

**Barack H. Obama Elementary School**  
**Language Policy** *(revised April 2023)*

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**Philosophy**

Barack H. Obama Elementary School is dedicated to providing all students with a strong foundation in language. We aim to develop confident, curious, proficient and enthusiastic readers, writers, viewers, presenters, speakers and listeners. In the school context, students actively learn language, learn through language, and learn about language. All teachers are language teachers who work together using evidence-based teaching strategies to provide inquiry-based, transdisciplinary learning experiences. These experiences provide for differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students and support language connections instruction in all content. We believe language learning leads to greater cultural understanding that develops an open-minded global perspective, the willingness to take the risks involved in learning to communicate in an additional language, and the desire to be a lifelong learner of language.

**Purposes for language Instruction**

- Language instruction builds a framework for transdisciplinary learning, thinking, and communicating.
- Learning an additional language enhances students' cognitive, personal, and social development.
- Language instruction fosters a global community where multilingualism is an asset and supports students' development as internationally-minded, global citizens.
- Language instruction develops cross-cultural communication and social interaction skills.

**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 guided by the use of formative and summative assessment data.
- The school invests in qualified language teachers for all language instruction.
- The language of instruction is English. Spanish is the additional language taught to all students. Spanish language instruction is provided in grades K-2 for a minimum of 75 minutes a week and for a minimum of 105 minutes a week.
- Curriculum is aligned with Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards, the PYP language scope and sequence, and Mississippi Gifted Standards.

**Guiding principles**

- All teachers promote authentic language learning. This can include inquiry based discussions, writing, and reflections on text, and furthering student voice through choices in reading, speaking, and writing topics.

- All teachers focus on transdisciplinary language teaching and learning through the units of inquiry.
- All teachers support differentiated instruction strategies for all students.
- Language skills are developed and refined through transdisciplinary learning engagements, assessment, and reflection.

### **Professional development**

- The school invests in qualified, professional language teachers for the language of instruction (English) and the additional language (Spanish).
- All teachers of language engage in state, district and school workshops furthering evidence-based language strategies in connection with 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 teachers have access to professional resources to deepen knowledge about language development, acquisition, instruction, and for teaching using a variety of resources.
- All teachers discuss and reflect on best practices during team planning sessions. This will include planning for language instruction, designing assessment tasks, developing unit questions, and writing task specific criteria.
- All teachers have access to relevant programme documentation and global PYP community for the purpose of connecting, communicating, learning and sharing strategies with other practitioners with respect to transdisciplinary language instruction, additional language learning, and valuing users of all languages.

### **Language practices**

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

*Inclusion: Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language backgrounds and needs, recognizing multilingualism as a fact, a right, and a resource (Culture 4.2)*

- The school values the language backgrounds of all students, providing opportunities for students to share information about languages they use and hear regularly. (Lifelong learners 7.2)
- Student identification for language needs is reviewed on a yearly basis using a mandatory survey and English Language testing. 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. 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.
- 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 teaching and learning of language is integrated

into the units of inquiry, with connections to both the language of instruction (English) and the additional language (Spanish) being made. Stand-alone language sessions are the primary mode instruction for the additional language (Spanish). The school focuses on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning by recognizing and modeling the role of the language of instruction in each subject as well as in the additional language.

- Evidence-based practices are integrated into the instructional strategies at every grade level. The language program is provided through a balance of large, small group and individual instruction. Resources are selected to match the units, languages, and needs of students when possible.
- The school focuses on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning by recognizing and modeling the role of the language of instruction in each subject as well as in the additional language.
- The basic skills for oral, written and visual communication are explicitly planned for. Students are encouraged to think for themselves, recognize patterns, develop theories and construct meaning as they investigate and use 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 (Lifelong learners 7.3)
- 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 will 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.

*Assessment: Strategies and collected data guide language instruction to support students' needs. (Approaches to assessment 1.1)*

- 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.
- All students' language needs are determined through initial and ongoing assessments throughout the year. Resulting data is used to differentiate to meet student needs.
- Teachers use pre-assessments to determine what students already know, can do and understand. Formative assessment data is used to provide feedback to feed forward. Summative assessments are used to gather evidence about students' learning at the end

of a unit. Various forms of both formative and summative assessment may be used. Students are often asked to peer or self-assess as well.

- Assessments are reported to parents in different ways. Students and parents receive district report cards and IB appraisal reports that provide information about their language learning. Parents have access to online platforms with assessment information for tracking individual student progress. Parents are also invited to attend parent-teacher and student-led conferences (Approaches to assessment 1.2).
- Students are assessed in Spanish instruction through observation, quizzes, and student projects. The teacher uses checklists and rubrics to monitor progress.

*Collaboration and Responsibility for Language Development: All teachers are responsible for language development of students and engage in teaching, learning, collaborative, and reflective practices to support student language development.*

- All staff members foster and encourage reading and writing for meaning.
- 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 evidence-based strategies will be introduced to support students in the mechanics of reading and comprehending the meaning of what they read.
- The grade level teachers work with the gifted education teacher(s), interventionist, and special subject teachers (counseling, library/media, music, and Spanish) to collaborate on vocabulary and conceptual development across the curriculum.
- 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 all staff as well as being a focus of staff meetings throughout the year. This collaborative structure supports the development of links across and between different subject areas.
- All teachers review the language scope and sequence to ensure it is as relevant and comprehensive as possible. Teachers then plan collaboratively, during grade level meetings, grade band meetings, special subject meetings and meetings with the PYP coordinator.

*Resources: Learning within the program is enhanced by human, virtual, and physical resources. Library/multimedia resources play a central role in program implementation.*

- Teachers use a range of district provided and/or individually sourced quality texts so students can explore different genres and text structures. Students have access to a variety of print and online dictionaries, including Spanish-English dictionaries.
- The community is considered a valuable resource to aid language learning. Students go on field trips to visit museums, libraries, theaters, and other locations where they have an opportunity to use language in context. Guest speakers are invited to speak on

various topics and they may speak languages other than the language of instruction. Throughout the year, students are exposed to celebrations linked to diverse cultures to promote international mindedness and an appreciation of different cultures.

- 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.
- Students are involved in learning engagements promoting 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. Students are also taught strategies for crediting and citing sources in support of the principles of academic honesty.
- The library/media center collection houses a range of resources to support all facets of the PYP, including Spanish-English bilingual books and texts to support unit content, multicultural texts, periodicals, and technology resources.
- Resources in the media center and in classrooms are updated at least once a year to support PYP core elements as well as students interests, self-concepts, and cultural backgrounds.
- Students have access to a variety of print and digital resources to develop awareness of current events, foster an interest in reading, and develop confidence, fluency and comprehension.
- Students use technology devices to facilitate learning about and through language. Games, art, music, maps and other artifacts are used to help students make connections in their language learning. Interactive whiteboards support interactive teaching and learning strategies to accommodate the various learning styles of students.

### **Language Policy Review**

The language policy is reviewed every two years in the second semester of the school year. During the review period, updates to IBO programme documentation are reviewed, and all stakeholders are invited to provide feedback. The pedagogical leadership team considers both inputs and revises the policy as appropriate.

The policy is highlighted in the fall to promote continued awareness for students, parents, staff, and other community members. The language policy can be accessed digitally on the school website and in print in the library/media center.

**Last revised - April 2023**