



Statement on Diversity, Inclusion & the impact of Kentucky SB 150 on World Language

The Kentucky World Language Association, like our national counterpart ACTFL, values diversity and strives for inclusion across world language teaching and learning contexts. Additionally, KWLA believes that world language classrooms are a conduit for development of engaged citizens, not only within the Commonwealth, but within global communities, in alignment with the *Kentucky Portrait of a Learner*. World language classes teach and celebrate the diversity of our world, and KWLA recognizes that experiencing a richness of diversity is valuable to the individual, state, and global community. Therefore, our classrooms must be places that welcome, support, and affirm all students as we challenge them to become globally and culturally competent citizens.

Due to the nature of our content, KWLA, ACTFL, and other world language organizations are “uniquely positioned to help bridge the ideological gaps that divide...We remain hopeful for a future where cultural and linguistic diversity is viewed as an invaluable asset that enriches the lives of all” (ACTFL “The Role of Language Learning” 2017).

As an organization, KWLA condemns all acts of prejudice, hate, and violence, and any action that demonstrates an intentional lack of intercultural competence and/or devalues the complexities of the experiences of individuals. We stand in solidarity with our students, colleagues, & communities (local & global)--regardless of race, ethnicity, origin, language background, English-language proficiency, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, among myriad other identity markers--against harassment, discrimination, violence, and systemic inequality in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and worldwide.

Addressing SB 150

As an organization that espouses the teaching of cultures and intercultural competence, and as individual educators who have dedicated our careers to teaching Kentucky youth about the importance of cultural appreciation and understanding, the Board of the Kentucky World Language is compelled to respond to sections of Kentucky Senate Bill 150.

Many organizations and individuals have already presented clear reasoning as to how this legislation will be harmful to students, and KWLA agrees with the statements of Kentucky



Kentucky World Language Association

Commissioner of Education Dr. Jason Glass, KEA, Greg Ross of Danville Independent Schools, Kentucky Fairness Campaign, and many more. Our position as an organization focused on intercultural education—not only highlighting language and tangible cultural differences, but also diversity of perspectives, beliefs, and identities—provides KWLA a unique stance on this legislation.

Within education, renowned educator Rudine Sims Bishop argued that teachers must provide learners with “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors” (Bishop 1990) to access the world around them. To become intercultural and globally competent citizens, students deserve to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, to observe and to appreciate the lived experiences of others, and to experience firsthand communities outside our own.

However, several segments of SB150 will deny students these opportunities.

“The Kentucky Board of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education shall not require or recommend policies or procedures for the use of pronouns that do not conform to a student’s biological sex as indicated on the student’s original, unedited birth certificate issued at the time of birth”

If student identities are not honored within the classroom, then they are unlikely to be able to personally engage with the classroom community and content, decreasing the academic success of Kentucky students. Additionally, a student who does not believe themselves an integral member of their own community is less likely to become an engaged local and global citizen, or to appreciate the uniqueness of others in a way that can facilitate cross-cultural collaboration. True learning and engagement can only happen when a student brings their entire self to the classroom: when we ask them to leave parts of who they are at the door, we are failing them.

“Any child, regardless of grade level, enrolled in the district does not receive any instruction or presentation that has a goal or purpose of students studying or exploring gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation”

Understanding gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and the cultural beliefs and values surrounding sex and gender is an integral part of exploring the diversity of humanity and global cultures. Even linguistically, countries and governments worldwide are adopting inclusive language (including non-binary pronouns) in formal communications



Kentucky World Language Association

while the binary may be maintained informally. If teachers are not allowed to approach linguistic gender expression, we are positioning our students for failure in a formal, global marketplace.

In regards to curriculum surrounding “human sexuality” and the need to provide alternatives, KWLA is concerned that, despite purported protections for discussing groups and historical figures relevant to the content, the complex nature of discussion of culture may be interpreted by a layperson as an overreach. Many world languages are gendered, and discussing gender identity and expression becomes a linguistic necessity even at the earliest levels of world language learning. As students continue in their language courses, they are likely to have the opportunity to take an AP language course. In the College Board’s Advanced Placement assessment and related curriculum, there is a major focus on “Personal & Public Identities,” another on “Beauty & Aesthetics”, as well as a sub-themes of “Societal Challenges,” “Personal Beliefs,” “Family Structure,” “Philosophical Thought & Religion,” “Fashion & Design,” “Lifestyles,” & “Social Customs & Values”--all of which could necessitate exploration of gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation in contemporary contexts. Successful world language programs often contribute to their school’s accountability in post-secondary readiness via these AP scores, but limiting a teacher’s capacity to vertically align curriculum through every level of a language program will decrease student and school successes. Furthermore, through ACTFL’s World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, students not only should be presented with the opportunity to learn about cultures in the target language, but also to make comparisons & connections with their own personal communities and experiences.

The Kentucky World Language Association believes that diversity and the study thereof make us stronger. KWLA calls upon all Kentucky legislators to withdraw support for SB150 in order to protect and promote the development of globally and interculturally competent citizens in the Commonwealth.