



INDIANA  
DEPARTMENT *of*  
EDUCATION

2026 Indiana Academic Standards  
**WORLD LANGUAGES**  
**HERITAGE LANGUAGE**

**Indiana Department of Education**

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## Indiana Academic Standards Context and Purpose

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### Introduction

The Indiana Academic Standards for World Language: Heritage Language Learners are the result of a process designed to identify, evaluate, synthesize, and create high-quality, rigorous learning expectations for Indiana students.

Pursuant to Indiana Code (IC) 20-31-3, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) facilitated the review of the Indiana Academic Standards, integrating educator committee feedback, a public comment period and contributions from representatives of the Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association (IFLTA) and the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), culminating in formal adoption by the Indiana State Board of Education.

### What are the Indiana Academic Standards, and how should they be used?

The Indiana Academic Standards for World Languages are designed to allow heritage speakers to continue to develop their linguistic and cultural skills in order to become bilingual and biliterate. There is a focus on academic language while building literacy skills in reading and writing, as well as drawing upon and enhancing cultural knowledge. They should form the basis for strong core instruction for all students enrolled in the designated course of study. The standards identify the minimum academic content or skills that Indiana students need in order to be prepared for postsecondary success, but they are not all-inclusive.

While the Indiana Academic Standards establish key expectations for knowledge and skills and should be used as the basis for curriculum, the standards by themselves do not constitute a curriculum. It is the responsibility of the local school corporation to select and formally adopt curricular tools, including textbooks and any other supplementary materials, that align with Indiana Academic Standards. Additionally, corporation and school leaders should consider the appropriate instructional sequence of the standards as well as the length of time needed to teach each standard. Every standard has a unique place in the continuum of learning, but each standard will not require the same amount of time and attention. A deep understanding of the vertical articulation of the standards will enable educators to make the best instructional decisions. These standards must also be complemented by robust, evidence-based instructional practices to support overall student development.

### Who are Heritage Language Learners?

According to the ACTFL, a heritage language is the primary language used by a student's family. For instructional purposes, ACTFL makes a distinction between Heritage Language Learners. ACTFL refers to a Heritage Language Learner as a speaker (HL speaker) and as a learner (HL learner). ACTFL states, "A speaker is an individual who is 'raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and English' (Valdes, 2001). The term learner, on the other hand, refers to a student who has a familial, and thus personal and cultural, connection to the target language, but does not necessarily speak or understand it."

## Heritage Language and English Learners

Some HL learners may also qualify as English learners (ELs) under federal and state definitions. In these cases, heritage language courses can serve as a valuable program model to recognize and build upon students' existing linguistic knowledge while continuing to develop literacy and academic skills in the heritage language. Research has shown that the stronger a student's native language literacy skills are, the stronger their English literacy skills will become. However, heritage language instruction alone does not meet federal requirements for EL services. When heritage language learners are identified as ELs, these courses must be implemented in conjunction with other program models that directly address the development of English language proficiency. Schools are encouraged to coordinate efforts between world language, EL, and bilingual program staff to ensure that students' English and heritage language skills are both supported and advanced in a coherent, intentional way.

## Understanding Proficiency Levels

Indiana educators will recognize and be able to use ACTFL's proficiency levels/benchmarks to assess the acquisition of a student's heritage language. The proficiency levels for heritage learners reflect that most students have higher levels of interpersonal and interpretive listening skills. Educators will consider the proficiency levels when evaluating how a student may perform in an authentic situation outside of the classroom. The [ACTFL Can-Do Statements](#) provide performance indicators to assess achievement *within* the classroom setting. These proficiency levels may also be used for placement of heritage language students into the correct level of coursework. Heritage language students in Level I courses may have varied entry levels of proficiency at the onset of the course. However, because of their increased background knowledge, most heritage language students will make larger gains during the first level. The proficiency levels/benchmarks and performance indicators appear in student voice as "I can" statements.

