

Date of Hearing: April 11, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair  
AB 2239 (Eduardo Garcia) – As Introduced February 13, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Pupil instruction: foreign language course: A–G course certification

**SUMMARY:** Encourages the governing board of a school district to support its schools in submitting any foreign language course that is specifically designed for native speakers to the University of California (UC) for certification and addition to the school's "A–G" course list.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes requirements for graduation from a California public high school, including the requirement that a student take a one year course in one of the following subjects: foreign language, visual and performing arts, or career technical education.
- 2) Requires the California State University (CSU), and requests the UC, to establish a model uniform set of academic standards for high school courses for purposes of recognition for admission to the CSU and to the UC, respectively. These uniform set of academic standards are commonly referred to as the "A–G" subject requirements.
- 3) Encourages the governing board of a school district to support schools in submitting any computer science course that a school wishes to use to fulfill school district imposed mathematics subject area requirements to the UC for certification and addition to the school's "A–G" course list.
- 4) States the intent of the Legislature that local educational agencies submit course outlines for ethnic studies for approval as A-G courses which meet the admissions requirements of the UC and the CSU.
- 5) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the IQC to recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) revisions to the content standards in world languages, and authorizes the SBE to adopt, reject, or modify the revised standards by January 31, 2019.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** The author's office states, "Currently, the governing board of a school district must submit a foreign language course, such as a heritage language course, to the UC for certification in order to be added to the school's "A–G" course list. If the school district does not submit a course, students cannot use this course to fulfill the foreign language requirement for admission to UC or CSU. If a heritage language course is not approved by UC, heritage language speakers must either switch to a new language or be ineligible to attend these institutions. By encouraging the governing board of a school district to support schools in submitting these courses, our office hopes to see more heritage language speakers become eligible for admission to UC and CSU without having to take study a third language."

***Heritage language courses in California.*** In recognition of the specific language learning needs of heritage language speakers, many schools offer world language courses specifically designed for students who are native speakers of a language. For example, a school might offer a course titled “Spanish for heritage speakers.”

The Center for Applied Linguistics defines a heritage language learner as a student who “has some proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language through family, community, or country of origin. Heritage language learners have widely diverse levels of proficiency in the language (in terms of oral proficiency and literacy) and of connections to the language and culture.” UC San Diego’s heritage language program defines heritage speakers as “neither typical students of a foreign language, nor fluent speakers,” and states that they “require a different kind of instruction that enhances the language skills they already have, and amplifies their cultural literacy.”

Heritage language courses are designed for students who might have conversational or social proficiency with a language due to its use in their home, making beginning language courses inappropriate, but who lack proficiency in academic language – reading, writing, and vocabulary, for example – or some other aspect of language, which would also make placement in an advanced language course inappropriate.

***“A-G” approved heritage language courses in California.*** Data from the CDE on course offerings and enrollment in heritage language courses for 2016-17, as well as the number which are “A-G” approved, is shown below:

| Course                                    | Enrollment | Schools offering course | Courses offered | Courses A-G approved |
|---|------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Spanish for native speakers               | 111,173    | 792                     | 3,762           | 3,568                |
| Other language course for native speakers | 2,816      | 44                      | 117             | 99                   |
| Korean for native speakers                | 39         | 1                       | 2               | 2                    |

The UC “A-G” course portal lists heritage language courses at public schools in Hmong, Armenian, Arabic, Hmong, Tagalog (Filipino), and Vietnamese. These courses are some of the courses labeled “other language courses for native speakers” by CDE.

***What happens if a heritage language course is not “A-G” approved?*** If a heritage language course is not “A-G” approved, a student who has taken these courses must either take additional approved courses (perhaps starting over in another language) or be ineligible for admission to UC and CSU. The author argues that making a student take a new language when he or she has already taken coursework in their heritage language poses an unnecessary barrier to college eligibility.

***UC and CSU foreign language requirements.*** California requires that all high school graduates take a course in either world language, visual and performing arts, or career technical education.

In addition, the UC and CSU systems each require completion of foreign language courses to be eligible for admission. The UC requires two years in the same language (or equivalent to the second level of high school instruction) and recommends a third year. CSU requires two years in the same language, but if a student can demonstrate competency in a language other than English that is equivalent to or higher than that expected of students who have completed two years of language other than English study, the student may be allowed a waiver for this language requirement.

**“A-G” course approval process.** According to the UC, the intent of the “A-G” subject requirements is to ensure that students have attained a body of general knowledge that will provide breadth and perspective to new, more advanced study. Courses from California high schools and online schools used to satisfy the "A-G" subject requirements are intended to be “academically challenging, involving substantial reading, writing, problems and laboratory work (as appropriate), and show serious attention to analytical thinking, factual content and developing students' oral and listening skills.”

According to the UC, "A-G" course new submission period from February 1 - September 15, and new courses are generally reviewed within two to four weeks of submission. UC reports that it conducts “blind” reads of all new courses, in which the name of the institution submitting the course is hidden from the analysts.

**Assets orientation toward home language in English Learner Roadmap policy.** In July, 2017, the SBE adopted the California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy. The Roadmap is intended to articulate a common vision and mission for educating English learners and supports LEAs as they implement the State Board policy.

A key principle of the Roadmap is an “assets orientation” toward home language skills, as both valuable for their learning and in the larger world. Heritage language courses are one example of instructional programs which treat home language as an asset. The value of proficiency in multiple languages as a career skill will soon be reflected in the California School Dashboard. The 2018 Dashboard is expected to include the State Seal of Biliteracy as a component of the College and Career Indicator.

**World language standards under revision.** Current law requires the SPI, in consultation with the IQC, to recommend to the SBE revisions to the content standards in world languages, and authorizes the SBE to adopt, reject, or modify the revised standards by January 31, 2019. According to the CDE timeline for the revision of these standards, standards advisory committees are meeting in the spring and fall of this year. In August and September of this year the draft standards will be available for review and feedback from the public for 60 days.

While the statute authorizing the revision of these standards does not require it, it is likely that the revised standards will be aligned with key features of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, published by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The World-Readiness Standards address heritage language programs, noting that the population has diverse language skills and needs, and that heritage language speakers require instruction that will allow them to “1) maintain existing strengths in the language, 2) develop strengths in areas in which the home background has not provided support, and 3) use the language for reading and writing to communicate interpersonally or for a variety of published pieces.”

The CDE has issued guidelines for the revision of the World Languages Standards, based on input received at focus group sessions. They recommend that the standards include a section with information on how the standards support dual immersion programs, including “developmental considerations and other phenomena specific to dual immersion learners (e.g., developing English skills may take longer, what it means for a heritage language student to be in a language course in high school, etc.).”

**Recommended amendments.** *Staff recommends that the bill be amended* to add “governing bodies of charter schools...” to the bill, so that charter schools are similarly encouraged to submit heritage language courses for A-G approval.

**Related legislation.** AB 2319 (Nazarian) of this Session replaces the term “foreign language” with “world language” throughout the Education Code.

AB 2290, (Santiago), Chapter 643, Statutes of 2016, requires the SPI, in consultation with the IQC to recommend to the SBE revisions to the content standards in world languages, and authorizes the SBE to adopt, reject, or modify the revised standards by January 31, 2019.

AB 711 (Santiago) of the 2015-16 Session would have required the SBE, on or before September 1, 2017, to adopt or reject national content standards for teaching foreign languages, pursuant to recommendations of the SPI. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

California Immigrant Policy Center  
California Language Teachers Association  
Common Sense Kids Action

##### **Opposition**

None on file

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