River Forest
Public Schools

World Language Curriculum Update

July 15, 2025

World Language Instruction: 2025-2026
Focus on 5th and 6th Grade Course Refinement

	2024-2025 and previous	**Beginning in 2025-2026**
Grades 5 and 6	• 10 week courses • 37 minutes daily • Alignment to American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards limited by time • Vocabulary embedded within usable language, simple phrases • Culture: holidays and festivals are calendar dependent and as time allowed • Time spent on review varies and is significant	• Daily courses • 37 minutes daily • Fully aligned to standards: ACTFL Proficiency Standards, Performance Descriptors, and World Language Readiness Standards • 5Cs: Communication, **Culture,** Connection, Comparison, Communities

Curriculum Process Overview

1. Reflected on current instructional model: Identified strengths and areas for growth related to student outcomes
2. Conducted research review and analysis
3. Curated core resource options
4. Developed high-quality instructional materials evaluation tool/rubric
5. Evaluated resource options independently and as a team
6. Analyzed results of resource evaluation as a team
7. Developed implementation and purchase recommendation

Research Review and Analysis

- ACTFL Research Findings:
  - Academic Achievement, Competence and Proficiency, Reading Abilities, Skills Transfer, Linguistic Awareness, Socio Economics, Print Awareness, Language Brokering, Test Scores, College Performance

- American Academy of Arts and Sciences; America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century

- ACTFL Guiding Principles for Language Learning

- ISBE/ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

- ACTFL World Language Readiness Standards and CCSS

- ACTFL Performance Descriptors

- 21st Century Skills Map: World Languages

Benefits of World Language Instruction in Middle School

- Middle school is an ideal time to begin or build on exposure because the adolescent brain retains strong neuroplasticity for language acquisition.
- Students who start learning world languages in middle school can reach higher proficiency by high school graduation.
- Students that learn world language in middle school:
  - Develop better reading skills (including English)
  - Demonstrate stronger executive functioning skills (i.e. organization, focus, task-switching)
  - Accomplish higher overall academic achievement
  - Develop empathy for people who are different from them
  - Gain confidence by communicating in new ways
  - Perceive themselves as part of a global community
  - Are prepared for high school world language programs and professional pathways
  - Have more time to achieve Seal of Biliteracy by high school graduation

Anchor Resource:

ACTFL

World Language

Readiness Standards

GOAL AREAS	STANDARDS		
COMMUNICATION Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes	**Interpersonal Communication:** Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.	**Interpretive Communication:** Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.	**Presentational Communication:** Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.
CULTURES Interact with cultural competence and understanding	**Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives:** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.	**Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives:** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.	
CONNECTIONS Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives in order to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations	**Making Connections:** Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.	**Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives:** Learners access and evaluate information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures.	
COMPARISONS Develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence	**Language Comparisons:** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.	**Cultural Comparisons:** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.	
COMMUNITIES Communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world	**School and Global Communities:** Learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world.	**Lifelong Learning:** Learners set goals and reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement.	

ISBE/ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

- Proficiency is a range.
- Guidelines measure what language users can do in real-world situations *and* in spontaneous contexts.
- Gives insight into skills and identifies strategies to increase proficiency.
- Each level applies to *all four* language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Proficiency is fluid, and users' abilities often change over time!

Draft "I Can" Statements

5th Grade Spanish

- I can recognize sounds of the alphabet.
- I can use numbers from 16-30.
- I can recognize & repeat days of the week.
- I can talk about what I want to eat.
- I can describe animals .
- I can use greetings & farewells.

6th Grade French

- I can greet my peers & adults.
- I can use expressions of politeness.
- I can express basic feelings and preferences.
- I can express likes, dislikes, preferences on familiar topics.
- I can identify and describe places.
- Introduce my city.

ACTFL Performance Descriptors
Anchor Resource

3 Modes of Language: **Interpersonal * Interpretive * Presentational**

What are the parameters for the language learner's performance?

- Functions
- Contexts and Content
- Text Types

How and how well is the language learner able to be understood and to understand?