**Table 1:** Heritage Language Learners: Performance Levels

Mode	Performance Levels		
	Heritage Language I	Heritage Language II	Heritage Language III
<b>Interpersonal Speaking</b>	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	Intermediate High
<b>Interpretive Reading</b>	Novice High	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid
<b>Interpretive Listening</b>	Intermediate Low	Intermediate High	Intermediate High
<b>Presentational Speaking</b>	Novice High	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid

## Standard Coding

The table illustrates how the standards are coded within this document. Indiana uses ACTFL’s alphanumeric system for coding individual standards. Coding provides a consistent means of communication among educators.

**Example:** Communication Standard - 1C.1I.NL.a

1C	The first (“1”) <b>Overarching Standard</b> is Communication (“C”).
1I	The first (“1”) <b>Specialized Standard</b> with the Communication standard is Interpersonal (“I”) Communication.
NL	The <b>Proficiency Benchmark</b> is Novice (“N”) and the <b>Performance Indicator</b> is Low (“L”).
a	A lowercase letter signals the specific <b>Standard Indicator</b> .

## Acknowledgments

The Indiana Department of Education appreciates the time, dedication, and expertise offered by Indiana’s secondary educators, higher education faculty, and other representatives who contributed to the development of these standards. We wish to specially acknowledge the committee members who dedicated many hours to the review and evaluation of these standards designed to prepare Indiana students enrolled in high school world languages for postsecondary enrollment, enlistment, and employment.

## Communication (1C)

**Students communicate effectively in the target language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes.**

### Standard 1: Interpersonal Communication (1I)

Students interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or informal written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

Proficiency Benchmark	Intermediate
<b>Proficiency Benchmark</b>	I can participate in spontaneous conversations using the spoken, written, or gestured features of my heritage language on familiar topics, creating a single sentence or series of sentences to ask and answer a variety of questions.
<b>Low</b>	<b>1C.1I.IL.a:</b> I can participate in spontaneous spoken, written, or gestured conversations on familiar topics, creating sentences to ask and answer a variety of questions using my heritage language.
	<b>1C.1I.IL.b:</b> I can, with guidance, employ idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions as well as shift register, to enhance comprehension.
<b>Mid</b>	<b>1C.1I.IM.a:</b> I can identify and exchange information in spoken and written conversations on a variety of familiar, researched, and/or heritage topics, while using words, phrases, and connected sentences through my heritage language.
	<b>1C.1I.IM.b:</b> I can, with some guidance, employ idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions as well as shift register, to enhance comprehension.
<b>High</b>	<b>1C.1I.IH.a:</b> I can ask a variety of questions, discuss, and exchange opinions using the spoken, written, and gestured features of my heritage language on relevant and personally researched topics using connected sentences that may combine to form paragraphs, often across various time frames.
	<b>1C.1I.IH.b:</b> I can independently employ idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions as well as shift register, to enhance comprehension.

**Standard 2: Interpretive Reading (2I)**

Students understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

Proficiency Benchmark	Novice High	Intermediate	
	I can identify the general topic and some basic information in both very familiar and everyday contexts by recognizing practiced or memorized words, phrases, and simple sentences in spoken and/or written contexts in my heritage language.	I can understand the main idea and various pieces of information on familiar topics from sentences and series of connected sentences in spoken and/or written contexts in my heritage language.	
		Low	Mid
Standards	<b>1C.2I.NH.a:</b> I can identify and recognize some words and phrases in both very familiar and everyday contexts, read in my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IL.a:</b> I can demonstrate the main idea of short and simple texts when the topic is familiar and in my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IM.a:</b> I can interpret specialized vocabulary, appropriate register, and genre-specific conventions in texts related to relevant topics in the heritage language.
	<b>1C.2I.NH.b:</b> I can identify and recognize some learned or memorized words and phrases when I read in my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IL.b:</b> I can understand some additional topics related to the main idea of short and simple texts when the topic is familiar in my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IM.b:</b> I can analyze and examine the main idea and supporting points of a text related to enduring relevant topics in the heritage language.
	<b>1C.2I.NH.c:</b> I can identify main ideas in fiction and/or non-fiction as well as identify the structural elements of text and its purpose when I engage with my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IL.e:</b> I can understand messages from familiar sources and some information from news and social media when the topic is familiar in my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IM.c:</b> I can evaluate arguments, points of view, or purposes for both fiction and/or nonfiction texts in the heritage language.
	<b>1C.2I.NH.d:</b> I can identify some supporting topics related to the main topic when I read in my heritage language.	<b>1C.2I.IL.d:</b> I can interpret literal and figurative language in fiction and determine the connotation of words in context.	<b>1C.2I.IM.d:</b> I can examine and analyze similes, metaphors, imagery, and other literary devices.
	<b>1C.2I.NH.e:</b> I can recognize simple literary devices in texts (e.g., similes, metaphors, imagery).	<b>1C.2I.IL.e:</b> I can understand some practices, products, and perspectives of the heritage cultures (e.g., geography, history, religion, fine arts).	<b>1C.2I.IM.e:</b> I can analyze and examine some practices, products, and perspectives of the heritage cultures (e.g., geography, history, religion,

