



Chapter 8

**PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS/
LIFELONG LEARNING**



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If the new standards are to have a significant impact on the foreign language profession, language teachers who are currently in the classroom must play a key role in bringing about the necessary reform. Many studies dealing with the implementation of the standards cite professional development as one of the most important vehicles for helping teachers to deal with changing educational needs of the American public.

(Glisan, 1996, p. 57)

The information in this section has been adapted from the *Standards for Professional Development for Teachers of Foreign Languages*, 1997. According to that document, professional development for teachers should be analogous to professional development for other professionals. **Becoming an effective world language teacher is, therefore, a continuous process that begins from preservice education and extends throughout a teaching career.** As the languages and cultures of all nations are rapidly changing, teachers will need ongoing opportunities to enhance personal language skills, further their cultural understanding, and keep abreast of the latest language theory and methodology. In order for world language programs in New Jersey to embrace the philosophy and fully realize the goals set by the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, professional development must be a priority.

Collaborating language organizations (i.e., American Association of Teachers of French, American Association of Teachers of German, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) **have identified the following five standards for improving teacher competence and student learning.** These standards are followed by recommended professional development activities for attaining each standard.

Professional Development Standard 1

Teachers of foreign languages are committed to the success of all students and their learning.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. To attain this standard, language teachers formally study issues related to learner diversity, cognitive styles, affective dimensions of learning, and levels of intellectual development. They should be knowledgeable about national and state student standards and be able to demonstrate how they orient instruction toward those standards. They also develop courses and materials that are responsive to all learners and provide instruction that is coordinated with the total school curriculum. In addition, they offer individual assistance and other forms of active support for learning, and in cooperation with colleagues, they strive to provide an articulated curriculum of sequential study.

Professional Development Standard 2

Teachers of foreign languages know the foreign language and culture and know how to teach them.

Note: Four aspects of this standard (A, B, C, and D) will be discussed separately.

A. Teachers of language know the foreign language.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. Study, work, residence, or travel in the target-language areas are ideal ways to develop competence in the language. Teachers can also enhance language competence by participating in immersion activities that will help maintain or improve language skills, taking postbaccalaureate courses or seminars conducted in the language, and engaging in independent study or interaction with other speakers of the target language. Other opportunities for maintaining and improving skills include interaction with other speakers of the language and independent activities involving target-culture reading, listening, and viewing materials.

B. Teachers of foreign languages know and understand the cultures in which these languages are used.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. The desired cultural knowledge and understanding are usually gained through a program of study that includes a coherent set of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and arts, along with courses that promote an understanding of the influences of economics, science, and technology. Repeated and extended stays in the target-language cultures, combined with formal study and reflection, are likely to be the most

beneficial experiences for broadening and deepening cultural understanding. Professional development activities in support of this standard may also include participation in seminars, workshops, conferences, and programs in the United States and in other countries, as well as independent study.

C. Teachers of foreign languages know how to teach the language.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. A variety of preservice and in-service experiences contributes to the necessary growth in this area. Examples include ongoing participation in courses, conferences, workshops, and seminars in language acquisition and pedagogy, curriculum design, assessment, and the integration of language and content. Teachers also remain current in the above areas through professional reading and dialogue.

D. Teachers of foreign languages know how to teach the target culture(s).

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. Professional development activities in support of this standard include participation in appropriate courses, seminars, workshops, and conferences that focus on the concept of culture through multidisciplinary perspectives and explore a pedagogy of teaching for cultural awareness and sensitivity. They include study in the target culture and/or travel abroad.

Professional Development Standard 3

Teachers of foreign languages manage and monitor student learning effectively.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. A variety of preservice and in-service experiences contribute to the necessary growth in this area. Examples include workshops and courses on curriculum content and design, learning styles, multicultural education, technology, and language assessment. Also useful are participation in faculty discussion groups, peer observation and mentoring, and task forces that address the alignment of learning outcomes, instruction, and assessment. Continuing dialogue with teachers at all levels of instruction is critical for the realization of an articulated sequence. Additionally, teachers can gain knowledge through professional publications and by information conveyed through other media.

Professional Development Standard 4

Teachers of foreign languages reflect on their practice and learn from experience.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. Sustained interaction with other teachers and experience in teaching a variety of courses and levels help foreign language teachers

reach this standard. They take additional courses related to language acquisition, language teaching, and the study of the target language and its cultures. Teachers maintain a current professional library of books, periodicals, and other media that focus on language, culture, and pedagogy. They are involved in professional organizations and interact with colleagues in both formal and informal settings.

Professional Development Standard 5

Teachers of foreign languages are members of teaching and learning communities.

Professional development activities for attaining this standard. Examples of professional development activities for attaining this standard include ongoing participation in disciplinary and interdisciplinary faculty development opportunities; mentored development of teacher competency and personal leadership skills; experience gained through participation, service, and leadership in school, community, and professional organizations; and regular collaboration in curriculum development with colleagues in the target language, as well as colleagues of other disciplines.

These five professional development standards should be of interest to several audiences concerned with the quality of world language instruction:

- A first audience includes educators in postsecondary language departments and departments and colleges of education. The document suggests guidelines for the development of programs for the preparation of foreign language teachers as well as for their in-service development.
- A second audience includes school administrators, supervisors, and curriculum planners who can derive from these standards criteria for the hiring, retention, and promotion of foreign language teachers, as well as guidelines for teachers' continuing in-service development.
- The third audience consists of present and future teachers of languages at all levels.

TEACHER PREPARATION

Due to reform efforts taking place within the profession, **the need to reflect on current teacher preparation programs, past certification practices, and recertification programs has never been greater** (Nerenz, 1993, p. 159). Students who are presently in teacher preparation programs and new teachers entering the profession are caught up in a period of transition impacted by the shift to proficiency-oriented teaching, learning, and assessment, and the inclusion of all students in the world language classroom. The formal preparation of teachers must lay a solid foundation to prepare future language educators for this new paradigm in world language education.

Experts in the field have come to a consensus that the preparation of world language teachers must consist of several **interrelated components** (Nerenz, 1993, p. 171):

- a thorough knowledge of subject matter as defined by state, national, and professional guidelines and standards;
- general and content-specific pedagogies (*general pedagogical knowledge* refers to the characteristics of effective teaching across disciplines, and *content-specific knowledge* refers to the “new” model of language instruction and assessment); and
- reflective decision-making processes needed to design, implement, and adapt curriculum in culturally authentic contexts.

This *Framework* envisions the ideal New Jersey world language educator of the 21st century as a well-trained professional who possesses the ability to use language in real-life contexts, both social and professional, and who is able to facilitate high-quality language instruction using an interdisciplinary approach. Classroom teachers, nonspecialists, or volunteers who provide world language instruction should also be offered opportunities for professional development. The teacher’s pedagogical knowledge and skills encompass the following:

- recent research in second language acquisition and on the working of the brain;
- theories on childhood development;
- learning theories based on the cognitive approach and instructional methodology dealing with diverse learning styles;
- new assessment initiatives;
- the integration of current cultural practices and products into language learning; and
- the use of multimedia and computer technology.

See Appendix F, Figures 59 and 60, for key terms regarding teacher preparation.