

INTRODUCTION

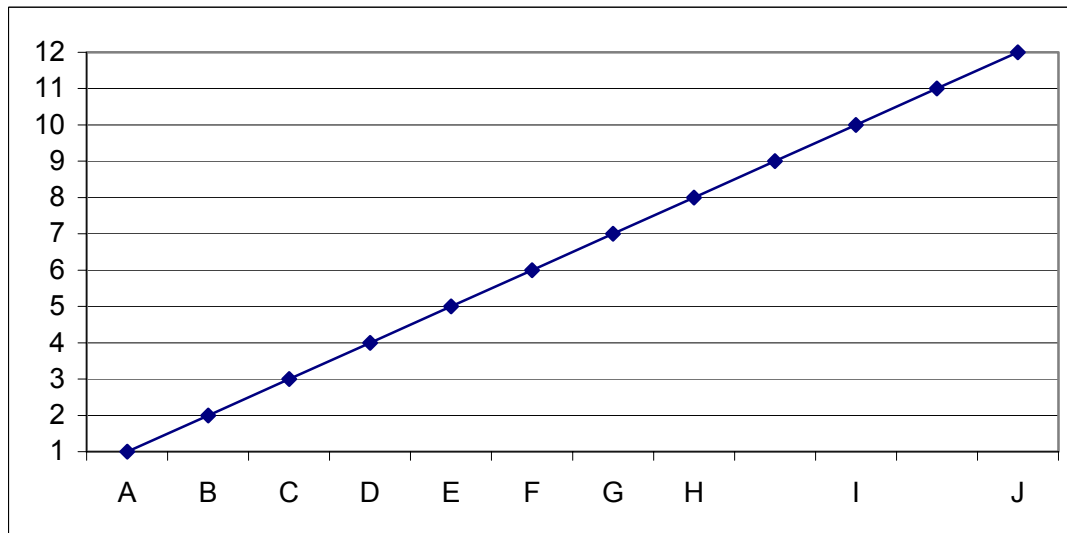
Design for Performance Standards

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 Association¹ raised two pertinent questions policymakers should consider for the design of performance standards:

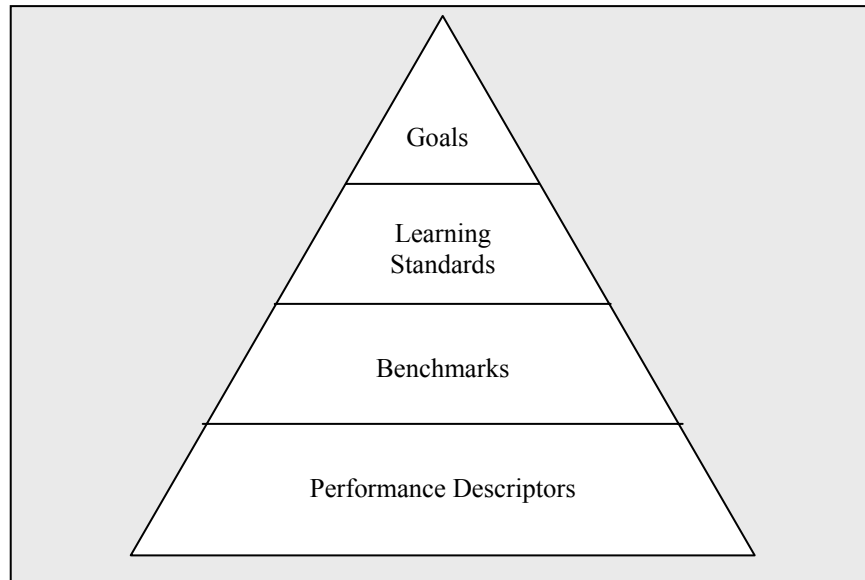
- Do the performance standards indicate the levels of performance students should attain, descriptions of performance at each level, and rules that enable educators to determine whether students have reached a given level?
- Do the performance standards include a range of work . . . to show that students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



¹ 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.²

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

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

assessment tasks: descriptors of what students 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 21st 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.



Illinois State Goal 28

Goal 28: Use the target language 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

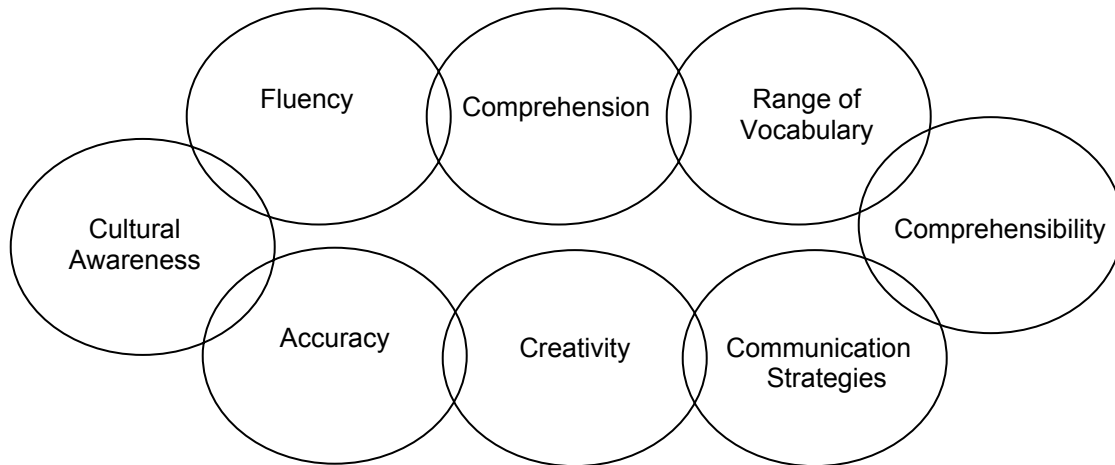
The achievement levels for performance of Illinois students of foreign languages will depend upon several variables related to the individual language learner’s length and sequence of study, age, ability, class size, and motivation. The performance descriptors indicate how students can attain competency 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			ADVANCED High	

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 10th grade student in the same stage. Consideration has been given that the student beginning at Stage A might be in Grade 1, or possibly Grade 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 21st 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.