			fine arts).
	<b>1C.2I.NH.f:</b> I can identify some practices, products, and perspectives of my heritage culture when I read in my heritage language.		

**Standard 3: Interpretive Listening (3I)**

Students understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

Proficiency Benchmark	Intermediate
	I can understand the main idea and various pieces of information on familiar topics from sentences and series of connected sentences in spoken or gestured contexts in my heritage language.
Low	<b>1C.3I.IL.a:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can recognize the use of idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions as well as shifts in register.
	<b>1C.3I.IL.b:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can recognize word families, cognates, and borrowed and shared words to expand vocabulary and derive meaning.
	<b>1C.3I.IL.c:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can interpret oral communication with guidance.
	<b>1C.3I.IL.d:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can recognize non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, tone, intonation) that enhance understanding of oral communication.
Mid	<b>1C.3I.IM.a:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can usually understand and examine the use of idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions as well as shifts in register.
	<b>1C.3I.IM.b:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can group word families, cognates, borrowed, and shared words to expand vocabulary and derive meaning.
	<b>1C.3I.IM.c:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can understand and sometimes analyze oral communication with little guidance.
	<b>1C.3I.IM.d:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can examine non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, tone, or intonation) that enhance understanding of oral communication.
High	<b>1C.3I.IH.a:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can analyze the use of idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions as well as shifts in register.
	<b>1C.3I.IH.b:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can examine and analyze word families, cognates, borrowed and shared words, and synonyms and antonyms to expand vocabulary and derive meaning.
	<b>1C.3I.IH.c:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can synthesize oral communications on various

	relevant topics.
	<b>1C.3I.IH.d:</b> In conversations and discussions, I can evaluate non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, tone, intonation) that enhance understanding of oral communication.

**Standard 4: Presentational (P)**

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate resources and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

Proficiency Benchmark	Novice High	Intermediate	
	I can communicate and present information on familiar, personal, and everyday topics using simple sentences as well as idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions through spoken or written heritage language supported by visuals and gestures.	I can communicate information, make presentations, and express my thoughts about relevant topics using paragraphs and a series of connected paragraphs through spoken and written heritage language supported by visuals and gestures.	
		Low	Mid
Standards	<b>1C.P.NH.a:</b> I can present information about myself and familiar topics using original, simple sentences in my heritage language.	<b>1C.P.IL.a:</b> I can present information about my life, activities, and relevant topics using original, simple sentences in my heritage language.	<b>1C.P.IM.a:</b> I can present information about relevant topics related to the heritage language.
	<b>1C.P.NH.b:</b> I can use appropriate grammatical agreement and shift in register as well as idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions in the heritage language with guidance.	<b>1C.P.IL.b:</b> I can use appropriate grammatical agreement and shift in register as well as idiomatic, colloquial, and proverbial expressions independently in the heritage language.	<b>1C.P.IM.b:</b> I can use specialized vocabulary and consistent verb tenses to evaluate relevant topics in the heritage language with facilitation using connected paragraphs.
	<b>1C.P.NH.c:</b> I can identify citations, anecdotes, quotes, and details to support the message and purpose of written communications with guidance.	<b>1C.P.IL.c:</b> I can use/integrate citations, anecdotes, quotes, and details to support the message and purpose of written and spoken communications with some guidance.	<b>1C.P.IM.c:</b> I can use and integrate citations, anecdotes, quotes, and details, and explain how they support the message and purpose of written and spoken communications with facilitation.

