

## Why Proficiency Rating and Language Learning Are Needed

- Colleges and universities have voiced a need for students to enter their programs with higher proficiency levels.
- Many colleges and universities use a proficiency assessment for course placement. Local business owners have voiced a need to hire employees with second and third language proficiencies to do their jobs.
- Local business owners have stated that they will hire a candidate with proficiency in another language over a candidate without second language proficiency.
- In recent years many articles have been published nationally about the negative impact our lack of language and intercultural skills are having on our nation's economy.
- Growth in internet and overseas business, has led to national recruitment of employees with second and third language proficiencies as well as inter-cultural skills. The Department of Defense funds some Utah K-12 language programs across the, because of the overwhelming need to have security and military officials with advanced language and intercultural skills. They have identified several very critical languages (e.g. Mandarin, Russian, Portuguese, Farsi) as well as the more common languages (e.g. German, Italian, French) due to the enormous impact these countries have on our national security and economy.
- The medical and science community have identified early language learning and high levels of proficiency in other languages as physiologically and biologically beneficial leading to healthier brains and increased mental capacity.
- In Davis School District, we employ levels of proficiency based on nationally and internationally defined and recognized descriptors to ensure our students are ready for the world of work or university study.
- **Our students are not only capable of becoming highly proficient communicators in other languages; they are thriving in our language classrooms.**
- ***Parents, teachers, and learners must begin to shift the focus from traditional grades to the learners' second language communication skills and how well they are using these skills. Their performance in the language WILL count towards a final grade at the end of each course of study.***
- ***Referring to the rubric and other feedback provided by the teacher on each and every assignment is essential to help the learners reach the proficiency cut-off ratings for each course. Furthermore, it prepares learners to move forward into the next level of proficiency.***

## The world language classroom...Then and Now

	Then...	Now...
<b>A</b>	Language learners moved through coursework by seat-time or program structure (Exploratory, Levels etc...).	Language learners may move through courses by proficiency level, regardless of program or seat time.
<b>B</b>	Learners were graded on how well they completed a given task (e.g. number of correct verb conjugations).	Learners are rated on how well they use the language to complete a task (e.g. exchange information with another person to resolve a problem).
<b>C</b>	Learners were credited for coursework by completing a given course in a traditional time-frame, regardless of their current language proficiency.	Learners are credited for completing a course by <i>demonstrating the targeted levels of proficiency</i> for the given course, not by seat-time in the course.
<b>D</b>	Students with language ability gained through life situations or experiences had to start at the beginning level coursework in order to get course credit.	In some of our schools, students with higher proficiency levels are able to move directly into a course aligned with their proficiency level. This ensures learners are challenged and engaged and receive course credit for courses where they have out-performed the proficiency levels.
<b>E</b>	Learners were graded on traditional quizzes and tests, emphasizing mostly grammar, which yielded the grade for the course.	Learners complete tasks, activities (e.g. quizzes, partner work) and integrated performance assessments (IPA's) that are performance-based. They must use the language to complete communicative tasks. They are rated with the proficiency rubric on how well they use the language to complete the task.
<b>F</b>	Grammar, vocabulary, reading, and accuracy mattered most.	Emphasis is on using ALL modes of communication – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Accuracy <i>is</i> important in its relevance to the task and is still addressed. However, it is no longer the primary focus for all instruction.
<b>G</b>	Culture was the “fun stuff” students learned about when studying the countries and people of their language of study.	Culture is an essential component, integrated into the communication skills which are assessed. Learners must be able to function in real-life settings, with authentic informational texts and with true-to-life intercultural skills they will need to interact in the real world with native speakers.
<b>H</b>	Objectives were set for learning by the textbook and its chapters or units.	Students use “I can” statements to track their own progress over time in the language. Learning goals are set by the teacher <i>and</i> by the learners. The standards are performance based in “I can” statements to help both teachers and learners progress through the proficiency levels.
<b>I</b>	The norm was to see a quiet classroom where learners were seated in rows, reading, filling out worksheets, listening to speakers through ear-phones, and repeating language.	Learners are in small groups where they perform tasks requiring them to speak, interact with each other and native speakers, and research on international sites. There is a hum from students speaking and practicing in the language with each other, face-to-face or using digital language labs that allow multiple pairings a digital recording for later assessment.
<b>J</b>	Learners were graded A, B, C, D and F. Frequently the grades are assigned by how many answers were <i>right or wrong</i> . Grades did not reflect what students could do with the language.	Learners are rated on a scale of 1-12. Each rating number corresponds to a level of proficiency with descriptors of <b>how well</b> a person can communicate in the language at that proficiency level. The grade level or structure of the program does not change how the learners are rated. A 3 <sup>rd</sup> grader may use the language equally as well as a 9 <sup>th</sup> grader. Thus, they may both be novice learners and able to do similar types of tasks to the same level of proficiency, even if the content and vocabulary varies by interest or curriculum of the learner.
<b>K</b>	Grades represented achievement of a task. The learners pass or fail.	Ratings represent a level (they are a description of) where the learner is performing, <i>not achievement</i> . Each course has proficiency targets learners must aim to meet to move to the next level. It might take longer for some to reach the next proficiency level than others.
<b>L</b>	Learners received grades on homework, quizzes, tests and projects.	Learners receive a proficiency rating describing how well they used the language to complete a performance task (homework, quiz, projects) or formative performance assessment in the 3 modes, based on the rubric. This helps them target their performance for the next tasks.
<b>M</b>	Learners received a grade at each interim and report card period.	Learners can continually track their proficiency growth on a “proficiency tracking” form, and receive a rating from their teacher at regular intervals.
<b>P</b>	Final grade was defined by the <i>average of grades</i> in the class and the final exam.	Final rating is defined by how well the learner uses the language <b>consistently at least 80% of the time</b> in the three modes, for all work. Emphasis is placed on performance towards the end of the course rather than at the beginning as it best reflects what they can do and where they are performing at that time.
<b>Q</b>	Learners moved to the next level based on their grade in the course or even by just having sat through the class.	Learners move to the next level based on their performance level in the course. There is a range of performance that allows the learners to project how well they will perform at the next level based on their current performance in their course.

