

Mildred Helms Elementary IB World School

Language Policy

What are our views?

It is our belief that:

- Language development is fundamental for the need to communicate confidently.
- Language strengthens and supports human relationships.
- Language allows us to express our identities, develop international mindedness, become literate, become effective inquirers, and communicate.
- Multilingualism, having linguistic ability in more than one language, affirms cultural identity and develops international mindedness.

What is our purpose?

- All teachers and students are language teachers. They:
 - Learn language (ex: learning a new word)
 - Learn through language (ex: reading a text to get information)
 - Learn about language (ex: learning how to spell a word or write a poem)
- Develop and utilize the approaches to learning and learner profile when learning.

What are our guiding principles?

- All members of the learning community are interested in, engage with, and inquire about languages.
- All members of the learning community see themselves as language learners.
- Multilingualism is respected and its development promoted.
- Language has different purposes depending on where it is used: home, family and school.

What are our essential agreements?

- English is our primary language of instruction.
- Students will have access to learning more than one language.
- Language is a primary tool for learning, communication, and expression.
- Language learning is woven throughout the Programme of Inquiry within authentic, transdisciplinary learning engagements and is developed through inquiry and reflection.

What are our practices?

- Daily English/Language Arts block for all grades.
- Additional minutes of reading intervention/enrichment for all students daily with specialized instruction for ESE (Exceptional Student Education) and ELL (English Language Learners) students.
- Plan for instruction for the ELA strands of the BEST Standards: writing, speaking and listening, reading, and language.
- 30 minutes of Spanish language instruction for all K-5 students weekly.
- By providing support for translanguage connections to be made between students' home language and the language we teach in, as we strive to foster their sense of self and identity.

Oral Language – Listening and Speaking

All students will have opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills through:

- Purposeful talk with members of the learning community.
- Asking questions and seeking answers through inquiry.
- Using certain types of language based on audience and task.
- Listening to varying perspectives and viewpoints.
- Listening for understanding.
- Responding by explaining thinking.
- Using read alouds to develop critical listening skills.

Visual Language – Viewing and Presenting

All students will have opportunities to develop visualizing and presentation skills through:

- Using multimedia for interpretation, evaluation, and expression.
- Creating a wide variety of knowledge products that are constructed to show evidence of learning.
- Presenting knowledge products to members of the learning community.

Written Language – Reading & Writing

All students will have opportunities to develop skills and strategies in reading and writing through:

- Whole group and small reading and writing instruction.
- Collaborative and independent practice.
- Reading for meaning through interactions with a wide variety of texts (digital, print, audio, multicultural, fiction, nonfiction) and explicit instruction in authentic English/Language Arts instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension).
- Authentic writing for multiple purposes.

Home Language Support

Home language refers to the language that the learner first acquired. The majority of our students' home language is English, however, a significant number of our students, and some of our staff members, are multilingual. Our largest group of multilingual community members is Hispanic, and we also have members in the community who speak the following languages – Albanian, Arabic, Filipino, French, German, Pohnpei Ans, Portuguese, Cambodian, Chinese, Creole, Hindi, Laotian, Romanian, Russian, Tagalog, Telugu, Tonga, Vietnamese, and Wolof.

The district's Home Language Survey is used to determine the language needs of students in our ELL program. To encourage cultural identity, we build upon their language experiences and perspectives to develop their language profile.

Home languages at Mildred Helms are supported through:

- ELL certified teachers.
- Spanish speaking members of the staff who communicate with and translate for parents and students.
- Library resources in home languages.
- District and school information/publications in home languages.
- Telephone access to translators through the district ESOL department and provided services.
- Annual International Showcase to celebrate the diversity of our community.

What is our responsibility?

- Staff is kept current regarding recent research on best practices in language learning.
- Provide and participate in ELA professional development through internal and district provided workshops.
- Provide and participate in just-in-time coaching on language acquisition, ELA Standards and best practices.
- Teachers informally assess language development through running records and other formative assessments.
- Formally assess language development and report results of language learning.
- Make adjustments to ELA instruction based on student needs.