

Eakin Elementary School Language Policy

“Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savor their songs. ... We [are] not different people speaking separate languages; we [are] one people, with different tongues.”
- Nelson Mandela

Language Philosophy

In preparing students to be life-long learners and global citizens, Eakin Elementary recognizes the key role of language education. The knowledge and use of languages enable communication and connection with others. Language is an essential tool through which people can bridge differences, share ideas, and solve problems in a respectful, caring and peaceful world. We embrace and encourage linguistic diversity within our school and strive to support the development of all mother tongues (home language) spoken within our community.

Instruction

Classroom

At Eakin Elementary, our primary language of instruction is English. Our curriculum and instruction are designed to support the development and acquisition of oral and written language through balanced literacy strategies and practices. These include providing a print-rich environment, building vocabulary through real-world experience and literature, activating prior knowledge, scaffolding, supporting authentic language use, and providing fluent peer and teacher models.

English

In Metro Nashville Public Schools, all students whose mother tongue is other than English are screened for English proficiency. Students who qualify for support from the EL program receive services from a certified English Language Development (ELD) teacher, who uses a push-in and pull-out model, to meet student needs. In all cases, the ELD teacher collaborates with the general education classroom teacher to support the student’s transition, participation, and learning in the classroom. Safe, supportive classroom environment and frequent, effective parent communication are essential elements, at our school. Teachers scaffold and incorporate all students’ language learning needs within our general school curriculum and units of study.

Mandarin

Students in grades K-4 receive Chinese language instruction every sixth school day for 60 minutes. We continue to explore ways to increase opportunities for Chinese language instruction and exposure. We also seek to provide meaningful, authentic Chinese language experiences for our students: e.g., writing to pen pals in China. In addition to studying the Chinese language, our students also learn about Chinese culture and traditions.

Total Communication

Students who qualify as Deaf/Hard of Hearing receive total communication services by an exceptional education teacher certified in Deaf Education. Total communication uses any means of

communication including sign language, voice, lip-reading, and amplification. The sign language used in total communication is closely related to English. Students in this program are integrated into mainstream classes for math, science, and social studies and are supported by a sign language interpreter.

Students with developmental delays, cognitive delays, and emotional difficulties, may communicate non-verbally in a variety of ways including pointing and gesturing, picture symbols, and sign language. Some of these students also use assistive devices that provide voice output when the student presses a corresponding button on the device. Tests of understanding are conducted receptively; students express their understanding without speaking. All students with delays in verbal language are integrated into the Related Arts Classrooms while some are integrated into general education classes for math, science, and social studies.

Maintenance

At Eakin Elementary, a significant portion of our student population speaks a language other than English at home. Research shows that a student's mother tongue is the foundation for learning a new language and for preserving language and cultural identity. For these reasons, we encourage students and parents to speak their mother tongue at home. According to Marie Franquiz and Maria de La Luz Reyes¹ teachers need not be fluent in the native languages of their students to support the learning and development of students' language in the classroom. The work of Franquiz and de La Luz Reyes shows that "...encouraging students to use their native languages and cultural background as resources for learning is frequently more important than knowing the students' languages."

Assessment

Language assessment will be based upon our assessment policy. Model, a progress monitoring tool, is used three times a year with EL students. It identifies their correct level of language instruction.

Professional Development

Eakin faculty and staff receive ongoing research-based professional development to support an effective language learning environment and instruction. In addition to PYP workshops, our staff regularly attends trainings offered by our district. On a daily basis, we have two instructional coaches on-site to support teachers in language and other instruction. The Mandarin language teachers and the English Language Development teachers are additional on-site resources, and they provide for teachers regular professional development, learning opportunities, and support.

Resources

Our school library has multilingual books that are available to both students and staff. We recognize that we need to expand our current collection, and we are in the planning and research phase of this project. As part of our commitment to diversity, school-wide resources available in the book room are culturally diverse.

¹ "Creating Inclusive Learning Communities through English Language Arts; from Chancas to Canicas" *Language Arts* 75, 3 (March 1998): 211-220.