

Introduction to Modern Language Programs

Modern Language programs involve the study of languages that are a first or native language in use today somewhere in the world. In North Carolina, the following modern languages are currently being studied: American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Cherokee, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Spanish. Additional languages can be added at any time.

Modern language instruction is a vital part of a global-ready curriculum. Proficiency-based instruction is aligned with the characteristics of a 21st Century learner, in that it acknowledges that the student may progress from one level to another, independent of the course in which he or she is enrolled, and that proficiency may vary in each of the four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The focus of proficiency-based curriculum is on day-to-day communication that accommodates learners who begin learning a language at any age. There are four different models of modern language programs offered in North Carolina, depending on the age of the beginning learner:

1. Elementary grades K-6 have language-focused and/or content-enriched FLES (Foreign Language Elementary School), also called Early Start Programs. These programs focus on developing oral proficiency and can involve reinforcing core content knowledge. Therefore, emphasis is placed on Interpersonal Skills, along with Interpretive Listening and Presentational Speaking.

Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg, who co-wrote *Languages and Children - Making the Match: New Languages for Young Learners, Grades K-8* (2010), describe best practices for proficiency-based FLES programs. Minimally, students need to be learning a language for 90 minutes per week or having class sessions of 30-40 minutes held 3-5 times per week. There are programs that exceed 90 minutes per week, which is the reason ranges are given in the proficiency expectations chart below.

Modern Language Exit Proficiency Expectations for FLES/Early Start Programs of 90 minutes per week or more for Alphabetic and Logographic Languages

Proficiency Assessment → ↓MODE & Skill	End of 2 nd year of study	End of 3 rd year of study	End of 4 th year of study	End of 5 th year of study	End of 6 th year of study
INTERPRETIVE Listening	Novice Mid	Novice High	Intermediate Low		Intermediate Mid
INTERPRETIVE Reading	Novice Low-Mid	Novice Mid-High	Novice High		Intermediate Low
INTERPERSONAL Person-to-Person	Novice Mid	Novice High	Novice High-Intermediate Low	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid
PRESENTATIONAL Speaking	Novice Low-Mid	Novice Mid-High	Novice High-Intermediate Low	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Low-Mid
PRESENTATIONAL Writing	Novice Low-Mid	Novice Mid-High		Novice High – Intermediate Low	