World language programming and leadership in K–12 Massachusetts public schools

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The Challenge
How can we make progress in world language education without understanding K–12 programming? How can we lead change without knowing who the K–12 program leaders are and what responsibility they hold? And how can we advocate for inclusion of more students in our programs without knowing who is being excluded?

Abstract
This large-scale study used a survey to collect data on K–12 world language programming in Massachusetts public schools. Building off work by Pufahl and Rhodes (2011), this study focused on world language programs, program types, and languages offered, as well as student exclusion, program leadership, and the Seal of Biliteracy. The study resulted in 188 districts represented in the final data set, which was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results indicate comparable findings to national data in terms of program and language offerings, with shifts in program type. Data further revealed patterns of student exclusion and trends in offering the Seal of Biliteracy. Although programs are most often led by a world language specialist, school principals are more likely responsible for teacher evaluation. Survey data were collected at the beginning of school closures due to COVID-19, capturing a picture of K–12 world language education and a point of comparison for future research.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Increased attention to world language programming in the United States and the need for more bilingual and multilingual speakers has been called for by many organizations (ACTFL, 2019; American Councils for International Education, 2017; Commission on Language Learning, 2016; Wiley et al., 2015). Few large-scale studies have collected data documenting world language education at the K–12 level (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011), however, and researchers have indicated a general “lack of knowledge” about world language education as well as the “difficulty” in collecting data (American Councils for International Education, 2017, p. 35). Little is known about leadership models in K–12 world language education, and unlike many other countries, the United States lacks a national policy for world language education (Brecht, 2007) leading to variability in programming and policies across states and individual school districts (O’Rourke et al., 2016). Furthermore, world language education has been additionally undergoing a “shift” in curricular and programming models, moving away from more traditional, grammar-based instruction towards proficiency-based instruction and thematic curriculum design (Shrum & Glisan, 2016). Widespread adoption of the Seal of Biliteracy (Davin & Heineke, 2017) may also be impacting programming decisions and design, as students are being assessed on proficiency in the language to obtain the Seal upon graduating from high school. The overall limited data, as well as ongoing shifts in the profession, present an opportunity to better understand K–12 world language education. This survey of state programming might serve as a model to other states seeking to track programming and the potential impact of the Seal of Biliteracy.

In this article, we present findings from a large-scale study that attempts to improve understanding of world language instruction and programming at the K–12 level by focusing on the researchers’ home state of Massachusetts. Using a survey designed to capture information world language programming, teacher practices, and student learning outcomes, this article presents the findings on world language programming, addressing the following research questions:

- What does world language programming look like in Massachusetts and which students are being allowed to participate?
- How are world language programs and teachers being led within their school district?
- What is the status of implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy across the state?

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | World language programming

Data on K–12 world language programming in the United States indicates an overall student enrollment of 18.5%–20% nationally (ACTFL, 2010; American Councils for International
Looking across the elementary (K–5), middle (6–8), and high school (9–12) levels, the majority of enrollment in world language education nationally occurs at the high school level, with only 15% of elementary public schools offering world language programming, 58% of public and private schools offering world language programming at the middle school level, and 91% of public and private schools offering world language programming at the high school level (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011, pp. 261–262). Spanish is the most widely and commonly taught language (72.06%) followed by French (14.8%) (ACTFL, 2010, p. 8). In their large-scale study of K–12 world language programming, Pufahl and Rhodes (2011) surveyed elementary schools regarding the type of world language program offered, finding notable differences between public and private schools. Public elementary schools were more likely to offer “exploratory” programs or “immersion” programming, whereas private elementary schools more often offered what they called “focus” language programs, defined as programs in which students “acquire listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills” along with developing cultural understandings (p. 280). Pufahl and Rhodes (2011) also reported a lack of articulation across different program levels, with 50% of elementary schools reporting no articulation with the middle school program (p. 267). In reviewing research into the application of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) to the K–16 educational context, Glisan (2012) notes that implementation of the Standards into teaching practices is still in its “infancy” (p. 522). Although certain programming changes have occurred as a result of or in conjunction with the Standards (the use of authentic texts being one area of note), the “challenge” of shifting teachers away from grammar-driven curricula remains present (Glisan, 2012, p. 518).

Though Massachusetts has a strong and active state world language organization—the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA)—until recently, there was no world language representation in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and no resources or support for world language teachers and programs apart from the Foreign Language Curriculum Framework from 1999 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1999). Collecting data on world language programming proved challenging, and innovative practices in world language teaching and programming were siloed and not overseen in the state. The passage of the Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK) Act in 2017 which included a provision for a state Seal of Biliteracy was the impetus for DESE to hire a world language coordinator and overhaul the state Framework (Sherf et al., 2020).

