

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS**

**INTERMEDIATE - ADVANCED**

# RESPONDING TO THIS DOCUMENT

We welcome your response to this document.

Feedback should be sent to:

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## INTRODUCTION

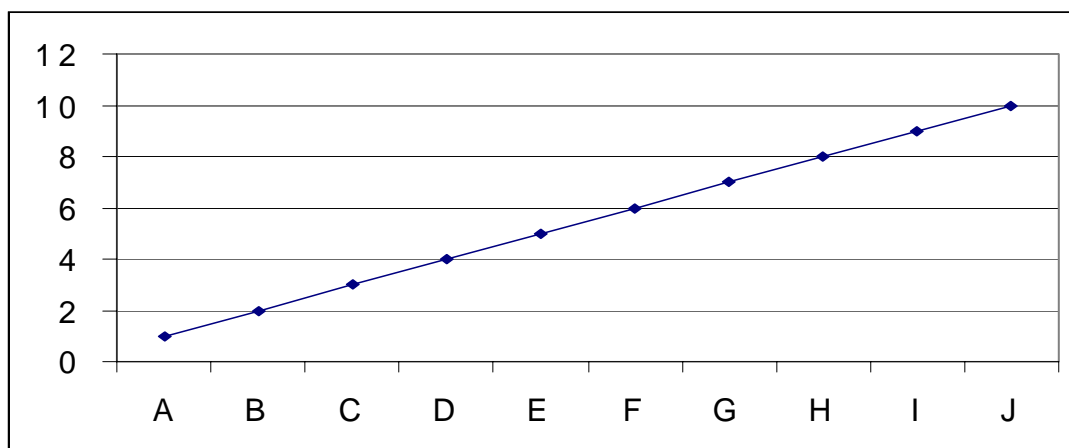
### Design for Performance Standards

The Illinois Learning Standards are content standards that describe “*what*” students should know and be able to do in grades K – 12. Each content standard includes five benchmarks that describe what students should know and be able to do at early elementary, late elementary, middle/junior high, early high school, and late high school.

The challenge for the 2000-2001 school year was to produce performance standards that would indicate “*how well*” students should perform to meet the standards. To address this challenge, a number of perspectives needed to be considered. For example, the National Governors Association<sup>1</sup> raised two pertinent questions policymakers should consider for the design of performance standards:

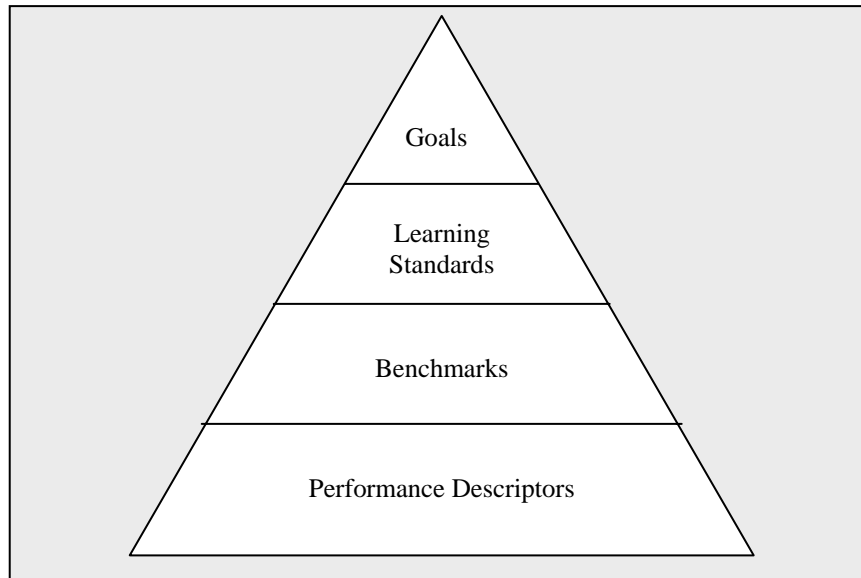
- Do the performance standards indicate the levels of performance students should attain, descriptions of performance at each level, and rules that enable educators to determine whether students have reached a given level?
- Do the performance standards include a range of work . . . to show that students can meet the standards in a variety of ways?

The performance standards describe how well students perform at various points on an educational development continuum. This continuum shows how students can demonstrate mastery of progressively more difficult content and cognitive skills over ten incremental stages of development. Performance within each stage can be assessed by the extent to which students are meeting the standards (i.e., starting, approaching, meeting, exceeding). Performance standards include four essential elements: performance descriptors, performance levels, assessment tasks, and performance examples.



<sup>1</sup> Ouellette, M. (2000). “Maintaining progress through systemic education reform: Performance standards,” Washington, DC: National Governors Association.

The performance standards are classroom resources for voluntary use at the local level. They are not intended to replace the Illinois Learning Standards. Instead, they supplement them by providing sufficient detail and examples to enable teachers to establish appropriate grade-level performance expectations for students. The performance descriptors are a direct outgrowth of the state goals for learning. Whereas the benchmarks filled in detail on each of the standards at five grade-level clusters, the performance descriptors provide additional detail at each grade level.



## Definitions

**performance standards:** the knowledge and skills that students are to perform at various stages of educational development (*performance descriptors*) and the performance expectations (*performance levels and assessment tasks*) for student work (*performance exemplars*) at each of the stages.

**performance descriptors:** statements of how students can demonstrate the knowledge and skills they acquired.<sup>2</sup>

**performance levels:** descriptions of how well students have achieved the standards; that is, the range, frequency, facility, depth, creativity, and/or quality of the knowledge and skills they acquired. Students can demonstrate levels of achieving performance standards along six dimensions:

PERFORMANCE LEVEL =	RANGE +	FREQUENCY +	FACILITY +	DEPTH +	CREATIVITY +	QUALITY
Exceeding	extensively	consistently	automatically	profoundly	inventively	excellently
Meeting	fully	usually	quickly	deeply	imaginatively	well
Approaching	partially	occasionally	haltingly	cursorily	commonly	marginally
Starting	narrowly	rarely	slowly	superficially	imitatively	poorly

<sup>2</sup> New Standards. *Performance Standards*. (1997) Washington, DC: The National Center on Education and the Economy.

**assessment tasks:** descriptions of what student can do to demonstrate they have met the standards and a means for evaluating the levels of their performance.

**performance examples:** student work samples resulting from the classroom-based assessment tasks that illustrate performance levels.

### Template For Expanded Performance Descriptors

BENCHMARKS ⇒	Beginning			Beginning/ Intermediate		Intermediate			Inter- med/ Advan	Advan ced
STAGES ⇒ PERFORMANCE LEVELS ↓	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Exceeding										
Meeting										
Approaching										
Starting										

### Vision for Foreign Languages Performance

The Performance Standards for Foreign Languages offer a framework of opportunity for Illinois students to achieve levels of communicative competence in a language other than English. The need for such competency becomes increasingly evident because of worldwide communication networks and an interrelated global economy. Illinois students need a broad base of knowledge, including foreign languages, in preparation for the challenges they face in the twenty-first century.

All students are capable of learning languages in addition to English when given opportunities for quality instruction. “Earlier starts with language instruction assure greater success for more students,” asserts the *Standards For Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* prepared by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. This document also points out, “Beginning a language in high school does not provide much time for learning to communicate effectively. Students who start earlier have a distinct advantage.” Foreign language programs which emphasize the development of usable communicative skills in another language will require schools to create the opportunity for long-term study sequences in the language. Illinois students should graduate from high school with the ability to interact, read and write in a second language as well as with an understanding of cultural diversities embedded in the accompanying cultures. Since 1986, the following policy statement has been on record at the Illinois State Board of Education: “It will be the policy of the State Board of Education to work toward establishing the conditions necessary to assure that all students, including those whose native language is other than English, have the opportunity to develop usable proficiency in at least one language in addition to English; to begin second language study in the early elementary years and continue in an uninterrupted sequence through high school; to choose from a broadened range of language offerings which reflect the worldwide scope of the vital interests of individual citizens, the state, and the nation; and to acquire an understanding of the international dimensions of relevant subject areas.”

