



## WORLD LANGUAGES

REFLECT REPORT  
2013-14

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We currently offer Levels 1-5 of French, German and Spanish. Levels 4 and 5 are CIS offerings through the U of M Twin Cities. CIS courses are concurrent enrollment options with the same curricula as on campus at UMN taught by BHS faculty on our campus. These 3 languages have been offered at BHS for 20+ years. BCMS has offered a one quarter 8th grade exploratory course for the last 5 years. This course is designed to help guide students in their choice of a language, but is by no means equivalent to a level of language learning. Enrollment in language has increased the past three years based on registration requests.

### NATIONAL STANDARDS

The National Standards for Foreign Language learning are the “Five Cs”: Communication (Communicate in languages other than English), Cultures (Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures), Connections (Connect with other disciplines and acquire information), Comparisons (Develop insight into the nature of language and culture) and Communities (Participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world).

### ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

The ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) guidelines are used within our district to measure students’ achievement in relationship to the National Standards. Within each language level students are expected to reach designated goals for reading, listening, speaking, and writing. At Buffalo High School we give a multilingual standardized test called the MLPA (Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessment) in the level three classes to set a benchmark in reading and listening in all three languages.

This exam measures student achievement and sets a target of ACTFL's **Intermediate Low**. The interpretation of the learner's capability is as follows:

Students at an Intermediate level can CREATE with the language to a certain extent. They tend to be reactive rather than initiatory — they can answer questions but don't volunteer much. They tend to function largely in the present tense, though they can use some pasts and futures. They also tend to focus almost entirely on personal welfare, not much outside themselves. They can handle everyday survival tasks, e.g. courtesy, routine travel, food, personal welfare. They can basically function on the SENTENCE level, not just in separate words.

SURVIVAL language is the criterion, not sustained conversation. A native speaker accustomed to foreigners can understand pronunciation. Intermediate speakers have only minimal control of major grammatical structures; but they can say a lot of things — not just a few — simply, and a whole range of personal-welfare things. With limited vocabulary, they can handle the three phases: get into, through, and out of a practical situation (for example, get a hotel room or a taxi, find out closing times, order a basic meal, etc.).

Both the ACTFL guidelines and national standards support each other in second language learning and together can be used to effectively guide world language program development and instruction. The National Standards' "Five Cs" refer to what we teach. The ACTFL guidelines help to quantify how well students learn the language.

## **STATE AND NATIONAL TRENDS AND RESEARCH**

A leader in survey research, [Westat](#) worked with the Center for Applied Linguistics analyzing results from their third survey (1987, 1997, 2008) to determine national trends in foreign language education. In 2008, 5,000 public and private schools participated in the survey.

Although foreign language instruction study remained relatively stable at the high school level from 1997 to 2008, it decreased substantially in elementary and middle schools, from 31% to 25% and 75% to 58% respectively.

The teaching of French, German, Japanese and Russian decreased significantly at both the elementary and secondary levels. Spanish remained the most commonly taught language. Although still low, Chinese and Arabic increased at both the elementary and secondary levels.

The percentage of secondary schools offering concurrent enrollment and Advanced Placement (AP) language classes increased significantly during this time period. The study also notes a severe shortage of foreign language teachers.

