

**Target
Language
Usage**

**Interpersonal
Communication**

**Functional
Goals and
Objectives**

***Delaware Core Practices for
World Language Proficiency***

**Authentic
Cultural
Texts**

**Grammar
in Context**

**Meaningful
Feedback**

Delaware Core Practices for World Language Proficiency

Purpose

The ***Delaware Core Practices for World Language Proficiency*** describes essential core practices for world language educators at all levels to employ in order to advance their learners' target-language proficiency. As opposed to *best practices*, which are recommendations for "what works" based on experience, *core practices* are actions "that are essential for beginning teachers to understand, take responsibility for, and be prepared to carry out in order to enact their core instructional responsibilities" (Ball and Forzani, 2009, p. 504). The core instructional responsibility of Delaware world language teachers is to help their learners advance their target-language proficiency by creating an environment of culturally relevant, meaningful language input, intake and output.

The ***Delaware Core Practices for World Language Proficiency*** are adapted from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)'s *Six Core Practices* that reflect the current research and thinking of world language experts across the United States. These six core practices include using the target language at least 90% of the time by both teachers and students in the classroom, designing learning experiences with functional language usage in mind, focusing on interpersonal communication, using authentic cultural texts to provide culturally appropriate input, teaching grammar in context and as a concept, and providing meaningful feedback to learners.

Acknowledgments

This document was created and reviewed by the following individuals:

Dr. Gregory Fulkerson

Director, Language Acquisition, Delaware Department of Education

Dr. Estefania Becker

Board Chair, Delaware World Language Teacher Leader Network, Cape Henlopen School District

Bronwen DuHadaway

Board Chair-Elect, Delaware World Language Teacher Leader Network, Brandywine School District

Gina Travalini-Rubini

President, Delaware Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (DECTFL), Red Clay School District

Lea Wainwright

World Language Supervisor, Appoquinimink School District

CORE PRACTICE 1

Use the target language as the vehicle and content of instruction

Target Language Usage

In a proficiency-focused classroom, both students and teachers speak, listen, read, write, view, and create in the target language **90% or more** during classroom time. Therefore, language learning is contingent upon teachers using comprehensible input, creating meaningful contexts, and facilitating purposeful interactions. When the target language abounds, checking for comprehension is also critical to ensure that students are understanding what is going on. Dr. Eileen Glisan's research in her book *Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language*

Instruction reminds us to avoid translating into English as a way to check for understanding.



[Facilitate Target Language Use](#)

CORE PRACTICE 2

Design and facilitate a variety of interpersonal communication tasks

Interpersonal communication is at the heart of the proficiency-focused world language classroom as this mode of communication involves both interpretive listening as well as presentational speaking. Teachers must design and carry out interpersonal communication tasks for pairs, small groups, and whole-class instruction. Interpersonal tasks require a conversation partner. They require learners to listen to one another, to negotiate and interpret meaning and then to ultimately arrive at an understanding.

Interpersonal Communication

Tasks must focus on meaningful, real-world outcomes and provide follow-up. Successful tasks activate learners' prior knowledge in some way. Teachers must provide assistance, scaffolding and monitoring for students as they complete interpersonal tasks. Novice-level language learners benefit from lots of interpersonal modeling. Teachers should employ the gradual release modeling cycle in which the teacher shows the interaction with a video of native speakers, models it with one or more students, then has two students model before asking students to work in pairs or small groups.



[ACTFL Guiding Principle – Design Communicative Tasks](#)

CORE PRACTICE 3

Design units, lessons, and learning tasks with functional goals and objectives

Each level of learning (unit, lesson and individual learning tasks) should focus on the functional use of the language. This is best accomplished by applying backward design theory when planning. Begin by identifying the desired results in terms of the functional language use (e.g., I Can statements). Base goals and objectives on the *Delaware World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning*, the state proficiency targets and the *Delaware Recommended Framework for Designing Standards-Based and Proficiency-Focused World Language Curriculum*.

Functional Goals and Objectives

Communicative objectives must reflect all three modes of communication—interpretive, interpersonal and presentational. Specify clearly the language needed to meet and support the communicative objective and determine what evidence will be sufficient to demonstrate students having met the goals or objectives. Then, design learning experiences and tasks that help students build the language skills they need to reach the planned goals and objectives.

Having clearly stated functional learning targets help students understand what they are learning and why they are learning something. This ultimately helps them become more autonomous in their language learning by enabling them to self-monitor and assess their own progress towards learning goals.



[Plan with Backward Design](#)

CORE PRACTICE 4

Use authentic cultural texts of various kinds with appropriate scaffolding

Authentic Cultural Texts

In a proficiency-focused classroom, input is just as important, or arguably more important, than output. How do language learners acquire new language in appropriate cultural contexts? Teachers should design and facilitate interactive reading, listening and viewing comprehension tasks using authentic cultural texts of various kinds with appropriate scaffolding and follow-up tasks that promote interpretation.

The use of authentic cultural texts allows for “a meaningful exposure to language and culture and often play ... the role of sociocultural mediators in the formal context of the [world] language classroom” (Petrus and Bocos, “Developing students’ intercultural communicative competence through authentic resources. A perspective on a pre-service teacher training program,” *Communication and Public Relations*, 89-96). Authentic cultural texts lay the foundation for developing intercultural competence.



[Reading and Listening Tasks with Authentic Cultural Texts](#)

CORE PRACTICE 5

Teach grammar in context and in functional chunks

Grammar in Context

If the focus is on functional language usage, it is imperative to understand the various inductive and deductive approaches to grammar instruction and how to select one over the other to promote growth in linguistic accuracy while not hindering general language development. Language acquisition research shows us that students focus on meaning well before form. This fact implies that grammar becomes more meaningful to students when it is learned in context within the frame of functional language goals and objectives.

Many proficiency-focused language educators employ a story-based, dialogic approach to teaching grammar that focuses on both form and meaning. “Research on human memory tells us that language acquisition is dependent upon two kinds of long-term memory: procedural and declarative. Procedural memory shows what a learner acquires naturally with automatic processing, through repetition and practice, as evidenced by the learning of one’s native language. Declarative memory is recollection of facts and information that a learner has acquired and stored explicitly. In order to be most effective, it is important that language development is stored in both memory systems; learners should be expected to learn grammar implicitly through target language use and explicitly through the discovery of grammatical rules through use in meaningful examples” (ACTFL, <https://www.actfl.org/guiding-principles/teach-grammar-concepts-meaningful-contexts-language-learning>).



[Teach Grammar as a Concept and in Context](https://www.actfl.org/guiding-principles/teach-grammar-concepts-meaningful-contexts-language-learning)

CORE PRACTICE 6
Provide appropriate feedback in speech and writing
on various learning tasks

One of the greatest motivators to continue learning and improving language skills is the timely and constructive feedback that learners receive. Oral corrective feedback in speech or writing elicits output beyond a simple yes or no response. Reformulations can add input as oral corrective feedback. The use of proficiency-oriented, performance-based rubrics help learners understand how they are currently performing with their language and also helps them see what they need to do to advance their performance. These types of rubrics should help learners focus on language usage, function and structure, comprehensibility or comprehension, as well as language control or accuracy.

**Meaningful
Feedback**

Adapted from ACTFL’s Six Core Practices, 2015 and ACTFL’s Guiding Principles 2022