Language learning is more than simply learning new words; it encompasses the acquisition of new concepts associated with the words. Language acquisition broadens

the sources of information available to the learners, and concepts presented in other classes are reinforced in the foreign language class. Research indicates that foreign language study enhances cognitive skills and results in students (regardless of their socio-economic level) achieving higher scores on standardized tests in reading and math. Foreign language skills are linked to a wide variety of career choices and enhance employment opportunities by producing a more valuable employee. The national standards document affirms, “. . . only language study empowers learners to engage in direct interaction with members of other cultures.”

Sequential study over an extended period of time is necessary in order to achieve the highest levels of performance for Illinois Goals 28, 29 and 30. **All language learners need to start in Stage One, which corresponds to Stages A – C of the performance descriptors.** Since there are multiple entry points for language study throughout the state, the performance descriptors are arranged in stages rather than grade levels, because language acquisition depends on several variables: a) time spent on task, b) age and maturity of learner, c) prior knowledge and experience, d) class size, and e) length of language sequence available. The bar graph indicates an estimate of student performance expectations based on grade-level entry in a program:

Students who start in these grades	and continue an uninterrupted sequence of study could attain these stages: ‡				
	Stages A - C	Stages D - E	Stages F - H	Stage I	Stage J
K – 3					*
3 – 5				*	**
6 – 8			*	**	
9 – 10			*	**	
11 - 12		*			

‡ The graph applies to the commonly taught European languages in an uninterrupted sequence of study. Other languages may require longer periods to achieve the same stages.

\*Due to the many variables in minutes per week of instruction in language programs, the medium gray areas indicate variable achievement levels possible at the end of each grade level sequence. In different age brackets, the class as a whole may also be at differing stages of achievement.

\*\* Due to variables in age and maturity of learners, the lightest gray areas indicate what some learners may achieve at higher levels in some stages, but these students are exceeding the grade level expectation.

### Vision for Incrementally Improving Foreign Languages Performance

Though Goals 28, 29 and 30, with their standards and descriptors occupy similar space in this document, it is important to remember that the communicative strategies emphasized in Goal 28 are the heart of the three Foreign Language Goals. Languages and the cultures in which they exist are inseparable, and the communicative knowledge and skills of Goal 28 are required to achieve Goals 29 and 30.



**Goal 28: Use the target language to communicate within and beyond the classroom setting.** In the initial stages, students' utterances are *memorized* and highly dependent on classroom context. Responses are selections students make from *recall* of learned patterns. Reading consists of the printed version of students' speaking vocabularies and writing is *labeling* and *copying*. With much practice, intermediate students achieve the ability to *transform* elements of their extended repertoire of memorized material to *express* personal information. They then ask questions as well as answer them and can *convert* simple spoken patterns to writing. As listening and reading skills increase, students are able to *grasp* the main message and *ascertain* important details. They can understand some abstract ideas within their vocabulary range and are able to *analyze* ideas in a face-to-face discussion. In the most advanced stages students have the ability to cope with abstract ideas in a spoken message. Persuasive communications can involve discussions in which students can *explain* and *defend* a position. They *generate* reports based on researched sources in the target language and *compare* and *contrast* various issues inherent to areas where the target language is spoken and to the United States. Improvement in pronunciation is expected as students progress through the stages.

**Goal 29: Use the target language to develop an understanding of the customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with the target language.** The language and the culture of the people who speak it are inseparable. True understanding and use of another language demands that the speaker of the language identify with the culture in which it is embedded. In the initial stages, students learn to *recognize, identify* and *compare* selected customs of daily life and cultural aspects of areas associated with the target language. They *use* expanded target language vocabulary to *demonstrate awareness* of selected customs and to develop *knowledge* of some facets of the culture. As students move through the novice stages, they *utilize* increasing language abilities to *examine* the cultural elements being studied and *communicate* them to others. In the intermediate stages, students are able to *analyze* in greater detail customs and cultural aspects with *interactive presentations* on a variety of topics. They *create* simple projects to present ideas and concepts. In the more advanced stages, students have the ability to *analyze* and *justify* in the target language varied ideas, concepts and perspectives. They *discuss* a variety of issues and *compare* and *contrast* customs, arts, literature, history and geography.

**Goal 30: Use the target language to make connections and reinforce knowledge and skills across academic, vocational and technical disciplines.** In the initial stages, students *learn vocabulary* for a variety of interdisciplinary connections. They *reinforce*, in the target language, various skills and knowledge being acquired in other classrooms. Students *use the target language* to carry out varied activities related to these connections. In the intermediate stages, students are able to *apply* this learned vocabulary to new situations. They *rearrange parts* of learned material to *create* and *compose* simple presentations. They use the target language to *solve problems* and *design* simple activities. In the most advanced stages, students have the ability to *research* in the target language and *evaluate* topics in academic and work settings. They *investigate* career opportunities and *summarize* requirements for these careers.

### Vision for Measuring Performance Levels

The achievement levels for performance of Illinois students of foreign languages will depend upon several variables related to the individual language learner's length and sequence of study, age, ability, class size, and motivation. The performance descriptors indicate how students can attain competency in foreign language study. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has developed K-12 Performance Guidelines for describing levels of performance for language learners based on the following questions: 1) How well is the student understood? 2) How well does the student understand? 3) How accurate is the student's language? 4) How extensive and applicable is the student's vocabulary? 5) How is the student's cultural knowledge reflected in language use? 6) How does the student maintain communication? The following chart shows the estimated correlation of the Performance Descriptors, the Illinois Learning Standards, and the ACTFL K-12 Proficiency Guidelines:

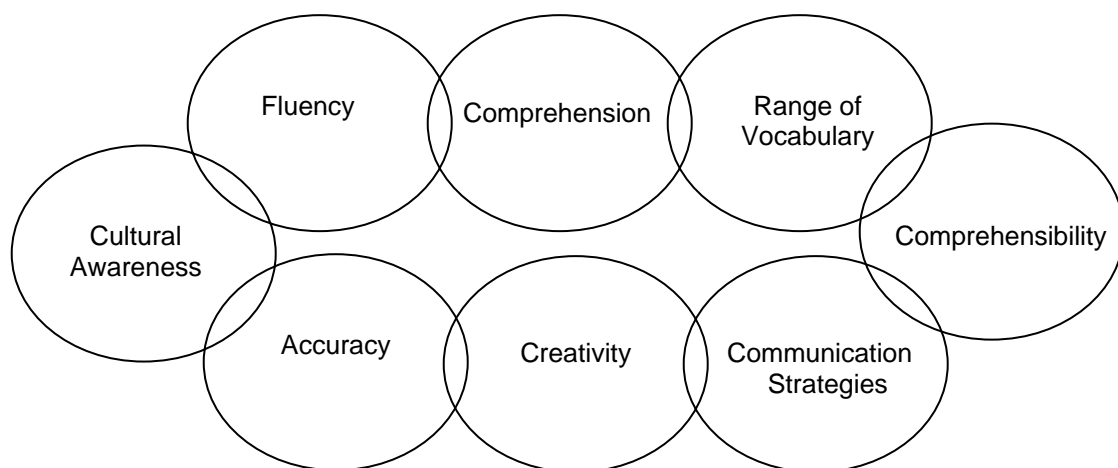
Performance Descriptors	STAGE A	STAGE B	STAGE C	STAGE D	STAGE E	STAGE F	STAGE G	STAGE H	STAGE I	STAGE J
Illinois Learning Standards	STAGE ONE (Beginning)			STAGE TWO (Beginning/Intermediate)		STAGE THREE (Intermediate)			STAGE FOUR (Intermediate/Advanced)	STAGE FIVE (Advanced)
ACTFL K-12 Proficiency Guidelines	NOVICE Low                      Mid                      High			INTERMEDIATE Low                      Mid                      High			ADVANCED			

The organizing principles for the Illinois performance descriptors are based on four levels of performance: 1) *Exceeding* = student clearly surpasses standards, 2) *Meeting* = student usually meets standards, 3) *Approaching* = student occasionally reaches standards, and 4) *Starting* = student rarely attains standards. Though the stages have equal space requirements in print, there are some that will require a greater time commitment for acquisition of the skills and control of the content. This is especially true of the later stages.

