

J.M. Alexander & North Mecklenburg MYP Language Policy 2012-2013

Philosophy of language teaching and learning

As spoken and written language are the primary means of communication in an academic setting, we emphasize the study of English as it is the primary language spoken in our community. Since we live in an interconnected world where we must communicate across cultures to solve problems, students should become proficient in a second language in order to become responsible world citizens. As a result, we require all students in the IB Middle Years Program to study a second language throughout their participation in the IB Programme. In order to support primary and secondary language acquisition, we believe that all teachers are language teachers. We support our English Language Learners by appreciating their mother tongues and by helping them become proficient in English.

Language Profile of J.M. Alexander

The primary language of J.M. Alexander (JMA) and North Mecklenburg (NMHS) is English, but we have an increasing number of students who are not native English speakers. JMA and NMHS offer direct language instruction or consultative support to these students. These services are delivered by our English as Second Language (ESL) teachers. We have students whose families come from Africa, India & Pakistan, Egypt, Central America, Mexico, Haiti, Europe, Asia, and Puerto Rico. Multiple languages are spoken by our bilingual students, including Spanish, French, Italian, Vietnamese, Korean, and several African dialects.

In our district, English Language Learners are identified as follows. When a student enters Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the parent fills out a Home Language Survey. If a language other than English is spoken in the home, the student is given the W-APT or the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test. If a student is not deemed proficient in the English language, the student is tagged as LEP (Limited English Proficient) and services are provided for that student in compliance with Title III of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Students then take the ACCESS test annually to assess progress.

Admission requirements

Students shall be admitted to the IB program regardless of their mother tongue.

Support for Language A (English)

English is the primary language of instruction at JMA and at NMHS. Because all teachers are language teachers, all of us bear the responsibility for improving our students' proficiency in academic English. All teachers focus on literacy in their instruction. We emphasize reading and writing skills in all courses. All teachers help students improve their writing skills by having them write frequently and providing them with feedback. We actively teach our students the literacy skills they need to be able to read and comprehend content-specific texts.

Support for the development and maintenance of the mother tongue

Our population is made up of native speakers of many languages from around the world. While it is critical to ensure that the language of instruction (English) does not serve as a prolonged obstacle to learning, it is equally important to support the development and maintenance of our international students' mother tongues. Our media center offers an increasing number of magazines, newspapers, and books in the most common mother tongues of our students. We also offer differentiated Spanish instruction to our heritage Spanish speakers.

Respect for the mother tongue

Our teachers take opportunities to demonstrate respect for our students' mother tongues whenever possible in class. We have two goals: we want our English Language Learners to feel that their language and culture are appreciated and we want to model our appreciation of other languages and cultures for our English speakers. As a staff, we have on-going conversations about how to teach respect for other cultures and increase international mindedness in our students.

Parental Involvement

Since our population of non-native English families is growing, we recognize the need to improve our ability to communicate with parents in their language. While we recognize that English is the functional language of our nation, some parents are missing essential information about their children's progress in school because of a language barrier. Our district already offers some printed materials in Spanish and Vietnamese, including letters informing parents of students' academic difficulties. We need to make translators available for parent phone calls and conferences, have parent meetings in Spanish as well as English, and provide IB materials in Spanish and other languages so that all parents are informed.

Professional Development

We recognize that our staff needs support and training to better serve our English Language Learners. Our district offers frequent online and in-person professional development. In addition, our ESL teachers will provide a variety of professional development for our staff, including yearly training during all-staff meetings on strategies for teaching English Language Learners, frequent contact with the staff via email including district-wide policies and procedures for English Language Learners, and individualized training and support for specific teachers who request help.

Support for acquisition of a Language B

We offer three choices for Language B: Spanish, French and German

Sequence of study in Language B

6th grade -- Year 1 —Exploring Foreign Language: French and Spanish

7th grade – Year 2 – French I – Part One or Spanish I – Part One

8th grade – Year 3 – French I – Part Two or Spanish I – Part One

9th grade – Year 4 – French II or Spanish II; (Students who are new to MYP and who have had no prior Language B take Spanish I & II, French I & II, or German I & II)

10th grade – Year 5 – French III, Spanish III, or German III

Assessment in Language B

Students in our Language B classes are assessed using required local assessments for reading, writing, and speaking and the Language B assessments prescribed in the MYP Language B subject guide.

Language Policy Revision

We recognize that our Language Policy will need to change as our school population changes. We will reconsider and revise our Language Policy at the end of each school year. Language committee members will include representatives from diverse departments and the IB coordinator.