

Appendix 1.2 Best Practices for World Language Instruction
Pittsburgh Public Schools

7 Best Practices for World Language Instruction



- I. **The classroom learning environment promotes world languages learning. (Page 2)**
- II. **Students have frequent opportunities to communicate in the world language. (Page 3)**
- III. **Authentic cultural information is infused into world languages instruction. (Page 4)**
- IV. **Vocabulary, grammar, and skills are taught in meaningful contexts. (Pages 5-6)**
- V. **Multiple forms of assessments are used. (Page 7)**
- VI. **The professional expertise of the teacher is continually maintained and improved. (Page 8)**
- VII. **Effective classroom management techniques are used. (Page 9)**

Please note: **It is not expected that teachers incorporate all of the items in this document all of the time.** As professionals, teachers will make decisions about which activities, strategies, and techniques to use and when, how, and how often to use them. This list of Best Practices is updated periodically to reflect the results of new research in the field.

Revised
Spring, 2004

WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:	THE TEACHER SHOULD:
1. All students are engaged in the learning activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show enthusiasm for and an interest in the students and what he/she is teaching. • provide clear directions, vivid examples, and interesting practice activities to help students attain the objective of the lesson. Prepare at least 3-5 activities per class at the lower levels. • give students praise and encouragement using verbal and non-verbal cues (smiles, head-nodding, interested facial expressions, etc.). • know his/her students. Plan personalized activities (personal bingo, personal interviews, and tasks that incorporate students' interests and talents). • vary activities (signaling, action chains, pair and group activities, whole group activities). • hold students accountable for their work and behavior.
2. Students appear confident and willing to participate and use the target language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques at all levels to introduce new material. • provide practice of new material using choral repetition, small group, or pair work before requiring individual responses or presentations to the whole class. • introduce and practice new material in the context of older familiar vocabulary and grammar. • make an earnest effort to understand students' communicative efforts and respond to the message rather than error correction (which may be dealt with later during grammar practice).
3. Accommodations are made depending on students' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjust seat assignments, provide access to support materials, and organize students in flexible groups. • adapt learning task in terms of size/depth, time, input, difficulty, output, level of support, degree of participation, alternative goals, substitute curriculum. • incorporate audio/visual materials, kinesthetic activities, music and art projects, and print materials. • use a variety of aids such as tape recorders, computers, TV, and overhead projector. • use differentiated levels of questioning (yes/no, either/or, one word responses, how/why, open ended).
4. Students cooperate with one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide instruction on group process skills (how to work in cooperative learning groups), as needed. • use information-gap activities, role plays, extended scenarios, paired interviews, learning games, jigsaw activities, simulations, and group problem solving activities.
5. Student learning is promoted through the physical environment. 6. The room is an attractive and obvious world language classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • display the world language PPS Standard and Rubric posters and refer to them frequently. • display and enforce basic classroom rules/procedures. • display examples of student work (with rubrics, checklists) • create a "cultural island" with cultural artifacts, posters, flags, music, and other realia. • arrange the room to facilitate student-to-student communication, small and large group activities, learning centers or resource areas (space permitting).
I. Classroom Learning Environment	

WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:	THE TEACHER SHOULD:
<p>7. The teacher uses the second language 80% of most class periods.</p> <p>8. Students demonstrate that they understand the target language by responding appropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the second language for all classroom routines (greetings, opening books, lining up). • use Negotiation of Meaning techniques (i.e., either/or questions, verbal prompts, gestures, visual aids, facial expressions, cognates, comprehension checks, clarification requests, expanding or remodeling one-word utterances, adding information, simplifying vocabulary and syntax, adjusting speed of speech, paraphrasing) to help students understand what was said and to be better able to express themselves. • check for understanding by having students respond with signals, gestures, TPR movements, questions, answers, as appropriate (it is not enough to ask “Do you understand?”).
<p>9. Students practice oral communication in pairs or small groups at least 3-10 minutes most class periods.</p> <p>10. Students express their own thoughts and opinions orally and in writing in the target language.</p> <p>11. Students write creatively and with increased complexity as their proficiency increases.</p> <p>12. Students use the language to obtain information from sources beyond the classroom on a range of topics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use whole group and small-group techniques (i.e., information gap, jigsaw, role-play, PPS SIT⇒COMMS, and brainstorming), and at least 2 presentations to the class per year. • reply to a student’s message, not form, during communicative exchanges (don’t correct the grammar at this time). • teach functional language that students will want to use with one another and must use to function in class (ex. “What are you doing tonight?” or “I need a pencil.”). • provide regular opportunities for students to express personal meanings in spontaneous interactions with each other, in prepared presentations to the class, and in written work. • encourage real conversations about topics of interest (with books closed, no worksheets). • provide opportunities for students to use the target language to make connections to topics from other subject areas orally and in writing. • distinguish between prepared, memorized speech/dialogs (Presentational Mode) and spontaneous, on-demand role plays/communication (Interpersonal Mode) that is required at the Partially Proficient and Proficient Level and above. Use Sit⇒COMMS to help students go from the Novice to the Proficient Level. Cue students to “expand” their utterances. Ask more open-ended questions. • facilitate written exchanges with pen pals or e-pals. • require communication with exchange students, immigrants in the community, international visitors, and exchange teachers who are brought in to speak with members of the class, individually and as a group. • assist students in using the Internet (safely) to research and write letters to embassies, companies, agencies, and/or famous individuals in the target language.
II. Communicate in the Target Language	

