
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 2319 **Hearing Date:** May 9, 2018
Author: Nazarian
Version: February 13, 2018
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Brandon Darnell

Subject: Foreign language education: world language.

SUMMARY

This bill replaces references to the term “foreign language” throughout the Education Code with references to the term “world language” instead.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Makes reference to the term “foreign language” in numerous provisions throughout the Education Code.
- 2) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the Instructional Quality Commission, to recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) revisions to the World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools, adopted by the SBE in 2009, and requires the SBE to adopt, reject, or modify the recommended revisions by January 31, 2019. (Education Code §60605.5)
- 3) States the intent of the Legislature that that new career technical education courses that satisfy the foreign language requirement for admission to the California State University and the University of California focus on world languages aligned with career preparation, emphasizing real-world application and technical content in related career and technical education courses. (EC § 51225.3)

ANALYSIS

This bill replaces references to “foreign language” throughout the Education Code with references instead to “world language.” Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Replaces references to “foreign language” throughout the Education Code with references instead to “world language.”
- 2) Defines “world language” to mean “any language other than English, including American Sign Language, and is synonymous with ‘foreign language.’”
- 3) Specifies that none of its provisions require local educational agencies to make modifications to their language programs.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Since 2009, when the State Board of Education Adopted the World Language Content Standards for guiding the teaching and learning of languages and cultures in California’s public schools, local education agencies have been using world language to label their course offerings in the discipline. It is also the current term preferred in the teaching profession and research literature; various publications use it most often to describe the teaching and learning of languages and cultures. The new term is perceived as more inclusive to describe the discipline, especially in California where our diverse society includes speakers of nearly every language in the world. As such no language should be considered “foreign” within our boards... Ultimately, changing foreign language to world language is an opportunity to celebrate California’s diversity and embrace the various cultures contributing to our State’s ongoing achievement.”
- 2) ***Complete replacement.*** This bill amends 27 different code sections within the Education Code to replace all references to the term “foreign language” with references to the term “world language” instead. These code sections touch on a wide variety of topics, from teaching credentials to instructional materials to high school graduation requirements, and many others. In fact, the only reference to “foreign language” that would remain in the Education Code would be to the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), a third party standardized test.
- 3) ***California state standards use the term “world languages.”*** California’s language learning content standards, adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2009, are titled the World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools. The author notes that in the World Language Content Standards the SBE and Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) noted that, “students also need to communicate with the diverse populations that constitute California’s rich linguistic and cultural tapestry. For this reason, the standards refer to world, rather than foreign, languages.” According to their respective websites, 41 other states also use the term “world language in their state standards. Six states use the term “foreign language:” Arkansas, Illinois, North Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming. Rhode Island does not appear to have foreign/world languages standards, and Texas uses the phrase “languages other than English.”
- 4) ***Previous legislation.*** SB 1016 (Karnette, 2001) would have deleted references in the Education Code to the term “foreign language” and instead substituted the term “world language.” SB 1016 was vetoed by Governor Davis, who stated:

"This bill would delete references in the Education Code to the term 'foreign language' and instead, substitute the term 'world language'.

While I appreciate the intent of the bill to eliminate any negative connotations, this bill is not necessary. The term 'foreign language' is used and acknowledged throughout the nation. The term was never meant to be derogatory in nature.

I am also concerned about the additional cost to taxpayers for publishers to conform textbooks and local governments to change numerous laws to conform to this change in law.”

SUPPORT

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson
California Language Teachers Association
Californians Together
California School Boards Association
California Teachers Association

OPPOSITION

None received

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