

What Languages are Taught in Washington Schools?

World Languages Summit
University of Washington
November 6, 2008

Debbie Warnock, Ph.C.,
Sociology, University of Washington

Michele Anciaux Aoki, Ph.D.,
World Languages Program Supervisor,
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, WA

About the Mapping & Enhancing Language Learning (MELL) Project

- Initiated in 2006 by four National Resource Centers at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies with US Department of Education Title VI grant funding
- Some funding from State Innovations Grant to the Washington State Coalition for International Education
- **Goal:** Capture longitudinal data following 2004 World Languages Survey

MELL Partners

UW partners:

- Center for Global Studies
- Center for West European Studies (CWES)
- East Asia Center (EAC)
- Ellison Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies (REECAS)
- Language Learning Center

Other Partners:

- Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Washington State Coalition for International Education
- Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT)

What MELL Delivers

- Annual survey: *What languages are taught where in Washington schools?*
- Data | Maps | Reports and Policy briefs
- Events and workshops to enhance the teaching and learning of languages
- Website:
<http://depts.washington.edu/mellwa/>

Why Do Languages Matter?

Globalizing economy

- Need to be competitive
- Need to communicate to collaborate

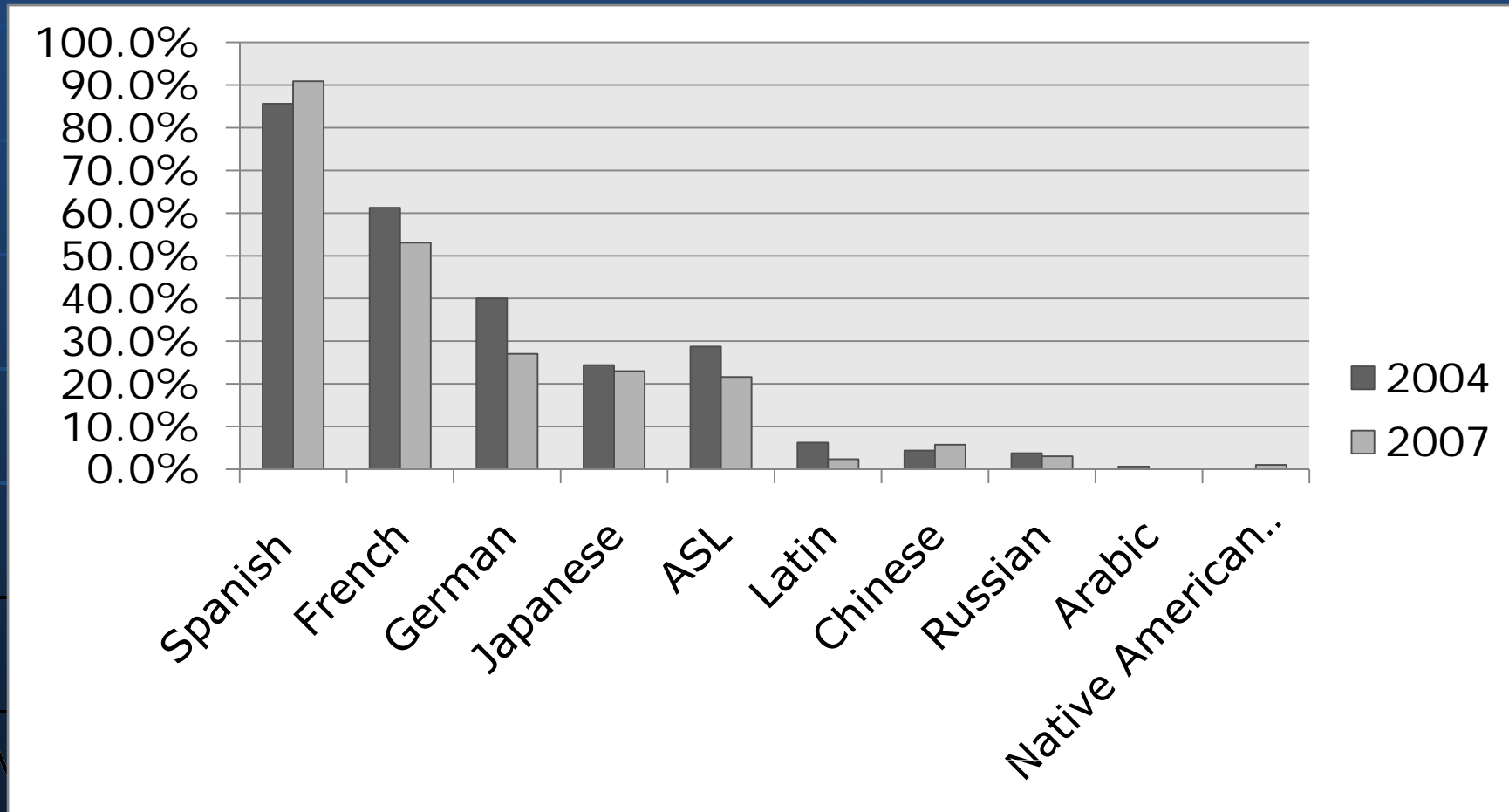
Access to college

- Two years of world language necessary for admission to four-year colleges
- Past research shows that language offerings are stratified by race and class

MELL Policy Brief #1

*Establishing an Understanding of
Foreign Language Teaching
Trends in Washington*

MELL High School Comparison



2007: 367 (79%) of 463 Washington public high schools; 2004: 160 reported

MELL Policy Brief #2

Taking a Closer Look at High Schools that Don't Offer World Languages

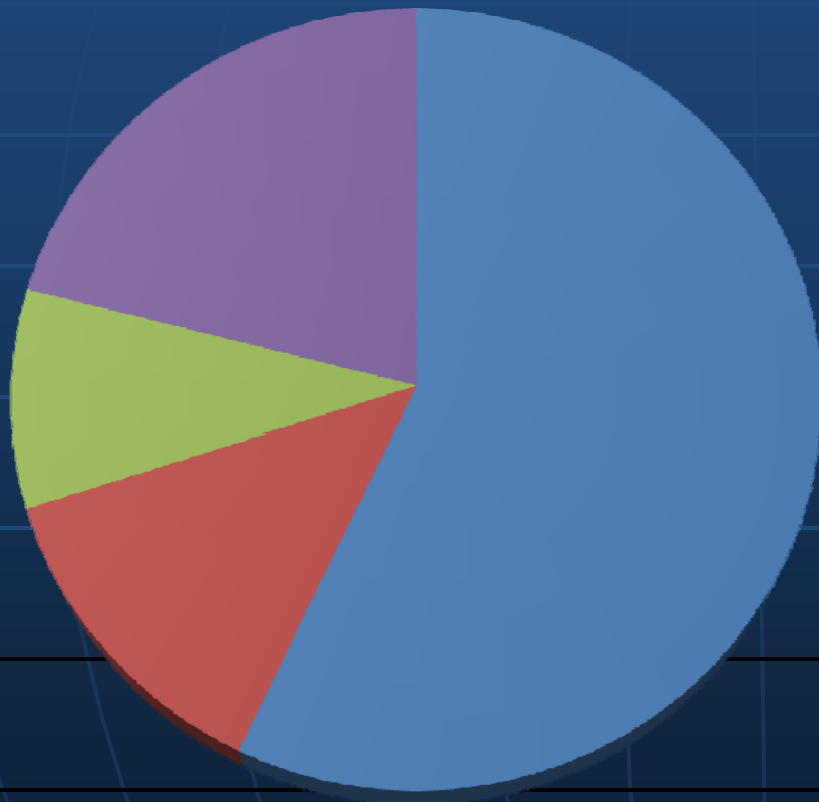
Schools that Don't Offer Languages

- 19% (71 out of 367) of high schools in 2007 MELL Survey indicated that they don't offer languages
- 62 of these 71 are included in our follow-up phone survey
 - Of these, 5 reported that they do offer languages
 - The remaining 57 all reported that they were alternative schools

Questions on Phone Survey

1. How do students earn two credits for college admission?
2. Is there a demand among students for world language classes?
3. Do you have plans to offer world languages in the near future?
4. What are the barriers to offering world language courses?

How do students earn 2 credits for college admission?



