

World Languages in the Kentucky Accountability System

Introduction

According to the KDE website, updated Aug 21, 2004, “The centerpiece of Kentucky's education reform effort is its vision of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their school experience. Every aspect of the reform movement is designed to promote student attainment of these goals and to measure our progress in helping them to do so.

The actual content of that vision for what students should know and be able to do was defined in Kentucky’s Learning Goals and Academic Expectations. Virtually every academic expectation is reflected in The Program of Studies and the Core Content for Assessment, documents which lay out for all Kentuckians the precise content that will be included in the CATS assessment. However, two academic expectations are notable by their absence in the assessment and accountability formula, namely world languages:

Academic Expectation 2.27

Students recognize and understand the similarities and differences among languages.

Academic Expectation 2.28

Students understand and communicate in a second language.

History/Background

While the need for Kentuckians to compete with the educational opportunities afforded students in other states, and the need for Kentucky students to develop an increasing amount of second language facility to play a vital role in a world-economy were never in question, an equitable manner for including these academic expectations in the accountability formula was beyond the realm of possibility in the early days of the reform. The main arguments that seemed to define the issue were the following: 1. Not all students in every Kentucky schools were given the same opportunity for learning a second language. 2. In schools where such opportunities existed, there was tremendous variance in the type of instruction, the amount of instruction given in a certain time period, and the length of the sequence of language instruction. 3. Student learning standards in foreign language had not yet been defined on a state or national level. 4. Ed Reidy and others in the Kentucky Department of Education at the time felt that it was not ethical to hold schools accountable for student achievement under those circumstances. The goal of Academic Expectations 2.27 and 2.28, while admirable and important, was beyond the grasp of the state’s education system to achieve.

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Much has changed in the past decade. The precollege curriculum has been defined to include two units of the same foreign language (or the equivalent). Standards have been codified in the profession. Under the direction of KDE, the “Kentucky Framework for World Languages” (Appendix A) has been developed by a team of Kentucky world languages professionals. A “Content Guide for World **Language** -Multiple Entry Point Chart” (Appendix B) has been developed and is available on the KDE website.

In addition, the combination of technology and new views of articulation and assessment have made it possible to offer world languages learning opportunities to every student in the Commonwealth, and to be able to track and credential their increasing levels of proficiency.

The Proposal for Inclusion of World Languages in the Accountability System

The heart of the proposal is found in the notion of putting world language learning into the assessment formula as a “bonus add-on”, rewarding schools for student learning. Specifically, the proposal is that a world languages add-on be available as a bonus of up to 4.75% at the elementary level and 7.13% at the middle and high school level, bringing these academic expectations up to a level of parity given to those of Practical Living and Vocational Studies, and Arts and Humanities. The incentive would be awarded for student language learning as attested to by verified enrollment and annual progress as assessed by the *LinguaFolio KY!*. At the high school level, there would be the addition of successful language learning as recognized by one of four established and standardized assessment measures, namely, successful passing of the AP Language exam, successful completion of the International Baccalaureate certification process in world languages, or successful completion of a dual enrollment college-level course equivalent to at least the 200 level, or successful completion of the Kentucky precollege curriculum as evidenced by success on the common end-of-course assessment (under development). Key in this proposal is the notion that students and teachers will use the *LinguaFolio KY!* to chart student learning over the course of the language-taking sequence.

The Incentive Add-on would only be applied to schools that were in the “Progressing” or “Meeting Goal” categories. Schools in the “Assistance” range would not be eligible for the add-on.

At the elementary level, 100% of the add-on would be awarded a school if every student were engaged and progressing in language learning as evidenced by the Kentucky *LinguaFolio KY!*. At the high school level, 40% of the add-on would be awarded based on enrollment and validated progress, 60% would be awarded based on achievement of proficiency according to the 4 possibilities previously mention.

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Key Points

Several Key Points need to be understood regarding the proposed World Languages Core Content for Assessment Incentive Add On.

1. The proposal does not attempt to assess students in a subject area for which they have not received instruction. Every student in the Commonwealth will have the opportunity to be engaged as a foreign language learner. This may take place via a standard classroom experience, or a virtual opportunity. Only students involved in language learning will be assessed.
2. The proposal does not penalize a school which chooses not to offer all students the opportunity to learn another world language. One of the proposal's unique qualities lies in the fact that it is an incentive add-on. Promoting student learning and achievement in languages is in the best interest of a school, but a school is not penalized if students are not offered the opportunity.
3. The proposal rewards school for encouraging student learning via the Incentive add-on. Currently schools are given no positive feedback in the accountability index for providing the rich learning opportunities that world languages represent. Schools that currently provide world languages learning for students have reaped an indirect reward via demonstrable student learning gains in other core content areas.
4. Incentive add-on points will complete the inclusion of all academic expectations in the Accountability formula. It will also complete the inclusion of a subject traditionally identified with the "academic core".
5. Incentive Add-on points will not be available to schools that fall below the "Progressing" category. This proposal does not wish to interfere with the special assistance necessary to students in these schools.
6. ESL and LEP students would be eligible if they are enrolled in an English Language Arts class since that would be considered their second language learning opportunity.
7. The 60% assessment-tied portion at the high school level is determined by the per cent of all students in grades 9 – 12 who have reached the assessment goal. That Incentive Add-On is awarded to the school each year the student is in high school and "maintaining" language skills as determined by an up-to-date *LinguaFolio KY!* This encourages early sequences and early proficiency. The student would not have to be enrolled in a traditional upper level class for the school to continue to receive the benefits of the student's proficiency. The school would have a vested interest in making sure the student continued to at least maintain the assessed proficiency level.
8. The Incentive Add-On encourages language "layering" by making it possible for a student who is learning two or more languages to be given credit for demonstrated progress and proficiency in each of those languages.

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9. Implementing the State Scholars Program should make it possible for all schools to increase their academic index by 1.426 given that all students in the school would take a world language for at least 2 years, equaling approximately 50% of the 40% for enrollment. ($.20 \times 7.13\% = 1.426$) Students enrolled in 2 classes in a block schedule system would count twice, but would not be counted for any year they had not enrolled.

10. This proposal encourages all students to reach proficiency in a world language other than their native language.

11. Heritage language learners are encouraged to have a strong background in their native language since they must meet the same criteria (e.g. a passing grade on the AP Spanish exam) as non-native Spanish speakers. The only exception would be for student for whom native language assessments or dual credit are not available (e.g. Vietnamese or Farsi). These students would have to demonstrate 2nd language ability in English at the same level as noted above, in other words, a 3 on the AP English exam.

12. This proposal encourages “start early, stay long” sequences to world languages development.

13. By using *LinguaFolio KY!*, the project guarantees vertical articulation and avoids having students start over at the beginning levels

14. The proposal encourages alternative learning methods (KVHS, other distance learning, web-enable technologies, “repository courses), etc.) to reach proficiency.

15. By allowing, encouraging and facilitating alternative, non-Carnegie unit options, the proposal reduces the impact of world languages instruction in the fight over the division of the school day.

16. The proposal encourages the inclusion of students with special needs by tying the Incentive Add-On to school population. Only students requiring an adaptive or alternate portfolio would be excluded in determining school population.

17. The proposal encourages a “middle college” or dual credit approach since it encourages all students to reach proficiency at a level that will equate with college credits.

18. The proposal supports articulation between the high school and postsecondary institutions by using agreed upon criteria and standards of proficiency.