachusetts Framework when planning their lessons. Respondents who answered “Yes” were asked to specify the standard(s) they use. The ACTFL Standards are by far the most referenced within the variety of standards also used by respondents, referenced by 79% of the respondents (259) who use other standards. Additional standards mentioned include the Common Core Standards (7 respondents), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (6 respondents), and Standards for Classical Language Learning (5 respondents).

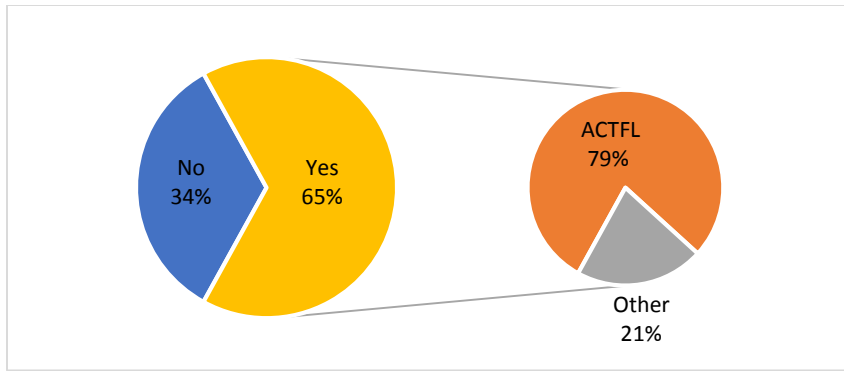


Figure 14. Reference to other standards

### The Five Cs

The Massachusetts Framework and the ACTFL Standards both target the Five Cs, and the next section of the survey included questions about educators’ familiarity with the Five Cs and their experience with implementing the Five Cs.

#### Familiarity with the Five Cs

Figure 15 shows that 72% of respondents are very familiar with the Five Cs in general. Among the five goal areas, *Communication* is the one that respondents are most familiar with. *Communities* has the highest percentage of respondents who are not familiar with the area at all, although it remains a small percentage (4%).

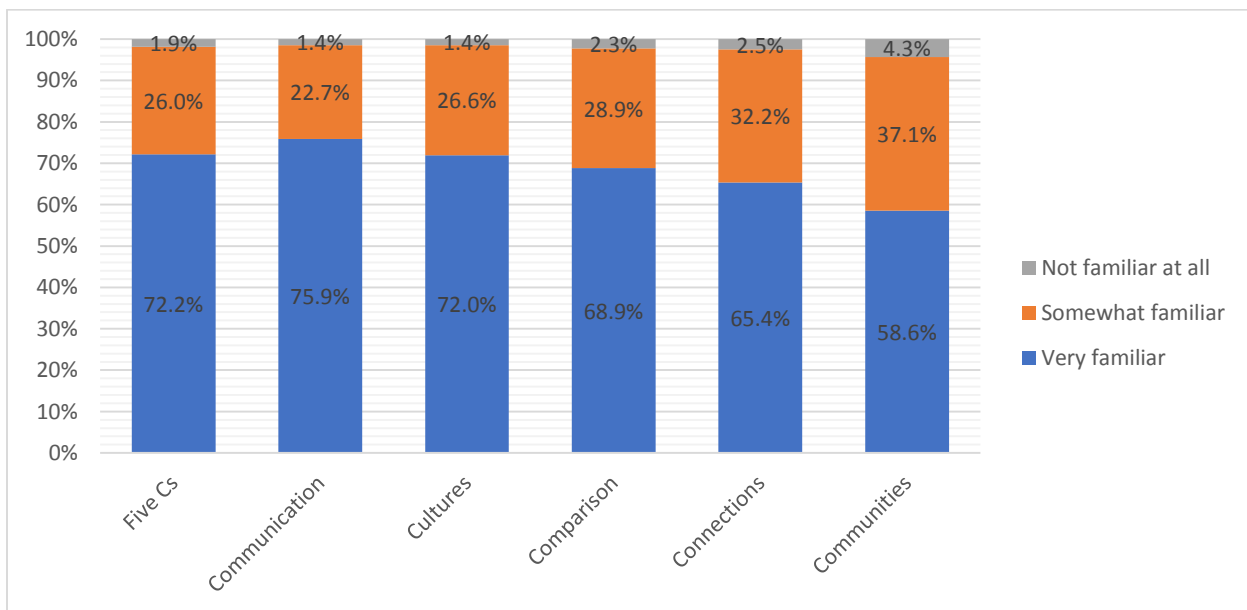


Figure 15. Educators’ familiarity with the Five Cs

#### Perceived Usefulness of the Five Cs

Respondents ranked the goal areas from 1 to 5 in terms of what they find useful to their own context, with 1 being the most useful and 5 being the least useful. Table 17 reflects the overall ranking results of the survey responses. *Communication* is perceived as the most useful

goal area, followed by *Cultures*, *Comparisons*, *Connections*, and finally *Communities*. The respondents' perceived importance of each goal area is consistent with their reported familiarity. The more useful they perceive a goal area is, the more familiar they are with it.

