



Trends in High School Language Offerings 2004 - 2012

Overview

In 2004, 2007, and 2009 the University of Washington’s Mapping and Enhancing Language Learning (MELL) project collected surveys from Washington high schools. Trends observed over this period of time were reported in MELL Policy Brief #6 Winter, 2010: Trends in High School Language Offerings 2004–2007–2009. In 2010 and 2012, MELL began to utilize data collected from the world language enrollments reported in the OSPI Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), a longitudinal data warehouse of educational data based on standardized state course codes. (For more information about CEDARS, visit <http://www.k12.wa.us/CEDARS/default.aspx>.) With this information, we can now develop a more comprehensive snapshot of the languages that students study across Washington State and also observe some trends in languages offered over a 9-year period.

What CEDARS Measures

CEDARS records student “enrollments” at each school by state course code. These enrollments may represent actual seat-time classes in the school or credits earned by students through online courses, Running Start courses at the community college, or competency-based credits, i.e. credits earned by students demonstrating proficiency in the language. These types of credits may not be clearly distinguished in the CEDARS data (since all courses use the standardized state course codes), so it may be difficult to say whether a language’s enrollments represent an actual seat-time course in the school or simply a group of students who were able to earn credits in another way. (This is very apparent in the 2012 CEDARS data for Vietnamese in Seattle, where all the credits earned were competency-based.)

Trends in Languages Offered 2004 - 2009

From the survey results from MELL Policy Brief #6, the main trends were:

- Expansion of schools reporting that they offered Spanish from about 85 percent in 2004 to 90 percent in 2007, and 95 percent in 2009
- Stabilization of other popular languages, such as French (53 percent), German (28 percent), Japanese (24 percent), American Sign Language (ASL) (23 percent)
- Expansion of Chinese (from about 4 percent to almost 7 percent)

Trends in Languages Offered 2009 - 2012

Table 1 below shows the transition from MELL survey data in 2009 to CEDARS enrollment data in 2010 and 2012. While some trends remain the same, there is interesting new data provided by CEDARS.

Table 1. Schools (Number & Percentage) that Reported Offering World Languages in the 2009 MELL Survey or Reported Language Enrollments in the 2010 and 2012 CEDARS Data

	2009(#)	2009(%)	2010(#)	2010(%)	2012(#)	2012(%)
Total Schools Reporting	396		466		485	
Spanish	302	95.57%	316	94.33%	481	99.18%
French	169	53.48%	182	54.33%	256	52.78%
German	89	28.16%	92	27.46%	139	28.66%
Japanese	77	24.37%	96	28.66%	134	27.63%
ASL	73	23.10%	72	21.49%	131	27.01%
Chinese	22	6.96%	34	10.15%	58	11.96%
Latin	7	2.22%	20	5.97%	41	8.45%
Russian	7	2.22%	9	2.69%	13	2.68%
Native	7	2.22%	22	6.57%	11	2.27%
Arabic	3	0.95%	3	0.90%	9	1.86%
Korean			2	0.60%	9	1.86%

Note: For CEDARS, not all districts succeeded in entering their world language enrollments in 2010 and/or 2012, so the data is not always complete. Italian, Portuguese, and Vietnamese all show numbers under 1.5 percent in 2012 data.

From 2009 to 2012, **Spanish** continued to expand. At this point, virtually all schools that offer languages offer Spanish (over 99 percent) based on CEDARS enrollment data. **French** has been stable since 2007 and continues to be strong at over 50 percent. **German, Japanese, and American Sign Language (ASL)** are all now over 27 percent, with minor fluctuations from year to year.

Chinese has been growing steadily, reaching almost 12 percent in 2012. It is noteworthy, however, that offerings in Chinese remain less than half of Japa-



nese and German and ASL and that its growth is not at the expense of German and French, which have remained steady throughout the collection of data.

Latin has continued to grow steadily from just over 2 percent of schools in 2009 to over 8 percent in 2012.

Russian has remained small at less than 3 percent in 2012, which is about the same as in 2009 and 2010. Although 13 schools show data in CEDARS for 2012, only 3 high schools actually offered classes to students in Russian during the school day.

Between 2010 and 2012, the number of schools that reported in CEDARS offering **Native American languages** halved from 22 to 11. Further study is needed to determine whether that was an actual drop or if some schools simply did not report their data to CEDARS in 2012.

Arabic has been growing very slowly over the course of this period. In 2012, only 1.86 percent of schools reported enrollments.

Several languages had not been reported in earlier MELL surveys (2004 to 2009). In 2012, **Korean** course enrollments in CEDARS were also at 1.86 percent. It appears that only one school (Mt. Tahoma in Tacoma School District) actually offered classes in Korean, while the other schools awarded credits for students completing the Korean national language test.

The number of schools with **Italian** enrollments in CEDARS doubled from three in 2010 to six in 2012. **Portuguese** was reported in one school in 2010, but none in 2012. As mentioned above, **Vietnamese** had enrollment figures for the first time in CEDARS in 2012. All of these students earned competency-based credits in Seattle.

Impact of Competency-Based Credits

Since 2011, students in Washington State have had the opportunity to take nationally available language proficiency tests to demonstrate their ability to read, write, listen, and speak in a language other than English. They can potentially earn from one to four high school competency-based credits in a world

language based on their language proficiency level. Since these credits are reported in CEDARS, we are now beginning to see the impact of this new opportunity, although 2013 is the first year that districts are required to specifically code competency-based credits in CEDARS. For more information, see: <http://www.k12.wa.us/WorldLanguages/CompetencyBasedCredits.aspx>

Conclusion

As our data analysis continues to reveal trends in languages offered, we can examine the implications of these trends and formulate policies that will allow us as a state, and as businesses and citizens, to keep pace with the needs of our interdependent, global economy.

The strongest trend in 2012 is the expansion of new less commonly taught languages in state enrollment data.

The strongest trend in 2012 was the expansion of less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese, Korean, Italian, Portuguese, and Vietnamese. Although the emergence of these languages in the CEDARS data can be attributed to the fact that more school districts are awarding competency-based

credits, we may also be seeing the beginning of an increase in schools teaching these languages. What the data do not show (yet) is that some of these “less commonly taught” languages are also beginning to enter the school day. Both Federal Way and Tacoma School Districts reported now offering Korean language classes during the day in high schools in their districts at the December 2013 Korean Global Education Forum. (Their data should show up in the 2014 CEDARS report.) Highline School District launched one of the first Vietnamese Dual Language programs in the country in September 2013. Of course it will take many years for those students to have enrollments reflected in the CEDARS database.

In the next few years, it will be important to follow the CEDARS data carefully to determine whether the increase in “enrollments” (credits) earned for a wide variety of languages not taught in our schools correlates with a reduction of languages actually taught in the schools.