### 2.2 Student exclusion from world language programming

The “elitist nature of language study” (Glynn & Wassell, 2018) along with pervasive “myths” about world language learning and students with disabilities (Sparks, 2016) results in the common practice of exemption from world language requirements (Wight, 2015). The rationale for keeping students out of world language programming is based on “personal beliefs and preferences” regarding which students can and should learn another language, and lacks grounding in the research (Wight, 2015, p. 41). Sparks (2006) has noted that there is no Foreign Language Learning Disability and provides evidence to counter such beliefs. Wight (2015) argues that the practice of exemption from world language requirements goes beyond simply allowing students to opt out of programming due to a learning disability, but in fact is a practice that actively “denies access” to programming for students by preemptively excluding them from world language courses (p. 42). Though some data exist on the extent of exclusion, particularly...
at the university level (see Wight, 2015), there remains little information on which students are routinely being excluded and to what extent at the K–12 level. Students categorized as being learning-disabled—those with either an individual education plan (IEP) or a 504 plan—students who experience challenges in their education in general, and English Language Learners (ELLs) are all groups who may routinely be kept out of world language programming.

### 2.3 Program leadership

Effective leadership in education and schools can impact student achievement, teachers’ attitudes and beliefs, the school climate, curriculum and instruction, and more (Marzano et al., 2005). Though leadership can take many forms and have many impacts on schooling and education, “instructional leadership” has the potential to be “transformative” (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al. (2005) outline 21 “responsibilities” of a school leader, including “knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment,” stating that in order for school leaders to provide “guidance” for teachers, they must themselves be “students of best practices” (p. 54). Darling-Hammond (2013), however, notes that many school leaders lack “access to the professional development and support they need to become expert instructional leaders and evaluators of teaching” (p. 1). Of consideration is whether the world language program has a content-area specialist leading the program, or if the school principal or other generalist oversees the program. World language teachers who are observed by non-world language specialists have indicated concerns about the expertise and feedback received on their teaching (Ritz, 2021). When world language programs do have a content-area expert who oversees the program, this role can vary widely from district to district, with differing titles (department head/chair, curriculum leader/director, lead teacher, etc.), differing responsibilities (such as evaluating teachers or not), and covering different levels (K–5, 6–8, K–8, 9–12, 6–12, etc.). Although there are calls for more attention to the role of program leadership at the post-secondary level (Jansa, 2020), little is known about program leadership in world language education at the K–12 level, despite its important role.

### 2.4 Seal of Biliteracy

The Seal of Biliteracy is a national movement that began in California in 2012 to celebrate students’ biliteracy in English and another language (Davin et al., 2018). Since its inception, the movement has spread throughout the states so that now most have a way to reward students for documented functional levels of proficiency in two or more languages. The Seal uses nationally understood levels and external tests to determine student achievement, holding the potential to be transformative for world language programming which, until now, has relied on seat time or grades to document student and programmatic progress (Davin & Heineke, 2017). In Massachusetts, a grassroots advocacy effort was begun in 2014 by leaders of the state professional organizations for world language, dual language, and English language learning programs, forming the Language Opportunity Coalition (LOC) (Sherf et al., 2020). Over the 5 years of lobbying efforts, an inclusive pilot was created with teachers and leaders from all types of language learning programs and for a variety of languages and levels. Because of this initial effort, by the time the Massachusetts DESE began administering the Seal of Biliteracy in 2018–19, 83 districts of the 405 operative school districts in the state awarded either Seals of
Biliteracy (Intermediate High proficiency in the partner language) or Seals of Biliteracy with Distinction (Advanced Low proficiency in the partner language) (Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2020a). Though the DESE awards are only for high school graduates, the LOC continues to offer the other awards for the elementary and middle school levels which were included in the original pathways awards in the pilot.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Survey development

The survey was designed by the researchers building from a structure used by Pufahl and Rhodes (2011) to collect information on world language programming and teacher practices. Discrete item response sections were added to collect data on program leadership, student exclusion from programming, and implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy. The survey went through two rounds of piloting. The initial piloting of the survey (Dörnyei, 2010) included a review by a small group of world language teachers and administrators similar to the target sample to provide feedback on any ambiguity in wording, clarification on questions, redundancy, and any other issues. Feedback was incorporated into the survey design. The survey was then built in Qualtrics and reviewed for errors. Final piloting (Dörnyei, 2010) included the distribution of the survey to a “group of respondents...similar to the target population” (p. 56), resulting in 45 completed responses. Each page of the survey was reviewed to check question wording and page routing and the pilot data were reviewed for trends and individual responses that suggested a need for changes to survey design. On the basis of the final pilot results, minor changes to wording and constraints in Qualtrics were made. The world language programming section of the final survey is included in the Appendix (this article does not report on the teacher practices component of the survey).

3.2 | Participants

The survey targeted world language teachers and administrators from K–12 public schools in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (n.d.) reports 405 operative public school districts in the state. The full population of K–12 public school districts was targeted for data collection.

3.3 | Survey distribution

The survey was distributed electronically through a number of world language teacher and administrator organizations in the state, including the MaFLA, the Eastern Massachusetts Foreign Language Administrators, the American Association of Teachers of French—Eastern Massachusetts chapter, the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy workgroup, the Foreign Language Teachers of Western Massachusetts Collaborative, and the Berkshire Organization of Language Teachers. Each organization sent the survey three times to their member lists, the first time to invite their members to participate, and the second two times to remind members of the survey completion deadline. Additionally, the survey was sent to each of the 405 operative public...
school district superintendents via email, asking them to forward the survey to the world
language teachers and administrators in their district with one reminder email.