- Language Control
- Vocabulary
- Communication Strategies
- Cultural Awareness

ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners | Interpersonal

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
	Expresses self in conversations on very familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions that have been highly practiced and memorized.	Expresses self and participates in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences. Handles short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering a variety of questions. Can communicate about self, others, and everyday life.	Expresses self fully to maintain conversations on familiar topics and new concrete social, academic, and work-related topics. Can communicate in paragraph-length conversation about events with detail and organization. Confidently handles situations with an unexpected complication. Shares point of view in discussions.
Functions	Can ask highly predictable and formulaic questions and respond to such questions by listing, naming, and identifying. May show emerging evidence of the ability to engage in simple conversation.	Can communicate by understanding and creating personal meaning. Can understand, ask, and answer a variety of questions. Consistently able to initiate, maintain, and end a conversation to satisfy basic needs and/or to handle a simple transaction. May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate about more than the "here and now."	Can communicate with ease and confidence by understanding and producing narrations and descriptions in all major time frames and deal efficiently with a situation with an unexpected turn of events. May show emerging evidence of the ability to participate in discussions about issues beyond the concrete.
Contexts/Content	Able to function in some personally relevant contexts on topics that relate to basic biographical information. May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate in highly practiced contexts related to oneself and immediate environment.	Able to communicate in contexts relevant to oneself and others, and one's immediate environment. May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate in contexts of occasionally unfamiliar topics.	Functions fully and effectively in contexts both personal and general. Content areas include topics of personal and general interest (community, national, and international events) as well as work-related topics and areas of special competence. May show emerging evidence of the ability to communicate in more abstract content areas.
Text Type	Understands and produces highly practiced words and phrases and an occasional sentence. Able to ask formulaic or memorized questions.	Able to understand and produce discrete sentences, strings of sentences and some connected sentences. Able to ask questions to initiate and sustain conversations.	Able to understand and produce discourse in full oral paragraphs that are organized, cohesive, and detailed. Able to ask questions to probe beyond basic details.

ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners | Interpersonal

Domains	Novice Range	Intermediate Range	Advanced Range
Language Control	Can usually comprehend highly practiced and basic messages when supported by visual or contextual clues, redundancy or restatement, and when the message contains familiar structures. Can control memorized language sufficiently to be appropriate to the context and understood by those accustomed to dealing with language learners, however at times with difficulty.	Understands straightforward language that contains mostly familiar structures. Control of language is sufficient to be understood by those accustomed to dealing with language learners.	Language control is sufficient to interact efficiently and effectively with those unaccustomed to dealing with language learners. Consistent control of basic high-frequency structures facilitates comprehension and production.
Vocabulary	Able to understand and produce a number of high frequency words, highly practiced expressions, and formulaic questions.	Communicates using high frequency and personalized vocabulary within familiar themes or topics.	Comprehends and produces a broad range of vocabulary related to school, employment, topics of personal interest, and generic vocabulary related to current events and matters or public and community interest.
Communication Strategies	May use some or all of the following strategies to maintain communication, able to: • Imitate modeled words • Use facial expressions and gestures • Repeat words • Resort to first language • Ask for repetition • Indicate lack of understanding	Uses some of the following strategies to maintain communication, but not all of the time and inconsistently, able to: • Ask questions • Ask for clarification • Self-correct or restate when not understood • Circumlocute	Uses a range of strategies to maintain communication, able to: • Request clarification • Repeat • Restate • Rephrase • Circumlocute
Cultural Awareness	May use culturally appropriate gestures and formulaic expressions in highly practiced applications. May show awareness of the most obvious cultural differences or prohibitions, but may often miss cues indicating miscommunication.	Recognizes and uses some culturally appropriate vocabulary, expressions, and gestures when participating in everyday interactions. Recognizes that differences exist in cultural behaviors and perspectives and can conform in familiar situations.	Understands and uses cultural knowledge to conform linguistically and behaviorally in many social and work-related interactions. Shows conscious awareness of significant cultural differences and attempts to adjust accordingly.