The performance descriptors have been written with the "average" student in mind: a student who would be expected to **meet the standard** with consistency. An occasional error would not place this student in a different category but a pattern of errors would do so. Any student may very well be at one achievement stage in one skill descriptor and at another stage in a different descriptor. For example, exceptional progress in fluency and the ability to respond spontaneously may not be matched by accuracy in pronunciation. Meeting the standard is defined by performance of consistently good quality. Those students who **exceed the standard** and go significantly beyond the descriptors for their age and language experience levels would be those who have achieved the goal set by Baron Pierre de Coubertin for the champions of Olympic events: "*Citius, Altius, Fortius*" ("Swifter, Higher, Stronger"). In order to exceed, their performance clearly shows accomplishment above and beyond the norm indicated and in greater depth than the descriptor prescribes. Students who **approach the standard** are those who are performing occasionally or partially at the ability level expected for the stage of learning. Their performance may be partially or haltingly moving toward achieving the standard. Those who exhibit **beginning** performance skills are those who rarely achieve the expected norm for their stage of learning.

The components of quality for performance evaluations of foreign language students include a variety of concepts. Each concept rests on the base of knowledge gained in

the early stages and expanded in the progressive stages of learning. They are intertwined and linked together throughout the sequence of study without any hierarchy of importance:



### **The ISBE Foreign Languages Expanded Performance Descriptors: Intended Use and Interpretation**

The Performance Descriptors for Foreign Language offer great potential and additional resources to enhance implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards. The current Standards, which are content standards, are written for stages of learning (e.g., beginning, advanced) and do not indicate performance levels. Consequently, the State Board of Education has received numerous requests for information about what students at each stage of learning should know and be able to do, and also for rubrics or methods of determining how well students are achieving the content standards. The purpose of these performance descriptors is to help teachers determine how well their students are doing in terms of meeting the standards, and to enhance the current Illinois Learning Standards, not replace them.

**Explanation of Stages:** There are multiple entry points for language learning in Illinois. Since students can begin their studies in various grades, the performance descriptors are arranged in stages rather than grade-specific levels. This draft contains 6 of 10 stages of learning (A-F for elementary, E-I for secondary) for each standard, compared to the current five stages of benchmarks in the Learning Standards. In a K-12 program, stages A-H correspond to grades 1-8; stage I grades 9/10; and stage J grades 11/12. Not all students will be at the same stage at any one time, and teachers should look at surrounding stages to determine where students are performing. Skills progress across and within stages, increasing expectations for student performance.

**There are many variables for student learning.** It is important to emphasize that all language learners, regardless of age or grade, must begin in Stage One, which corresponds to Stages A–C of the performance descriptors. A high school student cannot be expected to perform in the upper stages (i.e., H-J) after two or three years of study. Obviously, a student who begins second language study in the early elementary grades and continues an uninterrupted sequence of study will advance further across

the spectrum than a student who begins in high school. Language learning depends on several variables, including time spent on task, age and maturity of the learner, prior knowledge and experience, class size, and length of language sequence. Due to developmental differences, the performance level of a second grade student in Stage 2 will differ greatly from a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student in the same stage. Consideration has been given that the student beginning at Stage A might be in Year 1, or possibly Year 11. The language studied also can extend the learning timeframe, and these descriptors apply to the commonly taught European languages. Other languages may require longer periods to achieve the same proficiency levels.

**The document is a curriculum development tool.** The Performance Descriptors are a developmental tool, and should be used in conjunction with the Illinois Learning Standards. The stages of development can help a school district develop a standards-led curriculum that will meet state standards, rather than to prescribe a state-mandated curriculum of what should be taught at each stage.

**It is intended that each stage represent growth from the previous stage.** An idea is repeated in a stage only if new content or concepts are introduced with respect to that topic. For example, once the concept of writing simple sentences using learned material is identified in Stage C, it is not repeated in Stage D or above. It is assumed that students will expand on and continue to use their knowledge and skills, but it is not a new concept to be mastered. This is designed to remove isolated review from the curriculum. All review should be done in context of the new content being presented. The writers realize that students who are below standards will need remedial work and may need extra help beyond the regular instructional time.

**The document is based on the current form of the state learning goals, standards and benchmarks.** It is assumed that the state goals, standards and benchmarks will undergo continual refinement, and this document will need to be revised as that happens. This document has also been aligned to the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (National Standards). Careful consideration was made to identify correlations to the national document. All descriptors are written to indicate the “meets” level of performance for each stage and are not intended to limit instruction. Curriculum should be fluid and change as needed. As such, this document should always be considered a work in progress. This is a working copy, and adequate space has been provided with the descriptors to allow teachers to make additions and notations, and to tailor the descriptors to their specific needs.



# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28A** Students who meet this standard can understand oral communication in the target language.

Beginning/Intermediate	Intermediate	
Stage E	Stage F	Stage G
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate comprehension (e.g., sequence events, illustrate, dramatize) of simple stories, dialogues, and other presentations containing significant visual cues.</li> <li>• Follow instructions in the target language given one step at a time for selected activities (e.g., craft project, daily life activities, puzzles, games).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate understanding of short, simple narratives, conversations or aural presentations with assistance from resources (e.g., concrete objects, graphic organizers) within developmentally appropriate, highly predictable, and familiar contexts.</li> <li>• Follow multi-step instructions using common classroom vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate understanding (e.g., retell, dramatize, illustrate) of narratives, conversations, and aural presentations using available resources.</li> <li>• Follow multi-step instructions in a variety of contexts.</li> </ul>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28A** Students who meet this standard can understand oral communication in the target language.

<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate/Advanced</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Stage H</b>	<b>Stage I</b>	<b>Stage J</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate understanding (e.g., summarize, paraphrase) of conversations, narratives, and aural presentations.</li> <li>2. Use resources and previously learned material to summarize a story.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension (e.g., summarize main ideas and supporting details, answer guided questions) of material on familiar topics and some unfamiliar topics.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate understanding of longer, more complex presentations (e.g., movies, T.V., plays, radio programs) in a variety of contexts.</li> <li>3. Recognize a speaker’s use of paraphrase and restatement cues used to convey the message.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate understanding of main ideas and significant details on a variety of topics that are presented in the media (e.g., TV, radio, film, video) of the target culture.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate comprehension of academic or cultural presentations (e.g., class lectures, plays, operas).</li> <li>3. Demonstrate comprehension of professional or technical vocabulary commonly used at the entry level of the student’s proposed career choice.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate understanding of details in a technical presentation (e.g., how to use equipment or assemble a model).</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28B** Students who meet this standard can interact in the target language in various settings.

