

OBAMA MAGNET LANGUAGE POLICY

Philosophy

Obama Magnet, a school with a recognized history of progressive education, is dedicated to providing all students with a strong foundation in language. We aim to develop confident, curious, highly proficient and enthusiastic readers, writers, viewers, presenters, speakers and listeners. At Obama Magnet, students not only learn language, but also through language and about language. All teachers are language teachers who work together using evidence-based teaching strategies to provide inquiry-based, transdisciplinary instruction allowing students to make connections with content through differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. We believe language leads to a greater cultural understanding that develops internationally-minded students who practice global citizenship.

Purposes – What are our purposes for language instruction?

- Language instruction builds a framework for transdisciplinary learning, thinking and communicating.
- Learning a second language enhances your ability to learn and gives students an advantage over monolingual learners.
- Language instruction fosters a global community where a second language is an asset and provides students with a sense of global citizenship.
- Language instruction develops cross-cultural communication and social interaction skills.
- Language learning provides students greater cognitive flexibility and memory.
- Language instruction promotes a climate that is culturally sensitive.

Policies – What are our essential agreements on language instruction?

- Language instruction includes the development of oral language (listening and speaking), visual language (viewing and presenting) and written language (reading and writing).
- Language instruction is formative and summative assessment based and involves the use of data to help guide instruction.
- The language of instruction is English; Spanish is taught to students in all grades from Kindergarten through fifth grade.
- Curriculum is aligned with:
 - Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards
 - PYP Language Scope and Sequence
 - Mississippi Gifted Standards

Principles – What are our guiding principles?

- All teachers promote inquiry-based authentic language learning. This can include inquiry based discussions, writing, and reflections on reading material and writing pieces, and furthering student voice through writing topic choices.
- All teachers focus on transdisciplinary learning within language instruction through our units of inquiry.
- All teachers support differentiated instruction strategies for all students.
- Language skills are developed and refined through transdisciplinary learning engagements, assessment, and student reflection.

Professional Development – What is our responsibility to professional development?

- All teachers of language will continue to be involved in state, district and school workshops that further the philosophy of using evidence-based language strategies through inquiry based instruction. This includes using outside speakers, in-school advanced skills workshops and professional learning communities to provide professional development sessions that support language instruction and the implementation of the PYP.
- All staff will continue to be provided professional resources to deepen knowledge about language development, acquisition, instruction, and for teaching using a variety of resources.
- All certified staff will continue to discuss and reflect upon best practices at team planning sessions. Sessions include planning for language instruction, creating assessment tasks, developing unit questions and writing task specific criteria.
- All staff will continue to connect, communicate, visit, and share strategies with other PYP schools with respect to transdisciplinary language instruction, teaching a second language and valuing mother tongue speakers and users.

Practices – What are our language practices?

As an IB World School, we are committed to the following practices:

- The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).

- Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the program(s). (IB Standard C4, Practice 1).
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).
- The school utilizes the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programs (IB Standard B2, Practice 11).
- The library/multimedia/resources play a central role in the implementation of the program. (IB Standard B2, Practice 6)

The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).

- Given that 60-70 percent of the world's population is reported as being bilingual, learning a second language is essential to the development of a global citizen. Being able to communicate effectively in more than one language enhances cognitive, personal, and social development. It also enables the person to better understand other cultures and to function more appropriately in a world that is becoming smaller and smaller.
- Language is taught holistically. Learning is based on specific learning outcomes for the strands of speaking and listening, reading and writing, and viewing and presenting appropriate to the students level. The language of instruction (English) is integrated into the units of inquiry or organized into stand-alone language sessions (Spanish).
- The school invests in qualified, professional language teachers for the language of instruction and host language. Second language instruction is provided in Spanish at all grade levels. Students receive Spanish language instruction for a minimum of 75 minutes a week for kindergarten through second grade and a minimum of 105 minutes a week for third through fifth grade. Our goal is to provide "exposure to and experience with languages, with all their richness and diversity, [to] create an inquisitiveness about life and learning" (Language and learning in IB programs, IBO, August 2014, p. 17). Our hope is to create open-minded learners with a firm sense of tolerance and empathy toward other cultures, the willingness to take the risks involved in learning to communicate in another language, and the desire to continue their studies throughout their secondary and postsecondary years.
- To date, the school has not enrolled any students who require mother-tongue support; i.e., students who qualify for English Language Learner services under Title III. Student identification for language needs is reviewed on a yearly basis using a mandatory survey and English Language testing. In the event the school enrolls students needing mother-tongue support, every attempt would be made to provide support within the purview of district, state and federal guidelines.

Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).

- All students' language needs are determined through initial and ongoing assessments throughout the year. Teachers differentiate for the range of students needs in different ways.
- Best practices are integrated into the instructional strategies at every grade level.
- Resources are selected to match the units, languages, and needs of students when possible.
- Focus is given to the transdisciplinary nature of language learning.
- The language program is provided through a balance of large, small group and individual instruction.
- All staff members foster and encourage reading and writing for meaning.
- Proficiency standards and goals in second language instruction are developmentally aligned.
- Students are assessed in Spanish instruction through observation, quizzes and student projects. The teacher uses checklists and rubrics to monitor progress. A Spanish report card is given at the end of each term for all students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).