<i>WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:</i>	<i>THE TEACHER SHOULD:</i>
<p>13. Culture is embedded in activities and instructional materials.</p> <p>14. Culture is infused throughout the week-not just something taught (in English) on Fridays.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporate information on products, practices, and perspectives related to daily life, literature, history, art, music and science. • use culturally authentic visual aids, music, videos and realia to preview, practice and produce linguistic concepts and skills (authentic items are items actually used in the target country). • present new vocabulary in a cultural context. • use authentic readings (those prepared for native speakers: newspaper/magazine articles, literary pieces, etc.) with tasks appropriate for the given linguistic level of students. • design cultural projects/tasks so that students must use the target language to complete the task. Class time is too precious to sacrifice target language practice. (For example: with an art project, limit the number of supplies and require students to use the target language to ask one another for what they need.)
<p>15. Students demonstrate interest in the target culture through their questions, research, portfolio projects, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highlight and stress cultural similarities before presenting cultural differences. • include comparisons of basic human needs, wants, modes of cultural expression, and perceptions of two or more cultures. • design activities that demonstrate the effects of weather, history and geography on culture. • contrast differences in cultures in terms of products, practices, and perceptions. • include native speakers, authentic materials, up-to-date illustrated magazines, videos, music, storybooks, the Internet and maps as appropriate in daily lessons. • provide opportunities for students to compare and contrast cultural items with their personal cultural background.
<p>16. Culture is presented without promoting cultural stereotypes and biases.</p> <p>17. Students recognize stereotyping and biases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the validity of the lazy siesta-taking Mexican in a sombrero; the wine-drinking, snobbish, Frenchman; the beer-drinking German in leather pants, and other stereotypes. • assign critical thinking activities that focus on advertisements in the mass media that perpetuate stereotyping and biases. • Help students to understand that aspects of culture may differ from person-to-person and region-to-region within a country, or from country-to-country even though the language may be the same.
III. Culture	

<i>WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:</i>	<i>THE TEACHER SHOULD:</i>
18. New vocabulary is introduced and practiced in a context –not in meaningless lists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach vocabulary—not just assign it for homework. • present new vocabulary in simple sentences, introducing 3-7 items at a time. • practice new vocabulary using: signaling, yes/no questions, either/or questions, naming questions, word chains, games, categorizing, opposites, rhymes, rhythms, personalizing, mnemonic devices, familiar stories, dialogues, tongue twisters and songs (not “What is this?” “This is a ...!” over and over again). • use prompts, cues and visuals to facilitate comprehension. • offer frequent short vocabulary assignments and quizzes so that students do not fall behind.
19. New items are embedded in previously learned material. 20. Visual representations are used to help students understand new items. 21. Translation to English is used rarely/sparingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage students in pre-listening activities using visuals, and graphic organizers. • use interesting contexts: familiar stories, songs, Total Physical Response (TPR), dialogs, current news articles, obvious advertisements, videos, familiar rhymes, poems, etc. to facilitate comprehension. • use storytelling techniques (redundancy, familiar plots, chiming in, gestures and mime, visuals). • use frequent comprehension checks: signaling (thumbs up/down), Total Physical Response (TPR) commands, and asking clarifying questions in the target language.
22. Language contexts increase in complexity from lesson to lesson, year to year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use yes/no, either/or, naming, and identification questions when introducing material. • encourage early speaking/writing activities that are based on rhymes, familiar stories, songs, raps, dialogs, personal information, games, sequencing activities and/or categorizing activities. • ask questions and assign tasks that range from specific to open ended. • encourage students to go from word level to sentence level or from sentence to paragraph level and extended discourse, as appropriate. • provide practice using PPS SIT⇒COMMS to promote progression through proficiency levels. • use personalized questions, sentence builders, storytelling, surveys/polls, paired interviews, information-gap tasks, group problem-solving, situations with complications and/ or pen pals, e-pals.
23. Distinctions are made between grammar practice and communicative practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify meaning during communicative practice using Negotiation of Meaning techniques (see 7-8 above)—not by correcting grammar errors (which tends to end the desire to communicate). Make a mental note of frequent errors for later grammar practice. • correct grammar errors during grammar practice when the attention is on form.
IV. Vocabulary, Skills, and Grammar in Context (Continued on next page)	