3.4 | Data analysis

Data were analyzed using R statistical software. Data were cleaned to eliminate incomplete
responses. When there were multiple respondents from the same school district, the data were
filtered so that only responses from self-identified department heads/world language curricu-
lum leaders were counted. If no department heads/world language curriculum leaders were
identified for a particular school district, the first teacher’s response was included. This filtering
was intended to eliminate overcounting of programs from one district. For the purpose of
presenting an overall description of world language programming, descriptive statistics were
used in the analysis.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | World language programming

Data cleaning led to responses from 188 districts of 405, representing a 46.4% response rate
from operative public school districts in the state. Of these, 20.8% reported offering an ele-
mentary world language program, 95% reported offering a middle school program, and all
responding school districts reported offering a high school world language program.

Five different languages were reported as being offered as part of elementary world lan-
guage programs: Chinese (7.3% of elementary programs), French (14.6%), Latin (2.4% with only
one reported program), Portuguese (7.3%), and Spanish (68.3%). Spanish was the most com-
monly taught language at the middle and high school levels (43.3% and 31.3%, respectively),
followed by French (31.9% of middle school offerings and 23.2% of high school offerings).
Chinese was the third most commonly offered language at the middle school level (9.3%),
although Latin was third at the high school level (13.9%). Though Spanish was most common at
the elementary level, as already stated, the overall proportion of districts offering an elementary
Spanish program was only 14.9%. Likewise, though 14.6% of elementary programs offered
French, when looking at all districts surveyed, only 3.2% of districts offered an elementary
French program. Table 1 provides the tally, percentage of language programs at each level, as
well as the percentage of language programs offered across all districts.

Respondents were asked to categorize the type of world language program they offered at
each level. Understanding that the types of programs offered at each level vary, respondents were
asked to select from different categories for the elementary, middle, and high school levels. For
the elementary (K–5) and middle school (6–8) levels, the following categories were presented as
options (a more complete description of each category can be found in the Appendix):

A Exploratory: Program whose goal is exploring language and culture.
B Language Achievement: Program whose goal is based on learning of vocabulary and
   grammar.
C Language Mix of Achievement and Proficiency: Program transitioning from a traditional
   vocabulary and grammar focus to that of proficiency development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>% offering at this level</td>
<td>% offering across all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Sign Language (ASL)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish for Heritage Speakers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Many districts represented in this survey report offering more than one language.
**D Language Proficiency:** Program whose goal is based on proficiency development.

**E Immersion:** Program whose goal is communication and content acquisition with at least 50% of the day in the world language.

Although no elementary programs reported using a traditional Language Achievement program, 32.5% reported using an Exploratory model. Immersion programming was used in 21.69% of schools, and 40.5% indicated using a Language Proficiency model. The middle schools reported using very few Immersion models (2.4%) and some Exploratory models (17.1%). Though schools reported some traditional Language Achievement models (12.7%), the majority of middle school programming was categorized as being either fully a Language Proficiency model or a mix of Language Achievement and Proficiency (67.8% combined). Figure 1 provides a distribution of program types at the elementary level and Figure 2 provides a distribution of program types at the middle school level.

Given different programming models at the high school level, the following categories were presented as options (a more complete description of each category can be found in the Appendix):

**A Language Achievement:** Program whose goal is based on learning of vocabulary and grammar.

**B Language Mix of Achievement & Proficiency:** Program transitioning from a traditional vocabulary and grammar focus to that of proficiency development.

**C Language Proficiency:** Program whose goal is based on proficiency development.

**D Immersion:** Program whose goal is communication and content acquisition with at least 50% of the day in the world language.

**E Distance Learning:** Program whose content is primarily delivered on a computer.

Similar to the middle school data, high schools reported using very few Immersion models (4.4%), and though schools reported some traditional Language Achievement models (8.4%),
the majority of high school programming was categorized as being either fully a Language Proficiency model or a mix of Language Achievement and Proficiency (86.6% combined). Distance Learning was reported as the program model for only two programs (0.6%). Figure 3 provides a distribution of program types at the high school level. Table 2 summarizes the program types across the grade levels.

To assess likely program articulation across levels, respondents were asked to rate the level of interaction and coordination between elementary, middle, and high school. Although some districts reported little or no interaction between levels, most programs indicated some, regular, or a high level of interaction. Figure 4 provides a summary of responses for each level.
Students at the middle school level were most likely to be excluded from world language programming compared to the elementary and high school levels. In every category—including students with IEPs, 504 plans, those considered “struggling,” designated as ELLs, or heritage language learners—middle school students were more often reported to be kept out of world language programming. Numerous high schools also reported excluding these students, with the exception of heritage language learners. Figure 5 shows the distribution of student exclusion by category at each level.