## Cultures (2C)

**Students interact effectively with cultural practices within the language.**

### Standard 1: Interacting with Other Cultures (IC)

Students use language to interact with others in and from other cultures.

Proficiency Benchmark	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
	I can understand my heritage culture through comparisons made between practices, products, and perspectives.		
<b>Standards</b>	<b>2C.IC.N.a:</b> I can identify the interrelationships among the practices, products, and perspectives of my heritage culture and those of the predominant culture.	<b>2C.IC.I.a:</b> I can identify the interrelationships among the practices, products, and perspectives of my heritage culture in relation to the predominant culture.	<b>2C.IC.A.a:</b> I can evaluate the interrelationships among the practices, products, and perspectives of my heritage culture and those of the predominant culture.
	<b>2C.IC.N.b:</b> I can recognize how these interrelations shape my heritage.	<b>2C.IC.I.b:</b> I can analyze how these interrelations shape my heritage.	<b>2C.IC.A.b:</b> I can examine how these interrelations shape my heritage.
	<b>2C.IC.N.c:</b> I can recognize in writing the influences of heritage language usage manifested in communications in my community.	<b>2C.IC.I.c:</b> I can examine in writing the influence of heritage language usage manifested in communications in my community.	<b>2C.IC.A.c:</b> I can analyze and explain in writing the influences of heritage language usage manifested in communications in my community.

**Standard 2: Relating to Cultural Practice and Products to Perspectives (Investigate) (CI)**

Students use language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices, products, and perspectives of the target cultures of study.

Proficiency Benchmark	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
	I can investigate products and practices to help me understand perspectives in the target cultures of study and in my own.	I can explain through comparisons between products and practices to help me understand perspectives in the target cultures of study and in my own.	I can reflect on the differences among products and practices and how they relate to perspectives in the target cultures of study and in my own.
Standards	<b>2C.CI.N.a:</b> I can investigate products and practices to help me understand perspectives in the target cultures of study and in my own.	<b>2C.CI.I.a:</b> I can explain through comparisons between products and practices to help me understand perspectives in the target cultures of study and in my own.	<b>2C.CI.A.a:</b> I can reflect on the differences among products and practices and how they relate to perspectives in the target cultures of study and in my own.
	<b>2C.CI.N.b:</b> I can identify and describe the perspectives of different traditions within families, communities, and schools.	<b>2C.CI.I.b:</b> I can describe and discuss the perspectives of different traditions within families, communities, and schools.	<b>2C.CI.A.b:</b> I can discuss and analyze the perspectives of different traditions within families, communities, and schools.
	<b>2C.CI.N.c:</b> I can identify and describe the different traditions in comparison with my own heritage experiences.	<b>2C.CI.I.c:</b> I can describe and discuss the different traditions in comparison with my own heritage experiences.	<b>2C.CI.A.c:</b> I can discuss and analyze the different traditions in comparison with my own heritage experiences.
	<b>2C.CI.N.d:</b> I can identify and describe significant relevant experiences that are unique to my heritage.	<b>2C.CI.I.d:</b> I can research and examine relevant experiences that are unique to my heritage..	<b>2C.CI.A.d:</b> I can research, discuss, and analyze relevant experiences that are unique to my heritage.
	<b>2C.CI.N.e:</b> I can research, identify, and describe significant historical events that are unique to my heritage.	<b>2C.CI.I.e:</b> I can research and examine significant historical events that are unique to my heritage.	<b>2C.CI.A.e:</b> I can research, discuss, and analyze significant historical events that are unique to my heritage.
	<b>2C.CI.N.f:</b> I can identify and compare the different historical and contemporary heritage backgrounds among my heritage classmates.	<b>2C.CI.I.f:</b> I can discuss the different historical and relevant heritage backgrounds among my heritage classmates.	<b>2C.CI.A.f:</b> I can analyze the different historical and relevant heritage backgrounds among my heritage classmates.
	<b>2C.CI.N.g:</b> I can connect and discuss historical and relevant	<b>2C.CI.I.g:</b> I can discuss and examine historical and relevant	<b>2C.CI.A.g:</b> I can analyze historical and relevant events

	events of my heritage language and culture with my peers, school community, heritage community, and family.	events of my heritage language and culture with my peers, school community, heritage community, and family.	of my heritage language and culture with my peers, school community, heritage community, and family.
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### Connections (3C)

