How To Use the Curriculum Alignment Guide

This how-to document provides instructions for completing and using the Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Alignment Guide.

Introduction

The Curriculum Alignment Guide was created by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2022) with elements adapted from three existing curriculum planning guides: ACTFL’s unit planning template in *The Keys to Planning for Learning: Effective Curriculum, Unit, and Lesson Design* (2013)*;* the Ohio Department of Education’s World Language Course and Curriculum Design Tool (2016); and the New York State Education Department’s Curriculum Alignment Reflection Tool (n.d.).

The Guide is designed to support district-based world language departments in planning courses and units that are aligned to the [2021 Massachusetts World Languages Curriculum Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/world-languages/2021.pdf). It is a living document for you to plan key components of your department’s courses and units of instruction, check for alignment to the new Standards, and reflect on successes and challenges at the end of each unit or course. It is not designed for lesson planning; while the content and structure of lesson plans should spring from information included in the Guide, individual lesson plans will vary based on the backgrounds and needs of different student populations and teacher skills, strategies, and interests.

This tool is primarily intended for the alignment of curricular materials that your department is already using, although it can support the development of new curricula. Although the Department recommends adopting high quality curricular materials and aligning those materials to Massachusetts standards, the Department has not yet identified high-quality curricular materials in the discipline of world languages. This tool, then, serves both to assist districts who have already adopted rigorous, proficiency-based, and culturally responsive curricula to align said materials to the new World Languages Content Standards, as well as to assist districts who are creating their own curriculum until they adopt rigorous, proficiency-based, culturally responsive curricular materials.

*The Guide is most powerful when used collaboratively within world language departments, and it will ideally be used by department leaders (e.g., directors, supervisors, and/or coordinators) to plan for and support high-quality, standards-based world language education in their schools. Small departments, especially those consisting of only one teacher, are encouraged to partner with district-based curriculum leaders as well as districts who use similar curricula to advance these conversations and this work.*

Along with student data and core practices, this adaptive tool should serve as an important and regular feature of department discussions, and it can and should be used in any way that makes sense in your context. The Guide is designed to serve you and your needs, and you may find it helpful to use the Guide to identify areas of strength and areas of opportunity within your courses and programs. It is important to remember that curriculum alignment is a complex and time-consuming process that goes well beyond the duties of a classroom teacher, and we recommend that stipends be provided in situations where departments are led by current classroom teachers who will be asked to lead this work in addition to fulfilling their daily teaching responsibilities.

The Guide has two major parts for Course Planning and Unit Planning in which sections are organized and structured according to the principles of backward design to best support you in using this approach when planning for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. We recommend that you first complete the Course Planning part and then use this information to guide you in completing the Unit Planning part for all units that will be implemented in the course. The following sections of this document describe the content and structure of each part of the Guide and provide guidance to complete them.

Course Planning

This part of the Guide focuses on course planning and alignment to the new Standards, and it contains the following sections: Course Information; Centering Student Diversity; Annual Unit Plan; Standards Summary; and Reflection and Analysis.

*Course Information*

This section answers the following question:

* **What are the end of course proficiency targets for my students across communicative modes and domains of language?**

This section is where you indicate the academic year, the language, level(s), and grade(s)being taught, and proficiency level targets for the end of the year. When thinking about end-of-year proficiency level targets, it is important to consider the age of your students, the type of language program being offered, the amount of time students interact with the language, and the closeness of the target language to languages with which students are already familiar.

*Some districts may have already developed expected outcomes for different courses or programs, and these expectations can be used to guide you in determining end-of-year proficiency level targets. You may have different targets for different skills, communicative modes, or domains of language, as proficiency can be acquired at different rates and in different ways.*

Proficiency level targets should be specific to and reflective of your context, meaning that you can create as many or as few targets as appropriate based on your course or program. We recommend that you use the guidance provided in the Framework to support you in this process.

*Centering Student Diversity*

*Effective world language programs lift up all students and empower them to act with cultural competence and critical consciousness. They center students, so that all students see their lives and experiences reflected in the course topics, curricular materials, and language offerings. They also disrupt stereotypes that misrepresent members of any culture by providing accurate and affirming representations of their histories, identities, expressions, values, beliefs, products, and practices.* (Guiding Principle 2)

This section answers the following questions:

* **Who are my students?**
* **What assets do they bring to the classroom?**
* **What topics will be linguistically and culturally appropriate for my students?**
* **What resources and teaching strategies will reflect students’ identities and experiences?**
* **What resources are available to teach the students I’ve identified?**

*Pause for Equity*

**To what extent are you considering students with disabilities in your responses to the questions listed above? What assets do they bring to the classroom? What resources and strategies reflect their identities and experiences?**

This section is where you think about the students that will be taught in your course, with boxes for recording information about students’ backgrounds and assets, the topics that will be linguistically and culturally appropriate for students to learn, and the resources and teaching strategies that will best reflect the identities and experiences of students in this course based on the information you’ve recorded. There is also a place to document what resources are available to teach the students you’ve identified. If you are planning multiple courses in advance or using the same Guide from year to year, it is important to remember that student diversity will change over time, so this section can and should be continuously updated based on the students in the course each year.

