

K-12 WORLD LANGUAGES ACADEMIC STANDARDS



Language and communication are at the heart of human experience.

- World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2015)

Catalina Foothills School District

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNING BOARD ON _____

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Introduction: Academic Standards for K-12 World Languages

Transfer Goals for World Languages

Catalina Foothills School District's (CFSD) World Languages (WL) program is grounded in the belief that learning another language is essential for engaging meaningfully in an interconnected world. The core objective of the program is to support students as they develop the ability to communicate effectively in more than one language—while also understanding and appreciating cultural nuance, including the often subtle and unwritten ways people from different backgrounds express themselves, behave, and interpret the world. By cultivating the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for intercultural communication, students are well equipped to collaborate and thrive in local, national, and global contexts. In doing so, they are prepared to demonstrate the *CFSD Transfer Goals for World Languages*:

Students will be able to independently use their learning to:

- Establish and maintain positive relationships in diverse cultural contexts.
- Serve as mediators within and across cultures in order to reach shared goals and understanding.
- Communicate effectively in more than one language, honoring culture and context.

Belief Statements

Belief statements articulate the core principles that guide programming, instruction, and assessment while simultaneously creating a common understanding about what matters most in teaching and learning. Rooted in research and best practices, the WL Belief Statements reflect our shared understanding of how students acquire language and develop intercultural competence. They serve as a foundation for decision-making at every level—supporting teachers in designing meaningful, student-centered learning experiences and informing programmatic choices that prioritize equity, engagement, extended sequences of language learning, and focused professional development. By anchoring the work in clearly defined beliefs, teachers ensure coherence across grade levels and a collective commitment to helping all students become confident, culturally aware communicators. In CFSD, WL teachers post the belief statements below in their classrooms and discuss them with their students:

- *A comprehensive K-12 WL program is essential to developing globally competent citizens.*
- *All students have an internal framework for language acquisition.*
- *Language is acquired when we understand messages: when we understand what people say and what we read.*
- *Language acquisition happens slowly over time.*
- *Creating and sustaining a safe and respectful learning environment where all students feel welcome is crucial for language acquisition.*
- *When students learn about other people and cultures, they better understand themselves and their own cultures.*

Academic Standards

CFSD's K-12 WL Standards align with the Arizona World and Native Languages Standards (2015), sharing a common emphasis on cultural competence and performance-based, proficiency-oriented instruction and assessment. CFSD's K-12 WL program is guided by four key standards that serve as the foundation for cultural inquiry, language learning, and assessment:

Cultural competence describes the ability to interact effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and involves:

- recognizing cultural similarities and differences;
- interpreting and explaining cultural meaning behind behaviors, customs, and expressions;
- using culture as a resource to communicate meaningfully and respectfully; and
- developing attitudes of openness and curiosity toward diversity.

Developing cultural competence enables learners to navigate cross-cultural interactions with sensitivity and adaptability, fostering meaningful connections in a globalized world.

Interpersonal communication involves two-way interactions where participants actively negotiate meaning through spoken or written conversations. Learners engage in spontaneous exchanges to share information, express feelings, and exchange opinions. This mode emphasizes real-time communication, requiring learners to interpret and respond appropriately to others' messages. Examples include face-to-face conversations, text messaging, or video calls.

Interpretive communication is a one-way process where learners comprehend and interpret written or spoken language. This mode focuses on understanding the main ideas and supporting details of authentic texts, such as articles, podcasts, and videos. Learners develop their ability to interpret information accurately by analyzing content, recognizing cultural nuances, and inferring meaning.

Presentational communication refers to the creation of messages for an audience without the expectation of immediate interaction or negotiation of meaning. This mode includes one-way communication where the speaker or writer plans, rehearses, and structures the message carefully for clarity and impact. Presentational tasks include activities like writing a story or report, giving a speech or oral presentation, or producing multimedia presentations.