**Students connect with other disciplines and acquire a variety of information and perspectives in order to use the language to think creatively and critically.**

#### Standard 1: Acquiring a Variety of Information and Perspectives (IP)

Students access and evaluate information and perspectives that are available through the target language and its cultures.

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Proficiency Benchmark / Standard</b>	<b>3C.IP.N:</b> I can gather primary resources of the heritage language and culture and connect to my heritage language and culture.	<b>3C.IP.I:</b> I can gather primary resources of the heritage language and culture and identify the perspective of the resource.	<b>3C.IP.A.a:</b> I can critique primary resources of the heritage language and culture and evaluate whether it includes a variety of perspectives.
			<b>3C.IP.A.b:</b> I can include a variety of perspectives of the heritage language and culture.

#### Standard 2: Making Connections (MC)

Students build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Proficiency Benchmark / Standard</b>	<b>3C.MC.N:</b> I can use my heritage language, culture, and experiences across some social and academic contexts.	<b>3C.MC.I:</b> I can apply my heritage language, culture, and experiences across a variety of social, academic, and professional contexts.	<b>3C.MC.A:</b> I can apply my heritage language, culture, and experiences to solve problems and actively participate in a variety of social, academic, and professional contexts.

## Comparisons (4C)

**Students develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact effectively in the target culture of study.**

### Standard 1: Cultural Comparisons (CC)

Through the target language(s), students investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied with their own.

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Proficiency Benchmark / Standard</b>	<b>4C.CC.N:</b> I can identify differences and similarities between my community and the target culture(s) of study.	<b>4C.CC.I:</b> I can explain and provide generic details about differences and similarities between my community and the target culture(s) of study.	<b>4C.CC.A:</b> I can explain, provide details about, and give specific examples of differences and similarities between my community and the target culture(s) of study.

### Standard 2: Language Comparisons (LC)

Students use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Proficiency Benchmark / Standard</b>	<b>4C.LC.N.a:</b> I can use my heritage language to identify, describe, and discuss the nature of language, with guidance.	<b>4C.LC.I.a:</b> I can use my heritage language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language with minimal guidance.	<b>4C.LC.A.a:</b> I can use my heritage language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language on my own.
	<b>4C.LC.N.b:</b> I can recognize national and regional language variation within the heritage language.	<b>4C.LC.I.b:</b> I can describe national and regional language variation within the heritage language.	<b>4C.LC.A.b:</b> I can examine and analyze national and regional language variation within the heritage language.

## Communities (5C)

**Students communicate and interact effectively in the target culture of study in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world.**

### Standard 1: School and Global (SG)

Students use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world.

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Proficiency Benchmark / Standard</b>	<b>5C.SG.N:</b> I can connect my experiences, including my heritage, while interacting within my school and home.	<b>5C.SG.I:</b> I can connect my experiences, including my heritage, while interacting within my school, home, and community.	<b>5C.SG.A:</b> I can embody my heritage experiences, including my heritage, while deeply engaging across multiple social contexts, including schools, home, and community.

### Standard 2: Lifelong Learning (LL)

Students reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement.

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Proficiency Benchmark / Standard</b>	<b>5C.LL.N:</b> I can identify how my heritage relates to my heritage family and school.	<b>5C.LL.I:</b> I can connect with my family's experiences and my heritage community to identify ways to be engaged within the greater school and community.	<b>5C.LL.A:</b> I can apply my heritage and engage with major communities to identify lifelong learning opportunities (e.g., my school, home, and community).