MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. lmlowery

DATE: December 17, 2012

SUBJECT: Model Policy: World Languages Credit for Proficiency

---

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to present a proposed model policy that, if adopted by local boards of education, would enable school systems to award high school credit to students based on demonstrated language proficiency.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

During the 2008 Maryland General Assembly session, the *Task Force for the Preservation of Heritage Language Skills in Maryland* was established to investigate current language preservation efforts and to develop new strategies in preserving world language skills in our State. The legislation creating the Task Force recognized that "while it is important for new Americans to learn and master English, there is also a critical shortage of Americans proficient in languages other than English." The bill recognized that Maryland's heritage language speakers "comprise a valuable and vastly underutilized linguistic resource."

One of the recommendations of the Task Force's January 2009 Report to the Governor and General Assembly was to "support and promote the awarding of high school credit by exam for students who attend non-public heritage language schools in Maryland."

MSDE convened a statewide validation and standard setting study with key stakeholders and world language experts in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, German, Korean, and Spanish to set the recommended proficiency levels equated to high school credit that are included in the model policy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

COMAR 13A.03.02.05 already provides the option for local school systems to award credit by exam. The proposed model policy recognizes that Maryland's diverse student population has opportunities to develop language skills outside the classroom and provides a framework for local school systems to award credit for demonstrated proficiency.

ACTION:

Recommend approval of the model policy.

Attachments: Model Policy: World Languages Credit for Proficiency; Summary of Validation Study

Model Policy: World Languages Credit for Proficiency

For Consideration by Local Boards of Education

.01 Purpose and Scope: In accordance with COMAR 13A.03.02.05, students may earn credit toward high school graduation through examination. Recognizing that Maryland's diverse student population has opportunities to develop language skills outside the classroom, local school systems may develop policies and procedures for awarding world language credits to students based on demonstrated proficiency across a range of language skills. With the purpose of validating proficiency in a second language, such policies enable students to further their study of languages and achieve advanced levels of proficiency.

.02 Definitions:

A. *World Language* means any natural language, including American Sign Language and languages no longer spoken (e.g., Latin and ancient Greek).

B. ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Guidelines means the global descriptions of five levels of integrated performance in listening, speaking, reading and writing: *Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished.*

.03 Demonstrating Proficiency in a World Language

A. The student may select appropriate assessment instrument(s) from Maryland State Department of Education's approved list of assessments aligned to the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines.*

B. Assessments must be offered in a proctored setting with appropriate technology.

C. The cost of the assessment(s) shall be borne by the student.

.04 Determining Proficiency and Credit Equivalencies

The local school system may award one or more credits based on the student demonstrating an overall proficiency according to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* as follows:

Novice Mid – 1 credit

Novice High – 2 credits

Intermediate Low – 3 credits

Intermediate Mid and above – 4 credits.

.05 Reporting Results

A. The student will provide official test results to the local school system.

B. The local school system will validate the assessment results and notify the student of the number of World Language credits awarded.

C. The World Language credit(s) will be recorded on the official transcript.

SUMMARY OF MARYLAND VALIDATION AND STANDARD SETTING STUDY WORLD LANGUAGES CREDIT FOR PROFICIENCY

The American Council of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Scales are global characterizations of integrated performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing derived from the government language skill descriptions and adapted to academic context. Since 1986, these guidelines have been the national standard for language proficiency rating and testing.

Maryland and numerous other states use the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and the Written Proficiency Test (WPT) for teacher certification assessments in world languages. The qualifying proficiency score for Maryland teachers on both assessments is Intermediate High.

On September 16, 2011, ACTFL conducted a full-day validation study for Maryland that included world language experts, supervisors, public and community school teachers, and MSDE staff. ACTFL provided detailed information on the proficiency scale, the assessment, research findings, and qualifying proficiency scores in other states. Language specific teams studied the proficiency guidelines, the national and state standards for world languages, sample interviews, and writing samples at each proficiency level. After discussion across language groups, the panel recommended the level of competency students must attain in order to earn credit as follows:

Novice Mid – 1 credit
Novice High – 2 credits
Intermediate Low – 3 credits
Intermediate Mid and above – 4 credits

In addition to the American Council for Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Written Proficiency Test (WPT), there are other widely available assessments that are aligned to the ACTFL proficiency scales. MSDE will maintain a list of national assessments in each language that are aligned to ACTFL.