<b>Beginning/Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
<b>Stage E</b>	<b>Stage F</b>	<b>Stage G</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask questions spontaneously in some new contexts.</li> <li>2. Respond spontaneously to questions.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate improved pronunciation, intonation, and inflection.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate comprehension of gestures and body language often used in everyday interaction in the target language culture.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formulate questions spontaneously in a greater variety of contexts.</li> <li>2. Recombine familiar elements of acquired language to produce original responses to questions in the target language.</li> <li>3. Repeat target language expressions using pronunciation comprehensible to a native speaker accustomed to interacting with second language learners.</li> <li>4. Dramatize non-verbal cues, including gestures, common to the culture while interacting in the target language.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Produce original responses to a wider range of questions.</li> <li>2. Initiate conversation about familiar topics.</li> <li>3. Read aloud in the target language using correct pronunciation, intonation, and inflection.</li> <li>4. Dramatize non-verbal cues, including gestures, common to the culture of the target language.</li> <li>5. Use appropriate non-verbal cues, including gestures, common to the culture of the target language.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28B** Students who meet this standard can interact in the target language in various settings.

<b>Intermediate Stage H</b>	<b>Intermediate/Advanced Stage I</b>	<b>Advanced Stage J</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create original responses to open-ended questions.</li> <li>2. Sustain conversation using familiar language patterns.</li> <li>3. Produce the target language using pronunciation, intonation, and inflection comprehensible to a native speaker who has had limited contact with second language learners.</li> <li>4. Interact using appropriate non-verbal cues, including gestures, common to the culture of the target language in a classroom setting.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employ a variety of discourse strategies (e.g., turn-taking, circumlocution, linguistic fillers) to sustain conversation.</li> <li>2. Recognize errors and attempt to self-correct.</li> <li>3. Use pronunciation, intonation, and inflection effectively to express nuances of meaning.</li> <li>4. Recognize and use appropriate nonverbal cues in various formal and informal settings.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss and defend a position on an issue using discourse strategies (e.g., circumlocution, paraphrase, restatement).</li> <li>2. Communicate confidently in sustained discourse.</li> <li>3. Apply techniques and skills used in other classes for various discussion forums (e.g., panels, critiques, interviews).</li> <li>4. Use idioms, humor, and culturally authentic expressions (e.g., proverbs, jokes, interjections).</li> </ol> <p>Converse using pronunciation that is understandable and acceptable to a native speaker unaccustomed to interacting with second language learners.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)</p>		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28C** Students who meet this standard can understand written passages in the target language.

<b>Beginning/Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
<b>Stage E</b>	<b>Stage F</b>	<b>Stage G</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Follow written classroom instructions.</li> <li>2. Summarize a simple passage.</li> <li>3. Use cognates and loan words to infer meaning of unfamiliar material.</li> <li>4. Infer meaning using contextual clues and drawing on known roots, words, and phrases.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension of the main message of a variety of written materials with the help of available resources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, software, Internet, e-mail).</li> <li>2. Identify word use, phrasing, and sentence structure (e.g., idioms, false cognates, word order) of the target language.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the main message of a variety of written materials with the help of available resources.</li> <li>2. Compare word use, phrasing, and sentence structure of the target language with those of one or more other languages.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28C** Students who meet this standard can understand written passages in the target language.

<b>Intermediate Stage H</b>	<b>Intermediate/Advanced Stage I</b>	<b>Advanced Stage J</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summarize the main message and significant details of a variety of written materials with the help of available resources.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate understanding of how word use, phrasing, and sentence structure of the target language convey meaning.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension of key vocabulary as well as the main message of complex written materials without the help of visuals, but with the use of other print sources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus).</li> <li>2. Demonstrate understanding of main ideas and significant details on a variety of topics presented in authentic material (e.g., newspapers, magazines, books) from the culture.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate ability to use graphic organizers (e.g., outlines, flow charts, Venn diagrams).</li> <li>4. Organize information and concepts in a brief essay about an issue important to a country where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>5. Compare the use of vocabulary in idiomatic phrases in one or more languages and in the target language.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension of a wide range of vocabulary including that which addresses abstract concepts.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate understanding of main ideas and significant details on a variety of topics presented in authentic literature of the culture.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate comprehension of written texts needed in the work world (e.g., instruction manuals, textbooks).</li> <li>4. Demonstrate understanding of cultural connotations of a wide range of words and phrases.</li> <li>5. Discuss various layers of meaning in a written work (e.g., poem, short story).</li> <li>6. Explain the similarities and differences (e.g., word origin, structure) between the target language and another language.</li> <li>7. Compare the target language to English in terms of word origin and text structures.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;">Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)</p>		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28D** Students who meet this standard can use the target language to present information, concepts, and ideas for a variety of purposes to different audiences.

Beginning/Intermediate	Intermediate	
Stage E	Stage F	Stage G
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Combine and recombine learned material to write a paragraph on a familiar topic using appropriate punctuation, grammar, and capitalization.</li> <li>2. Present a simple age- and stage-appropriate report on a familiar topic.</li> <li>3. Use known vocabulary and grammatical structures to write and present a simple production or media presentation (e.g., skit, commercial, ad, song).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a developmentally appropriate paper (e.g., report, composition, letter, journal) about a familiar topic using specific guidelines.</li> <li>2. Use preparation and presentation aids (e.g., dictionaries, notes, visuals) to facilitate oral or written presentations.</li> <li>3. Create a short, simple original story or poem based upon a model (e.g., fable, fairy tale, haiku, graphic poem, anagram).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make a brief presentation on a topic of personal interest or on a topic that has been studied in another subject area.</li> <li>2. Prepare a written or audio-visual presentation (e.g., information exchange with peers using available resources) on a topic of interest in daily life.</li> <li>3. Create and present an original story or poem based upon a model.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**28D** Students who meet this standard can use the target language to present information, concepts, and ideas for a variety of purposes to different audiences.

Intermediate	Intermediate/Advanced	Advanced
Stage H	Stage I	Stage J
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a report including supporting details, logical organization, and conclusion on a topic of personal interest or on a topic studied in another class.</li> <li>2. Research and prepare a presentation on an unfamiliar topic of current or historical interest in the target culture.</li> <li>3. Compose, edit, and revise using reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, grammar references).</li> <li>4. Create and present an original story or poem.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Apply increasingly complex vocabulary and structures to write complete expository pieces (e.g., book, movie or concert review, editorial, commentary on a current issue).</li> <li>2. Write a complete expository piece that includes a description of the situation, a definition of the issues, and an analysis of options for action (e.g., dress code in high school).</li> <li>3. Use documentation from target language sources to make a persuasive case for or against an important issue.</li> <li>4. Compare points of view and perspective on an issue.</li> <li>5. Prepare and present a short original piece (e.g., essay, story, poem) on a given theme using guidelines.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a persuasive communication (e.g., letter, essay, e-mail, resumé) with supporting documentation.</li> <li>2. Use research skills to write a paper in the target language using appropriate documentation.</li> <li>3. Distinguish between formal and informal language through use of forms of address, vocabulary, and syntax appropriate to a range of social and work contexts.</li> <li>4. Combine materials in oral impromptu presentations in paragraph-length and longer discourse.</li> <li>5. Prepare and present an original piece (e.g., essay, story, poem) on a theme of choice.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29A** Students who meet this standard can understand manners and customs of various target language societies.

Beginning/Intermediate	Intermediate	
Stage E	Stage F	Stage G
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate a wider range of culturally authentic activities following target language instructions.</li> <li>2. Role-play situations that demonstrate knowledge of activities popular in target language cultures (e.g., customs, leisure time, holiday practices).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an awareness of accepted roles and activities of families and family members in societies associated with the target language.</li> <li>2. Identify traditions and customs associated with times of the year and national events.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distinguish accepted roles of some social units in societies associated with the target language (e.g., the role of the extended family, the concept of friendship, the treatment of elders, gender roles).</li> <li>2. Describe some specific social practices that occur in the U.S., in the target language culture, and in both.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29A** Students who meet this standard can understand manners and customs of various target language societies.

