

A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate and World Language

A [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate](#) (PoG) was collaboratively developed to be used as a tool for reviewing and refining local proficiency-based graduation requirements, as well as a guide for making instructional decisions. The PoG specifies the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills and abilities that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation considering six attributes: learner agency, global citizenship, academic proficiency, communication, critical thinking, and well-being. Additionally, each trait includes key descriptors and performance indicators.

World language education programs should provide students with valuable learning experiences that support the development of PoG skills and abilities. The following diagram highlights specific terms that link to the six attributes of the Vermont Portrait of a Graduate.



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Learner Agency

Engaged • Reflective • Life-long Learner

Learning a non-native language allows the brain to be introduced to new, intricate systems of rules and structures. Struggling with this complexity enables learners to develop [life-long skills](#) such as higher-order reasoning, understanding perspective, critical thinking, and problem-solving which can enhance the learner's ability to successfully contribute to social and civic situations over a lifetime. These life-long skills carry over into other academic areas as well as into authentic experiences. For example, learners become keenly aware of meaning and nuances when they communicate in a language whose structure and cultural underpinnings may differ from their first language.

Global Citizenship

Culturally Aware • Collaborative • Empathetic

Learning a second language allows learners to expand their world view, as well as to limit the barriers between cultures and individuals that may present themselves differently from that of the learner(s). The eradication of barriers can limit both fear and mistrust and instill appreciation, understanding, and respect for others. World language study tends to help dissolve misconceptions and can create feelings of empathy for native speakers of different languages and opens the door to collaboration and eases opportunities for relationship building.

Academic Proficiency

Creative • Applier of Learning

“Bilingualism has been associated with improved metalinguistic awareness (the ability to recognize language as a system that can be manipulated and explored), as well as with better memory, visual-spatial skills, and even creativity. Furthermore, beyond these cognitive and neurological advantages, there are also valuable social benefits that come from being bilingual, among them, the ability to explore a culture through its native tongue or talk to someone with whom you might otherwise never be able to communicate. The cognitive, neural, and social advantages observed in bilingual people highlight the need to consider how bilingualism shapes the activity and the architecture of the brain, and ultimately how language is represented in the human mind, especially since the majority of speakers in the world experience life through more than one language” [The Cognitive Benefits of Being Bilingual.](#)

Communication

Interactor • Interpreter • Presenter

World language learners communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes. Learners interact and

negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions. Learners of multiple languages also acquire skills to understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics. World language learners develop the abilities to present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers. [ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages](#).

Critical Thinking

Problem Solver • Inquisitive

World language learning allows individuals to be effective problem-solvers, closer to achieving solutions to pressing social problems because a broader perspective brings an increased awareness of a wider array of options. Evidence from [recent studies](#) indicates that the multilinguistic brain is better able to deal with ambiguities and resolve conflicts, as the brain is more experienced at divergent thinking. Learners use this expanded thinking to investigate, explain and reflect as they make connections between what they know through a monolingual lens, and how their learning expands through cultural understanding and world language communication skills.

Well-being

Bias-aware • Tolerant

Learning a new language allows the learner to express respect for cultural norms and practices that may differ from those that the learner is accustomed to. Exploring other cultures helps to alleviate avoidance of the unknown as well as to help eradicate misinformation and misunderstandings. Gaining diverse perspectives through world language learning enables the learner to be tolerant of others and identify bias within resources, the community, the nation, and the world.

Resources

[American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages \(ACTFL\)](#) The national ACTFL site provides comprehensive support for world language teachers, including information regarding teacher workshops and mentoring, assessments and standards, as well as [Resources that Address Issues of Race, Diversity, and Social Justice](#).

Additional resources can be found on the ACTFL site, including:

- [Benefits of Language Learning](#) - This article speaks to the ‘how’ and ‘why’ second language learning is important; resources highlighting the research are provided.
- [Guiding Principles for Language Learning](#) - The Guiding Principles identify what is effective in language learning and provide guidance to educators and learners.

- [Standards Readiness Standards for Language Learning](#) - The five “C” goal areas (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) stress the application of learning a language beyond the instructional setting. The goal is to prepare learners to apply the skills and understandings measured by the Standards, to bring global competence to their future careers and experiences.

[How a Second Language Can Boost the Brain](#) - This article speaks to how the brain benefits from being multilingual, both from an early age and into adulthood.

[The Benefits of Multilingualism to the Personal and Professional Development of Residents of the US](#) - New research is highlighted regarding how “multilingualism has changed our understanding of the consequences of learning and using two or more languages for cognition, for the brain, and for success and well-being across the entire lifespan.”