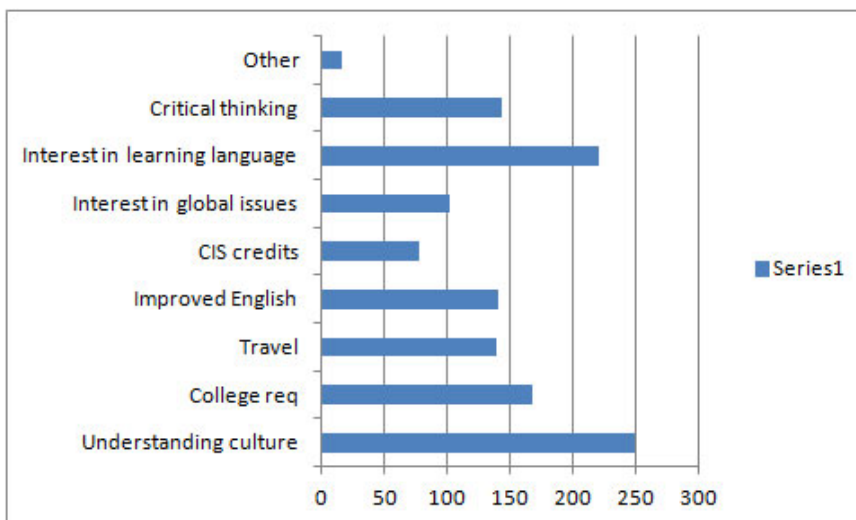
The study also shows an increase in target language use during instruction. This has been aided a great deal with the vast increase of availability of target language resources through the internet and various computer-based technologies. Teachers no longer have to rely on textbooks and trips for authentic material, they are able to access fresh, up to date written, audio and visual resources at any given time.

### **BHM PROGRAM STRENGTHS**

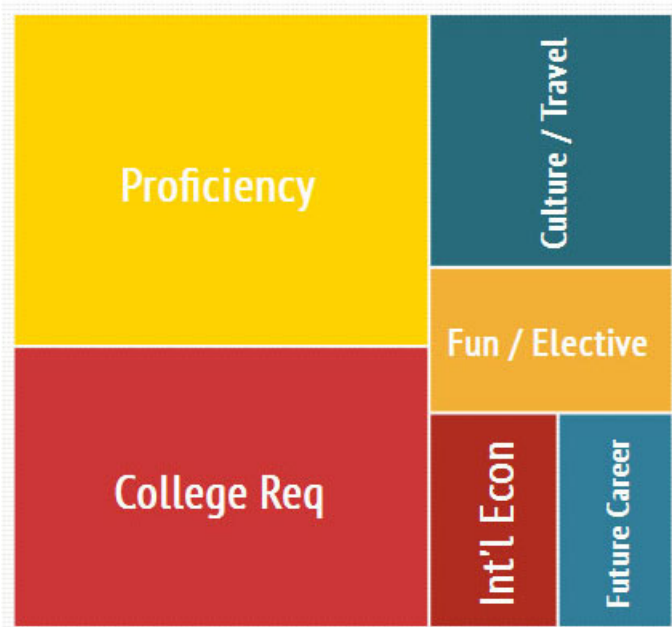
Of all neighboring districts, BHM is one of two that offer a choice of three languages. Dist 728 (Elk River) also offers three language choices (French, German, and Spanish). BHM is the only district that offers two CIS courses (1003 and 1004) at an intermediate level in all three language offerings.

According to a 2012 survey of 506 BHM parents and high school students:

The following have been met as a result of WL courses:



What are the original reasons that you chose to take a WL course?  
(larger boxes indicate a more frequent response)

