COLORADO WORLD LANGUAGES
EXTERNAL REFERENT REVIEW ADDENDUM

Prepared by WestEd
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As part of its initiative to revise the Colorado Model Content Standards (MCS), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) contracted WestEd to conduct a comprehensive review of the MCS. This report is an addendum to the world languages (foreign language) findings and recommendations in the final report of the Colorado Model Content Standards Review, Phase III. Following the review of the *Model Content Standards for Foreign Language* (adopted in 1997), the CDE and world languages subcommittee requested an additional review of two standards documents. The purpose of this addendum is to evaluate two external referent documents based on criteria of high-quality standards relevant for the content area of world languages, and to provide recommendations that can be considered by Colorado when revising the current MCS for foreign language.

The CDE selected the two external referent documents listed below for WestEd to review.
- *World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (Adopted by the State Board of Education, Jan. 7, 2009)
- *Colorado Foreign Language Student Model Content Standards* (Draft, Revised May 2007)

These documents serve as examples of content standards for world languages based on contemporary conceptualizations of world language learning as represented by the national *Standards for Foreign Language Teaching: Preparing for the 21st Century*.[1]

Each document was reviewed for its quality according to five criteria, relevant to world languages, operationalized through a set of questions listed above each chart on subsequent pages of this document. The five criteria are listed below.
1. Organization
2. Coverage (Breadth and Depth)
3. Clarity
4. Progression (Coherence and Rigor)
5. Assessability

WestEd conducted a qualitative, holistic review, the results of which are provided in the charts, which summarize the findings for each criterion in the form of narrative comments, with examples from each external referent document. Colorado can refer to these findings in considering the ways that each of these external referents addresses elements of the criteria, and determining which approaches to apply in its new world

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[1] The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1996). *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*. New York: The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project.

language model content standards. In the same charts, WestEd provides further recommendations for addressing each criterion, to help guide Colorado in the process of developing the new standards.

An overarching issue for Colorado to consider is what the standards can realistically provide, based on how the standards will be used. For example, the standards may *not* be able to describe how far a student can progress in a given language, starting at a given entry point and finishing at a given end point, especially since all these characteristics may vary across schools and students. The standards *can* describe a range of developmental levels (stages) of language learning appropriate to the school context; the implementation of the standards for a given course or series of courses may then vary depending on the context of the students, languages offered, and school schedules. The introduction in each of the documents reviewed provides useful comments related to these issues.

1. Organization

- How are the standards organized (structure and format)?
- Is the organization clear and useful for guiding instruction and assessment?

California (2009)	Colorado (Draft 2007)	Recommendations
Standards are organized into 5 categories: • Content (topics) • Communication (3 modes) • Cultures • Structures (grammar & orthography) • Settings	Standards are organized into 5 main categories with 1-3 subcategories each: 1: Communication 　1.1 Interpersonal communication 　1.2 Interpretive communication 　1.3 Presentational communication 2: Cultures 　2.1 Practices and perspectives 　2.2 Products and perspectives 3: Connections 　3.1 Connect with other disciplines 　3.2 Acquire information 4: Comparisons 　4.1 Nature of language 　4.2 Concept of culture 5: Communities 　5.1 Use language within and beyond school setting	• In determining categories and subcategories of standards, consider the relative importance of the knowledge and skills addressed by each category. For example, emphasis in instruction and assessment can be graphically indicated by having each category represent knowledge and skills of equal importance in the curriculum. (See also chart 2, Coverage.) • Consider the optimum number of standards/benchmarks for use by K-12 teachers in guiding instruction and assessment, given the context of world language teaching in Colorado (e.g., classroom hours per course, curriculum development processes). • Consider including charts that show *both* all stages within each category (as in current charts) *and* each stage across all categories, for use in planning instruction and assessment of knowledge and skills grouped by stage.
Each category is presented as a chart with a description of the category followed by 2-4 numbered descriptive statements (standards) for each of 4 developmental stages, I-IV. Total standards = 18.	Each category is presented first in a list and then as a chart with a description of the category followed by 2-4 bulleted descriptive statements (benchmarks) for each of 3 developmental stages: Novice, Intermediate, and Pre-Advanced. Total benchmarks for Novice and Intermediate = 29, for Pre-Advanced = 31.	
Document includes an introduction and a glossary.	Document includes an introduction, a glossary, and resources.	
Organization is clear and useful overall; however, it does not provide a format to view all standards within a stage across categories.	Organization is clear and useful overall; however, it does not provide a format to view all standards within a stage across categories.	