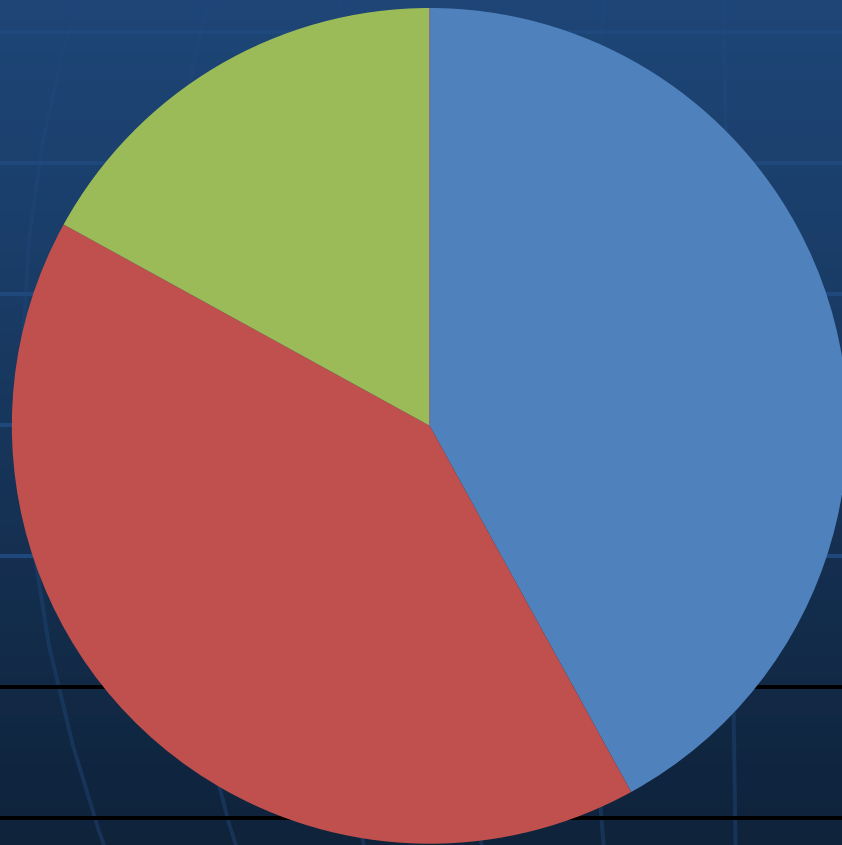
■ Traditional HS (57%)

■ Online (13%)

■ Running Start (9%)

■ Combination (21%)

Is there a demand among students for world language classes?

