



Minister of Education, the Honourable Rob Fleming  
British Columbia Ministry of Education  
620 Superior Street  
Victoria, BC V8V 2P8

Wednesday, November 24, 2017.

**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 for all high school graduates.

The current Language Education Policy requires the study of a second language for Grades 5 to 8. In a time of globalization, knowledge of a second language is an essential skill that needs to be in every graduate's toolkit. All nine BC second language curricula have a rationale stating 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 cultural 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. Language learners develop new ways of thinking and communicating with others while gaining a new perspective on their own lived experiences and the world around them.

A number of organizations have recently called upon the provincial government to support second language acquisition to Grade 11. On June 22, 2017, Canadian Parents for French BC Yukon Branch wrote to Ministry representatives Nancy Walt, Jan Unwin, and Linda Beddouche urging the inclusion of a Language 11 course as part of the BC Graduation Requirement. A copy of this letter can be found by visiting [http://www.bcatml.org/uploads/3/9/5/8/39584835/cpf\\_letter\\_on\\_grad\\_reqs\\_22june2017.pdf](http://www.bcatml.org/uploads/3/9/5/8/39584835/cpf_letter_on_grad_reqs_22june2017.pdf). As well, the Standing Committee On Language Articulation – a sub-committee of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer for postsecondary education – wrote your office earlier this month expressing its support for and endorsing a Language 11 course requirement for graduation. The BCATML also wrote to the Ministry in May 2017 lobbying for the inclusion of a Language 11 course requirement. Lastly, the Senate Committee on Official Languages released the report, [Horizon 2018: Toward Stronger Support of French-language Learning in British Columbia](#) on May 31, 2017. This report cites 17 essential recommendations on which the federal government should act in order to meet its obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and under the Official Languages Act. The report recommends that the BC government work with French-language education stakeholders to implement the 17 recommendations, with federal government support. Of particular interest, the Senate's report focuses on the need to address the barriers to accessing French programs in BC and the need for improvements. An expansion of opportunities for language study through to a minimum of Grade 11 would be one of many steps that our provincial government could take to respond to the Senate's urgent request to improve access and quality of French language learning in secondary schools across British Columbia. In so doing, there would be an increased number of bilingual BC graduates equipped with useful global skills.

The development of intercultural competency is increasingly seen as a vital element in both domestic and international education. Language education plays a significant role in helping to prepare our learners to become truly global citizens of tomorrow. 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'Brian 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 2014, the BC Ministry of Education published [Graduation Years Curriculum: Proposed Directions](#) which explains that the curriculum for the graduation years would be developed within domains, including one for Languages (p.2). BCATML supported this direction as we felt it fostered the development of the *Educated Citizen* of the redesigned curricula. Specifically, studying languages allows students to be thoughtful and to 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 curricula for second languages capture these qualities and the concept of the *Educated Citizen* both implicitly and explicitly, especially with 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 the inclusion of a Language 11 course requirement (and beyond) will develop life-long learners who will benefit immensely from learning an additional language and acquire many skills that will enhance society.

Sincerely,

Rome Lavrencic  
BCATML President  
[psac51@bctf.ca](mailto:psac51@bctf.ca)

CC: Diane Tijman, President, CPF BC & Yukon Branch; Nancy McKeraghan, President, CPF National Branch  
CC: Charlotte Jones & Mirabelle Tinio, Co-Presidents, Standing Committee On Language Articulation  
CC: Glen Hansman, President - BCTF; Janice Neden, Assistant Director PSID - BCTF