The standards are neither curriculum nor instructional practices. While the K-12 World Languages Standards may be used as the basis for curriculum, they are not a curriculum. Therefore, identifying the sequence of instruction at each level - what will be taught and for how long - requires concerted effort and attention by teachers and teams at each school. Curricular tools, including textbooks, are selected by the district and adopted by the governing board. CFSD defines standards, curriculum, and instruction as follows:

- Standards are what a student needs to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of each level of instruction. They build across grade levels in a progression of increasing understanding and through a range of cognitive demand levels. Standards are adopted at the state level by the Arizona State Board of Education and at the local level by the CFSD governing board.
- Curriculum refers to resources used for teaching and learning the standards. Curricula are adopted at the local level.
- Instruction refers to the methods or methodologies used by teachers to teach their students. Instructional techniques are employed by individual teachers in response to the needs of the students in their classes to help them progress through the curriculum to master the standards. Decisions about instructional practice and techniques are made at the teacher, school, and district level.

Cultural Competence

CFSD WL educators encourage students to approach culture with curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking, adopting the mindset of a “cultural detective.” This metaphor helps students understand that developing intercultural competence is not about making assumptions, but rather about asking thoughtful questions, gathering evidence from cultural products and practices, and drawing reasoned conclusions about the underlying perspectives and values. To guide this exploration, teachers provide students with the sentence frame: *All people ____, but the details may differ* (e.g., *All people celebrate important moments in their lives, but the reasons, rituals, timing, and settings of those celebrations vary across cultures*). This sentence frame helps students recognize both the universality and diversity of the human experience.

As students examine cultural products and practices in order to uncover cultural perspectives, they are encouraged to ask *I wonder...* questions. The *I wonder...* strategy helps students make comparisons with their own experiences and engage their curiosity as they investigate how other people live. Examples of questions that students might ask during a cultural investigation are provided here:

- *I wonder . . .*
 - *...why lunch is the biggest meal of the day in Mexico.*
 - *...what rules are followed when using public transportation.*
 - *...where families go during winter vacation in Chile.*
 - *...how this design helps families live in high altitudes.*
 - *...how much homework students get in middle school in the target culture.*
 - *...when children start learning another language in China.*
 - *...who is considered a hero or role model in the target culture—and why.*

These questions prompt students to think deeply about cultural products and practices and how they can reveal a community’s priorities, beliefs, and worldview. By developing this investigative mindset, students learn to interpret culture with greater insight and respect, building the skills needed to interact thoughtfully and effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Articulated Sequences of Learning and Assessment

The K-12 WL program is framed around end-of-year proficiency targets that describe the expectations for student performance in grades K-12 in terms of communicative competence. The development of the end-of-year targets was informed by the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines* and the *NCSSFL (National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Language)-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication*. These resources describe a continuum of growth in communication skills at the Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished levels, with the ultimate goal of developing students’ intercultural communicative competence (i.e., the ability to interact in ways that are “accepted and familiar” in the target culture). In CFSD, WL teachers use proficiency-oriented scoring rubrics and “can-do” performance indicators to ensure a cohesive experience for students and to guide future growth. Each stage of instruction builds on previous learning, with intentional spiraling of content, skills, and themes to deepen students’ language abilities and cultural understanding over time.

Acquisition-Driven Instruction (ADI)

To support student performance toward proficiency, CFSD's WL program emphasizes the use of research-based strategies that make language input both understandable and meaningful. Teachers draw from a range of acquisition-driven practices designed to lower the affective filter and promote language development through meaningful interaction. Key ADI principles include:

- **Comprehensible Input:** The teacher's role is to provide language that students can understand, even if it's slightly above their current level. The input must be interesting, repetitive in a natural way, and connected to students' lives and interests. The student's role is to monitor their own comprehension and let the teacher know when they do or do not understand. This framework reinforces the partnership between teachers and students in the language acquisition process and promotes agency and accountability on both sides.
- **Communicative Activities:** Learning experiences emphasize activities that encourage real-life communication such as games, storytelling, partner chats, role-playing, problem-solving, product reviews, etc.
- **Performance-based, proficiency-oriented learning:** Teachers support students as they work to reach performance indicators that are aligned to proficiency sub-levels.

Strategies such as *Picture Talk* (in which the class discusses an image in the target language using familiar vocabulary and structures) and *Card Talk* (a personalized activity where students share information about themselves based on visuals) help teachers create conversations that are both contextualized and relevant to students. Other practices like *Movie Talk* (narrating short video clips in the target language and embedding scaffolded questions to check for understanding), *One Word Image* (co-creating a character or scene based on a student-suggested noun), and *Story Asking* (collaboratively building and discussing a narrative) provide repeated exposure to high-frequency language in an engaging and low-stress environment.

