



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Public Service Building, 255 Capitol Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97310  
Phone (503) 947-5600 • Fax (503) 378-5156 • www.ode.state.or.us

**HB 2099: World Languages**  
**House Education Committee**  
**Jan McComb**  
**Feb. 8, 2013**

Good afternoon Chair Gelser and members of the House Education Committee. For the record, I am Jan McComb speaking on behalf of the Oregon Education Department. I am here today to speak in favor of HB 2099. HB 2099 is a housekeeping bill that changes the term “second languages” to “world languages.”

**Background**

The current term used in Oregon education law to describe the teaching of a language other than English is “second language” (French, Italian, Spanish, etc.). This is imprecise for a number of reasons.

The number of students whose first language is not English is large and growing. While about 78% enter our schools with English as their first language, other students enroll with Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and Ukrainian as their first language. Portland Public Schools serves students speaking 93 different languages.

For students learning more than one additional language, the new language may not be a “second” language—it may be a third or a fourth.

For a student who is deaf or hard of hearing whose primary language is American Sign Language, their second language may be English. In addition, “second language” is often misinterpreted as a reference to English Language Learners.

In short, “second languages” is an outdated and ambiguous term and does not reflect the verbiage used worldwide within the field of language teaching, which prefers “world languages.”

This legislation was originally introduced in 2011 as SB 23. SB 23 passed out of committee and off the Senate floor unanimously, but failed to receive a hearing in the House.

**Legislation**

HB 2099 updates the term “second languages” to “world languages” throughout the educational statutes to reflect the current terminology used by educators around the world. The Oregon Department of Education views this as a housekeeping measure.

**Fiscal Impact**

This legislation has no fiscal impact.

**Support**

The Oregon Second Language Content and Assessment Panel support this change.