*Annual Unit Plan*

This section, which spans two pages, answers the following questions:

* **What themes and topics will be covered across units during the academic year?**
* **What are the big ideas of my units, and how do they extend learning beyond the classroom?**

This section is where you list the units that will be taught throughout the entire academic year. You may find it helpful to include the name of each unit, a brief description of the theme(s) or topic(s) that will be covered, the length of the unit, and any other information that is needed to connect the scope and sequence of learning throughout the year.

*Unit themes and topics should be selected based students’ proficiency levels, identities, and experiences and the resources that are available to you. For recommended topics for students at different proficiency levels, please see Table 1 on p.9 of the* [*World Languages Curriculum Framework*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/world-languages/2021.pdf)*.*

In this section, there is also a place to plan the big ideas of each unit by recording the essential question(s) and information about students’ expected proficiency levels (Domain 1: Communication), the knowledge students will need to gain (Domain 2: Linguistic Cultures); and ways in which they will apply what they have learned (Domain 3: Lifelong Learning) for each unit.

*Standards Summary*

This section, which spans two pages, answers the following question:

* **What standards will be focused on or introduced during the academic year?**

This section is where you document the standards that will be focused on or introduced during the academic year, and there are boxes for recording which World Language Content Standards, social and emotional learning standards, social justice standards, and additional Massachusetts standards will be addressed across units. Each box is linked to the appropriate standards documents so that you can copy and paste the standards into the Guide as needed.

*Post-Unit Reflection & Analysis*

This section answers the following questions:

* **Which students connected to the units? Which students didn’t and why?**
* **Which students saw themselves most reflected in the units? Which students didn’t and why?**
* **Which unit activities and assessments were most effective? Why?**
* **Which unit activities and assessments were least effective? Why?**
* **How aligned were different components of the units to the standards I planned to address?**

This section is designed to be completed at the end of the course. It provides a place to reflect on the course as a whole and to analyze the extent to which it was aligned with the Standards. There are boxes for recording reflections on centering student diversity, strengths, and areas for improvement, as well as notes about alignment between assessment and course instruction and the standards that you intended to address. This section also includes a place to indicate whether these components of the course were fully, partially, or not aligned with the standards selected, followed by a box to plan for next steps when revising course plans for the future.

Unit Planning

This part of the Guide focuses on unit planning and alignment to the new Standards, and it contains the following sections: Unit Overview; Standards Summary; Summative Assessment; Instruction; and Reflection and Analysis.

*Unit Overview*

This section answers the following questions:

* **What is the overall focus and structure of this unit?**
* **What skills will students develop or advance in this unit and how?**

This section is where you record general information about the unit, including the unit number and title, the length of the unit, the proficiency level target(s), and the theme(s)/topic(s) of the unit. This section also provides a place to think about how you will center student diversity in the unit, which can and should be based on the more detailed information recorded in the Centering Student Diversity section of the Course Planning part of the Guide. Finally, there are boxes to record the essential question(s) for the unit, the unit goals/objectives, any culturally relevant authentic resources that serve as the foundation of the unit, and additional notes.

You may find it helpful to write your unit goals/objectives in the form of Can Do Statements, and we recommend using the [NCSSFFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements](https://www.actfl.org/resources/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements) (also linked directly in the Guide) to create unit goals/objectives that connect to your unit theme and align to the Communication standards in the Framework. Although the number of goals/objectives may vary from unit to unit, it is important for all world language educators to include at least one unit goal/objective for each of the Communication Practices.

*Classical language teachers may decide to focus more on goals/objectives for interpretive and intercultural communication while still providing opportunities for their students to develop and advance their interpersonal and presentational communication skills. The interpersonal and presentational modes may be expressed or demonstrated at lower levels of proficiency.*

*Standards Summary*

This section, which spans two pages, answers the following question:

* **What standards will be focused on or introduced in the unit?**

This section is where you document the standards that will be focused on or introduced in the unit, and there are boxes for recording which World Language Content Standards, social and emotional learning standards, social justice standards, and additional Massachusetts standards will be addressed. Each box is linked to the appropriate standards documents so that you can copy and paste the standards into the Guide as needed.

*It is important to remember that not all Practices or Standards will be addressed in each unit, and you should select which ones you plan to focus on or introduce based on the theme of the unit and the overall scope and sequence of learning that you outlined in the Course Planning part of the Guide.*

*Summative Assessment*

This section answers the following questions:

* **How will students demonstrate how well they have met the unit goals/objectives?**
* **What will I do to differentiate each of my summative assessment tasks for diverse learners?**
* **How will I ensure that my summative assessment tasks reflect students’ backgrounds, identities, and experiences?**
* **How will I measure student performances?**
* **How will I provide feedback on student performances?**

This section is where you describe your summative assessment for the unit, with boxes for identifying and describing the performance assessment tasks that you will use to measure students’ interpretive, interpersonal, presentational, and intercultural communication skills at the end of the unit. When planning for summative assessment, it is important to design tasks that allow students to demonstrate how well they have met the unit goals/objectives, and you may find it helpful to use ACTFL’s [Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA)](https://carla.umn.edu/assessment/vac/CreateUnit/p_2.html) model to support you in designing a connected and articulated series of tasks. This section of the Guide includes space to plan for differentiation of summative assessment tasks and materials and to check if you are simultaneously assessing the embedded Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities standards through these tasks.

