

## World Language Benchmarks

### **Vision**

Michigan students, like students throughout the United States, are living in and contributing to an increasingly diverse society and interdependent community of nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To realize their personal, social, and long-term career goals, individuals need to be able to communicate with others skillfully, appropriately, and effectively. The challenge of contemporary education is to prepare all students for life in this new world. Because language and communication are at the heart of the human experience, the United States must equip students linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which all students develop and maintain proficiency in English and in at least one other language.

### **General Principles of Language Acquisition**

Current linguistic, psychological and education research offers insight into the process of learning additional languages and the pedagogy that supports language learning. Even though language learning takes place in the community as well as in classrooms, in the school setting, several general principles are fundamental to successful language teaching and learning for all students:

- Language is functional.  
The development of listening, speaking, reading, writing, or signing skills is essential for students to function in social as well as academic situations.
- Language learning is cultural learning.  
Language is the primary vehicle for expressing cultural perspectives and participating in social practices. Thus, the study of a new language provides opportunities for students to develop cultural insights that are available in no other way. Since people who share the same native language share many common values, beliefs, and behaviors, language and culture are truly inseparable. It is also important to recognize that members of one culture tend to make assumptions and draw corresponding conclusions about other cultures based upon their own values. Through language study, learners come to understand, respect, and value the practices, products, and perspectives that are at the heart of cultures other than their own. To accomplish this, teachers must integrate language and culture within each daily lesson and compel students to make cultural comparisons and connections.
- Language proficiency develops through meaningful use and interaction.  
World language learners must have multiple opportunities to learn and use authentic language, to interact with others as they study meaningful and intellectually challenging content, and to receive feedback on their language use. This means that teachers and students should use the target language exclusively as the means of communication within and beyond the classroom. To do this, teachers must both have a high level of language proficiency and must be able to tailor their language to the level of their learners.
- Language acquisition is a long-term process and occurs at different rates.  
Language acquisition occurs over time with learners moving through developmental stages and gradually growing in proficiency. Teachers, parents and students must recognize that language learning takes time and that learners acquire language and develop proficiency at different rates.

- Language proficiency develops in varied ways.  
A variety of factors influence students' acquisition of another language. These factors include students' proficiency in their first/home language, their learning and cognitive styles, motivation for language learning, personality, personal interests, and previous language learning experiences. To help all students succeed in the language classroom, teachers must take these differences into consideration and use a variety of strategies, techniques and materials when teaching and assessing student learning.

## **Units of Study**

### Myself, family and friends:

- Family members, family relationships, personal characteristics (size, hair color, country of origin and nationality, character and personality traits), and pets
- Family activities, daily routines, chores and household tasks
- Personal possessions: toys, games, electronics, clothing (color, numbers, size, fabric, style, features)
- Leisure activities: sports, hobbies, pastimes, television shows, movies, music, graphic arts
- Foods and beverages: typical breakfast, lunch, snack, and dinner foods, regional specialties, favorite foods
- Body parts, illness, injuries, and treatments, food choices, diets, health behaviors, and fitness, healthy practices (exercise preferences, sports, diet and health choices)

### My home, school, neighborhood, and community

- Rooms and furnishings in a house, table setting
- Recreational, commercial, and government buildings
- Stores and shopping
- Transportation
- School (school supplies, classes, schedules, activities, rules, routines)
- Careers (professions, employment, future plans)
- Community services

### My country and the world

- Days, dates, months, seasons, and weather patterns
- Geographical features and land forms, neighboring regions and countries
- Holidays, ceremonies, and festivals, sites of interest, travel