



The Foreign Language Association of Georgia Supports Rigor for ALL Students

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) under the leadership of Superintendent Kathy Cox has made significant progress toward aligning high school graduation requirements that prepare all students for college and work-ready expectations. However, one academic area remains to be aligned: world language. The current lack of a universal world language requirement for high school graduation means that students can earn a high school diploma and not be qualified to enter most four year colleges in Georgia and throughout the nation. Over the long term, this is a deficiency in preparation that must be addressed.

It is the belief of the Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG) that every student in Georgia can successfully complete a minimum of two Carnegie Units of study of one world language, especially if they are allowed to begin their study of a world language prior to high school. Since the adoption of the Georgia Performance Standards for Modern Languages and Latin in 2007, over 1,500 teachers have been trained face-to-face to teach these standards effectively. The teaching workforce has never been better prepared for the challenge of teaching all students than it is today.

FLAG also believes that students cannot truly be considered to be ready for the working world in Georgia without at least this minimum exposure to a world language other than English. The international presence in Georgia from all parts of the world has increased dramatically in the past two decades, both in terms of new residents to our state as well as international businesses who have chosen to locate in Georgia. Students who wish to work in construction, health care, law enforcement, as court reporters, or in community service programs could make excellent use of their world language skills immediately upon entering the workforce. However, current policy allows school districts to provide only those planning to attend college with access to world language courses, effectively continuing the two-track system the GaDOE has worked diligently to eliminate.

Developing a Globally Competent Workforce for Georgia

To achieve its goal of competing and collaborating successfully as a part of the international community, the state of Georgia must develop a workforce with global linguistic and cultural competence, including the 21st century skills of being able to read, write, comprehend and speak at least one language other than English. Currently, a lack of multilingual staff hinders Georgia profoundly:

- Georgia businesses and farmers have difficulty exporting their products to other markets.
- A lack of multilingual, culturally-competent individuals in businesses across the state threatens the dream of Atlanta and Georgia becoming a powerful and influential international center for business and policy.
- The lack of multilingual, globally competent staff at state agencies prevents the development of programs and the effective delivery of services to Georgia's increasingly international citizenry.



To address these deficiencies, the Foreign Language Association of Georgia recommends that the state implement four new policies that begin developing a multilingual workforce.

Policy Recommendations

1. As soon as feasible, but no later than 2014, every student performing at or above grade level as demonstrated by meeting or exceeding standards on the CRCT in reading and math should have the opportunity to complete at least one year of sequential study of a world language other than English prior to entering high school.
2. Students entering high school in 2012 and beyond should be required either to complete two Carnegie Units of the same world language in a course taught in accordance with Georgia Performance Standards or provide evidence of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening at the Intermediate-Low Level in order to earn a high school diploma. For Classical languages, students may complete two units or provide evidence of proficiency in reading, writing and translating.
3. As soon as feasible, but no later than 2012, school districts should provide a bi-literacy seal on transcripts and diplomas for all students who complete four units of the same language with an overall grade point average of B or better in the world language courses and provide external evidence of language proficiency via national and internationally validated measures.
4. Students who are heritage or native speakers of a language other than English, or who have learned a language in a voluntary program outside the school day, should also be allowed to provide external evidence of proficiency and to earn the bi-literacy seal. The proficiency level to earn a bi-literacy seal should be no less than Advanced-Low for languages with Roman-based alphabets and no less than Intermediate-High for languages with non-Roman alphabets.

Multilingualism and Student Achievement

In order to “lead the nation in improving student achievement” the GaDOE and state leaders must design and implement policies that treat the increasing diversity of the Georgia student population as an asset, not a liability. Research conducted over the past forty years demonstrates the powerful effect of language study in other academic areas, and it is well-known that literacy in one’s native language has a powerful influence on the proficiency one develops in his or her second language. By implementing these policy recommendations, the state of Georgia will not only increase the global competence of its workforce in the area of world languages, it will also increase student achievement across the board.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

The Foreign Language Association of Georgia
Adopted 1 February 2010