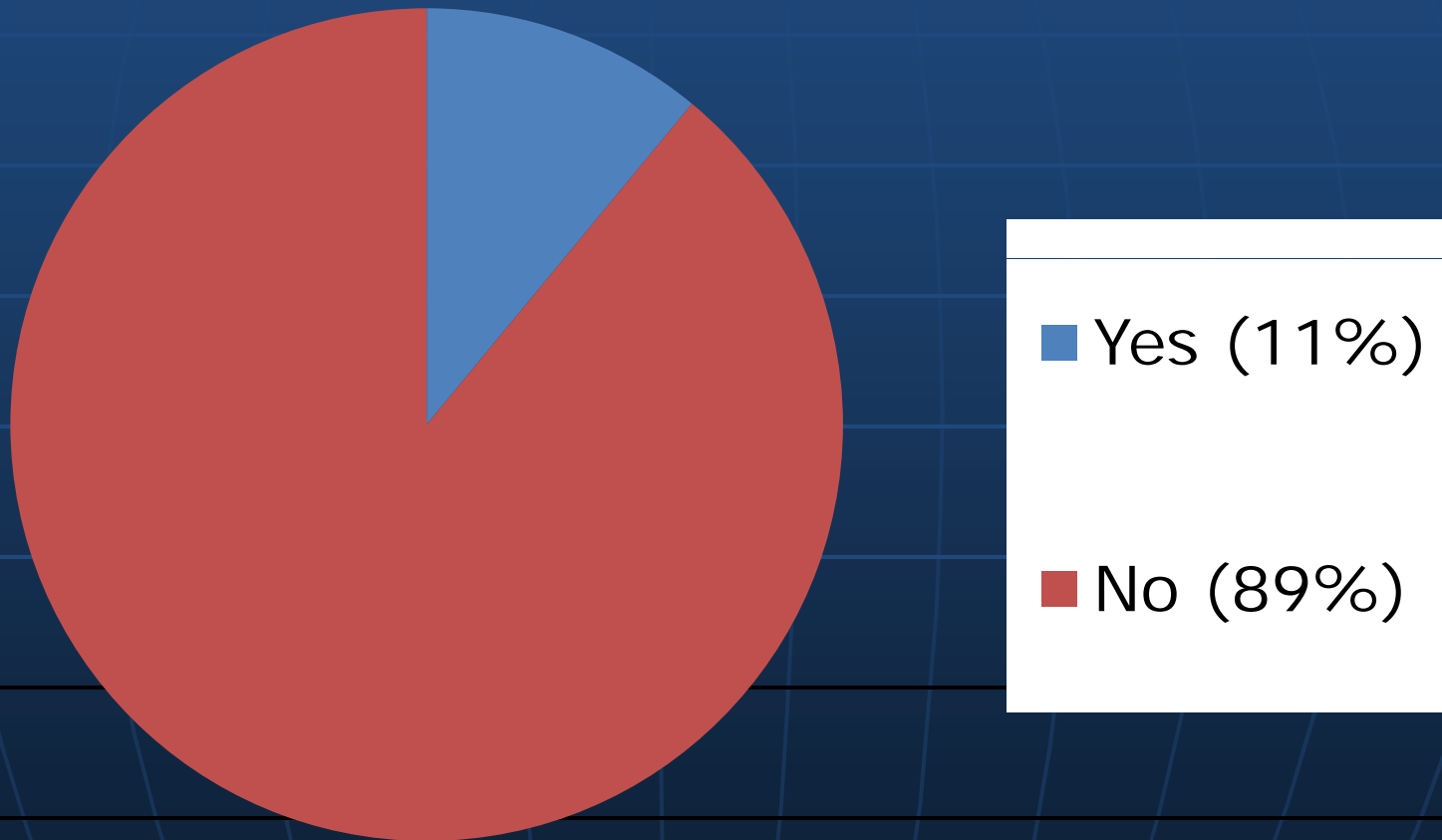


■ Yes (42%)

■ No (41%)

■ Don't Know
(17%)

Do you have plans to offer world languages in the near future?



What are the barriers to offering world language courses?

- School is too small
- Lack of funds
- Students are not “college-bound”
- Focus on basic skills and dropout prevention
- Proximity to traditional school makes it unnecessary
- Students are ELL so focus is on English fluency

MELL Policy Brief #3

*Explaining a High School's
Likelihood of Offering World
Languages*

What factors predict...

- Whether or not a school will offer world languages?
- The number of world languages a school offers?
- The number of world languages a school offers for at least two years?
- The number of world languages a school offers for at least four years?

Variables Considered

- School size
- Urbanicity
- School demographic composition
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Socioeconomic status

What factors predict that a high school will offer ANY world language courses?

- School size
 - The larger the school, the more likely to offer
- Urbanicity
 - Urban fringe schools (i.e. Auburn) less likely
 - Rural schools (i.e. Chewelah) more likely
- Race/ethnicity
 - The more non-white, non-Asian students, the less likely to offer

What factors predict the total number of languages a school offers?

- School size
 - The larger the school, the more languages it is likely to offer
- Race/ethnicity
 - The more Latino students in a school, the fewer languages it is likely to offer

What factors predict how many languages a school offers for at least two years?

- School size
 - The larger the school, the more languages it is likely to offer for at least two years

What factors predict how many languages a school offers for at least four years?

- School size
 - The larger the school, the more languages it is likely to offer for at least four years
- Race/ethnicity
 - The more Asian/Pacific Islander students in a school, the more languages it is likely to offer for at least four years
- Socioeconomic status
 - The more students eligible for free or reduced lunch in a school, the fewer the number of languages it is likely to offer for at least four years

All factors appear to affect world language course offerings

- **School Size**
- **Urbanicity**
- **School demographic composition**
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Socioeconomic status

MELL Policy Brief #4

*Mapping Languages Taught in
Washington High Schools*

[View County Maps](#)

Contact us

Debbie Warnock

deborw@u.washington.edu

Michele Anciaux Aoki

michele.aoki@k12.wa.us