

A Language Philosophy and Policy

Communication connects people through the promotion of idea exchange using words, symbols, or cues understood by those involved. For communication to take place effectively in an educational setting it is implicit an institution agree upon common language(s), words, and vocabulary. As McCluer North High School is in the process of seeking IB authorization, we as stakeholders must seek communication ideals using the lens of internationality. This Language Policy is our first blueprint attempt in how we will convey information and exchange ideas as an IB institution.

McCluer North will use English as the primary means of communication in and out of the classroom setting. We chose English because it is the unofficial, yet primary means of communication in the United States, the Missouri Department of Education, and among our stakeholders. For nearly all of our faculty and 98% of our students, English is our mother tongue. Since we are attempting to develop the lives of our students through the exchange of learning in multiple forms using English, we acknowledge that all administrators and faculty have responsibility in language instruction.

Second Language Acquisition

According to several sources, an estimated 60% of the world's population speaks more than one language. Therefore, second language proficiency is a necessary component for an education system emphasizing a global approach. McCluer North provides at least two opportunities for second language acquisition by offering French and Spanish. In the Ferguson-Florissant School District, many students are able to take up to 5 years of each language provided they start language acquisition in 8th grade. This is the case for Cross Keys Middle School, the primary feeder school for North. Students at the STEAM Academy, another key feeder school, can take Spanish starting in 8th grade. Students not choosing the World Language elective in 8th grade, will be able to start one of the target languages at North in 9th grade. Currently, North has 5 Spanish Teachers and 2 French Teachers. Both languages offer an AP option for 11th and 12th graders, while students are able to obtain university credit hours for Spanish III, IV, and V.

In response to having a more consistent approach to language acquisition learning and instruction, World Language teachers pushed for district adoption of the American Council of the Foreign Languages (ACTFL) World-Readiness standards within the last 5 years. The standards have 5 goal areas: Communications, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. North and FFSD Language Teachers chose to have priority standards in interpersonal communication, interpretive communication, presentational communication, and language comparisons. Early this year, Spanish and French Teachers received training in the ACTFL proficiency guidelines as a way to assess language standard acquisition. The proficiency guidelines emphasize abroad approach to world language learning and instruction including speaking, writing, listening, and reading components. As a result of these efforts, World Language teachers have been moving towards the DP Language B implementation structure before the IB North initiative started in 2017. In addition, both IB designated teachers for Spanish and French have attended Level I Workshop training in the Summer of 2018. The Coordinator will insist on having at least a Level I IB teacher trained before instruction in an IB course takes place.

Mother Tongue and Secondary Language Supports

Students living in the McCluer North attendance area requiring services in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) attend McCluer High School. The Secondary Teacher of ESOL, Ms. Brianna Larrick, is based at McCluer. While McCluer North is not the High School for ESOL supports in the Ferguson-Florissant School District, we recognize the importance of having equal access and supports for Language(s) A & B. Approximately 2% of North students come from homes where English is not the mother tongue. (Mother tongue languages for this 2% of North students include Arabic, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

To support all North students with Language A concerns, the English Department offers afterschool tutoring on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the school year. North students from homes where English isn't the primary language not only have access to the afterschool tutoring, but can also request a language support meeting with Ms. Larrick through the IB Coordinator. If the student is from a home where Spanish is the mother tongue, Ms. Jennifer Meitz (IB Spanish Teacher) can be a language resource. In addition, the ELA Department has a drop in room for each period of the day. This room is staffed with at least one ELA teacher who can help with English concerns of all types for all North students.

Library Resources

The library contains a small section of books in Spanish. In addition, a number of titles exist for students and parents wanting to learn English as their second or third language. In the next few years, additional resources will be purchased to support second language acquisition in Spanish and French.

Roles and Responsibilities for Language Acquisition

All North stakeholders will seek to value and respect their own primary language as well as others throughout the world.

The IB Coordinator promotes language acquisition best by communicating the importance of idea exchange(s) and mutual respect for multiple forms of those ideas with all IB stakeholders. In case of miscommunications in the program, the IB coordinator facilitates resolutions benefiting the common good of all while adhering to IB standards. The IB coordinator will provide North staff with professional development opportunities to improve instruction for mother tongue and second language proficiency. She/he will ensure other policies influencing language acquisition (i.e. Inclusion/Special Needs, Assessment, etc.) are followed by IB stakeholders. The IB coordinator will also lead periodic reviews and revisions of this particular policy.

As mentioned above, all North faculty have the responsibility of leading language acquisition learning in at least the mother tongue. IB teachers will utilize and follow IB standards for Language A and B classes. All North teachers will scaffold language learning activities and assignments utilizing thinking skills from knowledge centered to evaluation levels. Teachers will provide educational opportunities in multiple forms of communication including written, verbal, and reading typologies. Teachers will give students, parents, and the IB coordinator well timed feedback of classroom activities in hopes of fostering positive growth.

North's Librarian will encourage the use of Language(s) A & B by encouraging students from all language backgrounds to utilize media center resources. The Librarian will consult IB teachers about student needs in A & B language classes and seek to add more resources in English, Spanish, and French.

IB students will foster a global understanding of culture by seeking proficiency in a second language. They will also communicate with the IB coordinator and teachers regarding a variety of aspects regarding the IB program including academic needs.

North Administrative team will promote the language policy through encouragement of all teachers to view themselves as communicators of important ideas through instructive practices. District and Building level administrators will provide PD needed for teachers to improve on their language emphasizing a variety of communication ways.

Parents will help students and teachers in both first and second languages through encouragement and staying involved in the learning process through teacher contact in some form.

Review of the policy

Under the leadership of the Coordinator, the policy will be reviewed by the IB steering committee at least every other year. If changes are warranted, the Coordinator will take the committee recommendations for changes to the Principal and Assistant Superintendent for further discussion. The Administration will advise the Coordinator and the IB Steering Committee of the necessary steps needed to make the suggested changes.

References

Guidelines for developing a school language policy, April, 2008

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages website - <https://www.actfl.org/>