Intermediate	Intermediate/Advanced	Advanced
Stage H	Stage I	Stage J
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain accepted roles and activities of social units in societies associated with the target language (e.g., the role of the immediate and extended family, the concept of friendship, the treatment of elders, gender roles).</li> <li>2. Exhibit knowledge of selected social practices that differ from those in the U.S. (e.g., discussion of dating, coming of age rituals).</li> <li>3. Compare and contrast routine practices of daily life in target language societies (e.g., school, telephone conventions, food preferences and preparation, meal taking and manners, shopping, dwellings, dress).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate awareness (e.g., role-play, illustrate, discuss) of interpersonal conventions and behaviors in social and business contexts (e.g., dress, punctuality, personal space).</li> <li>2. Use appropriate vocabulary and level of formality in addressing those of different ages, roles, and status in social and business situations.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze the interrelationship of cultural practices and the political, social, religious, and economic entities in the societies where the target language is spoken (e.g., school breaks, workers' vacations, cottage industries).</li> <li>2. Identify specific cultural patterns and social behaviors from visual media of target language societies.</li> <li>3. Identify the basis of social levels and distinctions in the target language societies and analyze the impact of them on social behaviors and work situations (e.g., regional accents and job opportunities, lineage vs. wealth, fame, education).</li> <li>4. Analyze the ways in which the products (e.g., dwellings, dress, literary and artistic achievements) of the target language cultures reflect the values of those who live in selected target language societies.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29B** Students who meet this standard can understand music, dance, folk art, visual art, drama, and architecture related to the target language societies.

Beginning/Intermediate	Intermediate	
Stage E	Stage F	Stage G
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name selected art works associated with a target language culture.</li> <li>2. Present a short report on a selected work of art and its creator.</li> <li>3. Identify some characteristics of selected art forms using arts vocabulary in the target language.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the theme of a selected work of art using terms from the target language.</li> <li>2. Apply essential target language vocabulary to refer to tools of one or more art forms.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the themes of selected art forms.</li> <li>2. Use target language vocabulary to describe selected works of art.</li> <li>3. Apply essential target language vocabulary to refer to tools and products of one or more art forms.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29B** Students who meet this standard can understand music, dance, folk art, visual art, drama, and architecture related to the target language societies.

<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate/Advanced</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Stage H</b>	<b>Stage I</b>	<b>Stage J</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain themes of selected art forms.</li> <li>2. Use a wider range of target language vocabulary to discuss selected works of art.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare themes in selected works of art that are representative of various areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Analyze similarities and differences between the art forms studied.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the cultural and historical significance of a characteristic art form from a country where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Give an interpretive presentation that has been researched on a selected art form.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29C** Students who meet this standard can understand literature and various media of target language societies.

<b>Beginning/Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
<b>Stage E</b>	<b>Stage F</b>	<b>Stage G</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read, paraphrase, and summarize selected literary works.</li> <li>2. Associate sample literary works with their authors.</li> <li>3. Rewrite selected media presentations in the target language to include the main points.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension of simple materials in the target language with assistance from resources (e.g., chart, diagram, PowerPoint, graph).</li> <li>2. Identify the plot and form of a simple literary work using the target language.</li> <li>3. Create simple print or non-print media messages (e.g., T.V. commercial, magazine ads, posters) in the target language modeled on media examples.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension of selected materials (e.g., advertisement, cartoon, instructions, news article, play, report) with assistance from resources.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate comprehension of theme, settings, plot, and form of selected works of youth literature and abridgements of adult literature in the target language.</li> <li>3. Create simple non-print media messages (e.g., tape recordings, cartoons, commercials, videos) in the target language modeled on media examples using available technology.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29C** Students who meet this standard can understand literature and various media of target language societies.

Intermediate	Intermediate/Advanced	Advanced
Stage H	Stage I	Stage J
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate comprehension of a wider variety of materials in the target language with assistance (e.g., glossaries, guided questions, outlines).</li> <li>2. Demonstrate comprehension of more complex selected literary works with a written or oral presentation (e.g., essay, critique, panel, group discussion).</li> <li>3. Create original media messages (e.g., short T.V. or radio shows, websites) in the target language modeled on media examples using available technology.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare and contrast the characters, setting, themes, and plot of two or more literary works with a presentation (e.g., play, story, video, report, news article, multimedia presentation).</li> <li>2. Describe characteristics and author's styles of various literary forms.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate understanding of the main ideas of selected samples of authentic media from the target language culture(s) and how they relate to everyday life.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze characteristics of an author's work with a presentation (e.g., report, debate, group discussion, panel, critique).</li> <li>2. Compare and analyze an author's works regarding theme, style, and perspective.</li> <li>3. Compare the influence of historical context on the form, style, and viewpoint of two or more literary works.</li> <li>4. Discuss types and styles of media communication in areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>5. Compare typical topics of media communication in selected areas where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29D** Students who meet this standard can understand history of areas where the target language is spoken.

Beginning/Intermediate	Intermediate			
Stage E	Stage F	Stage G		
1. Use basic vocabulary to identify historical events and concepts.	1. Use acquired language to identify some historical events, concepts, and trends.	1. Write or present a simple report on a key historical figure giving basic biographical information. 2. Describe an historic event in basic terms.		
Year 6 (E-F-G)	Year 7 (F-G-H)	Year 8 (G-H-I)	Year 9-10 (H-I-J)	Year 11-12 (I-J)

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29D** Students who meet this standard can understand history of areas where the target language is spoken.

<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate/Advanced</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Stage H</b>	<b>Stage I</b>	<b>Stage J</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write or present a report on a key historical figure and the events associated with that person.</li> <li>2. Write or present a report including supporting details on a topic of historical interest using information learned in another subject or obtained through research.</li> <li>3. Describe the influences a key historical figure has had on an area where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write or present a report comparing and contrasting the influence of two historical figures or events.</li> <li>2. Compare and contrast the influences of a historical figure from a country where the target language is spoken to a person from the U.S. who held a similar place in history (e.g., a founding father).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze different perspectives on an historical event using a variety of media and technology tools.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29E** Students who meet this standard can understand geography of various language societies.

<b>Beginning/Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
<b>Stage E</b>	<b>Stage F</b>	<b>Stage G</b>
<p>1. Use maps, digital images, graphs, or other geographical representations to describe and discuss the geographical environment (e.g., a scarcity of water, the ocean warming the coast, sites of interest, the best routes to use) of an area where the target language is spoken.</p>	<p>1. Use graphs or other geographical representations to identify geographic and demographic features of the country (e.g., population distribution, average annual income, imports and exports).</p> <p>2. Identify major ethnic groups in the country(ies) where the target language is spoken.</p>	<p>1. Write or present information on a geographical aspect of a target language society (e.g., natural resources, products of the culture or ethnic groups) in the country(ies) where the target language is spoken.</p>
<p>Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)</p>		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**29E** Students who meet this standard can understand geography of various language societies.

Intermediate	Intermediate/Advanced	Advanced
Stage H	Stage I	Stage J
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write or present a report on a geographical aspect of an area where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Compare and contrast demographic factors of one target language area with another or with those of the U.S.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write or present a report contrasting geographic and demographic features (e.g., average annual income, population density, mortality rate, literacy rate) of countries where the target language is spoken to each other or to the U.S.</li> <li>2. Compare development and use of resources (e.g., imports and exports, uses of bodies of water) in selected areas where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze how settlement and colonization have affected the culture of country(ies) where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Explain the contributions of immigrant groups to the culture of areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>3. Analyze how immigration, migration, and emigration have helped shape the current economic and environmental situation in an area where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**30A** Students who meet this standard can use the target language to reinforce and further knowledge of other disciplines.