Table 17. Perceived usefulness of each goal area

Goal Area	Ranking
Communication	1.51
Cultures	2.52
Comparisons	3.29
Connections	3.36
Communities	4.08

### Implementation of the Five Cs

Respondents were asked to what extent their school or program curriculum, lessons, and assessments align with the Five Cs. Figure 16 show that respondents generally agreed or strongly agreed (over 70%) that all three of these elements were aligned with the Five Cs, although the alignment between the curriculum and the Five Cs is the highest.

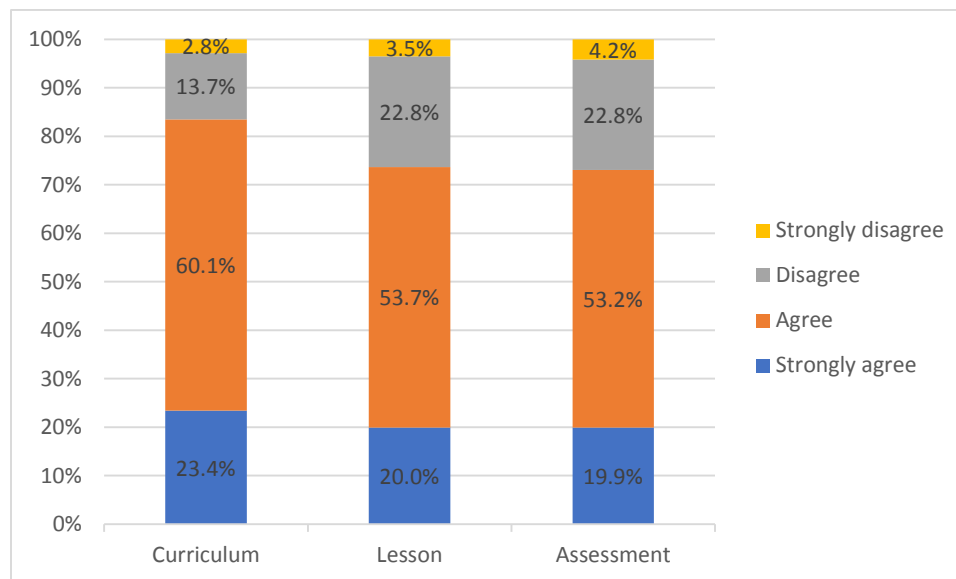


Figure 16. Alignment to the Five Cs

Respondents were also asked to what extent each of the goal areas is emphasized in tasks and activities in their classrooms. Figure 17 show that *Communication* is the most frequently emphasized goal area by far (90%), followed by *Cultures*, *Comparisons*, and *Connections*. *Communities* (30%) is the least frequently emphasized goal area in the classroom, with nearly 13% of respondents indicating that it is not emphasized at all.

