



UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

World Languages

Department Mission Statement

Through articulated, progressive, and engaging curricula, the World Language Department at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools endeavors to graduate linguistically and culturally competent students who will understand the world through the lens of a language and culture beyond their own.

Philosophy & Objectives

The World Language Department seeks to empower students to function effectively and appropriately in a language and culture other than their own; to foster an attitude of openness and an appreciation of language, culture, and history; to instill a disciplined and serious attitude toward language learning; and to encourage awareness of the individual process of language acquisition.

The high school graduation requirement for World Languages is two consecutive years of study in one of the following languages: French, German, Latin, Mandarin Chinese, or Spanish. Students gain proficiency in a variety of ways, and instruction focuses on the four basic language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, although listening and speaking are not as prominent in Latin classes. Students who perform consistently

well in the two-year sequence can expect to gain basic language skills, a sound foundation in grammar, and the ability to function at an elementary level. However, we encourage students to continue their study beyond the two-year requirement in order to develop real proficiency. Most students continue for four years, and some take more than one language.

Our curriculum is designed for second language learners, so we require students to select a language that is not a native or heritage language to fulfill the graduation requirement. However, once the language requirement is fulfilled, native and heritage language learners may take advanced courses as electives, to hone their reading and writing skills and to prepare for the AP exam.

World Language Department Placement Policy

Our program is designed to teach students a new language. Accordingly, our classes are not well-suited for students who are native- or heritage-speakers. A native speaker is a student who has spoken a non-English language from earliest childhood, often as a primary language. A heritage speaker is a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and

Courses

- Chinese 1-6
- Advanced Chinese 3-5
- AP Chinese Language and Culture
- French 1-5
- Advanced French 3-5
- French 6: The Francophone World
- AP French Language and Culture
- Intensive French
- German 1-5
- AP German Language and Culture
- Classical Greek 1-2
- Latin 1-4
- Spanish 1-5
- Advanced Spanish 3-5
- Spanish 6: Explorations in Culture
- AP Spanish Language and Culture

Non-Language Electives

- Ancient Greek Performance and Competition
- Sprache in Bild und Wort

who is to some degree bilingual/proficient in that language and in English (Valdés, 2000a, 2000b). To fulfill our departmental mission to “graduate linguistically and culturally competent students who will understand the world through the lens of a language and culture beyond their own,” we require that students choose a language that is a new language for them for grades 3–12.

The reasons for this policy are:

1) We are not a bilingual or an immersion school. The curriculum has been designed to teach students for whom the language is considered a new language and begins on the premise that students have no knowledge of the target language.

2) It is in the best interest of native- and heritage-speaker students who will not be challenged enough and whose needs will not be met in our regular classes, which are geared towards second language learners. Native and heritage speakers need different lessons, different reinforcements, and different ways to be challenged.

In making a determination about whether a class is an appropriate fit for a student, the department will consider the parent/guardian’s assessment of their student’s experience with the language, the student’s language skills/experience reported in their application for admission to Lab, and the teacher’s assessment of the student’s apparent proficiency displayed in class. If Lab has reason to believe a student enrolled in a particular class would be better suited to a different language class based on the above criteria, Lab will engage the parent/guardian(s) about changing the student’s language of study.

Placement, Advancement, Acceleration

New students may start a new language or take a placement exam in the spring to determine the most suitable level of study. Continuing students may start a new language in high school (Level 1) or continue with their middle school language (Level 3). If they choose to continue with their middle school language, they are placed by their eighth grade language teacher in either the regular or advanced level based on their middle school performance.

A student wishing to accelerate or to move from the regular track into the advanced

track must do the following in this order: 1) submit the recommendation of the current teacher (the teacher will provide a form for this; 2) have a final grade of A in the current class; 3) complete summer work as outlined by the teacher; and 4) pass a written and oral placement exam with a score of 85% or higher. Placement exams are scheduled by the department chairperson over the summer and administered in late August

A student who has received the written recommendation of the current teacher to advance may register for the advanced level course. If the student does not meet all requirements by the end of summer, he or she will be removed from the advanced course.

