

[Mapping Chinese Language Learning Outcomes in Grades K-12](#)

Jianhua Bai, Professor of Chinese, Kenyon College

Luyi Lien, Academic Director, Yinghua Academy

Madeline K. Spring, Professor of Chinese, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

An exciting new development in the field of Chinese language learning in the United States is the increase in the number of students learning Chinese at pre-college levels. In their search for effective curriculum for students at these levels, many schools realize that they need to have well-defined learning objectives across levels of instruction, in order to design a well-articulated program that leads students to attain high levels of language proficiency. The need for well-defined language learning objectives, with expected outcomes, at various levels of instruction, with multiple entry and exit points along the path of K-12 or even K-16, is more urgent than ever.

This Brief describes possible language learning outcomes in terms of a nationally recognized language proficiency scale and K-12 performance standards, which are aligned with language programs in K-12 schools in the United States. The Brief is useful for Chinese language teachers, parents, curriculum developers, and program administrators.

In the United States, the [ACTFL proficiency guidelines](#) are often used to *measure student learning* outcomes in the K-12 grade levels. According to the ACTFL guidelines, learners' proficiency can be categorized into Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished levels. The characteristics of each level and assessment of proficiency in different communicative modes (Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational) are explained. Assessment instruments commonly used in K-12 Chinese language programs are listed in the Appendix.

There are diverse types of language learning programs and multiple pathways to attaining higher levels of language proficiency. Two major types of programs are frequently implemented in the United States -- dual language/immersion programs and Chinese as a world/foreign language programs. Both types of programs, and their possible outcomes, are described in detail. Readers will find Figure 2 especially useful, in which language proficiency levels reached in K-12 Chinese immersion and world language programs, from the beginning all the way up to AP levels, are listed side by side for an "at a glance" overview (p. 4). Such a comparison provides a reference for schools and school districts to evaluate their own programs or for them to consider which type of programs to design and implement.

Equally beneficial are the profiles of students in an immersion program, Grades K-8, and profiles of students in a Chinese world language program, Grades 6/7 to 12. Clear and concise descriptions of what students at each grade or proficiency level know and can do are provided, which deepen educators' and parents' understandings of students' abilities and possible performances in Chinese.

In addition to in-school programs, there are multiple opportunities and pathways that schools can make available to continue students' learning of Chinese in college and beyond, including these:

- Summer or One-Year Study Abroad in China or in Chinese-speaking regions
- College/University Chinese Language Flagship Program
- Language Flagship Capstone Program

The standards-based and performance-oriented learning outcomes for various language proficiency levels described in this Brief will help guide the effective teaching and learning of Chinese in the early grades through high school, because all Chinese language programs need to set clear learning outcomes that are aligned with nationally and internationally recognized proficiency scales. The description of the learning outcomes will also help students and their parents have an understanding of what Chinese language proficiency looks like and means at different levels and have a sense of the progress that students are making in learning the language.

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