

High School Graduation Requirements

World Languages FAQs



Q: Are World Languages a high school graduation requirement in Seattle?

A: Beginning in 2017-2018 (class of 2021), high school students in Seattle Public Schools need to meet the new [state high school graduation requirements](#) (24 credits including 2 credits of world language). Both world language credits may be Personalized Pathway Requirements, i.e. “related courses that lead to a specific post high school career or educational outcome chosen by the student based on the student’s interests and High School and Beyond Plan, that may include Career and Technical Education, and are intended to provide a focus for the student’s learning.”

The Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT) recently received clarification from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board of Education about several aspects of the new requirement. WAFLT has issued a [letter to districts](#) expressing concern that students may choose to not select world language credits in high school without fully understanding the implications for future career, college, and life choices. WAFLT has drafted sample language below that districts may want to include in their students’ High School and Beyond Plan

I, (student name), understand that if I choose to forgo earning two credits of world language in high school I will graduate from high school without meeting admission requirements to four-year colleges or universities in Washington State. If I choose to enter a four-year college later in life, I will be responsible for earning those credits at my own expense.

Q: Do the two high school credits need to be in the same World Language?

A: WAFLT’s [letter to districts](#) also outlines the finding that the state high school graduation requirement Personalized Pathway option allows students the flexibility of meeting the graduation requirements by earning **one credit each in two different languages**. Therefore, students can graduate from high school in Seattle with zero, one, or two world language credits (depending on their Personalized Pathway).

Q: How many world language credits do students need for admission to a 4-year college?

A: If students ever plan to apply for admission to a 4-year college or university in our state (and in most other states), they do need to have world languages on their high school transcript. Although we talk about needing 2 “credits,” in fact, college admissions officers don’t count credits; they look at the highest level of world language course students have taken. Having two level 1 credits of two different languages (e.g., Spanish 1 and French 1) will not satisfy the college admissions requirement. Students attending the University of Washington also need to satisfy the college exit requirement in order to graduate college, which they can do with at least a level 3 world language class on their transcript.

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Q: How will students’ “personalized pathway” be determined, in particular, the two world language credits?

A: [WAC 180-51-068](#) specifies that “[s]tudents shall create their high school and beyond plans in cooperation with parents/guardians and school staff. This should include information about college admissions requirements and the definition of Career and College Ready.”

The High School and Beyond Plan is currently documented in the WSIPC’s High School and Beyond Planner, a digital tool. Students will document their chosen Personal Pathway each year, in the Personal Pathway section. Parents may view the plan online with their student. The Personal pathway notation should not be used to mandate course tracks. It is a tool to be updated and edited annually. Signatures are not required and should not be implemented for the purposes of mandating course selection.

Q: What options do students have for earning World Language credits toward high school graduation and college admissions?

A: There are a number of ways for students to earn World Language credits in Seattle:

- All high schools in Seattle offer at least 3 years of the same World Language. Some high schools offer College in the High School (CIHS), Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes as well. These classes may help a student qualify for college credits for advanced placement in a 4-year college. For specifics about which languages are offered where, download the [SPS World Languages Regional Offerings](#).
- Middle schools and some K-8 schools also offer opportunities for students to take high school equivalent World Language courses. Students taking the courses can earn at least 1 high school credit (sometimes 2) when they transition into 9th grade.
- Competency-Based [World Language Credit Testing](#) is an excellent option for students who have learned a language outside of school, for example, at home, through community-based language programs, summer language programs, or travel abroad. Comp credits appear on the transcript by language and are valid for high school graduation and college admissions.
- Seattle partners with a non-profit, [One World Now!](#), to offer after global leadership classes and language classes in Arabic, Korean, Mandarin, Russian. Students are able to earn Out of District world language credits upon successful completion of their courses.