

Wednesday, May 31, 2017.

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BC Ministry of Education
Victoria, BC
V8W 9H1

Re: Graduation requirement for inclusion of Language 11 course credit

On behalf of the BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages (BCATML), I am writing to ask that the Ministry of Education examine its graduation requirements to include a Language 11 course credit in order to receive a BC Dogwood Diploma.

The current Language Education Policy requires the study of a second language for Grades 5 to 8. The rationale of all nine BC language curricula, states clearly that acquiring a new language opens doors to a world of new experiences. Recent research states that as students study a new language, they develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures, beliefs, and ways of life, while also developing a deeper understanding of their own culture and personal identity. When students are exposed to another culture through its language, they begin to understand the role that language plays in making connections with others. Through language learning, students develop new ways of thinking and communicating with others, while gaining a new perspective on their own lived experiences and the world around them.

Acquiring an additional language not only challenges the mind, it also teaches understanding, encourages patience, and fosters open-mindedness. It is a well-known fact that knowledge of an additional language strengthens first-language skills. The ability to speak two or more languages generally enhances cognitive development, as well as critical and creative-thinking skills. It also enhances a student's confidence as a learner, facilitates the learning of additional languages, and contributes to academic achievement in a variety of subject areas. As their strengths develop, language learners become more flexible and adaptable in new and unforeseen situations. For example, second-language learners tend to be divergent thinkers, with improved memory and attention span. In fact, there are many cognitive, academic, economic, societal, and intercultural benefits to learning a language as outlined by Mary G. O'Brien and her team in the newly published [Executive Summary Literature Review on the Impact of Second-Language Learning](#). Moreover, many countries require secondary students to study two additional languages and this has shown resounding success in the development of the global citizen.

In *Graduation Years Curriculum: Proposed Directions*, it explains that the curriculum for the graduation years will be developed within domains, including one for Languages (p.2). BCATML supports this direction as we feel it fosters the development of the *Educated Citizen* within the redesigned curricula. Specifically, studying languages allows students to be thoughtful and think critically while communicating information from a broad knowledge base. Language students tend to be productive and gain satisfaction through achievement and strive for physical well-being. Acquiring an additional language fosters cooperation and the development of a principled and respectful learner, regardless of differences. Lastly, language students are acutely aware of the rights of the individual and are prepared to exercise the responsibilities of the individual within the family, the community, Canada and the world.

The redesigned second languages curricula for British Columbia capture these qualities and the concept of the *Educated Citizen* both implicitly and explicitly in the core and curricular competencies. We believe that these qualities need to be encouraged and can only be done so over the continuum of learning beyond the currently mandated Grade 8 year. It is our belief that requiring students to continue studying a second language to the Grade 11 level (and beyond) will develop life-long learners who will benefit immensely from learning an additional language and acquire many skills that will enhance society.

Therefore, the BCATML asks that the Ministry of Education include a Language 11 graduation requirement for high school students in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

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