

Foreign Languages Program

7-12 Statement of Philosophy

When making the decision to begin the study of a foreign language, the student is choosing to begin learning not only the fundamentals and basic skills of a language system, but also to be initiated into a new and unique way of perceiving reality. Each language offers a new and different perspective on culture and community, history and tradition. Each language offers a new way of communicating and of describing our environment.

We view the process of acquiring a foreign language as a challenging endeavor with multiple educational benefits. Fundamentally, it is a process of expanding one's base of knowledge to include not only the speaking, reading, and writing system of another language community, but also to deepen the understanding of one's own language system and culture. The study of another language helps us understand ourselves and our relation to others. In this mosaic of languages and cultures which is our Amherst community, acquisition of another language helps expand our vision and broaden our perspectives beyond that of a single way of naming everyday objects and actions, of interpreting events and phenomena. Learning a second language or a third, and beyond, is a vehicle by which knowledge, tolerance, and appreciation of other cultures can be expanded. This can lead us to new sources of information and new, multiple options for solutions to problems and conflicts.

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7-12 General Learning Goals

It is our expectation that, upon completion of the FL sequence, our students will have acquired measurable skills and demonstrated attitudes that reflect successful completion of our objectives. We expect students to demonstrate skills and competencies in listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, we expect students to demonstrate a knowledge, familiarity, and respect for the culture of the peoples whose language they have studied.

Expectation of student learning

1. In oral communication, students are expected to perform competently at each level of their proficiency continuum, as follows:

NOVICE

- a) Ask and respond to familiar questions on the most common features of daily life.
- b) Demonstrate survival level language skills to meet short-term needs.
- c) Convey meaning in simple conversations using familiar vocabulary, memorized phrases and personalized recombination of words and phrases.

INTERMEDIATE

- a) Ask and respond to questions on common features of daily life and personal environment.
- b) Demonstrate necessary skills required to satisfy simple personal demands and social demands to survive in a variety of social situations.
- c) Initiate, sustain, and bring to a close a number of communicative exchanges with good control of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy.
- d) Communicate personal meaning by creating with language elements in discrete sentences and strings of sentences.

ADVANCED

- a) Recombining vocabulary and structure to create personal meaning.
- b) Initiate, sustain and bring to a close personalized communicative exchanges.
- c) Paraphrase and summarize a sequence of events on familiar topics.
- d) Obtain and give information by answering questions involving complications.
- e) Narrate and describe with confidence in major time frame references using good control, accuracy.
- f) Sustain paragraph level discourse with abundant vocabulary and accuracy of structure.

In Classical Languages, using selected words, phrases, and expressions, students will:

- a) Greet and respond to greetings.
- b) Introduce and respond to introductions.
- c) Ask and answer questions.
- d) Discuss class reading.
- e) Share personal reactions to authentic literary texts.(letters, poems, plays, stories, etc.)
- f) Discuss and analyze literary texts. But for the simplest interactions, discussions in a Classical Language classroom will take place in English.
- g) Comprehend narration in present, past and future.
- h) Demonstrate competency in reading and comprehending a variety of text type including short stories, excerpts of literature, authentic materials, including poetry, prose, and other.
- i) Use writing as a way to demonstrate understanding of basic grammatical structures.
- j) Use a variety of media to show an appreciation of the ancient cultures and their literatures.

2. In reading, students are expected to:

- a) Read at or above their speaking proficiency level.
- b) Demonstrate competency in reading and comprehending a variety of text type, including articles, short stories, excerpts of literature, authentic materials and novel length texts.
- c) Demonstrate familiarity with principal authors of the target language.
- d) Read, analyze, discuss, and reflect on written works in their cultural, political, and historical context.

3. In writing, students should be able to:

- a) Write everything they can say.
- b) Produce well-organized paragraphs on familiar topics.
- c) Demonstrate control of the narrative structure in description, narration, opinion, argument development, and hypothesizing.

4. In culture, students will :

- a) Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between patterns of social interactions and attitudes, meanings, values and ideas found in the cultures studied.
- b) Demonstrate an understanding of the products (e.g. books, tools, laws, music, games, etc) of the cultures studied.
- c) Demonstrate an appreciation of cultural differences as well as cultural universals.