

PLACING STUDENTS IN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Students will learn more of the language if they keep on taking language classes.

All Students Can Take Upper-Level Classes (Level III, IV and AP):

All students can take upper-level classes. Students of all ability levels, from all socio-economic conditions, and from all ethnic groups make it to the upper-level classes. Traditionally it has been academically-oriented, economically advantaged, white girls that have been disproportionately represented in upper-level language classes. This has been the result of world language educational practices that cater to those specific students. We can change that. We do not want to “weed out” students, we want to teach students.

A diverse group of students can go on with their language study. We want **slow processing students** (even students with D grades) to continue with the sequence of higher-level classes. We want students of **all socio-economic standings** in level 3, 4 and AP classes. We want students from families at **all education levels** to take advanced classes. And we want **native speakers** to take on the challenge of AP. Here's how:

Encouraging Students to Take Upper-Level Classes

- **Let them know that you think they can do it.** Talk about going on from Native Speakers classes to upper-level classes. Talk to non-natives about going on to level 2, 3 or 4.
- **Show them the value personally.** Native speakers can maintain and develop their heritage language. They can become completely bilingual—enough so that they can get a good job using both languages. This will be a big advantage to them.
- **Show them the value academically.** Completing upper-level classes looks good on a transcript. And passing the AP test can help to impress college admission officials.
- **Help them.** Take students on field trips to local universities, especially those with special programs for Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students and first-generation college students.

Placing Students in Appropriate Classes

General Principles

- **Flexibility.** Stay flexible. The traditional sequence is 1, 2, 3, 4, AP, but this need not be a locked in approach. Students do not have to start at level 1 and go right through the sequence. They can jump up and try a higher level.
- **Highest Level Possible.** Encourage students to take the highest level they can handle. If they have trouble, they can always go down a level, but students should be encouraged to take a higher-level course. They will lose very little by trying the upper level first.
- **Low Academic Risk.** Make it a low-risk situation academically—we do not want to endanger students' GPA's if they are trying to learn at a higher level. We want to encourage students to take risks in learning and take risks with their comfort level, but we understand that the GPA is important to parents and colleges as well. So make a deal: If you take a higher level class and find it too difficult, you will be allowed to transfer back to a lower level class with no low marks on your permanent record.

Specific Guidelines

- **Skip a Level.** Motivated students may be able to skip a level. This may be accomplished by extra summer work and by getting extra help on the students' part and by solid Comprehensible Input-based teaching methods from the teacher.
- **Differentiated Instruction.** In a well-taught language class, it may be possible to place students in almost any level they choose. Students can learn because we differentiate our instruction. Students in all classes have a spread of ability. We must teach in such a way as to value those that process language more slowly while at the same time challenging those that process more quickly.
- **Communication.** Students, parents, teachers and counselors must be in constant communication regarding how the student is doing in class and their potential.