2. Coverage (Breadth and Depth)

- Is an appropriate range of knowledge and skills addressed in the standards (breadth)?
- Is an appropriate range of cognitive complexity addressed in the standards (depth)?
- Are the knowledge and skills addressed in the standards appropriate for 21st century world language learning?

California (2009)	Colorado (Draft 2007)	Recommendations
Overall, the standards address an appropriate range of knowledge and skills, including interpersonal communication, comprehension, presentation, cultural knowledge and practice, and linguistic structures. The standards in the Content category list specific topics of study, which are more appropriate for curriculum documents than standards. Overall, the standards address an appropriate range of cognitive complexity across the stages. For example, in Communication 1.4, functions range from "list, name, identify, enumerate" at Stage I to "discuss, compare and contrast, support an opinion, persuade" at Stage IV. The standards address 21st century skills relevant to world language learning, such as critical thinking, information literacy, and intercultural awareness.	Overall, the standards address an appropriate range of knowledge and skills, including expression and strategies for interpersonal communication, comprehension, presentation, cultural knowledge and practice, and structures of language. Note that structures are embedded in benchmarks for standards 1.1 and 4.1. Overall, the standards address an appropriate range of cognitive complexity across the stages. For example, for 1.3, 2nd bullet, students "summarize main idea" at Novice, "summarize and interpret information" at Intermediate, and "summarize, interpret, and analyze" materials at Pre-Advanced. The standards address 21st century skills relevant to world language learning, such as critical thinking, information literacy, and intercultural awareness.	- In determining the overall breadth of coverage, consider the relative importance of each set of knowledge and skills to ensure appropriate emphasis in instruction and assessment. For example, it may be appropriate to emphasize communication skills over connections and comparisons, and to include specific description of linguistic structures. Emphasis can be indicated by organization (see chart 1, Organization) and/or number of standards or benchmarks detailing a particular concept or skill. - In development and review of the new standards, ensure that descriptors for each benchmark statement describe knowledge and skills of appropriate cognitive complexity for each stage, based on the performance descriptors (see chart 4, Progression). - Determine which 21st century skills are relevant to world languages learning by consulting experts in the field, including Colorado world language instructors, as well as consensus documents such as Colorado's *21st Century Skills & Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness* and the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*.

3. Clarity

- Are the documents clearly written, that is, understandable and useful for curriculum planners, teachers, and students?
- Are the standard/benchmark statements clear and concise?

California (2009)	Colorado (Draft 2007)	Recommendations
Overall, the document is understandable and useful, and the standard statements are clear and concise. However, the use of the concept "paragraph," while clear for written language, is not clear for spoken language, since the length/organization of extended oral exchanges or presentations is not typically described as "paragraphs" (see Communication 1.0-4.0, and Structures). In addition, in Structures, the linguistic elements of orthography and phonology are addressed only in Stage I, though they are relevant across the stages (even as the complexity of linguistic structures increases, as described in the standards); similarly, morphology and syntax, introduced at Stage II, are also relevant across the stages.	Overall, the document is understandable and useful, and the benchmark statements are clear and concise. However, a few of the benchmark descriptions are not clear. In 2.1 and 2.2, Novice stage, 1st bullet, the wording, "Develop an awareness of . . . ," does not clearly describe what students know and can do. In 4.1 and 4.2, 1st bullet, it is not clear what the difference in skill is between the wording for the Novice stage, "demonstrate an understanding of . . . ," and for Intermediate and Pre-Advanced, "use age and level-appropriate language to demonstrate an understanding of . . . ."	• In development and review of the new standards, ensure that wording of the standards and benchmarks clearly and concisely describes what students know and can do, using verbs that describe measurable student behaviors (see chart 5, Assessability). • If linguistic structures are detailed in the standards, make sure they are described for both length and complexity at all stages, for example: o pronunciation and intonation (from pronunciation of individual sounds in simple words to sentence intonation patterns) o vocabulary/morphology (from simple, familiar words to complex, technical words) o syntax (from simple phrases and sentences to complex sentences to cohesive multi-sentence texts)

