

Dual & Heritage Language programs include dual language/immersion programs where students are taught academic content in two languages, English and the target language, as well as Spanish for Native Speaker or other heritage languages taught to native speakers. In dual language/immersion programs, students are learning math, science, social studies, etc., in two languages and become bilingual and biliterate as a result. For heritage language speakers, such as those who speak Spanish or some other language besides English at home, heritage language programs help build literacy skills in reading and writing, so that they can bridge into advanced language courses.

Modern Language programs involve the study of languages that are a first or native language for a population somewhere in the world. These programs are the most common and are often what comes to mind when world language or foreign language classes are mentioned. In North Carolina, the following languages are studied as modern languages: American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Cherokee, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish. Additional modern languages could be added to this list at any time and would use the same set of Essential Standards, Clarifying Objectives, and Assessment Prototypes.

Measuring Proficiency in Communication Skills

Mastering a language focuses on developing competency or proficiency in communication skills. The proficiency level achieved is directly linked to the amount of time spent learning the language. Taking a language course means that time is measured in instructional hours.

For example, If Student A takes a French I course in a block schedule that meets for 90 minutes each day throughout a semester, then s/he accumulates 135 hours of formal instructional time: 90 minutes per day X 90 school days in a semester = 8,100 minutes in a school year or 135 hours total.

If Student B takes a Latin I course that meets for 50 minutes each day throughout the school year, then s/he accumulates 150 hours of formal instructional time: 50 minutes per day X 180 school days = 9,000 minutes in a school year or 150 hours total for the school year.

As students progress through a language program and accumulate 135 or 150 hours for each course, this instructional time adds up.

- Level I: 135-150 (total hours for a block schedule or a traditional schedule)
- Level II: 270-300 (total hours including Level I time)
- Level III: 405-450 (total hours including Levels I and II)
- Level IV: 540-600 (total hours including Levels I-III)
- Level V: 675-750 (total hours including Levels I-IV)
- Level VI: 810-900 (total hours including Levels I-V)
- Level VII: 945-1,050 (total hours including Levels I-VI)
- Level VIII: 1,080-1,200 (total hours including Levels I-VII)

The examples above focus on the most prevalent type of world language program at the high school level, but students can begin to study a world language at any point, K-12. Elementary school programs allow students to start the study of a language as early as kindergarten, though formal instructional time is somewhat harder to gauge because of the variety of programs and the students' developmental level. Middle school programs also vary widely, from exploratory programs that do not build proficiency in communication skills to proficiency-based programs that earn students high school graduation credit.

In addition, the type of writing system used by a language impacts the amount of time needed to reach different levels of proficiency. Learning an alphabetic language, or one that uses a system in which