



Trends in High School Language Offerings 2010 – 2017

Overview

One of the goals of the University of Washington’s Mapping and Enhancing Language Learning (MELL) project has been to report on trends in high school language offerings. From 2004 to 2009, data were collected through MELL surveys completed by Washington high schools. Since 2010, MELL has been utilizing data collected from the world languages 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. Trends were initially reported in MELL Policy Brief #6: Trends in High School Language Offerings 2004- 2007-2009, based on MELL survey data. CEDARS data were reported in MELL Policy Brief #12: Trends in High School Language Offerings 2004-2012 and MELL Policy Brief #14: Trends in High School Language Offerings 2004-2013 as well as MELL Policy Brief #17: Trends in High School Language Offerings 2010-2014. This policy brief highlights 2010-2017 CEDARS data.

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 1 to 4 high school competency-based credits in a world language based on their language proficiency level. These credits are now reported in CEDARS. Note that one student who has earned 4 credits would appear as 4 enrollments in CEDARS (e.g., Vietnamese 1, Vietnamese 2, Vietnamese 3, and Vietnamese 4). Therefore, the enrollment counts by themselves do not equate to numbers of unique students as individuals.

MELL first reported on Competency-Based Credits in 2013 (Policy Brief #12 Fall, 2013: Trends in High School Language Offerings 2004-2012). The counts should have been much higher in 2014 (based on the volume of Competency-Based Credit testing in a

number of districts in the state that year), but it appears that the districts were not able to successfully update their data in the state database, CEDARS. By 2017, districts improved their reporting and we see an increase in competency-based credits awarded, though districts are inconsistent when determining competency-based enrollments. For example, some districts awarded competency-based credits for an Advanced Placement class or test, but many others did not for the same exact class. Because of this discrepancy, it was unclear when to label certain enrollments as competency-based, and the numbers may not be completely accurate. With that said, with the improved reporting, these credits have allowed for the introduction of enrollments in languages not traditionally offered at high schools and students have the opportunity to earn world language credits in their native/heritage language.

Trends in Languages Offered as of 2017

In 2017, we notice an uptick in the number of earned competency-based credits recorded in CEDARS compared to the data set in 2014.

Table 1. Schools (Number & Percentage That Reported Language Enrollments in 2010, 2014, 2017 (ordered by 2017))

	2017(#)	2017(%)	2014(#)	2014(%)	2010(#)	2010(%)
Total Schools Reporting	488		479		335	
Spanish	449	92.01%	452	94.4%	316	94.3%
French	225	46.11%	236	49.3%	182	54.3%
ASL	114	23.36%	110	23.0%	72	21.5%
German	108	22.13%	122	25.5%	92	27.5%
Japanese	108	22.13%	112	23.4%	96	28.7%
Chinese	59	12.09%	46	9.6%	34	10.2%
Russian	42	8.61%	24	5.0%	9	2.7%
Vietnamese	29	5.94%	13	2.7%	*	*
Tagalog	23	4.71%	*	*	*	*
Arabic	22	4.51%	5	1.0%	3	0.9%
Korean	20	4.10%	6	1.3%	2	0.6%
American Indian Language	16	3.28%	12	2.5%	22	6.6%
Latin	14	2.87%	30	6.3%	20	6.0%
Somali	11	2.25%	5	1.0%	*	*

Note: A significant number of the Competency-Based Credit data from 2014 were not recorded in CEDARS.



In the previous brief, we reported that 11 school districts awarded approximately 1800 credits, but explained that considering the amount of testing, this was under the actual number earned. In three years, we now have 18 school districts noting 6800 enrollments, giving us a 276.5% growth. Included with this increase, we added another 27 languages that Washington state students earned competency-based credits for, including Afrikaans, Punjabi, and Wolof. A majority of the competency-based credits earned were for Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

In terms of overall enrollments (both seat-time and competency-based credits), **Spanish** dropped almost 2.5% from 2014. This could be due to the increase in the variety of languages appearing from competency-based testing. **French** and **German** also decreased about 3% from their share of total schools in 2014. **Japanese** decreased by about 1% from 2014, and **American Sign Language** remained steady after three years, with about 23% in both 2014 and 2017. **Latin** dropped in total counties, schools, and enrollments. In 2017, 16 schools in 8 counties did not report offering Latin even though they had been listed in 2014. **Chinese** (Mandarin) expanded to 12% of schools in 2017 from 9.8% in 2014, but that represents a mix of seat-time credits and competency-based credits.

Russian had significant growth, increasing to 8.6% in 2017 from 5% in 2014, with students in 18 additional schools. This is mainly due to competency-based credits.

Vietnamese and **Somali**, though all competency-based credits, more than doubled the percentage of schools reporting from 2014 to 2017. **Arabic** and **Korean** more than tripled the number of schools

reporting. In 2014, they were only indicated as competency-based credits. For 2017, students were also awarded credits from seat time.

American Indian Languages increased from 2.5% in 2014 to 3.3% in 2017; however that is still a significant drop from 6.6% of schools reporting enrollments in 2010.

Tagalog appears to have a high increase, from zero schools reporting in 2014 to now 4.7% of schools reporting. However, districts have not remained consistent in their labeling of Tagalog, sometimes listing the language as Filipino.

Conclusion

We had noted in 2014 that Washington state would implement a new 24-credit high school graduation requirement for high school students, which includes two years (i.e. credits) of World Language. Our expectation was that more schools in more districts would offer additional language learning opportunities in order for students to fulfill the new graduation requirements. In

2017, we have noticed a slight decline in languages that were more frequently taught in school, such as Spanish, French, German, and Japanese. This could be due to a combination of more offerings in other languages, such as Russian, Chinese, and Korean, and the rise in competency-based credits earned. Though competency-based credits represent only 2.5% of the total world language enrollment, with these tests, students can earn credits in their native/heritage language that may not be taught in their schools. This may be particularly important for students who immigrated to the state at adolescence and need to fulfill their graduation requirements. In the next few years, we will continue to follow the CEDARS data carefully to determine whether the trend in schools increasing or decreasing offerings in specific world languages continues.

Competency-Based Credits have allowed for the introduction of enrollments in languages not traditionally offered at high schools and students have the opportunity to earn world language credits in their native/heritage language.