### 4.2 Program leadership

Program leadership can vary significantly from one school district to the next, and even within school districts. Respondents were asked to indicate who was officially responsible for program leadership, and data were sorted into three categories: A world language specialist, a lead world language teacher, and a non-world language specialist, such as a school principal. Some

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program type</th>
<th>Elementary (%)</th>
<th>Middle (%)</th>
<th>High (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Achievement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Mix of Achievement &amp; Proficiency</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Proficiency</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Learning</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2  Summary of program types reported across levels
respondents additionally indicated a lack of official structure for program leadership. Table 3 provides a summary of program leadership across levels.

Although at all levels, a world language specialist was reported most frequently as the official program leader, results indicate that the school principal is most commonly the primary evaluator for world language teachers at all levels of instruction (53.6% elementary, 49.6% middle, 37.1% high). Under the Massachusetts Teacher Evaluation System, a secondary evaluator for teachers is also designated. The primary evaluator is responsible for observing teachers, working with them to set professional practice and student learning goals, giving them their official rating, and providing feedback. The secondary evaluator contributes one or more observations. Figure 6 presents the distribution of primary and secondary evaluators for each level.

Respondents rated the level of support they felt from school administration. Overall, respondents reported feeling supported by school administration, although there was a slightly

![Distribution of students excluded from world language programming by category at all levels](wileyonlinelibrary.com)

**TABLE 3** Summary of world language program leader reported across levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program leader</th>
<th>Elementary (%)</th>
<th>Middle (%)</th>
<th>High (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World language specialist (department head, director, coordinator, etc.)</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead world language teacher</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-world language specialist (principal, general curriculum director, etc.)</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No official structure for program leadership</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lower level of perceived support at the middle school and elementary levels. Figure 7 presents a summary of reported sense of support by school administration.

4.3 | **Seal of Biliteracy**

The Seal of Biliteracy is most commonly offered to students at the high school level, with 54.8% of responding school districts already offering the award and another 27.4% planning to begin offering the Seal within 2 years. Of the elementary and middle schools surveyed, only one elementary and five middle schools are currently offering the Seal developed by LOC for these levels, though additional schools indicated plans to begin offering the Seal within 2 years. Figure 8 shows the breakdown of responses at the three levels.

5 | **DISCUSSION**

5.1 | **What does world language programming look like in Massachusetts and which students are being allowed to participate?**

In alignment with national trends (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011), the large majority of world language programming in Massachusetts is at the secondary level. Likewise, Spanish is the most widely taught language within the state, as it is nationally (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011).
Though these findings are not surprising, the categorization of program types reveals much about the shifting trends in world language education. A number of initiatives within Massachusetts have aligned in recent years to support a shift towards teaching for proficiency. In 2015, the MaFLA launched the MaFLA Proficiency Academy, a week-long summer event
which has run for 5 years and has provided training to over 550 world language teachers and administrators on teaching for proficiency (Ritz, in press). The Seal of Biliteracy was launched as a pilot in the state in 2014 and approved as an official state Seal of Biliteracy in 2018 (Sherf et al., 2020). Additionally, the Massachusetts DESE hired a Language Acquisition Support Specialist for World Languages in 2019 (the only world language specialist within DESE and the only such specialist in two decades) and began the process of updating the Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework, dating from 1999 (Massachusetts DESE). The updated standards are anticipated for April 2021.

Given these events, the researchers were encouraged to observe no elementary programs reporting traditional “Language Achievement” programming, and the bulk of middle and high school programs reporting either “Language Mix of Achievement & Proficiency” or “Language Proficiency” programs. Though larger percentages of programs at the middle and high school levels report have a “Language Mix” program than a full “Language Proficiency” program, the data are encouraging and indicate a shift away from more traditional models. Given the documented positive impact that proficiency-based practices have on student learning outcomes (Vyn et al., 2019) as well as the risk of student attrition due to dissatisfaction with the program overall (Wesely, 2010), program type should be given significant attention by our profession. Despite this encouraging data, questions remain on whether teachers are applying proficiency-based instruction that accurately reflecting the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning and an understanding of proficiency-based practices, or—as Glisan (2012) points out—they are merely “labelling” (p. 521) their practices as such without any substantial changes. In this time of transition in the profession, other states might benefit from studying the programming of world languages across all levels.

Despite clear evidence that students with learning disabilities “rarely fail” world language courses “and that they achieve average or better grades...without accommodations [when compared to non-learning-disabled peers]” (Sparks, 2018, p. 197), the results of this study confirm patterns of exclusion from world language programming for students with IEPs, as well as those designated as generally “struggling” with the language. Exclusion was most common at the middle school level, which comports with the researchers’ own anecdotal experiences. ELLs are also often excluded from world languages, again most commonly at the middle school level. On the basis of anecdotal experience, the reasons for program exclusion at the middle school level often stem from constraints around scheduling, though additional research in this area is needed to determine specific reasons for exclusion so that they may be properly addressed. It should additionally be noted that the overall low percentage of districts offering elementary world language programs can be interpreted as exclusion of many elementary-aged children from accessing world language education.

