

Memorandum

Date: June 26, 2026
To: PELSB Board Members
From: Yelena Bailey, Executive Director
RE: Heritage Language Rulemaking - Action

Background

The Legislature approved a new pathway in 2023 for PELSB to guide and support teachers in becoming licensed to teach their own language and culture, recognizing difficulties heritage speakers of languages historically had navigating the portfolio process. This pathway, staffed within PELSB, utilizes the portfolio process and World Languages and Cultures licensure standards. Understanding that this was a new and complex endeavor, PELSB and Education Evolving, a local education advocacy nonprofit, entered into an MOA whereby Education Evolving would gather experts from the various languages and cultures represented in the cohort to advise and provide recommendations to PELSB on this licensure pathway. These final recommendations were submitted to PELSB in November 2024.

Across conversations, Education Evolving highlighted gaps in the existing World Languages and Cultures license to advocate for a stand-alone, specific Heritage Language. Education Evolving believe a new license should be created that honors the unique needs of Heritage Language learners and the educators licensed to guide them. K-12 Heritage Language programs require a deep understanding of immigrant and refugee community histories, complexities, and intersectional identities, which is also true for the existing ESL and Bilingual and Bicultural licenses (refer to proposed language in Supb. 4A).

Discussion

The Board authorized the Heritage Language Fellows to draft language for a new Heritage Language License in November 2024. Since then, the Board has adopted a guiding philosophy on streamlining licensure. The need for heritage language educators is clear. Still, the Board may want to discuss how this license fits into the broader work of the Board.

Updates

At the April meeting, board members discussed incorporating the proposed heritage language standards into a new language license.

After the May meeting, the board chair and executive director met with the heritage language fellows, as well as Dr. Jenna Cushing-Leubner who is an expert in language acquisition. Dr. Cushing-Leubner provided a crosswalk of the language standards and the group as a whole is comfortable with the Board's plan to fold the heritage language standards into a larger language rulemaking.

Recommendation

Staff recommend moving the World Languages and Cultures rulemaking up in the schedule in order to incorporate these along with the heritage language draft standards into a new rule.

Options

1. Move to revise the rulemaking schedule and direct staff to start the process of incorporate the heritage language standards and the world language standards into a new rule draft.
2. Move to open rulemaking on just the heritage language standards.
3. Table for further discussion.