<b>Beginning/Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
<b>Stage E</b>	<b>Stage F</b>	<b>Stage G</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Present information about products that originate in countries where the target language is spoken and that are used in the United States.</li> <li>2. Use the target language to estimate measurements (e.g., train schedules, metric distances, purchases).</li> <li>3. Describe basic earth and life science content.</li> <li>4. Use target language expressions to describe or participate in games, dances, and sports (e.g., encourage others, keep score).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify a system of trade and exchange (e.g., bargaining and bartering) in an area where the target language is spoken and a system used in the local community.</li> <li>2. Use the target language to gather and organize data (e.g., list, graph, diagram) to solve math problems in a simple format.</li> <li>3. Identify some physical and geological features, vegetation, or animal life indigenous to an area where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>4. Identify typical diet, nutrition, and physical fitness concerns of peers in an area where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classify differing economic systems in a country where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Use the target language to gather and organize data (e.g., model, outline, summary, solution) to solve math problems in a complex format.</li> <li>3. Cite examples of selected physical and geological features, vegetation, or animal life indigenous to areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>4. Describe diet, nutrition, and physical fitness issues in areas where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**30A** Students who meet this standard can use the target language to reinforce and further knowledge of other disciplines.

Intermediate	Intermediate/Advanced	Advanced
Stage H	Stage I	Stage J
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare differing economic systems in areas where the target language is spoken to those commonly used in the U.S.</li> <li>2. Use the target language to gather and organize data (e.g., report, survey, graph, conversion of recipe to the metric system) to solve math problems in a more complex format.</li> <li>3. Describe physical and geological features, vegetation, and animal life indigenous to areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>4. Discuss diet, nutrition, and physical fitness issues in areas where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research and present information on the role of natural and human resources within the target language areas in determining employment opportunities (e.g., industry, agriculture, service, technology).</li> <li>2. Interpret data from timetables, schedules, charts, and graphs to analyze and solve math problems.</li> <li>3. Analyze the impact of human activity (e.g., population density, pollution) on a country where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>4. Describe and compare daily diet, nutrition, and physical fitness regimens in areas where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate data gathered regarding factors affecting economic conditions in areas where the target language is spoken compared to those in the U.S.</li> <li>2. Analyze and evaluate the results of research projects using math skills.</li> <li>3. Present an analysis (e.g., report, survey of speakers of the language, role-play, debate, group discussion, editorial, panel) of current natural or social science issues from the perspective of speakers of the language.</li> <li>4. Analyze and contrast diet, nutrition, and physical fitness programs in areas where the target language is spoken with those of the U.S.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**30B** Students who meet this standard can use the target language to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of career options.

<b>Beginning/Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
<b>Stage E</b>	<b>Stage F</b>	<b>Stage G</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe activities and characteristics of selected occupations and work places.</li> <li>2. Explore general career choices in which the target language can be used.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate awareness of occupations unique to areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Describe the activities of a specific career in which the target language can be used.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and describe occupations unique to areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Describe the preparation for, and activities of, some careers in which the target language can be used.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		

# Foreign Language Performance Descriptors

**30B** Students who meet this standard can use the target language to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of career options.

Intermediate	Intermediate/Advanced	Advanced
Stage H	Stage I	Stage J
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Present information about occupations unique to areas where the target language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Present information about specific careers in which the target language can be used.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare various occupations in terms of their roles, status, and qualifications in areas where the target language is spoken to similar occupations in the U.S.</li> <li>2. Analyze connections between specific businesses and industries in the U.S. and in a country where the target language is spoken.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze occupational information from target language sources for careers in a country where the language is spoken.</li> <li>2. Evaluate a career that requires proficiency in the target language.</li> </ol>
Year 6 (E-F-G)    Year 7 (F-G-H)    Year 8 (G-H-I)    Year 9-10 (H-I-J)    Year 11-12 (I-J)		



## GLOSSARY

**Available Resources:** Any or all pedagogical (teaching) materials, tools, devices or technology that are at the teacher's disposal.

**Circumlocution:** Use of multiple words or phrases to convey meaning of an unknown or forgotten word or phrase.

**Cognate:** Word or phrase closely related to a word or phrase in another language.

**Communicative Confidence:** ability to apply the linguistic components of the language to convey a message.

**Culturally Authentic:** That which is truly representative of, or originates in, the target cultures.

**Decode:** To figure out

**Differentiate:** To distinguish.

**Discourse:** Spoken or written language.

**e.g.:** A Latin abbreviation of "for example" used in this document to suggest possible activities. It is not meant to be a required or exhaustive list.

**Expository:** Factual, objective reporting in written or spoken form; can also be in a display such as blueprints or charts.

**Infer the Meaning:** To deduce the meaning of a message.

**Linguistic Fillers:** Sounds, words or phrases used by speakers to give time for thought.

**Loan Word:** Word borrowed directly from one language and used in another with the same meaning (e.g., French 'chateau' and German "Angst").

**Recombine:** To put together in a different way.

**Stage and Age Appropriate:** Applicable to the age of the students and the learning stage which they have achieved.

**Venn Diagram:** Graphic organizer that depicts commonalities and differences of overlapping domains.

## RELATIONSHIP OF PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS TO NATIONAL AND STATE STANDARDS

The National Standards document proposes a vision for the future, tempered by the reflection of best practices, focusing the profession on a broader and more diverse view of foreign language education. Though it suggests types of content and curricular experience, its basic purpose is to guide and augment other frameworks and eventually to be a yardstick against which to measure curriculum. The National Standards document was designed to provide a strong foundation on which to build the State Standards and district curriculum, and ultimately to impact foreign language learning in the classroom. The State of Illinois Foreign Language Standards, in line with that design, provide guidance for local districts to implement the vision and thereby to provide a direct conduit to the classroom teacher.

The progress indicators in the National document are discernible in the Illinois document though they are not necessarily in a similar configuration. The Performance Descriptors cover 10 stages of learning, are more rigorous and detailed, and include more descriptive skills and concepts than the national standards. The more numerous and more specific Illinois Performance Descriptors, while neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, tend to be more adaptable to curriculum design than the fewer and more general National Standards Progress Indicators. Their greater specificity may also make them appear to be more rigorous than the progress indicators of the national document, especially at the later stages. However, this finer focus supported by incorporated examples has also made the Performance Descriptors more relevant to activities and practices in the classroom. The original purpose of the National Foreign Language Standards was to present guidelines that each state would accept and modify to suit its needs. This has happened in Illinois. The Performance Descriptors of the Illinois Standards document have brought the National Standards several steps closer to a school's curriculum and to a teacher's classroom.

### **Analysis of our performance descriptors in terms of other state standards for Foreign Language**

A review of performance standards from four other states shows that all of the states based their standards on the national standards, but the Illinois performance descriptors moved to a greater level of specificity that is useful to classroom teachers and district curriculum committees. The number of stages (10) and the format, as well as the clearly written performance descriptors, make the Illinois document very "user friendly." The Illinois performance descriptors thoroughly cover the knowledge and skills needed to develop language proficiency and generally appear to be more rigorous than those of other states. At this time, there is no state that has been recognized as a model for development of foreign language performance standards. None of the other states' documents divide their standards into stages as extensive as those in the Illinois document. Illinois, Nevada, Connecticut, and Georgia are written in performance terminology; however, expectations of students are not always as clearly defined as in the Illinois document. Nevada and Georgia use terminology similar to ISAT definitions rather than as tools to develop classroom assessments. In some cases, definitions may be learning activities rather than performance descriptors. The Texas standards, written for their statewide curriculum, are somewhat vague and do not contain the specificity of the other states.