5.2 | How are world language programs and teachers being led within their school district?

This study revealed that the majority of districts have a world language specialist in a leadership role, although the title and scope of that role vary from district to district. However, this person likely does not hold the responsibility of conducting teacher evaluations. Rather, teacher evaluations in world languages are most likely conducted by a school principal who may or may not have a background in world language education. Though Massachusetts uses a standards-based system for teacher evaluation (Massachusetts Department of Elementary &
Secondary Education, 2020b), the standards are generic for all teachers. Ritz (2021) points out a risk for misinterpretation of standards for teacher evaluation by non-world language administrators who may not have an understanding of unique content-specific practices. Indeed, Darling-Hammond (2013) echoes the concern for “potential harm” (p. 142) in the teacher evaluation process as well as the need for contributions from “teachers with content expertise” (p. 116). Given the ongoing shift in world language education—for which many world language teachers still lack a deep understanding of how to apply to their own practices (Glisan, 2011)—we should look with great skepticism on the ability of school principals whose training is often in a different content area to be able to provide specific guidance on teaching for proficiency in world languages. Research in other areas of education have revealed misalignment between expectations of school principals and content-specific professionals (Lowery et al., 2018; Mahaffey et al., 2020). Furthermore, principals do not give “the same priority” to world language programming when compared to other “core content areas” (Sung et al., 2006, pp. 129–130). Given how “vital” leadership is to school and program success (Marzano et al., 2005), understanding the role of world language program leaders is crucial.

5.3 What is the status of implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy across the state?

The Seal of Biliteracy holds the potential to encourage further shift away from traditional methods of instruction towards proficiency-based teaching and learning as well as lead to increases in student enrollment (Davin et al., 2018). This study revealed that the Seal is being implemented or is in development to be implemented within 2 years by a large majority of high schools (82.2%), speaking to the widespread level of knowledge about the Seal within the state. Elementary and middle school programs, however, have significantly lower rates of implementation or planned implementation of the Biliteracy Participation Award or Biliteracy Achievement Award, both designed by the Massachusetts LOC to support earlier level language learners and create a pathway to the Massachusetts DESE Seal of Biliteracy by high school graduation. Increasing awareness of these earlier awards could provide an opportunity to better align world language programs across all grade levels, as well as encourage the expansion of elementary and middle world language programs and increase overall enrollment and retention.

5.4 Limitations & future research

Although this study attempted to collect data from all 405 operative public school districts across the state, only 188 districts were ultimately represented in the data set. As the survey was sent out primarily through state professional teacher or administrator associations, respondents may have been more aware of proficiency-based instruction than teachers not affiliated with those organizations, which may have skewed overall responses. Additionally, districts not offering world languages or with limited programming were less likely to respond to this survey. The data were furthermore all self-report, and data were not corroborated through observation or other methods.

This study brings to light many needed areas of further research. First and foremost, more attention should be given to K–12 world language education in the research, as has been noted
by others (e.g., Troyan, 2012). The kinds of world language programming models that are being used across the country, which students are being excluded from world languages and why, as well as how world language programs are being led and who is evaluating teachers can be expanded in further studies or replicated in other states. It should be noted, as well, that the survey used in this study was sent out to teachers in early April 2020, just a few weeks into the school closures due to COVID-19. At the time, many expected only short-term school closures. This survey captures a picture of world language education in Massachusetts just before the significant and long-lasting impacts of COVID-19 were felt. Future studies that compare their findings to this study would be of interest to measure the effect that budget shortfalls, teacher shortages, and any changes in instructional practices that occurred as a result of this significant world event.

6 | CONCLUSION

This study attempts to address questions about world language programming, student exclusion, program leadership, and implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy at the K–12 level in Massachusetts public schools. By seeking to collect information from all public school districts in the state, this study was able to gather a large pool of data that expands our understanding of how students are experiencing K–12 world language education. Program leadership was included in this study to paint a more complete picture of the K–12 schooling system, addressing a significant gap in the research. Although unintended, this study captured a picture of world language education immediately preceding the world-changing COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this writing, public schools in Massachusetts are preparing for a range of in-person, hybrid, and distance learning plans to begin the 2020 school year. The long-term impact of COVID-19 on education—and world language education specifically—remains unknown, but the researchers hope that this study can provide a point of comparison as we look back on the impact in the years to come through future research in our state and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank as well our graduate research assistant, Greg Morano, as well as the reviewers for their valuable comments and feedback. Statistical analyses were conducted with the help of Ryan Frost of the MSSP consulting service at Boston University under the guidance of Professor Masanao Yajima. This project was supported by the 2019 ACTFL Research Priorities Grant. Survey development and testing were supported by the Center for Applied Linguistics.

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APPENDIX: PROGRAMMING SECTION OF SURVEY
This survey is about world language instruction in your school or district during the 2019–2020 school year. In this survey, world language instruction refers to the teaching of any language(s) other than English. Please complete the sections of the survey that pertain to the school(s) that you work at within your district. You must complete the survey through the final page for the results to be recorded.

