

**INTRODUCTION
TO THE
NEW JERSEY
WORLD
LANGUAGES
CURRICULUM
FRAMEWORK
INITIATIVE**



INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW JERSEY WORLD LANGUAGES CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 1995, New Jersey enacted the *Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education* to ensure the development and assessment of rigorous academic standards throughout the state. On May 1, 1996, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted 61 core curriculum content standards in seven academic and five workplace readiness areas. The inclusion of two world language standards represented a key moment in the “evolution” of the study of world languages in New Jersey. For the first time in this state’s history, world languages was recognized as an **essential component of the core curriculum for all students**. The study of world languages has assumed a new role as an integral part of the school curriculum that, as in other content areas, will span the entire spectrum of K-12 education.

This new scope and sequence of language instruction emphasizes knowledge about second language acquisition, the importance of communication, and the relationship between culture and language as a new basis for program development. The ability “to communicate at a basic literacy level in at least one language other than English” (Standard 7.1) and “to demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationship between language and culture” (Standard 7.2) is now considered to be one of the hallmarks of a well-educated citizen in the state of New Jersey.

OVERVIEW AND ORGANIZATION

This *World Languages Curriculum Framework* represents the knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm of a cross-section of New Jersey educators. In addition, the *Framework* development team drew from the expertise of leaders in the field, from current language research and from existing national and state documents. This *Framework* builds upon and supports the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* (1996) produced by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, in collaboration with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and other language-specific organizations. The philosophy and goals of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project reflect the efforts of the foreign language teaching field to develop professional policy about how and what is being taught in world language classrooms throughout the country. *New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages* are philosophically aligned with the goals and guiding principles of the national standards.

The *World Languages Curriculum Framework* is intended to serve as a catalyst to assist schools in making curricular decisions based on an understanding of how students learn world languages most effectively, thereby providing a blueprint for innovation in local curricula and classroom practice.

Chapters 1 through 9 provide a rationale for language study, discuss the components of an effective program, and deal with issues affecting the implementation process. These chapters also provide information on restructuring the learning environment, strategies for diverse learners, assessment, teacher preparation, and professional development. The World Languages standards and related cumulative progress indicators are located in chapter 4, along with key terms associated with these standards.

Chapter 10 consists of a series of sample learning scenarios developed for Grades K-12 that reflect the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*. These scenarios provide illustrative examples of teaching and learning that incorporate student-centered, interactive, and interdisciplinary instructional activities. Interdisciplinary connections with standards from other core content areas as well as Workplace Readiness Standards are included.

Chapter 11 describes models of high-quality world language programs found in different states and discusses strategies that have contributed to their long-term success. In recognition of world languages as an essential component of the curriculum for a broader spectrum of learners, the first part of chapter 12 provides instructional adaptations for students with disabilities. These adaptations complement the learning scenarios found in this document. Strategies for exceptionally able learners are found in the second part of chapter 12.

Translation of the standards into strategies for teaching and learning is a formidable task as the implementation of the standards affects all areas of language learning: curriculum and instruction, performance and assessment, and teacher preparation and professional development. By itself, this *Framework* will not change what happens in world language classrooms in New Jersey. However, the conversations that ensue from discussing and using the ideas presented in this document can suggest a new focus for language practitioners.