4. Progression (Coherence and Rigor)

- Are there overall descriptors of student performance at each stage?
- Do the standards describe a progression of knowledge, skills, and complexity across the stages?
- Do the standards describe knowledge and skills of appropriate rigor for each stage, based on the performance descriptors?

California (2009)	Colorado (Draft 2007)	Recommendations
The performance descriptors (p. 2 of introduction) for each stage address length of language structures for student comprehension and production, but do not address complexity, accuracy, or context (familiarity of topics and structures).	The descriptors for each stage (p. 3 of introduction) address variation in entry points and duration of study by grade level, but do not address student performance.	• Determine appropriate number of stages, based on language teaching needs and context in Colorado (e.g., existence of elementary vs. middle or high school entry points for world language study; variety and difficulty of languages offered).
The majority of standards show progression across the 4 stages. However, Content 1.0-4.0 and Communication 1.1-4.1, 1.2-4.2, and 1.3-4.3 repeat the exact same statements for all stages.	The majority of standards show progression across the 3 stages. However, the Novice and Intermediate statements for 1.1, 1st and 3rd bullets, are exactly the same, and for 3.1, 1st bullet, all 3 stages are the same. For 4.1 and 4.2, 1st bullets, Intermediate and Pre-Advanced are the same, and the wording does not differentiate complexity from Novice.	• Develop overall performance descriptors for each stage (e.g., based on ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners). Make sure the descriptors address aspects of length and complexity of linguistic structures, accuracy of student performance, and context/familiarity of language used. For example, students know and use words at all stages—but their vocabulary increases in complexity and technicality, accuracy and variation, across the stages.
For those standards that show progression, the rigor at each stage for each category is appropriate. For example, for Communication 1.5-4.5, comprehension skills increase across the stages from identifying learned words and phrases at Stage I to understanding the main idea and most details at Stage IV.	For those standards that show progression, the rigor at each stage for each category is appropriate. For example, for 1.2, 1st bullet, comprehension skills increase from understanding "simple spoken and written language based on familiar topics" at Novice, to "basic spoken and written language based on new topics in a familiar context" at Intermediate, to "spoken and written language based on new topics in familiar and unfamiliar contexts" at Pre-Advanced.	• In development and review of the new standards, ensure that benchmark statements differentiate the knowledge, skills, and/or complexity at each stage. • In development and review of the new standards, ensure that benchmark statements describe knowledge and skills of appropriate rigor for each stage, based on the performance descriptors.

5. Assessability
- Are the standards assessable? (Note that assessment can be formative or summative and includes classroom assessment; assessments for world languages may include performance assessments and portfolios, as well as pencil-and-paper tests).
- If any standards are not assessable, are the knowledge and skills addressed useful to include in the standards document for other reasons (e.g., to emphasize that students should be encouraged to extend language learning strategies outside the classroom)?

California (2009)	Colorado (Draft 2007)	Recommendations
Overall, the standards are assessable. However, standards 1.1-4.1 in the category Settings are not assessable, since they address students' use of language outside the classroom.	Overall, the standards are assessable. However, benchmarks for 5.1, 1st bullet are not assessable, since they address students' use of language outside the classroom.	- In development and review of the new standards, ensure that benchmark statements describe assessable knowledge and skills. - Consider whether some knowledge and skills that are not assessable should remain in the standards for other reasons (for example, to emphasize world language learning as a lifelong process, or one that can be expanded in the community outside school).