Core Beliefs: World Language Vision Statement

At Roosevelt, our World Language Program inspires students to develop proficiency in **speaking, listening, reading, and writing** while deepening their understanding of diverse **cultures**. Through engaging, **theme-based units** and meaningful, authentic, and **interactive experiences**, we aim to ignite a lifelong passion for language learning and cultural exploration, empowering students to become curious, empathetic, and globally-minded citizens.

Development of High Quality Instructional Material Evaluation Tool

- ○ Standards Alignment
- ○ Lesson Quality
- ○ Assessment
- ○ Content and Coherence
- ○ Instructional Strategies
- ○ Differentiation
- ○ Teacher Resources

Evaluation Results

	Spanish	French	Italian
Carnegie	14	13	13.75
Vista Higher Learning	13.5	14	14.5
Savvas	13	NA	NA
Klett	16	15	15.5

Why *Klett*?

- Proficiency Based (ACTFL)
- Available in French, Spanish, Italian
- Print and digital materials available for teachers and students
- Assessment rubrics aligned to ACTFL proficiency and performance
- Self and peer assessments for students
- Accessibility supports: video and audio scripts, closed captions, audio and video tutorials
- Differentiated extension for heritage students
- Scored well in all areas of the evaluation tool; specific strengths include:
  - Content and Coherence: developmentally appropriate topics and themes for middle school students
  - Instructional Strategies:
  - Teacher Resources: Cultural Background and Index available

Long Term Course Outcomes

	ACTFL Proficiency	Description
5th	Novice Low	**Communication**: Can produce isolated words or short memorized phrases **Understanding**: Can recognize a few words if spoken slowly and clearly. **Functionality**: Can use a few rehearsed phrases
6th	Novice Mid	**Communication**: Can use memorized phrases and lists of words. **Understanding**: Can understands simple questions, instructions, and basic information. **Functionality**: Can answer simple questions about self and immediate surroundings.
7th	Novice High	**Communication**: Can manage short conversations in familiar contexts. Mostly uses memorized or practiced language, but begins creating simple original sentences. **Understanding**: Can understands short, simple conversation. **Functionality**: Can ask and answer questions about routine topics.
8th	Intermediate Low- Mid	**Communication**: Can create simple sentences and strings of sentences on familiar topics. **Understanding**: Can understands basic information in conversations on familiar topics. **Functionality**: Can participate in simple conversations about everyday life.

Pathway for Current D90 Cohorts

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030
5th	New curriculum				
6th	New Curriculum	New curriculum			
7th	No change	New Curriculum	New curriculum		
8th	No change	New curriculum	New Curriculum	New curriculum	
9th		Enter HS with 2 years of daily language instruction, no curriculum changes	Enter HS with 2 years of daily language instruction, 1 year of new resource	**Enter HS with 3 years of daily WL instruction, 3 years of new resource**	**Enter HS with 4 years of daily WL instruction, 4 years of new resource**

Implementation and Purchase Recommendation

	2025-2026 Year 1	2026-2027 Year 2	2027-2028 Year 3+
Grades 5 and 6	Year 1 Spanish and French No Change Italian	Year 2 Spanish and French Year 1 Italian	Year 3 Spanish and French Year 2 Italian
Grades 7 and 8	No Change	Year 1 Italian, French, Spanish	Year 2 Italian, French, Spanish
Projected Cost	**$15,808** Initial purchase of 5th and 6th Spanish and French	**$25,940** Initial purchase of 7th and 8th Spanish and French Initial purchase of 5th-8th Italian	**$17,290** Teacher and student digital renewal 6th-8th, 5th grade consumables

Total Cost over 5 Years: $93,620

Draft Professional Learning Plan: Year 1

- August Institute Day training with *Klett*
- Fall release day for team planning
- October Institute Day follow-up training with *Klett*
- February Institute Day follow-up with *Klett*
- April Institute Day follow-up with *Klett*
- Spring planning session: 7th and 8th grade

Next Steps

- Purchase materials
- Summer curriculum work: Continue curriculum map for 5th and 6th grade
- Implement Professional Learning Plan
- Develop scope and sequence for Italian (implementation to begin in 2026-2027)
- Update BOE midyear
- Spring 2026: Plan for 7th and 8th grade
- Collaboration with OPRF on placement as grade cohorts advance

Questions?