Electives

We offer three electives: Ancient Greek Performance & Competition, a literature-in-translation seminar; Classical Greek; and Sprache in Bild und Wort, a German film class for students with some experience in the language. Electives, like all courses, run when there is sufficient enrollment.

Exchange, Immersion and Travel Opportunities

We are committed to having as many students as possible take advantage of our travel programs. In some instances, scholarships and aid are available to help defray costs.

The Chinese Program

The Chinese Exchange hosts Chinese students for two weeks in January and then takes Lab students to China to visit our partner school, RDFZ, for two weeks over spring break. Cost of the program is approximately \$3,000 and includes airfare, lodging, excursions, all meals, and ground transportation. Contact: Xiaoli Zhou, xzhou@ucls.uchicago.edu

The French Program

The French program offers two different exchange/travel opportunities. We travel to different parts of the world to explore the diversity of the Francophone world. The first trip takes students to Paris for a week in the spring and then to another city (Besançon, Lyon, Tours, Nantes, or La Rochelle) for a family stay. The second trip is an exchange trip that we alternate with our two partner schools, the Lycée Saint-Exupéry of La Rochelle in France,

and the Lycée Bellevue of Fort-de-France, in La Martinique. Lab students travel either to France or La Martinique during our spring break and host their French counterparts in October. The cost of the trip varies depending on the location, it can range from \$2,950 to \$3,500 which includes airfare, lodging, excursions, and ground transportation.

Contacts: Catherine Collet-Jarard, ccollet@ucls.uchicago.edu, Suzanne Baum, sbaum@ucls.uchicago.edu.

The Eliade Scholarship, named after University of Chicago professor Mircea Eliade, is a wonderful opportunity for Lab students to immerse themselves in French culture and civilization. This scholarship enables students to travel to France for a month and attend classes at the Lycée Saint-Exupéry of La Rochelle. The scholarship includes a four-week homestay in La Rochelle in March–April; students host their French partners in October. This scholarship is available for junior students only. Students must apply for this scholarship at the end of their sophomore year. The scholarship covers the cost of airfare and ground transportation while in France. Contact: Catherine Collet-Jarard, ccollet@ucls.uchicago.edu.

The German Program

In this program, students travel to Prien am Chiemsee in June for three weeks to stay with host families and attend classes at our partner school. Lab students then host their partners for two weeks in October. Total cost of the exchange is \$2,600 (2019) which includes airfare, travel insurance, transportation, and all excursions. Two scholarships, the Wilhelm Heggen Pretzel Scholarship, and the Gardner Endowment Scholarship from the University of Chicago are available to help defray the cost of airfare. Contact: Susanne Pralle, spralle@ucls.uchicago.edu.

The Latin & Greek Program

This program offers student trips to Rome and Greece during spring break in alternating years. Students visit Rome (2023) or Greece (2021–25) for nine days. Total cost of the trip is about \$4,300 and includes airfare, hotels, ground transportation, breakfast, dinner, and all excursions. The Greece and Rome trips are open to all students, regardless of their language of study. Contact: Frances Spaltro, fspaltr@ucls.uchicago.edu.

The Spanish Program

In this program, students are offered a variety of exchanges to reflect the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world; these trips alternate years among Gijon in Spain, Buenos Aires in Argentina, and Costa Rica. The June exchanges to Spain and Argentina include two-week homestays; the trip to Spain includes a week of travel. Costs are about \$3,700 and include airfare, lodging, meals for nights not on homestay, transportation, and excursions. The partners from Spain and Argentina arrive at Lab in September and October respectively. The June exchange to Costa Rica includes a week of travel first, then a family stay, and service learning. The students from Costa Rica visit Lab in January–February. The costs for these trips are approximately \$2,900 and include airfare, transportation, excursions, lodging, and meals for nights not on homestay. Contact: Dinah D'Antoni, ddantoni@ucls.uchicago.edu.