Are you a world language teacher or world language teacher leader/administrator?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Part I. Demographics
Your Name:
Your Title:

Please select your school district from the following list:
(drop-down menu with district codes)
Which languages do you currently teach? (Please check all that apply)
☐ American Sign Language (ASL)
☐ Arabic
☐ Chinese
☐ French
☐ German
☐ Hebrew
☐ Italian
☐ Japanese
☐ Latin
☐ Portuguese
☐ Russian
☐ Spanish
☐ Other (please specify):
☐ I am a World Language Program chair/administrator/supervisor

What level(s) do you currently teach? (Please check all that apply)
☐ Elementary (Pre-K–5)
☐ Middle (6–8)
☐ High (9–12)
☐ Higher Education (13–16)
☐ Adult Continuing Education
☐ I am a World Language Program chair/administrator/supervisor

Which of the following best describes the school or district that you work in:
☐ Public School
☐ Charter School
☐ Private School
☐ Higher Education (University/College)
☐ Adult Continuing Education

Does your school or district currently teach world languages?
☐ Yes
☐ No

If your school or district does not currently teach world languages, is it planning to offer world language instruction in the next 2 years?
☐ Yes (please explain):
☐ No
☐ Not sure

Part IIA: Program type: Elementary
Does your school or district include Elementary (Pre-K–5) world language instruction?
☐ Yes
☐ Yes, but I am not familiar with the details of the Elementary world language program
☐ No
In the table below, mark each language taught at the Elementary level (Pre-K–5) at your school or district. Please complete the table for each elementary school that offers world language instruction unless the same program is offered. You may enter up to three schools.

**World Language Elementary Program Types:**

(a) **Exploratory:** The goal of Exploratory world language programs is for students to gain general exposure to language and culture, learn basic words and phrases, and/or develop an interest in world languages for future study. Portions of this program may be taught in English.

(b) **Language Achievement:** The goal of a Language Achievement program is for students to explicitly learn about the grammar and vocabulary of the language, with some focus on communication. The curricular focus of these programs is often driven by a textbook, following a sequential learning of grammatical structures and/or vocabulary.

(c) **Language Mix of Achievement & Proficiency:** The goal of this program is to develop proficiency in Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes of communication, and develop intercultural competence, but students also explicitly learn about the grammar and vocabulary of the language. The curricular focus of these programs is often driven by a textbook, following sequential learning of grammatical structures and/or vocabulary.

(d) **Language Proficiency:** The goal of a Language Proficiency program is to develop proficiency in Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes of communication, and develop intercultural competence.

(e) **Immersion:** The goal of Immersion programs is for students to be able to communicate in the language with high proficiency and acquire an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. At least 50% of the school day is taught in the world language, including academic subjects (called *partial, total, or two-way immersion* depending on the amount of world language used and the make-up of the student body).

Name of Elementary school (or schools if the language program is the same across schools): _______________

For each of the languages taught, indicate the program type from the descriptions above that best describe your program, the number of students in your school or district studying that language, the grades in which it is offered, an average number of minutes per week that students spend in the world language, and the number of teachers of that language. Note: If you have more than one program model for a given language, or if instruction time differs substantially per grade, please indicate this in additional spaces for “Other.”

*Please note: If you oversee a large district, please forward this survey to teachers or teacher leaders in each of the schools so that they may complete the survey.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Program type (indicate A, B, C, D, or E)</th>
<th>Approximate number of students</th>
<th>Grade levels (PK, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)</th>
<th>Average minutes per week</th>
<th>Number of Teachers (for part-time teachers, use a decimal, such as 0.2, 0.4, etc.)</th>
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<td>Other (please specify):</td>
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</table>

Would you like to add another Elementary School?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Are any populations of students not included in world language programming at the Elementary level? (Please check all that apply). If no populations are excluded, please skip this question.

- [ ] Students with IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans)
- [ ] Students with 504 Plans
- [ ] English Language Learners (ELLs)
- [ ] Students who have been deemed as struggling academically, but do not have IEPs or 504 plans
- [ ] Students who have transferred from another Elementary school without a world language program
- [ ] Students who are Heritage speakers of the language being taught
- [ ] Other (specify): _________

Which of the following best describes the leadership of the world language program at the Elementary level? (Please check only one)

- [ ] There is a Pre-K–12 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- [ ] There is a Pre-K–8 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
There is a Pre-K–5 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.

There is a lead Pre-K–5 world language teacher.

The school principal oversees the program.

There is a district curriculum coordinator (not a world language specialist) who oversees the program.

There is no official structure for overseeing the world language program.

Other (specify): ________

Please indicate who is the primary evaluator for world language teachers at the Elementary level.

- School Principal
- School Assistant/Vice Principal
- World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator
- Other (specify): ________

Please indicate who is the secondary evaluator for world language teachers at the Elementary level.