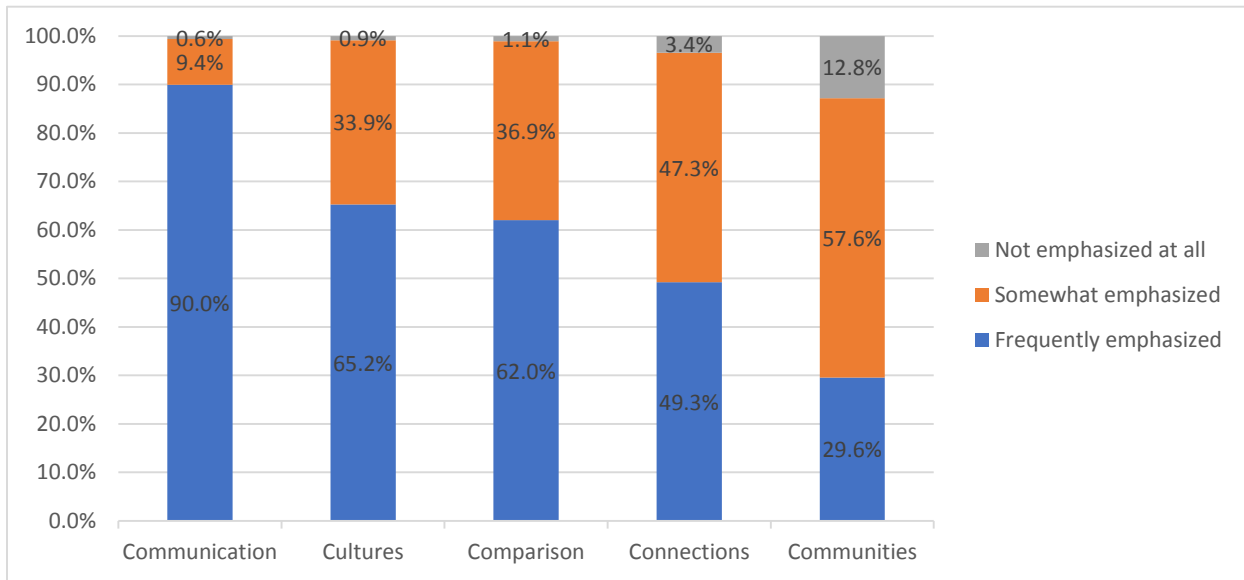


Figure 17. Implementation of the Five Cs

Some respondents commented that the reason for not targeting all five goal areas is resource constraints:

*“Sometimes there is not enough time to cover all.” (High school French teacher)*

*“It is impossible to hit all 5 Cs when creating and assessing.” (High school German teacher)*

*“It’s honestly impossible to assess some of the standards- for example, how should I measure my students’ community standards? I don’t teach a non-Indo-European language and I think that some of the standards may be a reach for them.” (Middle school Spanish teacher)*

### Opinions on the Standards

The survey contained open-ended questions about what respondents like and dislike about on the Massachusetts Framework and the ACTFL Standards. Responses were coded into different categories. Table 18 and 19 present respondents’ most like and dislike features of the Massachusetts Framework.

Table 18. Most liked features of the Massachusetts Framework

Alignment with ACTFL	37
Clear and easy to use	35
Provides good guidance	26
Allows flexibility	18
Clear objectives and expectations	12

Note: 262 respondents answered this question. Some named more than one feature.



Table 19. Most disliked features of the Massachusetts Framework

Outdated	115
Unclear	69
Not aligned with ACTFL	24
Too specific/hard to adapt	22
Proficiency levels	21

Note: 285 respondents answered this question. Some named more than one feature.

The alignment with ACTFL and the Five Cs appears to be an important factor influencing respondents' opinion of the Massachusetts Framework:

*“By focusing on the 5 C's, it encourages teachers to go beyond the ‘teaching words and verbs’ mentality. Language is a skill to be acquired, not a discipline to be learned.”*  
(Retired District Coordinator)

In terms of the most disliked features, the most frequently mentioned is that many aspects of the Massachusetts Framework are outdated. The following quotes from educators highlight that the outdated framework does not apply to the current program models, technological changes, teaching context, and best practices in Second Language Acquisition research.

*“Out of date. Higher levels are rarely achievable for grades 7-12 because it is based on preK-12 sequence.”* (District Coordinator)

*“Its relevance to the 21st century technology should be emphasized more in the standards. Standards should not be labeled according to grade level, which varies from district to district.”* (High School French teacher)

*“The language used, particularly in the guiding principles, is outdated. The Framework doesn't address the needs of proficiency and immersive language classrooms. Latin and Ancient Greek are forced into the framework.”* (High school Latin teacher)

Table 20 and Table 21 present the most liked and disliked features of the ACTFL Standards.

Table 20. Most liked features of the ACTFL Standards

Proficiency levels	54
Clear and easy to use	44
Up to date	32
Authenticity	20
Framework design	16

Note: 221 respondents answered this question. Some named more than one feature.

Table 21. Most disliked features of the ACTFL Standards

Difficult to use	51
Content	33
Not familiar to all stakeholders	7
Requires too much time	3

Note: 142 respondents answered this question. Some named more than one feature.

The most liked feature of the ACTFL Standards framework is its proficiency descriptors, specifically, the student-friendly language and can-do statements. Other most liked features include ease of use and the framework design.

