

**Iowa World Language Association
Position Paper on the Iowa Core Curriculum**

To prepare Iowa's students for the future, in which "each Iowa student must graduate with the 21st century skills necessary for a productive and satisfying life in a global knowledge-based environment," the Iowa Department of Education developed, and is currently implementing throughout the state, the Iowa Core Curriculum (Iowa Department of Education).

Clearly, addressing the needs of Iowa's students for the future is a wise step for the Iowa Department of Education; however, it is important to note that the core subject area of world languages has not been included in the Iowa Core Curriculum. This fact is surprising when considering the recommended changes in our education system proposed by the Council for Economic Development in 2006:

To confront the twenty-first century challenges to our economy and national security, our education system must be strengthened to increase the foreign language skills and cultural awareness of our students. America's continued global leadership will depend on our students' abilities to interact with the world community both inside and outside our borders.

Additionally in 2006, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) stated its belief that:

... students will be best poised to achieve their full potential and contribute most to society when they have complete access to a system of education that recognizes and incorporates best practices from around the globe, teaches skills and knowledge necessary for success in the 21st century, and utilizes high-quality and rigorous curricula, including instruction in world languages and cultures.

Twenty-five states heeded these calls, joined the States Network on International Education in the Schools, and are preparing their K-12 students for the future through the development of globally-oriented schools that include the study of world languages (CCSSO & Asia Society, n.d.). In fact the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, of which Iowa is one of twelve states with an initiative, lists world languages as one of the core content subjects of which mastery is "essential for students in the 21st century" (Partnership for 21st Century Schools).

Unlike other states, Iowa has not acted upon these recommendations by including world languages as a core subject in the Iowa Core Curriculum. Because of this omission, Iowa's students will be competing in a workforce with peers from other states and the world who will have studied world languages intensively, beginning in the early grades, as an integral part of their education. Ultimately, Iowa's businesses will be forced to look outside of the state for a workforce equipped to compete in the global society if Iowa's students do not have the necessary opportunities to learn to communicate in other languages and develop understanding of other cultures.

The Iowa World Language Association therefore strongly recommends to the Iowa Department of Education and its Chief State School Officer, Judy Jeffrey, that world languages be included as a core content area in the Iowa Core Curriculum.

References

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Approved by the Executive Board of the Iowa World Language Association
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