- School Principal
- School Assistant/Vice Principal
- World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator
- Other (specify): ________

On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), rate the level of interaction and coordination that the Elementary program has with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Middle and/or High):

- 1—There is no interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Middle and/or High).
- 2—There is little interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Middle and/or High).
- 3—There is some interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Middle and/or High).
- 4—There is regular interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Middle and/or High).
- 5—There is a high level of frequent interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Middle and/or High).

On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how supportive do you feel your school or district administration is of world language programming at the elementary level? (1 being lowest and 5 being highest)

- 1—Not supportive at all
- 2—Somewhat supportive
- 3—Supportive
- 4—Very supportive
- 5—Extremely supportive
What is the status of the Language Opportunity Coalition (LOC) Bilingual Participation Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award in the elementary school of your district?

☐ The Elementary School currently offers a Bilingual Participation Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award.

☐ The Elementary School does not currently offer a Bilingual Participation Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award nor is it planning to in the next 2 years.

☐ The Elementary School does not currently offer a Bilingual Participation Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award but is planning to in the next 2 years.

☐ The Elementary School previously offered a Bilingual Participation Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award, but no longer does.

Part IIB: Program type: Middle

Does your school or district include Middle School (6–8) world language instruction?

☐ Yes

☐ Yes, but I am not familiar with the details of the Middle School world language program

☐ No

In the table below, mark each language taught at the middle level (6–8) at your school or district. Please complete the table for each middle school that offers world language instruction unless the same program is offered. You can add up to three schools.

*World Language Middle School Program Types:*

(a) **Exploratory:** The goal of Exploratory world language programs is for students to gain general exposure to language and culture, learn basic words and phrases, and/or develop an interest in world languages for future study. Portions of this program may be taught in English.

(b) **Language Achievement:** The goal of a Language Achievement program is for students to explicitly learn about the grammar and vocabulary of the language, with some focus on communication. The curricular focus of these programs is often driven by a textbook, following a sequential learning of grammatical structures and/or vocabulary.

(c) **Language Mix of Achievement & Proficiency:** The goal of this program is to develop proficiency in Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes of communication, but students also explicitly learn about the grammar and vocabulary of the language. The curricular focus of these programs is often driven by a textbook, following a sequential learning of grammatical structures and/or vocabulary.

(d) **Language Proficiency:** The goal of a Language Proficiency program is to develop proficiency in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication, and develop intercultural competence.

(e) **Immersion:** The goal of Immersion programs is for students to be able to communicate in the language with high proficiency and acquire an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. At least 50% of the school day is taught in the world language, including academic subjects (called partial, total, or two-way immersion depending on the amount of world language used and the make-up of the student body).
Name of Middle School (or Schools if the language program is the same across schools): _______________

For each of the languages taught, indicate the program type from the descriptions above that best describe your program, the number of students in your school or district studying that language, the grades in which it is offered, an average number of minutes per week that students spend in the world language, and the number of teachers of that language. Note: If you have more than one program model for a given language, or if instruction time differs substantially per grade, please indicate this in additional spaces for “Other.”

*Please note: If you oversee a large district, please forward this survey to teachers or teacher leaders in each of the schools so that they may complete the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Program type (indicate A, B, C, D, or E)</th>
<th>Approximate number of students</th>
<th>Grade levels (6, 7, 8)</th>
<th>Average minutes per week</th>
<th>Number of teachers (for part-time teachers, use a decimal, such as 0.2, 0.4, etc.)</th>
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Would you like to add another Middle School?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Are any populations of students not included in world language programming at the Middle School level? (Please check all that apply). If no populations are excluded, please skip this question.

☐ Students with IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans)
☐ Students with 504 Plans
☐ English Language Learners (ELLs)
Students who have been deemed as struggling academically, but do not have IEPs or 504 plans
Students who have transferred from another Middle School without a world language program
Students who are Heritage speakers of the language being taught
Other (specify): ________

Which of the following best describes the leadership of the world language program at the Middle School level? (Please check only one)
- There is a Pre-K–12 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- There is a 6–8 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- There is a 6–12 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- There is a lead 6–8 world language teacher.
- The school principal oversees the program.
- There is a district curriculum coordinator (not a world language specialist) who oversees the program.
- There is no official structure for overseeing the world language program.
Other (specify): ________

Please indicate who is the primary evaluator for world language teachers at the Middle School level.
- School Principal
- School Assistant/Vice Principal
- World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator
Other (specify): ________

Please indicate who is the secondary evaluator for world language teachers at the Middle School level.
- School Principal
- School Assistant/Vice Principal
- World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator
Other (specify): ________

On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), rate the level of interaction and coordination that the Middle School program has with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or High):
- 1—There is no interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or High).
- 2—There is little interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or High).
- 3—There is some interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or High).
- 4—There is regular interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or High).
5—There is a high level of frequent interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or High).

On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how supportive do you feel your school or district administration is of world language programming at the Middle School level? (1 being lowest and 5 being highest)

- 1—Not supportive at all
- 2—Somewhat supportive
- 3—Supportive
- 4—Very supportive
- 5—Extremely supportive

What is the status of the Language Opportunity Coalition (LOC) Bilingual Achievement Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award in the Middle School of your district?