<p>24. Grammar is presented in a way that encourages students to identify and/or construct the rule.</p> <p>25. Grammar practice is meaningful (not drills where one sentence has no relation to the next).</p> <p>26. The major focus of the class is on communication (meaning), not grammar.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separate communicative and grammatical practice. • use familiar vocabulary to teach and practice new grammar rules. • choose one of the following teaching strategies based on the complexity of the grammatical concept and the ability level of students: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give multiple examples in the target language so that students can clearly identify the underlying grammatical rule (inductive approach)—preferred approach. 2. Help students construct their understanding of the grammatical principle using coaching and questioning strategies (guided inductive approach)—preferred approach. 3. Present a clear, logical, and correct explanation of the grammatical principle (in English when necessary) and provide examples (deductive explanation) –use this as last resort. • give clear demonstrations of how a grammatical principle is used in the everyday world (context). • provide multiple opportunities for the practice of high frequency grammar principles (integrating skills, variety of contexts). • give constructive feedback concerning grammatical accuracy without overcorrecting. • respond to students’ questions about the grammar rules without needless elaboration, complications, and extraneous detail.
<p>27. Students read the target language and demonstrate an understanding of what they read.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide practice in sound/symbol correspondence, rhyming words and syllabication. • use 5 stage approach as needed: pre-teaching/ preparation stage, skimming/scanning stage, decoding/intensive reading stage, comprehension stage, transferable/integrating skills stage. • use explicit strategies: SQ3R technique (survey , question, read, recite, review), KWL (what the student knows, wants to know, and has learned), utilizing context to figure out meaning, previewing material, looking for clues, rereading. • challenge students to express their own thoughts and think critically (about what they have read) orally and in writing. • provide practice in finding specific information, identifying main ideas and supporting details, and identifying material that seeks to persuade. • provide interesting articles, magazines, books to encourage reading for enjoyment.
<p>28. Students are guided through the processes involved in writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • start with simple techniques such as labeling, language experience chart activities, writing sentences or short paragraphs based on guided questions and simple dictations. • lead students through stages of writing: pre-writing (notes, brainstorming, information gathering); composing the draft (outline); revising (peer editing); check spelling; and formatting. • use a variety of feedback strategies (specific criteria to global qualities).
<p>29. The teacher reviews, refines, clarifies, and expands at “teachable” moments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize that even the most well-conceived grammar explanation may not be immediately received and applied by students—so revisit, reinforce, and re-teach grammar concepts in different contexts at increasingly higher levels.

