

DESE World Languages July 2020 Monthly Blast
Happy July World Language educators,

We at the Department hope that this monthly update finds you all healthy and restfully recovering from a school year unlike any other. We understand that next year will present new challenges for students and teachers alike. Because of that, I hope you take your rest and relaxation seriously this summer. As a firm believer that happy teachers make happy students, I hope you are all able to invest in your own happiness and emotional well-being this summer. Please find in this brief monthly blast information regarding:

- Fall Reopening Guidance
 - A statewide collaboration initiative for world language coordinators
 - The Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy including important due dates.
- The Framework revision process

Fall Reopening Guidance

By now, many of you have likely had the opportunity to peruse the Department's initial return-to-school guidance, available for download on DESE's homepage. This guidance is in place to ensure that every student can safely attend a brick-and-mortar school during a global pandemic. Student and faculty safety is of the highest concern. Consequently, the Department is asking schools to make classroom and physical seating arrangements that promote safety. In order to limit the spread of COVID-19, this guidance asks for 3-6 feet of physical distance between students, and perhaps more significantly asks for all students to face the same direction. This safety measure is shown to help control the spread of communicable diseases, but it also creates difficulty in facilitating authentic communication. The Office of Language Acquisition will produce guidance later this summer to address these challenges in the World Language classroom. Two things that are likely to appear in that guidance that you can go ahead and be thinking about are:

1. Transparent masks. These are not the same thing as face shields. They are regular masks with clear plastic windows over the mouth. This will enable students to see your mouth. Ideally teachers and students in World Language classes will have access to these masks. They appear to be readily available for purchase online.
2. Technology and teleconferencing to facilitate interpersonal and presentational communication. Whereas COVID-19 makes face-to-face conversations risky for our students, technology can facilitate conversations in which students can speak to a partner or small groups.

Please look for complete World Language Guidance in the August newsletter. Online webinars will also be available once the guidance is made public.

Third Third Thursday

Beginning in August and continuing on the third Thursday of every third month, the World Language Specialist from the Office of Language Acquisition will host an informal chat with World Language leaders in districts across the state. If you are a world languages leader in your district, please attend this first meeting at 3:30 on August 20th to discuss the Fall reopening and the 2021 Seal of Biliteracy. Register here. One participant per district please.

Seal of Biliteracy

Urgent deadline: SIMS reporting for 2020 graduates who earned the Seal of Biliteracy is due Thursday, July 9. Please ensure that your district's data administrator has the names of all 2020 graduates who earned the Seal and whether they earned the Seal or the Seal with Distinction.

We currently have two important, active surveys regarding the Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Survey was released in June and is due no later than Friday, July 10th. This survey will enable the Department to see what kind of supports are necessary to districts as they implement or consider implementing the Seal. The survey should take 3-5 minutes. The Seal of Biliteracy Data Companion survey is newly released. This survey seeks to collect data about the 2020 Seal of Biliteracy that is not reflected in the SIMS report. There is a spreadsheet upload component of this survey. Due to the type of data this survey collects, it may be a bit more time intensive. This survey is due to the Department by August 31st. Please help us collect this important information by completing these surveys.

Framework Revisions

The current draft of the framework is in the focus group portion of the project. Content advisors with specializations in elementary language instruction, classical languages, heritage languages, American Sign Language, languages that do not use the Latin alphabet, and language instruction for students with disabilities are currently reviewing the draft for inclusivity and impact. We expect the summary of the focus groups in early August, and once we have accounted for the focus groups' recommendations, we intend to be ready to present to the Board in late August. If our Board presentation is successful, you expect a public release of the draft for public comment in late summer/early fall.

Contact Me

Please feel free to reach out to me by email or by phone with any questions regarding World Languages or the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy.

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