## REFERENCES

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## STUDENT STRENGTHS THROUGH THE ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

**Novice:** No functional ability; speech limited to memorized material; enumerators; chunk work; memorized or rehearsed material; frequently speak in lists-single words or short utterances; cannot function in real conversations; good repeaters and recyclers; little expected in terms of accuracy and acceptability.

**Intermediate:** Can create with language; ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, and handle a simple situation or transaction; can reorganize memorized material for personal statements; can activate linguistic flexibility; focus on truth-telling and personal facts; the “great ego” level-students will talk about themselves; “survival” or “tourist” level-can survive a day or two in a target language country with no complications; discourse characterized by simple sentences or phrases, normally limited to present time; often quite inaccurate; intelligible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners.

**Advanced:** Can narrate and describe in past and future time/aspect, and handle a complicated situation or transaction; narration and description, especially in past time, but also in present and future time; can tell a story; discourse skills: coherence and cohesion in speech; can live on the economy of the target culture; can handle routine work requirements with facility; some ability to paraphrase and to cope in more complicated situations; longer and more complex sentence structure; can make comparisons across time and space, use connectors to link sentences, and deal with varied contexts; understandable to native speakers not used to dealing with foreigners.

**Superior:** Can support opinion, discuss abstract topics, and handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation; have, at very minimum, a “professional” level of proficiency; can handle unknown topics and situations; hypothesize; provide complicated explanations; describe in detail with much precision; make random errors in grammar but rarely errors that would interfere with comprehension or disturb the native speaker.

*Student Strengths through the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Used with permission.*

## THE ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

The 1986 ACTFL proficiency guidelines represent a hierarchy of global characterizations of integrated performance in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Each description is a representative, not an exhaustive, sample of a particular range of ability, and each level subsumes all previous levels, moving from simple to complex in an “all-before-and more” fashion. Because these guidelines identify stages of proficiency, as opposed to achievement, they are not intended to measure what an individual has achieved through specific classroom instruction, but rather to allow assessment of what an individual can and cannot do, regardless of where, when or how the language has been learned or acquired; thus, the words “learned” and “acquired” are used in the broadest sense. These guidelines are not based on a particular linguistic theory or pedagogical method, since the guidelines are proficiency-based, as opposed to achievement-based, and are intended to be used for global assessment.

### **Generic Description-Speaking**

The novice level is characterized by the ability to communicate minimally with learned material.

**Novice-Low:** Oral production consists of isolated words and perhaps a few perfect high-frequency phrases. Essentially no functional communicative ability.

**Novice-Mid:** Oral production continues to consist of isolated words and learned phrases within very predictable areas of need, although quality is increased. Vocabulary is sufficient only for handling simple, elementary needs and expressing basic courtesies. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and show frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor’s words. Speaker may have some difficulty producing even the simplest utterances. Some Novice-Mid speakers will be understood only with great difficulty.

**Novice-High:** Able to satisfy partially the requirements of basic communicative exchanges by relying heavily on learned utterances, but occasionally expanding these through simple recombinations of their elements. Can ask questions or make statements involving learned material. Shows signs of spontaneity, although this falls short of real autonomy of expression. Speech continues to consist of learned utterances rather than of personalized, situationally adapted ones. Vocabulary centers on areas such as basic objects, places, and most common kinship terms. Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by first language. Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, some Novice-High speakers will have difficulty being understood even by sympathetic interlocutors.

The intermediate level is characterized by the speaker’s ability to create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements, though primarily in a reactive mode; initiate, minimally sustain, and close in a simple way basic communicative tasks, and ask and answer questions.

**Intermediate-Low:** Able to handle successfully a limited number of interactive, task-oriented and social situations. Can ask and answer questions, initiate and respond to simple statements and maintain face-to-face conversation, although in a highly restricted manner and with much linguistic inaccuracy. Within these limitations, can perform such tasks as introducing self, ordering a meal, asking directions and making purchases. Vocabulary is adequate to express only the most elementary needs. Strong interference from native language may occur. Misunderstandings frequently arise, but with repetition the Intermediate-Low speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

**Intermediate-Mid:** Able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated, basic communicative tasks, and social situations. Can talk simply about self and family members. Can ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics beyond the most immediate needs: e.g., personal history and leisure time activities. Utterance length increases slightly, but speech may continue to be characterized by frequent long pauses, since the smooth incorporation of even basic conversational strategies is often hindered as the speaker struggles to create appropriate language forms. Pronunciation may continue to be strongly influenced by first language and fluency may still be strained. Although misunderstandings still arise, the Intermediate-Mid speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

**Intermediate-High:** Able to handle successfully most uncomplicated communicative tasks and social situations. Can initiate, sustain and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, but errors are evident. Limited vocabulary still necessitates hesitation and may bring about slightly unexpected circumlocution. There is emerging evidence of connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. The Intermediate-High speaker can generally be understood by interlocutors not accustomed to dealing with speakers at this level, but repetition may still be required.

The Advanced level is characterized by the speaker's ability to converse in a clearly participatory fashion, initiate, sustain and bring to closure a wide variety of communicative tasks, including those that require an increased ability to convey meaning with diverse language strategies due to a complication or an unforeseen turn of events; satisfy the requirements of school and work situations; and narrate and describe with paragraph-length connected discourse.

**Advanced:** Able to satisfy the requirements of everyday situations and routine school and work requirements. Can handle with confidence, but not with facility, complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating and complaining and apologizing. Can narrate and describe with some details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Shortcomings can often be smoothed over by communicative strategies, such as pause fillers, stalling devices and different rates of speech. Circumlocution, which arises from vocabulary or syntactic limitations very often, is quite successful, though some groping for words may still be evident. The Advanced-level speaker can be understood without difficulty by native interlocutors.

**Advanced-Plus:** Able to satisfy the requirements of a broad variety of everyday, school and work situations. Can discuss concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. There is emerging evidence of ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize. The Advanced-Plus speaker often shows a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms with confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing and circumlocution. Differentiated vocabulary and intonation are effectively used to communicate fine shades of meaning. The Advanced-Plus speaker often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech but under the demands of Superior-level, complex tasks, language may break down or prove inadequate.

The Superior level is characterized by the speaker's ability to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics; and support opinions and hypothesize native-like discourse strategies.

**Superior:** Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional and abstract

topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topics. Usually the Superior-level speaker is only partially familiar with regional or other dialectical variants. The Superior level speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. The latter involves the ability to distinguish main ideas from supporting information through syntactic, lexical, and suprasegmental features (pitch, stress, intonation). Sporadic errors may occur, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing, but no patterns of error are evident. Errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication.

### **Generic Descriptions-Listening**

These guidelines assume that all listening takes place in an authentic environment at a normal rate of speech using standard or near standard norms.

**Novice-Low:** Understanding is limited to occasional isolated words such as cognates, borrowed words and high-frequency social conventions. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.

**Novice-Mid:** Able to understand some short, learned utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands and courtesy formulae about topics that refer to basic personal information or the immediate physical setting. The listener requires long pauses for assimilation and periodically requests repetition and/or a slower rate of speech.

**Novice-High:** Able to understand short, learned utterances and some sentence-length utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands and courtesy formulae. May require repetition, rephrasing and/or a slowed rate of speech for comprehension.