IV. Vocabulary, Skills, and Grammar in Context.

WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:	THE TEACHER SHOULD:
30. Students are assessed in: oral and written <u>Communication</u> (Interpersonal, Presentational, and Interpretative), <u>Connections</u> to standards in other content areas, and <u>Culture</u> (Practices, Perspectives, and Products).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • global/holistic contextualized assessments are used such as TPR, oral interviews, role plays, classroom presentations (two per year minimum), and writing for different purposes in addition to traditional discrete-point test devices such as multiple choice or fill in the blank.
31. Assessment data is used to inform instruction (quizzes, tests, portfolios, progress on four Proficiency Checklists, PPS ORALS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use test data to modify daily lesson plans as needed. • relate student responses to the Standard Poster and Rubric Poster and encourage responses at a higher level. Emphasize progression as shown on the four Proficiency Checklists. • use supplementary materials to re-teach in different ways as needed. • put students in flexible groupings depending on need. • provide practice using Sit⇒Comms with every topic/chapter.
32. Tests include real-life situations/contexts from the target countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include authentic cartoons, newspaper articles, realia (menus, bills, receipts, and train or school schedules), role-plays, and situational tasks in test items.
33. Test questions increase in complexity (requiring answers that go from word, to sentence, to paragraph levels; from present to past and future time; and from simple to complex topics) yet provide accommodations as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include discrete point and open ended questions (answers are: yes/no, true/false, multiple choice; quotable directly from text; found in text but cannot be quoted directly; require inference; and require evaluation or judgment to be made). • replace traditional types of assessments (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, etc.) with integrated performance assessments and projects as students become more proficient. • make accommodations as needed, (assign same general task but at different levels of difficulty, modify the time to respond and/or length of response required, provide a word bank and/or study guide, have more open ended tasks to let the student demonstrate what he/she can do, etc.)
34. Students are held responsible for their oral and written work. 35. Student portfolios contain a rich array of student work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the four PPS Proficiency Checklists to note progress on oral proficiency. • have students correct their own errors and make revisions in the writing process. • use peer editing techniques as a part of the writing process. • expect students to reflect on their work and relate the work to the standards and rubrics. • vary assignments to be included in the portfolio: student designed videos, reports, audio excerpts of informal and formal student interviews, taped role-plays, drafts and final versions of written work, photographs with descriptions of projects, Power Point presentations.
36. Overall results on PPS ORALS improve 3% per year or more at each benchmark level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the PPS tools to better prepare students (4 Proficiency Checklists, Standard Poster, Rubric Poster, PPS ORALS Practice Test, PPS Online Practice Activities, results of PPS ORALS).

V. Assessment

WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:	THE TEACHER SHOULD:
<p>37. The teacher participates in formal and informal professional development opportunities in the areas of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -personal communicative practice, -cultural knowledge, -current teaching methodologies, -cognitive development of students <p>as evidenced through use of new knowledge, ACT 48 hours, sharing of new information with colleagues, making presentations to others, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend relevant conferences, workshops, seminars and/or classes. • communicate with native speakers on a regular basis (Pittsburgh Council for International Visitors, University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Latin American Studies, heritage language/cultural organizations). • be a member and participate in foreign language professional organizations, (PSMLA, AFLA, AATG, AATSP, AATF), cultural organizations (singing societies, heritage groups). • read/contribute to journals such as <i>The PA Language Forum</i>, <i>Foreign Language Annals</i>, <i>Modern Language Journal</i>. • read professional books, attend travelogues, visit international exhibits or plays. • conduct workshop sessions and/or present at conferences. • mentor student teachers or new teachers. • engage in personal reflections, experimentation, and a willingness to take risks in trying new ideas, then share the results with colleagues. • travel to other countries and participate in home-stays, seminars, work experiences.
<p>38. The teacher uses technology as a tool for instruction, research, and global communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • travel via the Internet to: stay up-to-date on current events, cultural phenomena and political tendencies of the target language culture(s), and current teaching trends; network with colleagues; maintain and improve language skills; identify employment opportunities for students;
<p>39. The teacher uses newly acquired, research-proven methods, techniques, strategies, activities etc. to enhance instruction and help students attain standards.</p> <p>40. The teacher is at ease communicating in the target language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try-out new techniques, strategies, etc. and reflect on the results. Don’t give up just because it doesn’t work the first time. There is often a learning curve that dips before the benefits become evident. • use TIP or ESEP time, professional development periods, the PPS world language teacher zz lists (listservs), and/or the Internet to share ideas with colleagues, problem solve, and maintain and improve fluency in the target language.
<p>VI. Professional Expertise</p>	

