

To: The Members of the South Dakota Board of Education  
800 Governor's Drive  
Pierre, South Dakota 57501  
April 7, 2011

From: Diane Van Den Oever on behalf of the South Dakota World  
Languages Association

Re: The Adoption of the National Foreign Language Learning Standards  
as the South Dakota Foreign Language Learning Standards.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I write to you today on behalf of the South Dakota World Languages Association to express our strong support for the adoption of the National Foreign Language Learning Standards as our own South Dakota Foreign Language Learning Standards. At our annual meeting for each of the last three years, members in attendance have voiced their unanimous support for aligning the teaching of foreign languages in our state with these National Standards. Our Foreign Language liaison in Pierre, Marta Stirling, tells us that now is a most propitious time to make this change, as K-12 Foreign Languages will be in a Professional Development and revision cycle during the 2011-12 school year.

The National Standards (NFLLS), which developed as a part of the Goals 2000 Initiative through the combined efforts of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the American Associations of Teachers of French, German, and Spanish and Portuguese, are now the "gold standard" for learning world languages in the United States. The broad aim of the 5 goals (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) is to produce students who are both linguistically and culturally well-equipped to interact with speakers of other languages.

Because the National Standards are so widely accepted in the United States, there are many resources available to help districts and teachers

align instruction with goals using best instructional practices. This is important because the NFLLS do not define any district's curriculum – rather, their purpose is provide instructional “targets” that will lead to the development of linguistic skills grounded in intercultural awareness.

Working in cooperation with Marta Stirling, the SDWLA is happy to provide assistance in making professional development opportunities available as districts and individual teachers begin the energizing task of revisiting their World Languages Curriculum. Curricular revision will help to ensure that South Dakota students are experiencing instruction that leads toward the attainment of NFLLS goals. This alignment can transform instruction – as a focus on these goals leads away from traditional pencil/paper assessment and toward other types of assessment that show us **what students can “do” with the language to accomplish real world tasks.** Students becoming aware of how what they “do with the language” grows over time is an important motivating factor.

Our hope is that students will perceive learning a second language as an opportunity to interact with other peoples of the world through work and travel as well as speakers of other languages within the United States. Language learning is a long journey that is best started early in life so that the skill becomes automatic and natural over time. Students who experience instruction based on National Standards are more likely to be motivated to persist in learning to achieve higher levels of proficiency and to become lifelong language learners.

Thank you for considering the proposed change. Please don't hesitate to call on the South Dakota World Languages Association for support in promoting instruction based on National Foreign Language Learning Standards.

Sincerely,

Diane Van Den Oever  
President of the South Dakota World Languages Association  
Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Sioux Falls