**Intermediate-Low:** Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned elements in a limited number of content areas, particularly if strongly supported by the situational context. Content refers to basic personal background and needs, social conventions and routine tasks, such as getting meals and receiving simple instructions and directions. Listening tasks pertain primarily to spontaneous face-to-face conversations. Understanding is often uneven; repetition and rewording may be necessary. Misunderstandings in both main ideas and details arise frequently.

**Intermediate-Mid:** Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned utterances on a variety of topics. Content continues to refer primarily to basic personal background and needs, social conventions and somewhat more complex tasks, such as lodging, transportation and shopping. Additional content areas include some personal interests and activities, and a greater diversity of instructions and directions. Listening tasks not only pertain to spontaneous face-to-face conversations but also to short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech, such as simple announcements and reports over the media. Understanding continues to be uneven.

**Intermediate-High:** Able to sustain understanding over long stretches of connected discourse on a number of topics pertaining to different times and places; however, understanding is inconsistent due to failure to grasp main ideas and/or details. Thus, while topics do not differ significantly from those of an Advanced-level listener, comprehension is less in quantity and poorer in quality.

**Advanced:** Able to understand main ideas and most details of connected discourse on a variety of topics beyond the immediacy of the situation. Comprehension may be uneven due to a variety of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, among which topic familiarity is very prominent. These texts frequently involve description and narration in different time frames or aspects, such as present, nonpast, habitual, or imperfective. Texts may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics and news items and reports primarily dealing with factual information. Listener is aware of cohesive devices but may not be able to use them to follow the sequence of thought in an oral text.

**Advanced-Plus:** Able to understand the main ideas of most speech in a standard dialect; however, the listener may not be able to sustain comprehension in extended discourse which is prepositionally and linguistically complex. Listener shows an emerging awareness of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the text but may fail to grasp socio-cultural nuances of the message.

**Superior:** Able to understand the main ideas of all speech in a standard dialect, including technical discussion in a field of specialization. Can follow the essentials of extended discourse, which is prepositionally and linguistically complex, as in academic/professional settings, in lectures, speeches and reports. Listener shows some appreciation of aesthetic norms of target language, of idioms, colloquialisms and register shifting. Able to make inferences within the cultural framework of the target language. Understanding is aided by an awareness of the underlying organizational structure of the oral text and includes sensitivity for its social and cultural references and its affective overtones. Rarely misunderstands but may not understand excessively rapid, highly colloquial speech or speech that has strong cultural references.

### **General Description-Reading**

These guidelines assume all reading texts to be authentic and legible.

**Novice-Low:** Able to occasionally identify isolated words and/or major phrases when strongly supported by context.

**Novice-Mid:** Able to recognize the symbols of an alphabetic and/or syllabic writing system and/or a limited number of characters in a system that uses characters. The reader can identify an increasing number of highly contextualized words and/or phrases including cognates and borrowed words where appropriate. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be required.

**Novice-High:** Has sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read for instructional and directional purposes, standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps and signs. At times, but not on a consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extra linguistic background knowledge are supportive.

**Intermediate-Low:** Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically non-complex and have a clear underlying internal structure; for example, chronological sequencing. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples include messages with social purposes or information for the widest possible audience, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.

**Intermediate-Mid:** Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart

basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things for a wide audience.

**Intermediate-High:** Able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.

**Advanced:** Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but also from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routine business letters and simple technical material written for the general reader.

**Advanced-Plus:** Able to follow essential points of written discourse at the Superior level in areas of special interest or knowledge. Able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and linguistically complex, and/or texts which treat unfamiliar topics and situations, as well as some texts which involve aspects of target language culture. Able to comprehend the facts to make appropriate inferences. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permits comprehension of a wider variety of texts, including literary. Misunderstandings may occur.

**Superior:** Able to read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although the reader is not expected to comprehend thoroughly texts that are highly dependent on knowledge of the target culture. Reads easily for pleasure. Superior-level texts feature hypotheses, argumentation and supported opinions, and include grammatical patterns and vocabulary ordinarily encountered in academic/professional reading. At this level, due to the control of general vocabulary and structure, the reader is almost always able to match the meanings derived from extra linguistic knowledge with meanings derived from knowledge of the language, allowing for smooth and efficient reading of diverse texts. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur; for example, the reader may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structures and low-frequency idioms. At the Superior level, the reader can match strategies, top-down or bottom-up, which are most appropriate to the text. (Top-down strategies rely on real-world knowledge and prediction based on genre and organizational scheme of the text. Bottom-up strategies rely on actual linguistic knowledge.) Material at this level will include a variety of literary text, editorials, correspondence, general reports and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary, and misreading is rare.

### **Generic Descriptions-Writing**

Able to form some letters in an alphabetic system. In languages whose writing systems use syllabaries or characters, writer is able to both copy and produce the basic strokes. Can produce romanization of isolated characters where applicable.

**Novice-Low:** Able to form some letters in an alphabetic system. In languages whose writing systems use syllabaries or characters, writer is able to both copy and produce the basic strokes. Can produce romanization of isolated characters where applicable.

**Novice-Mid:** Able to copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases and reproduce some from memory. No practical communicative writing skills.

**Novice-High:** Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material and some recombinations thereof. Can supply information on simple forms and documents. Can write names, numbers, dates, own nationality, and other simple autobiographical information as well as some short phrases and simple lists. Can write all the symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic system or 50-100 characters or compounds in a character writing system. Spelling and representation of symbols (letters, syllables, characters) may be partially correct.

**Intermediate-Low:** Able to meet limited practical writing needs. Can write short messages, postcards and take down simple notes, such as telephone messages. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience.

Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences on very familiar topics. Language is inadequate to express in writing anything but elementary needs. Frequent errors in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and formation of non-alphabetic symbols, but writing can be understood by natives used to the writing of non-natives.

**Intermediate-Mid:** Able to meet a number of practical writing needs. Can write short, simple letters. Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events and other topics grounded in personal experience. Can express present time or at least one other time frame or aspect consistently, e.g., non-past, habitual, imperfective. Evidence of control of the syntax of non-complex sentences and basic inflectional morphology, such as declensions and conjugation. Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization. Can be understood by natives used to the writing of non-natives.

**Intermediate-High:** Able to meet most practical writing needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience. In those languages relying primarily on content words and time expressions to express time, tense or aspect, some precision is displayed; where tense and/or aspect is expressed through verbal inflection, forms are produced rather consistently, but not always accurately. An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging. Rarely uses basic cohesive elements, such as pronominal substitutions or synonyms in written discourse. Writing, though faulty, is generally comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-natives.

**Advanced:** Able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express self simply with some circumlocution. May still make errors in punctuation, spelling or the formation of non-alphabetic symbols. Good control of the morphology and the most frequently used syntactic structures; e.g., common word-order patterns, coordination, subordination, but makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices, such as pronouns, accurately. Writing may resemble literal translations from the native language, but a sense of organization (rhetorical structure) is emerging. Writing is understandable to natives not used to the writing of non-natives.

**Advanced-Plus:** Able to write about a variety of topics with significant precision and in detail. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences fully but has difficulty supporting points of view in written discourse. Can write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints and pressure, writing may be inaccurate. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weakness and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling or character writing formation may result in occasional miscommunication. Some misuses of vocabulary may still be evident. Style may be obviously foreign.

**Superior:** Able to express self effectively in most formal and informal writing on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most correspondence, such as memos, as well as social and business letters, short research papers, and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling or non-alphabetic symbol production, and a wide general vocabulary allow the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed and/or not totally reflecting target language patterns. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still may not tailor writing precisely to a variety of purposes and/or readers. Errors in writing rarely disturb natives or cause miscommunication.

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