These strategies ensure that learners are immersed in language they can understand, with multiple opportunities to hear and interact with key structures and vocabulary. Teachers also use visual supports, gestures, realia, dramatization, frequent comprehension checks, and a myriad of other strategies to help all students access the content and remain engaged in the target language. This approach builds student confidence by prioritizing communication over correction and ensuring that input remains comprehensible, purposeful, and enjoyable.

Teaching Grammar as a Concept in Context

Rather than isolating grammar as a set of rules to memorize, CFSD's WL program integrates grammar instruction within meaningful communication. Students explore language structures as tools for making meaning, noticing patterns and using them in context to express their ideas clearly and effectively. This conceptual and contextualized approach supports retention and encourages flexible, accurate language use.

CATALINA FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT	
K-12 WORLD LANGUAGES STANDARDS (Mandarin Chinese & Spanish) – INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE	
CFSD Transfer Goals: By the end of 12th grade, learners will be able to independently use their learning to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Languages: Establish and maintain positive relationships in diverse cultural contexts. World Languages: Serve as mediators within and across cultures in order to reach shared goals and understanding. World Languages: Communicate effectively in more than one language, honoring culture and context. Citizenship: Collaborate, communicate, and learn with individuals and groups from other cultures to better understand self, others, and the world around them. 	
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE	
PERFORMANCE SCALE	
Score 4.0	The learner demonstrates performance indicators that are one sublevel above the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course. [See <i>CFSD Articulation Chart</i> for end-of year performance targets for each class/course.]
Score 3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 4.0.
Score 3.0	<p>The learner will:</p> <p><u>Standards / Learning Goals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WL.K-12.1.1 Learners investigate and analyze products and practices (from their own and other cultures) in order to explore cultural perspectives. WL.K-12.1.2 Learners demonstrate attitudes, knowledge, and skills that support effective communication and interactions with people from other cultures. <p>Notes: These standards will be addressed in English and/or the target language according to the learners' language proficiency levels. See <i>CFSD Intercultural Competence Continuum</i> and the <i>NSCCFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Interculturality</i> for performance expectations/indicators.</p>
Score 2.5	The learner demonstrates indicators of the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course in some but not all domains of the assessment rubric.
Score 2.0	The learner performs one sub-level below the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course.
Score 1.5	The learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0.
Score 1.0	<p>With help, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0.</p> <p>Learners might exhibit misconceptions, beliefs, or perceptions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone belongs to the same culture. My own culture is inherently better than other cultures (for example: communicates that “our way is the right way” or states that one belief system is better than another). The purpose of comparing cultural attitudes, beliefs, and values is to determine which culture is best. Others should adjust to my way of doing, thinking, and being. Cultural attitudes, beliefs, and values change easily. I will dishonor or disrespect my own culture if I interact in ways that are appropriate in different cultural contexts. In order to interact effectively in diverse cultural contexts, I must give up my own cultural values and beliefs. Understanding others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different worldviews can be understood by a superficial examination of cultural products and practices. I can understand other cultures by examining them through my own worldview.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stereotypes are always grounded in truth and don't need to be inspected or questioned. ○ Diverse perspectives can only lead to negative outcomes; cultural uniformity is preferable to cultural diversity. ● Curiosity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The sole purpose of comparing cultures is to highlight differences or perceived idiosyncrasies. ○ Sources from diverse cultural contexts present the same information about an issue or event in the same ways. ○ Being informed about current events (abroad and at home) is not a critical part of understanding culture.
Academic Vocabulary	culture, intercultural competence, cultural products, cultural practices, cultural perspectives, community, connection, stereotypes, (ethnocentric) attitudes, knowledge, skills, non-verbal communication, proficiency, performance

