

Two-Year World Language Requirement FAQ

Illinois will have a two-year world language graduation requirement beginning for students who enter ninth grade in the 2028-29 school year.

1. Is there an exemption for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

The language in the School Code states that the two-year language requirement “does not apply to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an IEP.”

2. Can any other students be exempt from this requirement?

No other exemptions currently exist.

3. Are English learners (ELs) exempt from the requirement?

There are no exemptions for EL or multilingual students.

4. Is learning English as a Second Language considered part of meeting this requirement?

ESL courses are not considered to be part of meeting the requirement.

5. Can participation in a dual language program count toward the two-year language requirement?

Participation alone does not exempt a student from the requirement. However, [105 ILCS 5/10-22.43](#) allows districts “to grant one year of high school foreign language credit to any student who has graduated from an accredited elementary school and who can demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English ... Proficiency shall be determined by academic criteria acceptable to local school boards.”

6. Can EL participation in a Transitional Bilingual Program (TBE) in their home language and English count toward the two-year language requirement?

Students who are enrolled in TBE programs that include a language arts course in their home language may be able to earn world language credit if the course is coded as both bilingual and world language AND the teacher of record has both a bilingual AND world language endorsement for that language.

7. Can a student “place out” by taking a language proficiency test?

Students are not able to place out by taking a proficiency test. Proficiency tests can place students in a higher level of language study, but not exempt them.

8. What if a student places into a world language course that is beyond Level 2?

The student would still be required to take two years of world languages, regardless of what level the student is initially placed into. Independent study, dual credit, or choosing a new world language path are options a district could consider if further coursework that the school is not able to offer in the current world language track is required. However, please

review question 5 for further information regarding earning credit for world language study prior to high school.

9. Do courses that are taken through the [Illinois Virtual Course Catalog](#) count for credit?

If the world language courses are coded as high school classes, they can be applied to graduation requirements.

10. Does it have to be two years of the same language?

Students may choose to take different world languages to meet this requirement.

11. Some states say that computer science is a language. Is this acceptable via ISBE standards?

Computer science is not considered a world language as defined in School Code and thus cannot be counted toward the world language requirement.

12. What do we do for students transferring in from out of state who don't have the opportunity for two years?

Local districts have the authority to determine if transfer credits will be accepted. This involves a transcript review or process otherwise determined locally. A student who is determined not to have credits that would satisfy this requirement would not be eligible for graduation until the requirement is met.

13. How does the state define "two years"? Is it two academic years? Or, for example, could a student take Spanish 1 over two academic years?

An academic year or its equivalent is defined by the local district. (If a district uses semesters, two semesters equal a year. If a district uses trimesters, three trimesters equal a year.) Students would need two courses (indicated through distinct course codes) that are equal to a year or its equivalent to satisfy this requirement.

14. What about students who take a world language class prior to high school? Can any years of a middle school world language class count toward the two-year high school requirement?

*The requirement falls in a section of School Code that applies to high school requirements; therefore, the only way a student could receive credit for middle school courses at the high school level is if **all three** of the following conditions are met (this is the same procedure for students who take Algebra 1 in middle school):*

- 1) The middle school teacher must be properly endorsed for 9-12, AND*
- 2) The course code should match the high school course code, AND*
- 3) The course must appear on their high school transcript.*

15. Can a student who attends an approved Ethnic Language School earn World Language Credit toward this requirement?

An ethnic language school may seek approval to show that the language instruction offered is equivalent in content, rigor, etc. to foreign language instruction offered at a public high school. This program provides for that approval under [105 ILCS 5/2-3.44](#) in the School Code. Per [105 ILCS 5/10-22.43a](#), high schools may choose to award world language credit to students who participate in approved Ethnic Language School programs. "The amount of credit awarded shall be roughly equivalent to the amount of credit the student would have received if he or she had reached the same level of foreign language proficiency at a public high school as he or she achieved at the ethnic school." Students who are awarded two years of world language credit by their high school via their participation in an approved ethnic language school program shall be considered to have met the two-year world language graduation requirement.

16. How does the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy factor into awarding high school credit for world language study?

Students can qualify for the Illinois State Seal of biliteracy at any time during their 9-12 high school years. Per [105 ILCS 5/2-3.159](#), "For admissions purposes, each public university in this State shall accept the State Seal of Biliteracy as equivalent to 2 years of foreign language coursework taken during high school if a student's high school transcript indicates that he or she will be receiving or has received the State Seal of Biliteracy." As such, students who have met the qualifying requirements for the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy any time during Grades 9-12 shall be considered to have met the two-year world language graduation requirement.

For Reference:

Full text of IL School Code: [105 ILCS 5](#)

- Ethnic Language Schools: [105 ILCS 5/10-22.43a](#), [105 ILCS 5/2-3.44](#)
- Credit for Proficiency in Foreign Language: [105 ILCS 5/10-22.43](#)
- Graduation Requirements: [105 ILCS 5/27-1](#)
- State Seal of Biliteracy: [105 ILCS 5/2-3.159](#)