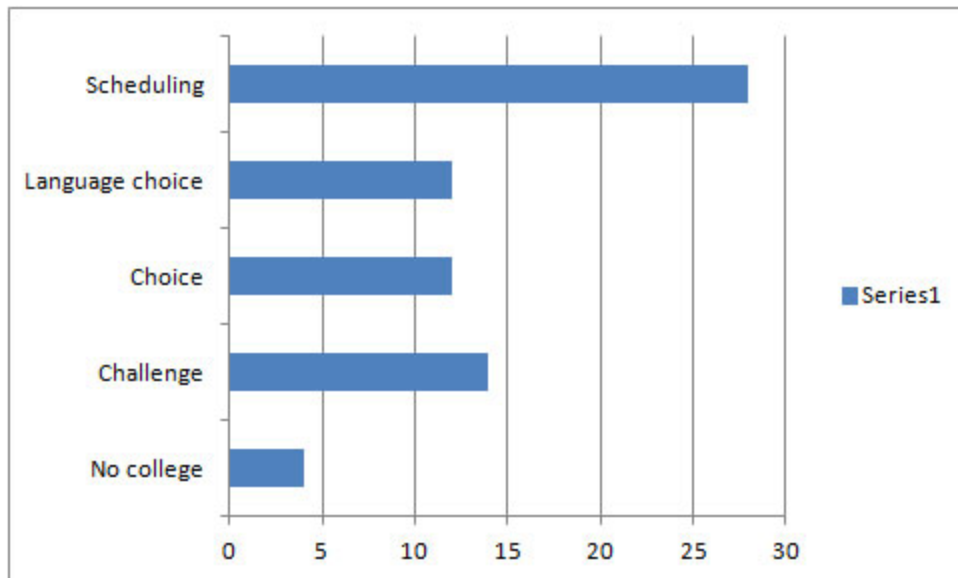


BHM World Languages offer a wide range of benefits to the student body. Many language students target completion of the two years of one foreign language required for college or university entrance. During this study, students gain insight into their own culture and language by way of exploring another. They enjoy a different sort of study from the traditional core classes, describing language study as not only challenging, but uniquely fun and practical. Our level III language courses target the Intermediate Low level of the ACTFL guidelines, maximizing student interest in proficiency. Many venture even deeper into the target language and culture by studying more than one foreign language/culture or participating in one of our instructor-guided travel offerings. Every second year we offer three travel options, which vary from one to three-week excursions to a variety of European, South and Central American locations. As a school district uniting several small communities, this cultural and language enrichment is invaluable.

Many students continue beyond the two-year language study, earning up to ten cost-free credits from the University of Minnesota through our in-house level IV and V German, French and Spanish CIS courses. With the head start our department offers, our students often continue their language study post-secondary, culminating in a language minor (or beyond) that is relatively quickly earned.

## BHM PROGRAM LIMITATIONS OR CHALLENGES

What was a reason if you chose not to take a World Language course?



The number one obstacle that students face in their pursuit of World Language education is simply scheduling. Students are given many choices at Buffalo High School, but being able to fit their desired electives into their schedules, and especially being able to complete the number of language levels that they would like, proves to be very difficult. Students therefore have to make choices, and sometimes find themselves unable to complete language courses before graduation.

In ISD 877, as in the rest of the United States, World Language is generally seen as a course for a college preparatory track, not a necessary tool that all people should acquire for everyday life. This is not a consistent view throughout the world. Therefore, while many Americans and students in our district view language learning as a “difficult” undertaking, it is a skill that all different types of people with various educational backgrounds throughout the world do undertake, acquire and benefit from.

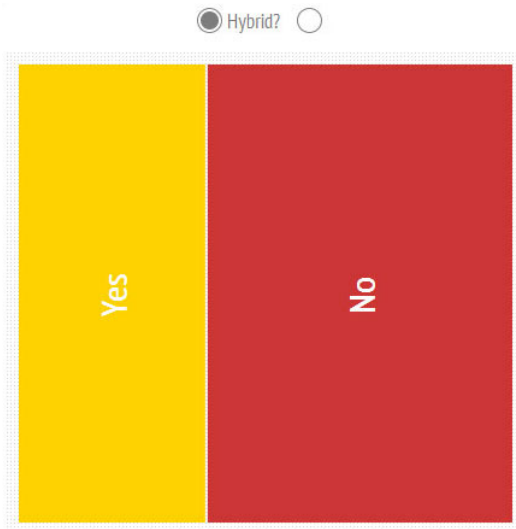
## NEXT STEPS

The department will be exploring trends and options in delivery methods and resources currently available.

The department sees that the future of language learning will likely include different class structures, such as hybrid and online learning.

**According to the 2012 BHM parents and students:**

**“Would you be interested a hybrid option?”**



**What type of Internet access do students have?**