*“The can-do statements are easy for the students to understand and to follow their own progress.” (Middle school teacher of multiple languages)*

*“Student-friendly language, oriented towards growth, can-do statements make lesson planning fun.” (High school Spanish teacher)*

*“They are clear and applicable to the work we do and to what students need to be able to do.” (Middle school French teacher)*

The largest number of comments on dislikes indicated that the ACTFL Standards can be hard to use. Many respondents commented that the standards are too dense, and they would like to have more supports in interpreting the standards:

*“So many categories and no rubrics to help guide assessments. We have to develop rubrics on our own. Also, professional development is needed for teachers to recognize different levels of proficiency.” (District Coordinator)*

*“It does not have example of assignments, projects or any assessment like the Massachusetts Foreign Language Curriculum Framework standards.” (High school Spanish teacher)*

A total of 33 respondents mentioned the content of the ACTFL Standards in their comments, but they vary in what aspects of the content are disliked. For instance, some educators dislike that the ACTFL Standards do not focus on grammar, some think they are too rubric-driven, and others think there is too much focus on *Cultures*.

## Needs

Respondents were finally asked about their needs for an update to the Massachusetts Framework. Table 22 shows whether respondents think the Massachusetts Framework needs to be more specific to the context and needs of the state and to their own context and needs. Only 33% of respondents think the Framework needs to be more specific to the Massachusetts context and needs, but about half of the respondents think it needs to be more specific to their context and needs, such as grade level, program type, and language.

Table 22. Opinion on whether the Massachusetts Framework needs to be more specific...

<i>To the Massachusetts context and needs</i>		
Yes	160	33.0%
No	325	67.0%
<i>To educators' own context and needs</i>		
Yes	244	50.3%
No	241	49.7%

Respondents were asked to explain yes answers, and representative comments include:

*“Each language has its specific patterns and needs. They are not all alike.” (High school German teacher)*

*“It is difficult to find good resources and guidance for teaching Arabic. Massachusetts does not even offer the MTEL<sup>2</sup> for Arabic Language. Any support for Arabic, especially if specific to grade level, would be great help.” (High school Arabic teacher)*

*“I believe frameworks should be aligned to grade level and/or program type (Novice, intermediate, or advance learner)” (High school Spanish teacher)*

Respondents were also asked whether specific resources would help them better implement the Massachusetts Framework. Table 23 and Figure 18 show that most respondents would find the resources listed helpful in implementing the Massachusetts Framework. The resources indicated as helpful by the greatest number of respondents are example rubrics, assessment tools, and progress indicators.

Table 23. Additional resources in implementing the Massachusetts Framework

<b>Resources</b>	<u>Not helpful</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Helpful</u>
Example rubrics	27	69	389
Assessment tools	24	90	371
Progress indicators	28	105	352
Suggested topics	28	116	341
Face to face PD	26	130	329
Learning scenarios	34	147	304
Language-specific standards	36	145	304
Web PD	49	174	262

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure

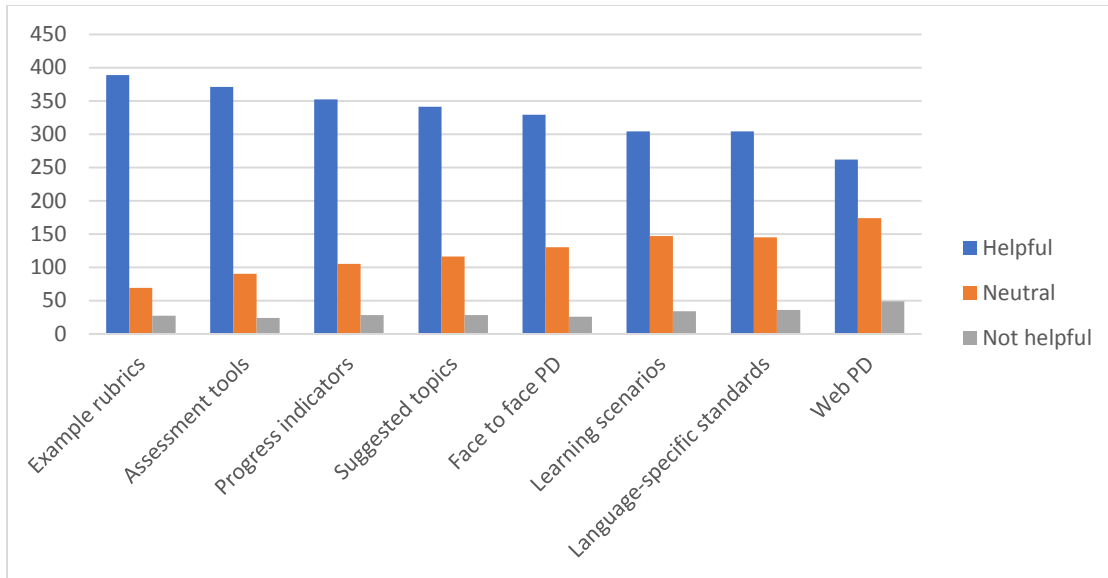


Figure 18. Additional resources in implementing the Massachusetts Framework

A few educators commented on additional resources they would like to receive to better implement language standards:

*“All of these are great ideas! I also think a Twitter feed with PD / ideas would be awesome!” (Middle school Spanish teacher)*

*“Suggested grammar for each level, like in the European Frameworks.” (High school French teacher)*

*“Sample lesson plans/unit plans. Textbook suggestions. Access to an authentic resource database.” (High school Spanish teacher)*

### Preference for Term

Respondents were asked which term the Massachusetts Framework should use to refer to the profession and content area. As Figure 19 shows, most teachers (407, or 84%) prefer the term “world language” over “foreign language” (78, or 16%) to describe languages other than English.

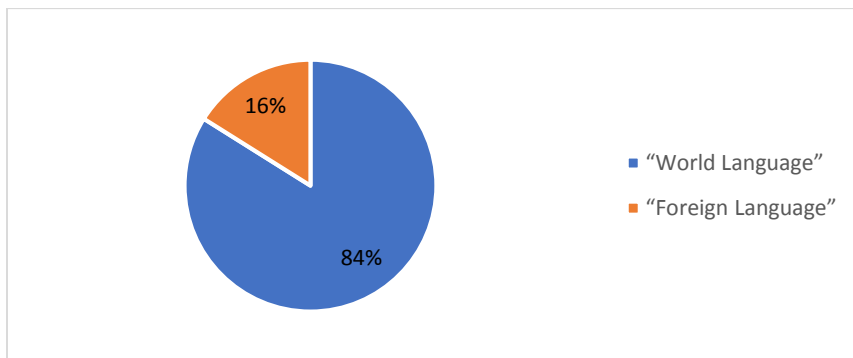


Figure 19. Preference for term

Open-ended comments to explain these responses showed that educators saw “world languages” as more inclusive and aligned better with other standards:

*“Foreign has such a negative tone associated with it... Many individuals are born in this country speaking a language in addition to English, they are not foreigners to this country. World language is more welcoming to the rich diversity of languages spoken and studied. It is more inclusive of the uniqueness of the composite of the US.” (High school Spanish teacher)*

*“Term aligns better with Global Citizenship Skills and 21st Century Skills” (Middle and high school Spanish teacher)*

### Preference for Adoption vs. Revision

Respondents were finally asked for their preference to update the Massachusetts Framework by rewriting it, adapting the ACTFL Standards, or adopting the ACTFL Standards as is. As shown in Figure 20, most respondents (86%) thought Massachusetts should adopt ACTFL Standards directly (244 respondents) or adapt the ACTFL Standards (173 respondents), while only 14% of respondents (68) recommended rewriting the Framework. As one respondent stated:

*“I don't think we need a separate MA Framework from the ACTFL world readiness standards. They are excellent, and creating separate MA Frameworks only creates more work for MAFLA, but also creates more work for teachers to be familiar with both.” (High school teacher of multiple languages)*

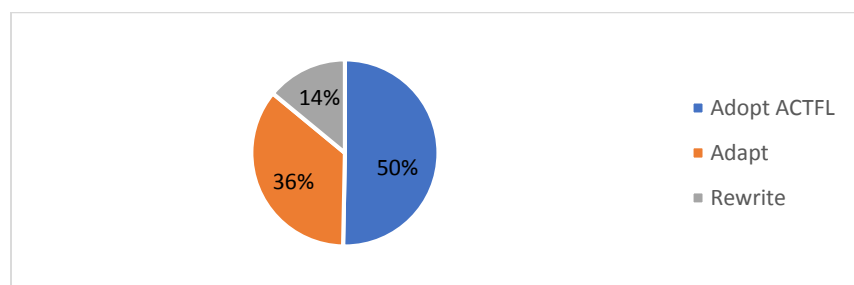


Figure 20. Preference for adoption vs. revision

When asked for additional comments, 96 respondents took time to respond. Of these comments, 33 reiterated support for adoption of the ACTFL Standards, 14 detailed specific needs for Massachusetts world language support within and beyond the standards, and 25 applauded efforts to update the Massachusetts Framework and include educator feedback. Two respondents named other states that should be looked to for guidance in the standards update: Ohio and Kentucky (mentioned by both), and New Jersey. Noteworthy comments included:

*“Create a public service campaign to promote world language learning and the benefits of early language learning in MA. Provide financial support to all communities to implement the frameworks a level playing field throughout the state.” (Retired high school teacher of multiple languages)*

*“Adopting ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Language would allow for more collaboration nationally. There are huge group of teachers who are continuously sharing units, ideas, authentic resources... It would be easier to collaborate if we all use the same standards. In addition, when students move from one state to another it will be easier to assess their level if we use the same tools. Consistency in the country is important.” (Middle school Spanish teacher)*

*“I am happy to hear the frameworks for World Languages are finally under review! We need more professional development to help all teachers understand that teaching language is a craft and proficiency in language and world cultures is the goal.” (District Coordinator)*

*“Thank you for taking the time to reach out & seek input. Thank you for all you do & looking forward to the final product.” (Middle school teacher of multiple languages)*

## Recommendations

Based on the literature review, comparative analysis of stand standards, and survey results from educators in the field, the Center for Applied Linguistics makes the following recommendations for updating the Massachusetts Framework:

### 1. Adopt the term “world language” in place of “foreign language”

With the changing demographic makeup of the United States, “foreign language” is no longer the most accurate or inclusive terminology to describe languages other than English. As mentioned in the comparative analysis (page 17), the ACTFL Standards and standards in 40 states have adopted the term “world language” in place of “foreign language”. In addition, survey results indicate that this change is anticipated by Massachusetts educators (page 35).

### 2. Adopt the ACTFL goal areas and proficiency descriptors

The ACTFL Standards are well grounded in Second Language Acquisition research and reflect best practices in the field of language teaching (page 5). The version published in 2015 incorporated 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that address recent social changes.

Most states adopt the ACTFL Standards either directly or with minor revisions (page 13). Unlike the Common Core State Standards, there has been no withdrawal or widespread controversy once a state adopts the ACTFL Standards.

The survey results showed that most respondents are in favor of adopting or adapting the ACTFL Standards (page 38). Both the goal areas and the progress indicators are positively perceived by Massachusetts educators. Most respondents are familiar with the ACTFL Standards and many educators are already using these standards when planning their lessons.

In terms of practicality, rewriting state standards can be a lengthy process (page 10), which does not guarantee a better set of standards. As mentioned in the literature review (page 6), most states that did not adopt or made non-trivial changes to the Common Core State Standards replaced them with weaker standards. Adopting the ACTFL Standards would be cheaper in cost, time, and resources than rewriting Massachusetts-specific standards, and Massachusetts educators would benefit from a wealth of resources aligned with these national standards as well as greater potential for collaboration and sharing of materials across states.

### 3. Provide additional resources in the updated Massachusetts Framework

As mentioned in the literature review (page 5), discrepancies often exist between standards, assessments, and implementation. The survey results confirm that educators see these gaps, particularly in implementing all Five Cs (page 30). Educators also expressed a clear desire for additional supports in the “Needs” section of the survey (page 33) and in open-ended comments. Therefore, it is recommended that DESE provides the following resources within and accompanying the updated standards:

- a. An introductory section that
  - i. justifies why new world language standards are needed for college and career-readiness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - ii. highlights key changes from the 1999 Massachusetts Framework
  - iii. explains how the ACTFL progress indicators map to the old developmental stages

- b. Supplementary language-specific standards, especially for non-Roman alphabet languages, classical languages, and ASL
- c. Model curriculum/lesson ideas, especially for *Connections*, *Comparisons*, and *Communities* goal areas
- d. Sample rubrics and assessments
- e. Expected outcomes for different program models (see Figure 9. World Languages Program Articulation Chart for District of Columbia students)
- f. Reflections on relevant technology and other social changes since the last update of the ACTFL Standards in 2015 (e.g. Google classroom, gamification in education, 3-D printing, etc.)

#### 4. Plan for professional development events

It is recommended that Massachusetts plan for online and in-person professional development events to help language educators gain an in-depth understanding of the updated standards. It is also recommended to plan and budget for publications and events to increase awareness of the new standards not just for language educators but all educational stakeholders to advocate for the importance of world language learning for every student.



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