- The school focuses on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning by recognizing and modeling the role of language in each subject as well as in the language of instruction.
- The basic skills for all types of communication – oral, written and visual – are explicitly planned for using our scope and sequence. Students are encouraged to think for themselves, recognize patterns, develop theories and construct meaning as they investigate language. As students progress, teachers enable them to see language as a means of self-expression, exploration of self and others, as context driven, having multiple meanings, and involving at all levels of discourse a personal stance, from simple communication to the core of academic language.
- Throughout the school there is an expectation that in order to foster an enjoyment and love of reading, students will be encouraged to read at home after school, during school breaks and over the summer. Students may be read to, read with, or read every day at home. A variety of reading strategies will be introduced to support students in the mechanics of reading and comprehending the meaning of what they read. These include phonemic awareness, recognizing patterns in text, decoding, making inferences, and recognizing a bank of sight words. Teachers may also make use of guided reading and literature circles to develop students' reading skills.

- The writing process of drafting, revising and publishing will be modeled and explored. The use of literature, games, role-play and multimedia will support students' understanding of different genres as well as developing their vocabulary, sentence construction, use of tense and punctuation. Using text as a model, students and teachers can begin to analyze the features of different genres before jointly and individually constructing written or presented pieces. During the revision process, students will be encouraged to develop their knowledge of grammatical and spelling conventions using print and digital dictionaries and thesaurus as well as by self-correcting. Publishing writing may involve students sharing writing with others, keeping it for themselves or publishing it for a chosen audience.
- The grade level teachers work with the school special subject teachers (Music, Counseling, Gifted, Spanish, Library/Media Specialist and Interventionist) to collaborate on vocabulary and conceptual development across the curriculum.

Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the program(s). (IB Standard C4, Practice 1).

- Assessment is integral to teaching and learning. Using a range of tools and strategies, teachers are able to determine students' knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes towards language.
- Teachers use pre-assessments to determine what students already know, can do and understand. Formative assessment is used to check in and to give constructive feedback or praise on learning. Summative assessments are used to gather evidence about student's learning at the end of a unit. Various forms of both formative and summative assessment may be used. Along with teacher assessment, students are often asked to peer or self-assess as well.
- Assessments are reported to parents in different ways. Students receive district report cards and IB appraisal reports that provide information about their language learning. Parents are also invited to attend parent-teacher and student-led conferences.

Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).

- Since students learn about language and through language, we understand that all teachers are responsible for the language development of students in the school. As a result, collaborative planning and reflection is built into the regular schedule for staff as well as being a focus of staff meetings through the year. In this way, we are able to develop links between different subject areas across the school.
- All teachers review the language scope and sequence to ensure that is as relevant and comprehensive as possible. Teachers then plan collaboratively, during grade level

meetings, grade meetings, special subject meetings and meetings with the PYP coordinator.

The school utilizes the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programs (IB Standard B2, Practice 11).

- All language teachers are responsible for sourcing a range of quality texts so that students can explore different genres such as recounts, stories, explanations, or persuasive writing in different languages and at different levels. Students have access to a variety of dictionaries including Spanish-English dictionaries.
- The community is considered a valuable resource to aid language learning. Students go on numerous local and out of state field trips to visit museums, libraries, theatres, movies where they have an opportunity to use language in context. Guest speakers are invited to speak on various topics and they may speak English, Spanish, or other languages. Throughout the year, students are exposed to celebrations linked to the diverse cultures around us to promote international mindedness and an appreciation of culture.
- Parent and community involvement is important in our school. Parents are involved in student learning through experiences highlighting language. These include monthly student presentations at Parent Teacher Association meetings, fifth grade Exhibition, fourth grade Poetry Café, annual reading and science fairs, school-wide productions and other student performances throughout the school year.

The library/multimedia/resources play a central role in the implementation of the program. (IB Standard B2, Practice 6)

- Students are involved in learning engagements that promote media literacy; i.e. distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources; viewing and responding to videos, images, and audio; developing content for oral, visual and written presentations.
- The library/media center collection houses a range of resources to support all facets of the PYP, including bilingual books and texts to support unit content, multicultural texts, periodicals, and technology resources.
- Students have access to a variety of print and digital resources to develop awareness of current events, to foster an interest in reading, and to develop confidence, fluency and comprehension. Students utilize iPads, computers, and laptops to gain access to Google products to facilitate learning about and through language. Games, art, music, maps and artifacts are used to help students make connections in their language learning. Interactive Smartboards are also used to encourage a more interactive approach to teaching and learning in order to accommodate the various learning styles of students.

- Resources in the media center and in classrooms are updated at least once a year to provide links to the learner profile and the attitudes. Resources are also provided to support Spanish language instruction.
- Students are also taught the conventions of referencing, citing and the principles of academic honesty.

Language Policy Review:

The language policy is reviewed twice yearly-once in the fall and once in the spring. It is presented in the fall for staff, community, parent, and school site council in multiple ways. It is presented in the spring for feedback and input from all stakeholders previously mentioned in multiple ways. The school leadership team considers stakeholder input and revises the policy as appropriate. The language policy is located in the library/media center and on our school's website.

Policy Reviewed/Revised - April 2018