*The Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities standards are expressed through the communicative modes. Summative assessment tasks should therefore be communicative tasks that concurrently assess the cultural and lifelong learning skills included in these standards.*

There is also a place to brainstorm how to avoid biases in your summative assessment tasks to ensure that they are equitable for all types of learners in the course, including those from marginalized groups and populations. Finally, there are boxes to plan for the tools and methods that you will use for scoring and providing feedback on student performances.

*Instruction*

This section, which spans two pages, answers the following questions:

* **What learning activities will support students in meeting unit goals/objectives?**
* **How will I check for understanding and determine if additional supports are needed?**
* **What culturally relevant authentic materials and resources will I use during this unit?**
* **What supporting language functions, grammatical structures, and vocabulary do students need to develop or advance their skills in this unit?**
* **What materials, strategies, and supports will I use to ensure equity in the unit?**
* **What materials, strategies, and supports will I use to ensure that all students see themselves and their lived experiences in this unit?**
* **How will I integrate technology into my instruction, and what supports will be needed?**
* **Which Core Practices will I focus on, and how will I use them to enhance student learning?**

This section is where you plan for instruction after having identified and designed unit goals/objectives and summative assessment tasks. In the first page of this section, there are boxes for describing the key learning activities and formative assessments that will ensure students are able to meet unit goals and objectives for the interpretive, interpersonal, presentational, and intercultural communication modes. There is a place to describe the authentic materials and resources needed for the key learning activities and formative assessments, and you may find it helpful to include links to these resources if they are hosted online.

*If you are planning to use the same resources for activities and assessments across multiple communicative modes, you are welcome to merge the cells within this section rather than typing the same resource into separate boxes for each mode.*

*Pause for Equity*

**To what extent are you considering students with disabilities in your responses to the questions listed above?**

There is also a space to check if you are simultaneously teaching the embedded Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities standards through these activities and assessments. When planning communicative activities across modes, you should also include the cultural or lifelong learning skills that are included in these standards. Finally, there is a box to consider the toolbox of language functions (e.g., expressing, describing, comparing), structures (e.g., pronouns, future tense, interrogatives), and vocabulary that students will need to develop or advance their skills by the end of the unit.

The second page of this section asks you to think through the materials, strategies, and supports needed for ensuring equity in the unit, and there are boxes for planning how you will incorporate and address social and emotional well-being and social justice throughout the unit.

*When planning for social and emotional well-being, you may find it helpful to consider ways in which students are encouraged to develop self-awareness, maintain healthy classroom relationships, and make responsible decisions. For social justice, it is important to think about the extent to which different identities and language varieties are represented in the classroom and if your tasks and activities elevate marginalized experiences.*

There are also boxes for recording information about how you will plan for differentiation based on proficiency level, linguistic and cultural background, learning challenges, and other elements of student diversity, as well as your use of technology. Finally, there is a place to check that you are using each of the [ACTFL Core Practices for World Language Learning](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/resources/Core%20practices.pdf) to ensure that you are delivering high-quality, equitable instruction in your classroom. For a list of these practices, please see p.10 of the [World Languages Curriculum Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/world-languages/2021.pdf).

*Post-Unit Reflection & Analysis*

This section answers the following questions:

* **Which students connected to the unit? Which students didn’t and why?**
* **Which students saw themselves most reflected in the unit? Which students didn’t and why?**
* **Which unit activities and assessments were most effective? Why?**
* **Which unit activities and assessments were least effective? Why?**
* **How aligned were different components of the unit to the standards I planned to address?**

*Pause for Equity*

**To what extent are you considering students with disabilities in your responses to the questions listed above?**

This section is designed to be completed after the unit has been taught. It provides a place to reflect on the implementation of the unit and to analyze the extent to which it was aligned with the Standards. There are boxes for recording reflections on centering student diversity, strengths, and areas for improvement, as well as notes about alignment between instruction and assessment in the unit and the standards that you intended to address. This section also includes a place to indicate whether these components of the unit were fully, partially, or not aligned with the standards selected, followed by a box to plan for next steps when revising unit plans for the future.

References

Clementi, D., & Terrill, L. (2013). *The keys to planning for learning: Effective curriculum, unit, and lesson design*. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/keys-planning/BlankUnitTemplate.docx>

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Ohio Department of Education. (2016). *World language course and curriculum design tool*. <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Foreign-Language/World-Languages-Model-Curriculum/World-Languages-Model-Curriculum-Framework/Instructional-Strategies/BACKWARD_design_tool_BLANK_WEBSITE_oct2016.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>