CATALINA FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT	
K-12 WORLD LANGUAGES STANDARDS (Mandarin Chinese & Spanish) – COMMUNICATION	
CFSD Transfer Goals: By the end of 12th grade, learners will be able to independently use their learning to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Languages: Establish and maintain positive relationships in diverse cultural contexts. • World Languages: Serve as mediators within and across cultures in order to reach shared goals and understanding. • World Languages: Communicate effectively in more than one language, honoring culture and context. • Citizenship: Collaborate, communicate, and learn with individuals and groups from other cultures to better understand self, others, and the world around them. 	
Interpersonal Communication (Two-Way) – Speaking, Writing	
PERFORMANCE SCALE	
Score 4.0	The learner demonstrates performance indicators that are one sublevel above the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course. [See <i>CFSD Articulation Chart</i> for specific expectations for performance in each course.]
Score 3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 4.0.
Score 3.0	<u>Standards / Learning Goals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WL.K-12.2.1 Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken or written conversations in order to exchange information, express feelings, and share opinions. [See <i>CFSD Assessment Rubrics</i> for specific sub-level expectations for performance in each course.] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Novice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask and answer formulaic questions about self, family, friends, school community. ■ Uses strategies (for example, gestures, pauses, eye contact, facial expression, engages in turn-taking) to initiate and sustain communication. ○ Intermediate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask and answer questions, discuss preferences, opinions, desires on a variety of familiar topics related to self, family, and community. ■ Uses strategies (for example, repeats, asks for/provides clarification, demonstrates conversational etiquette) to initiate, sustain, and extend communication. ○ Advanced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Describe experiences, clarify misunderstandings, support opinions with details, and share point of view on topics of academic, community, national, or international interest. ■ Uses strategies (for example, rephrases, asks probing questions, uses culturally appropriate nonverbal communication) to discuss and debate concrete and some hypothetical and/or abstract issues.
Score 2.5	The learner demonstrates indicators of the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course in some but not all domains of the assessment rubric.
Score 2.0	The learner performs one sub-level below the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course.
Score 1.5	The learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0.
Score 1.0	With help, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0. Learners might exhibit misconceptions , beliefs, or perceptions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating in Diverse Settings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People from different places all communicate in the same way. ○ Using the same language and tone is appropriate for all people in all settings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I don't need to change the way I communicate to accommodate other people; they should adjust to my way of communicating. ● Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I don't have anything important or interesting to say. ○ What I have to say is more important than what anyone else has to say. ○ I'm contributing to the discussion when I express agreement without adding new ideas. ○ When I ask a question or make a comment loosely related to the topic, it shows my understanding of the content. ○ When I don't know how to say something correctly or perfectly, I shouldn't say it at all. ○ I can talk about the same topics in my first language and the target language. ● Communication Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication is only about my words; body language, tone of voice, and intonation are not important. ○ Varying my gestures and facial expressions means I need to use a lot of them. ○ I should keep using the same gesture, facial expression, or inflection over and over again. ○ When I switch to English during a conversation, I'm still communicating effectively. ○ Speaking quickly or having native-like pronunciation means that I am communicating effectively. ● Comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I need to understand every word in order to participate in the conversation. ○ If I can repeat what someone says, it means I understand it. ○ My own prior knowledge or experiences won't help me understand the speaker's ideas. ● Listening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When I sit quietly with my eyes on the speaker, it means I am listening. ○ My goal in listening to another person is to figure out what I want to say. ○ I'm a better listener if I use all of my active listening strategies in the same conversation. ○ It's OK to interrupt anytime if I'm using an active listening strategy.
Academic Vocabulary	interpersonal communication, formulaic/memorized/created question, follow-up question, probing questions, communication strategies, text type, language control, time frame, initiate/sustain communication, circumlocution, nonverbal communication, restate/rephrase, repeat, provide clarification, concrete topics, abstract topics, culturally appropriate, accepted and familiar