<i>WHAT THE OBSERVER SHOULD SEE AND HEAR:</i>	<i>THE TEACHER SHOULD:</i>
41. Classroom activities are engaging, interesting, and at the correct level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know his/her students and their interests and use that knowledge to plan for instruction. • plan the “how” as well as the “what” to teach for daily lesson plans. • plan at least 4-5 activities per class (particularly at the lower levels) to help students meet the objective. • vary the 4-5 activities (whole group, pair work, Q and A, presentation, etc.). • make sure the activities are at the correct level of difficulty (too easy is boring, too difficult is frustrating)—different levels of difficulty may be needed within a class (use flexible grouping). • provide guided, whole-class practice before asking students to do something individually. • make lessons interesting (use humor, songs, raps, games, personalized tasks, interesting topics, etc.) • show enthusiasm for the activity, avoid a monotone voice. • offer a carrot for more difficult/intense work (if we can work through this, we will have time for...). • monitor the learning and adjust the teaching as needed throughout each class period. • make note of what works/what doesn’t and figure out why—talk to colleagues.
42. There are clear rules and consistent enforcement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • post no more than 4-5 rules he/she is willing and able to enforce. • explain the progression of consequences for infractions (reminder, warning, call home, etc.). • be consistent and fair with the rules and consequences.
43. The teacher “disciplines with dignity”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a repertoire of responses: use humor or the unexpected, give “the look”, use proximity (move near the student), call on the student to redirect attention back to the task, speak privately to the student before or after class, preface “the talk” with a compliment and an expression of caring or concern (“You were doing so well but now I am worried about you. What is going on?”), etc. • avoid sarcasm—it has no place in the classroom. • provide positive reinforcement for good behavior (a verbal compliment-without embarrassing the student, an award or special activity, a good call home, etc.). • raise and lower students’ level of concern as needed. (For example, “There will be a quiz on this tomorrow.” or “Don’t worry, we will practice this again before the test.”)
44. Transitions from one activity to the next are smooth, not disruptive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan transitions from one activity to the next and have all materials set out and ready to go. • give clear directions, provide exemplary models, check for understanding (“please tell the class what the next steps are in your own words”) • establish and stick to instructional routines so that students will know what to expect and what to do. • have procedures in place for routine tasks (taking roll, passing out paper or books, etc.) that are unobtrusive and allow the activities to flow from one to the next. Provide a procedure and time for clean-up and a conclusion.

VII. Effective Classroom Management



LEARNING WALK—WORLD LANGUAGE CHECKLIST

Classroom Environment	All students are engaged in the learning activities (3-5 activities per class at the Novice Level*).	
	Students appear confident and willing to take risks to participate and use the target** language.	
	Accommodations are made depending on students' needs (seating, flexible grouping, etc.).	
	Students cooperate with one another during pair or group activities and learning games.	
	Student learning is promoted through the physical environment (including PPS Standard and Rubric posters, posted classroom rules, seating for student-to-student communication, learning centers or resource centers, etc., space permitting).	
	The room is an attractive and obvious world language classroom.	
Accountable Talk	The teacher speaks the target language 80% of most class periods. All routine directions/questions are in the target language (greetings, open your book to page..., what is today's date? Raise your hand!, etc.)	
	Students demonstrate that they understand the target language (teacher or other students) by responding appropriately.	
	Students practice oral communication in pairs or small groups at least 3-10 minutes most class periods.	
	Students name, list, sing, and recite memorized phrases/short sentences (Novice Level).	
	Students begin to express their own thoughts and opinions (not just memorized sentences), ask questions, and give directions in the target language (Novice High level and above).	
	Students use the target language to obtain information on a range of topics (Intermediate Level and above).	
	Students begin to speak in paragraph-length discourse; in present, past, and future time; on a wide range topics in the target language (Intermediate High level)	
Academic Rigor	The major focus of the class is on communication (meaning), <u>not</u> grammar.	
	Visual representations (posters, transparencies, mime) are used to help students understand new items (and to stay in the target language).	
	Translation to English is used sparingly/rarely.	
	When grammar is presented, students are encouraged (assisted) to identify and/or construct the rule (guided induction) and are given multiple opportunities to practice applying the rule.	
	Distinctions are made between grammar practice (where the focus is on form) and communicative practice (where the focus is on meaning). During communicative practice, the teacher keeps the conversation going, making a mental note of key grammatical errors for a later grammar lesson.	

	Students listen to native speakers and read authentic texts (of increasing length and complexity) with comprehension, as demonstrated by appropriate responses (Novice level and above).	
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Reading & Writing	Students label items, list, and read/write short simple sentences (at the Novice level).	
	Students are guided through the processes involved in creative writing (pre-writing, draft, editing, formatting) (Intermediate level or above).	
	Students write creatively and with increasing complexity (Novice High level and above).	
	Students read the target language and demonstrate an understanding of what they read as appropriate to their proficiency level.	

* for a description of levels, please see the **rubric** "PPS Speaking Rubric:

****Target languages:** French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish

For a more detailed description of the above items, see the **PPS 7 Best Practices for World Languages Instruction** document and **4 Proficiency Checklists**.

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