

Oak Park District 97 Middle School Language Policy

I. Philosophy

Language is central to understanding and demonstrating learning. It is a central part to our own identities and learning a language comes naturally, and begins at birth. All teachers at the middle school level in Oak Park School District 97 are language teachers and all students have access to a second language. We live in a multilingual community that embraces the language diversity of our school community. Our students are empowered to collaborate with others, share their experiences, and inquire about the world. We encourage our students to continue to use their language(s), as well as acquire an additional language. Learning an additional language enables our students to be critical thinkers, balanced learners, and global citizens.

We strive to continually improve effective language instruction across all subject areas. Teachers work collaboratively to create differentiated units that incorporate an intentional approach to language learning. We believe in student-driven inquiry; student engagement fosters the development of lifelong readers, writers, and speakers. We work toward developing visual, oral, auditory, and written language skills by encouraging constructive *reflection* so students improve their ability to communicate effectively. We emphasize that all teachers are language teachers and we collaborate to ensure that our students learn language, learn about language, and learn through language.

II. Learner Profile Language Expectations

The IB Learner Profile is integral to teaching and learning in the IB MYP because it represents the qualities of effective learners and internationally-minded students. Educators at District 97 motivate all members of our learning community to live the Learner Profile.

As inquirers we:

- Use language to acquire information and to make sense of the world around us
- Develop a natural curiosity and appreciation for other cultures, and our own, through language exploration
- Acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry, research and show independence in learning

As thinkers we:

- Use language to express our thoughts and ideas clearly
- Effectively applying creative thinking skills to communicate reasoned, culturally ethical decisions

As communicators we:

- Listen attentively, paying attention to detail
- Speak confidently and clearly
- Read fluently with comprehension
- Write clearly, concisely and accurately in a style appropriate for the purpose
- Understand and express ideas confidently and creatively in more than one language
- Use a variety of modes of communication

As risk-takers we:

- Willingly attempt to read, write, listen, and speak confidently in a variety of situations and languages
- Approach new language experiences with courage and forethought
- Foster independence of spirit by exploring critical literacy skills, ideas, and strategies

As knowledgeable learners we:

Use language to develop and expand an in-depth knowledge of :

- Vocabulary
- Language structures
- Text forms
- Genres
- Literary styles
- Digital and media literacy
- Concepts, ideas, and issues that have local and global significance

As **principled** learners we:

- Recognize that language is powerful and can have a profound effect on others
- Use language responsibly and respectfully while maintaining a strong sense of fairness and justice for the dignity of individuals, groups, and communities
- Communicate with integrity, honesty, and compassion

As **caring** learners we:

- Express empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others when speaking, listening and writing

As **balanced** learners we:

- Use expressive and receptive language to find a balance in communicating
- Strike a balance between actively listening and speaking when communicating with others
- Read a variety of written materials and are able to write for different purposes and audiences

As **reflective** learners we:

- Consciously work to improve our language proficiency through practice and patience
- Thoughtfully consider our own language learning experiences
- Are able to recognize and access our strengths and limitations in order to support and demonstrate our learning and personal development

III. Language Acquisition

Students will increase their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, through learning a second language, Language Acquisition.

- Studying Spanish or French is a requirement for students in Grades 6 through 8.
- The Language Acquisition choice will be studied for three consecutive years.
- Students entering Spanish who have participated in the Total Immersion Program at Lincoln Elementary School will be assessed with appropriate criteria to determine appropriate placement at Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School.
- Students who do not begin Language Acquisition during 6th grade due to a unique circumstance will be placed in the most appropriate level according to a placement test.
- Through the lens of a unit's statement of inquiry, Language Acquisition continues to align itself with the National World Readiness Standards designed by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), by implementing "Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities".
- Spanish and French classes consist of mixed ability levels. Teachers will differentiate instruction to appropriately schedule and assess the needs of the various language acquisition levels in each class.

IV. English Language Learners Supports and Mother Tongue (the language a person has grown up speaking)

English Language Learning (ELL) Program:

- When a language other than English is spoken at home, as indicated on the Home Language Survey, the student is screened by an EL Teacher.
- If the student qualifies as LEP (Limited English Proficient), according to the state guidelines, a letter is sent home.
- If a guardian decides they do not want their child to receive EL services, they must complete a refusal form and services will not be given. The student is still considered LEP and must take the annual ACCESS test to determine English proficiency.
- EL students are taught in English and receive English instruction. They participate with English-speaking peers in content areas and social opportunities.
- Students are given instructional time with a certified EL teacher. The level of service is determined by the professional judgment of the EL staff and student proficiency. At the middle schools, students receive one EL class period. Beginning level students receive push-in support as needed.
- The EL program helps students gain proficiency in English (Language A), the target language. For EL students, Language Acquisition is fulfilled by enrolling in EL class. EL students are not required to enroll in an additional world language.
- Currently 1.1% of students at our school are enrolled in ELL services.

Mother Tongue:

- We support the development of a student's mother tongue. This is essential for their cognitive development and personal identity.
- Language and culture are not learned/maintained in isolation; they are developed through social acts and engagement with the larger world.
- Guardians are encouraged to be a part of the school community, regardless of language or cultural background. The district provides an interpreter at conferences and other events, including IEP meetings. EL teacher translates assignments when appropriate.
- Faculty at both schools are provided professional development in Language Learning and EL teachers are highly qualified in their area.

V. Additional Language Supports

- All students have access to the school media center and its resources which are necessary for accessibility to language learning.
- Our library and media resources are linked to the language program. Currently, students have access to a variety of picture books and literature in multiple languages. There is a strong connection to the public libraries and their resources. The media specialist supports students and staff with research, materials, co-teaching, etc.
- Our school websites can be translated into one of eight languages.

VI. Stakeholder Expectations

Classroom and specialist teachers will:

- Embody the Learner Profile language expectations
- Use English as the primary language of instruction
- Acquire a professional knowledge base in second language acquisition processes, student developmental language behaviors, and familiarity with styles of student language learning
- Actively and mindfully model dispositions for life in an international world (i.e. appreciation for ambiguity; expression of empathy, flexibility, and respect for all languages and cultures)
- Review and, if needed, the language policy and its resources on a yearly basis

Pedagogical leadership team will:

- Embody the IB Learner Profile language expectations
- Ensure the implementation of Language Policy
- Provide regular check-ins with teachers and classrooms, gathering evidence around the implementation of the Language Policy
- Ensure all stakeholders have access to the Language Policy
- Maintain materials and resources

Library/media specialist will:

- Embody the IB Learner Profile language expectations
- Maintain and actively provide teachers with appropriate language learning materials
- Conduct periodic reviews of language learning resources with the technology and Pedagogical Leadership Team to access resources available for current languages represented in the student body that promote not only the school's chosen language of instruction, but the mother-tongue language development of the student population.

Students will:

- Take an active role in the school's language rich community by expressing their individual learning styles and cultural approaches
- Take responsibility for their own learning

Families will:

- Communicate with teachers and other school stakeholders regarding language needs
- Encourage mother tongue, world language, and English literacy skills at home

References

Guide to School Authorization: Middle Years Programme. Cardiff, Wales, UK: International Baccalaureate Organization, 2016.

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Language and Learning in IB programmes. Cardiff, Wales, UK: International Baccalaureate Organization, Sept. 2011.

Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes. Cardiff, Wales, UK: International Baccalaureate Organization, April 2008.

Middle Years Programme: Second Language Acquisition and Mother-tongue Development. Cardiff, Wales, UK: International Baccalaureate Organization, January 2004.

This document will be reviewed annually by the middle school department chairs.