- The Middle School currently offers a Biliteracy Achievement Award.
- The Middle School does not currently offer a Biliteracy Achievement Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award nor is it planning to in the next 2 years.
- The Middle School does not currently offer a Biliteracy Achievement Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award, but it is planning to in the next 2 years.
- The Middle School previously offered a Biliteracy Achievement Award or Biliteracy Attainment Award, but no longer does.

Part IIC: Program type: High

Does your school or district include High School (9–12) world language instruction?

- Yes
- Yes, but I am not familiar with the details of the High School world language program
- No

In the table below, mark each language taught at the high school level (9–12) at your school or district. Please complete the table for each high school that offers world language instruction unless the same program is offered. You can add up to three schools.

**World Language High School Program types:**

(a) **Language Achievement**: The goal of a Language Achievement program is for students to explicitly learn about the grammar and vocabulary of the language, with some focus on communication. The curricular focus of these programs is often driven by a textbook, following a sequential learning of grammatical structures and/or vocabulary.

(b) **Language Mix of Achievement & Proficiency**: The goal of this program is to develop proficiency in Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational modes of communication, and develop intercultural competence, but students also explicitly learn about the grammar and vocabulary of the language. The curricular focus of these programs is often driven by a textbook, following a sequential learning of grammatical structures and/or vocabulary.

(c) **Language Proficiency**: The goal of a Language Proficiency program is to develop proficiency in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication, and develop intercultural competence.
(d) **Immersion:** The goal of Immersion programs is for students to be able to communicate in the language with high proficiency and acquire an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. At least 50% of the school day is taught in the world language, including academic subjects.

(e) **Distance Learning:** Distance learning programs are ones which are predominantly delivered on a computer, either through an online program or software.

Name of High School (or Schools if the language program is the same across schools): _______________

For each of the languages taught, indicate the program type from the descriptions above that best describe your program, the number of students in your school or district studying that language, the courses and tracks in which it is offered, an average number of minutes per week that students spend in the world language, and the number of teachers of that language. Note: If you have more than one program model for a given language, or if instruction time differs substantially per grade, please indicate this in additional spaces for “Other.”

*Please note: If you oversee a large district, please forward this survey to teachers or teacher leaders in each of the schools so that they may complete the survey.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Course levels (1, 2, 3, etc.)</th>
<th>Tracks (honors, CP, curriculum A, etc.)</th>
<th>Program type (indicate A, B, C, D, or E)</th>
<th>Approximate number of students</th>
<th>Average minutes per week</th>
<th>Number of teachers (for part-time teachers, use a decimal, such as 0.2, 0.4, etc.)</th>
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Would you like to add another High School?
- Yes
- No

Are any populations of students not included in world language programming at the High School level? (Please check all that apply) If no populations are excluded, please skip this question.
- Students with IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans)
- Students with 504 Plans
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Students who have been deemed as struggling academically, but do not have IEPs or 504 plans
- Students who have transferred from another Middle School without a world language program
- Students who are Heritage speakers of the language being taught
- Other (specify): ________

Which of the following best describes the leadership of the world language program at the High School level? (Please check only one)
- There is a Pre-K–12 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- There is a 9–12 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- There is a 6–12 World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator who oversees the program.
- There is a lead 9–12 world language teacher.
- The school principal oversees the program.
- There is a district curriculum coordinator (not a world language specialist) who oversees the program.
- There is no official structure for overseeing the world language program.
- Other (specify): ________

Please indicate who is the primary evaluator for world language teachers at the High School level.
- School Principal
- School Assistant/Vice Principal
- World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator
- Other (specify): ________

Please indicate who is the secondary evaluator for world language teachers at the High School level.
- School Principal
- School Assistant/Vice Principal
- World Language Department Chair/Director/Coordinator
- Other (specify): ________
On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), rate the level of interaction and coordination that the High School program has with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or Middle):

- 1—There is no interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or Middle).
- 2—There is little interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or Middle).
- 3—There is some interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or Middle).
- 4—There is regular interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or Middle).
- 5—There is a high level of frequent interaction or coordination with world language programs in other schools and at other levels (Elementary and/or Middle).
- There are no middle or elementary programs in my district.

On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how supportive do you feel your school or district administration is of world language programming at the High School level? (1 being lowest and 5 being highest)

- 1—Not supportive at all
- 2—Somewhat supportive
- 3—Supportive
- 4—Very supportive
- 5—Extremely supportive

What is the status of the Seal of Biliteracy in the High School of your district?

- The High School currently offers a Seal of Biliteracy.
- The High School does not currently offer a Seal of Biliteracy nor is it planning to in the next 2 years.
- The High School does not currently offer a Seal of Biliteracy, but it is planning to in the next 2 years.
- The High School previously offered a Seal of Biliteracy, but no longer does.

What, if any, partnerships does your school have with higher education? (Check all that apply)

- Dual enrollment programs
- Hosting pre-practicum/practicum students who are pursuing licensure
- Hosting students in internships
- We do not have any partnerships with universities.
- Other (specify):