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Interpretive Communication (One-Way) – Listening, Reading, Viewing	
PERFORMANCE SCALE	
Score 4.0	The learner demonstrates performance indicators that are one sublevel above the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course. [See <i>CFSD Articulation Chart</i> for specific expectations for performance in each course.]
Score 3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 4.0.
Score 3.0	The learner will: <u>Standards / Learning Goals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WL.K-12.3.1 Learners interpret and analyze diverse texts on a variety of topics in order to acquire language and learn more about their world. [See <i>CFSD Assessment Rubrics</i> for specific sub-level expectations for performance in each course.] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Novice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can identify the general topic and some basic information in very familiar and everyday contexts, by recognizing practiced or memorized words, phrases, and simple sentences. Intermediate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can interpret the main idea and some details from sentences and series of connected sentences in texts on familiar topics. Advanced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can interpret the underlying message and supporting details across various time frames from complex, organized texts on a wide variety of general interest topics.
Score 2.5	The learner demonstrates indicators of the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course in some but not all domains of the assessment rubric.
Score 2.0	The learner performs one sub-level below the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course.
Score 1.5	The learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0.
Score 1.0	With help, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0. Learners might exhibit misconceptions , beliefs, or perceptions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill development/Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I should look up every word that I don't know in a reading in order to understand it better. Reading fast is a sign of higher proficiency. My own prior knowledge or experiences won't help me understand the speaker's ideas. It's irresponsible to skim/skip some portions when reading longer texts. Reading something once is enough to understand the main idea. If I don't have a wide enough vocabulary, I won't be able to understand a text. Listening ability automatically develops with language proficiency; it's not a skill you can develop with practice.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding a text should be effortless; I don't need to use specific reading or listening strategies. ● Content and Format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I need to understand every word to be able to interact with a text. ○ All words that look and sound similar are cognates. ○ Format doesn't impact how I engage with a text. ○ I am the target audience for all texts that I interact with. ○ Every detail is equally important to a text's main ideas and purpose.
Academic Vocabulary	interpretive communication, interpret, main idea, topic, detail, time frames, texts, underlying message, characters, informational text, fictional text, narrative text, making and inference, nuances, simple sentences, cognates, tone, tone of voice, register

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K-12 WORLD LANGUAGES STANDARDS (Mandarin Chinese & Spanish) - COMMUNICATION	
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Presentational Communication (One-Way) – Speaking, Writing	
PERFORMANCE SCALE	
Score 4.0	The learner demonstrates performance indicators that are one sublevel above the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course. [See <i>CFSD Articulation Chart</i> for specific expectations for performance in each course.]
Score 3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 4.0.
Score 3.0	The learner will: <u>Standards / Learning Goals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WL.K-12.4.1 Learners present information and ideas on a range of topics to various audiences and for a variety of purposes (e.g., to inform, persuade, entertain). [See <i>CFSD Assessment Rubrics</i> for specific sub-level expectations for performance in each course.] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Novice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can present information on very familiar, everyday topics using a variety of practiced and memorized words/characters, phrases, and simple sentences. ○ Intermediate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can communicate information and express my thoughts about familiar topics, using sentences and series of connected sentences. ○ Advanced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can use detail, organization, paragraphs, and various time frames to communicate about familiar as well as unfamiliar topics. ■ I can match word choice and tone to my audience.
Score 2.5	The learner demonstrates indicators of the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course in some but not all domains of the assessment rubric.
Score 2.0	The learner performs one sub-level below the targeted proficiency outcome for the class/course.
Score 1.5	The learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0.
Score 1.0	With help, the learner demonstrates partial success at score 2.0. Learners might exhibit misconceptions , beliefs, or perceptions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The characteristics of an effective presentation are the same regardless of the task or setting. ○ Language conventions (punctuation, capitalization, etc.) are not important when writing. ○ Pronunciation does not impact my ability to communicate effectively. • Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When I'm communicating in the target language, using good grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary is the only thing that matters; the content and ideas I present aren't important.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When I don't know how to say something correctly or perfectly, I shouldn't say or write it at all. ○ If I say/write a lot, it means I'm communicating effectively. ● Considering audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How I choose to communicate should be driven by my own needs, interests, and purpose; I don't need to consider my audience. ○ As long as I know what I mean, it doesn't matter if other people understand my idea. ○ Communication is only about my words; body language, tone of voice, and intonation are not important. ○ Using the same language and tone is appropriate for all audiences and all settings. ● Process and protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading aloud from a text or script is the same as presentational speaking. ○ I don't need to organize my thoughts before a presentational task. ○ Proofreading won't improve my presentational writing. ○ If I use a visual aid with my spoken presentation, it should contain all of the details I will present.
Academic Vocabulary	presentational speaking/writing, text type, language control, visuals/graphic organizers, simple sentences, connecting words, connected sentences, connected discourse, elaboration, conventions, nonverbal communication strategies (facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, body language, posture), voice volume, rate of speech, delivery, practiced/memorized (words, phrases, sentences), familiar/unfamiliar topics, register