

Characteristics of Effective Foreign Language Instruction

The National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages has identified the following characteristics of effective foreign language instruction. These guidelines provide a basis for common understanding and communication among evaluators, observers, and practitioners in classrooms where foreign/second languages are taught. The Characteristics focus on the students who are the recipients of effective foreign language instruction.

The Characteristics reflect the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) and focus on the five goal areas of Communication, Connections, Comparisons, Cultures, and Communities. The Characteristics reflect also the importance of language learning strategies, diverse learning styles, the use of authentic cultural documents, and the use of technology as an instructional tool. The Characteristics are a companion resource to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, state frameworks, and local curriculum guides.

1. The teacher sets high expectations for all students, designs assessment, and organizes instruction to engage and motivate all learners.
2. The teacher and students communicate purposefully in the target language as listeners, speakers, readers, writers, and viewers.
3. There is more student activity than teacher activity in most lessons. Student activity includes student to student interactions as well as teacher to student interactions. Students work independently, in pairs, and in groups. Students ask and answer questions and they create with language.
4. Students take risks as language learners because the learning environment is positive and supportive.
5. When error correction is appropriate, students are given opportunities, including wait-time, to self-correct. Teacher correction of student errors is often done through follow-up review and re-teaching strategies.
6. Assessments are ongoing. Students are assessed formally and informally on how well they are able to meet the objectives of the lesson. Continuous self-assessments for students and teachers are encouraged.
7. Students use language specific learning strategies and are encouraged to assess their own progress.
8. Culture is a natural component of language use in all activities.

9. All students are guided to use all levels of thinking skills, e.g., they repeat, recognize, and recall as well as apply, create, and predict.
10. The diverse learning styles of all students are considered in the teacher's instructional planning.
11. Students have positive attitudes toward cultural diversity which are often demonstrated in the learning environment.
12. The physical environment including displays of student work is instructional, motivational, and informative.
13. Students and teachers are not text-bound during instructional time. It is obvious that the text is a tool, not the curriculum.
14. Students and teachers use a variety of print and non-print materials including authentic target language sources.
15. Technology, as appropriate and available, is used by students and teachers to facilitate learning and teaching.

NOTE: Listening, speaking, and authentic non-print materials are emphasized, but to a lesser degree, in Latin and Classical Greek instruction.