

# Mildred Helms Elementary IB World School

## Language Policy

### Mission Statement

Mildred Helms is committed to developing knowledgeable, inquiring, and caring lifelong learners within an intellectually challenging, transdisciplinary program emphasizing international-mindedness.

### Philosophy

It is the philosophy of all stakeholders at Mildred Helms Elementary that language is fundamental for communication and expression. It is a social process and dependent on interactions and relationships, at school, at home, and in the global community. As a collaborative process, we have determined that at our school:

- All teachers are language teachers.
- All students are language learners.
- Learners grow through language acquisition.
- Language should be taught in response to previous experiences.
- Mother tongue languages should be respected and their development promoted.
- PYP students will have access to learning more than one language.
- Language diversity is respected.
- Language acquisition develops international mindedness.

### Practices

English is the language of instruction at Mildred Helms. All teachers at our school are teachers of 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.

Our district mandates a 120-minute language arts block for kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and a 90-minute language arts block for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Our school also has an extra hour of reading intervention/enrichment for all students daily.

In addition to teacher formative assessments and observations, student language development is monitored through the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment three times a year in kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade are assessed using the Florida Standards Assessment in language arts annually. Student progress is also communicated through quarterly report cards.

The PYP has identified three strands of language that are learned throughout the curriculum: oral language, visual language, and written language. Our school supports the development of these strands with the following:

#### ***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 viewing and presenting 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 reading and writing instruction.
- Small group reading and writing instruction.
- Collaborative practice.
- Independent practice.
- Interactions with a wide variety of texts: digital, print, audio, multicultural, fiction, nonfiction.
- Reading for meaning.
- Authentic writing for multiple purposes.
- Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension explicit instruction.

### ***Limited English Proficiency***

- Small group instruction with a highly qualified ESOL (English as a Second Language) teacher.
- Language instruction scaffolded by a highly qualified classroom teacher.
- CELLA (Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment) assessment evaluates English proficiency.
- ACCESS assessment monitors reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

## **World Language Instruction**

Mildred Helms Elementary offers a Spanish second language program for students beginning in kindergarten. Exposure to another language promotes international mindedness and develops cultural awareness in our community.

- Students receive instruction in Spanish from a highly qualified teacher for 30 minutes once a week.
- The Spanish teacher develops her own units of inquiry that develop the concepts, approaches to learning, and attitudes of the PYP.
- Students listen, speak, read, and write in the second language during Spanish instruction.
- Spanish is supported in the classroom through labeling, using key phrases, and literature connections.

## **Mother Tongue Support**

Mother tongue refers to the language that the learner first acquired. The majority of our students' mother tongue is English, the school's language of instruction. However, a significant number of our students, and some of our staff members, are multilingual. Our largest group of multilingual community members is

Hispanic, however we also have members in the community who speak the following languages – Albanian, Arabic, Bulgarian, Czechoslovakian, Filipino, French, German, Hmong, Pacific Gulf Yupik, Pohnpeians, Portuguese, and Visayan. Mother tongue languages at Mildred Helms are supported through:

- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) certified teachers
- Spanish speaking members of the staff who communicate with parents and students in mother tongue language.
- Library resources in mother tongue languages.
- District and school information/publications in mother tongue languages.
- Telephone access to translators through the district ESOL department.
- Annual International Showcase to celebrate the diversity of our community.

### **Home-School Communication**

Parents of all language learners are encouraged to participate in their child’s education through the following opportunities:

- Annual Open House and Teacher Meet & Greet
- Parent-Teacher conferences
- School Advisory Council (SAC)
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Mildred Helms Elementary Family Handbook
- Monthly newsletters (hard copy and online)
- Student agenda books
- Volunteering
- Mentoring
- Family Inquiry Nights
- School web page resources
- Pinellas County Schools Parent FOCUS account
- School Messenger emails and phone messages

When necessary, communication will be delivered in the mother tongue language of the families at our school.

### **Language Policy Review**

This policy will be formally reviewed as needed by Mildred Helms staff and community stakeholders to adapt to changing best practices and changes in the PYP, as well as changes in the needs of our community. The effectiveness of this policy will be reflected in the achievement data in the area of language acquisition (both primary and secondary languages) and the feedback from our stakeholders. We welcome comments and recommendations on this policy at any time.