



# Language Policy

## Cascade Elementary School

### **Philosophy**

At Cascade Elementary School, we believe language is at the center of all we do and learn. We are committed to preparing the whole child through inquiry-based, culturally relevant, and real world learning experiences. Additionally, we view every teacher as a language teacher, and use the balanced literacy approach to develop the language skills of our scholars. We value language and communication as critical factors of student agency, as well as cultural diversity and the development of dual language skills. As such, all kindergarten through 5th grade students learn Spanish, our second language, through weekly instruction from a Spanish specialist teacher. Our goal is for all students to become fully engaged and realized citizens of the global community.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Cascade Elementary language policy is to articulate the practices and principles guiding language development of students to all stakeholders in our community. It will also outline how language learning will allow students to build social emotional competencies, learner profile attributes, and make connections within and across disciplines resulting in a broad and balanced education.

### **Language of Instruction and Curriculum**

The primary language of teaching and learning at Cascade Elementary is English. Students develop thinking, research, communication, social, and self-management skills using a balanced literacy approach. Literacy proficiency is achieved through integrated learning opportunities across all content areas that include authentic activities and strategies including flexible grouping, opportunities to select and respond to literature, collaborative and independent meaning making, and performance based assessments. This student-centered approach complements conceptually-based inquiry by allowing space for shared roles of responsibility between teachers and students.

### **Assessment**

All students at Cascade Elementary are assessed on language proficiency in a variety of ways. Universal screeners are administered three times per year to measure student achievement and growth, in addition to formative and summative assessments throughout units. The assessments include pre/post unit tests across the curriculum, performance-based tasks, exit tickets, as well as standards based assessments related to our literacy programs including Fountas and Pinnell, Lucy Calkins for writing, Foundations (K-3rd) for phonics, and Just Words (4th-5th) for phonics intervention. Pre-K students will be assessed using the Phonological

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Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) three times per year, and Access, an English language proficiency assessment, will be administered yearly to all K-5th English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program students to determine English proficiency as well as readiness to exit the ESOL program. Literacy and communication skills will also be assessed as 5th grade students engage in the PYP exhibition. Culminating unit assessments and rubrics for performance-based tasks will be included in the unit planners. Additionally, accommodations for special education and ESOL students are expected to be implemented as appropriate.

### **Support for all Learners**

We strive to create an equitable balance of power through a culture of equity, trust, and collaboration. Therefore, we must give all children the opportunity to learn by providing necessary scaffolds, accommodations, or interventions to meet the needs of diverse learners. Students experiencing academic difficulties in any area of language development or proficiency will be referred to the Student Support Team (SST), which is our state mandated school-based intervention process. The team includes the SST interventionists, the intervention specialists, parents, homeroom teachers, and when appropriate, the school psychologists and the special education lead teacher. Through the SST process, teachers receive strategies, modifications, and/or accommodations to help students progress. If students continue to experience difficulties, the SST process progresses with intensified and/or individualized support as needed. In addition, classroom teachers conference with individual students to review data, academic progress, and learning goals. Teachers also differentiate instruction daily based on the needs of all learners.

Special Education students are expected to participate in the language curriculum with accommodations being implemented when appropriate based on the individualized education plan (IEP). Teachers are expected to collaborate with the ESOL teacher to implement modifications and/or accommodations for all ESOL students according to the Testing Participation Committee (TPC) recommendations. The TPC consists of the ESOL teacher, the homeroom teacher, and another certified educator who serves the student.

### **Language B - Language Learners**

Cascade Elementary offers Spanish as the additional language for students in kindergarten through 5th grades. Our Spanish specialist teacher implements the National Standards for Learning Languages, and works on developing multilingual skills in students in the areas of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Through weekly instructional lessons, students develop global awareness and an understanding of cultural differences.

### **ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages)**

Our school community language profile includes English, Spanish, Soninke, Mandingo, French, and Wolof. All students who attend Cascade complete a Home Language Survey, and based on

the survey, students receive a placement test to determine if they are eligible for English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. The goal of our ESOL program is to provide the appropriate scaffolds and language support to increase English language proficiency and academic achievement. Our ESOL teacher collaborates with classroom teachers to ensure appropriate strategies and accommodations are implemented to lead to successful outcomes for ESOL students. The ESOL teacher also provides support to parents to help them understand the academic and social progress of their child(ren).

### **Mother Tongue Support**

To further develop cultural proficiency and international mindedness, the media center includes literature in Spanish and several of our ESOL students' first languages. We also strive to utilize APS translation services for key documents and request translators for important meetings for our parents and guardians, as much as possible. Our goal is to provide a learning community and environment that consistently includes diversity and inclusion of world cultures.

### **Responsibility of Stakeholders**

All members of the learning community are expected to support implementation of the Language Policy.

### **Language Policy Review**

The language policy at Cascade Elementary School will be reviewed by community stakeholders, staff, school administration, and the IB pedagogical team at least once each year. The IB pedagogical team includes the principal, assistant principal, school business manager, PYP coordinator, instructional coaches, school improvement grade level leaders, and the school counselor. Revisions will be guided by IBO updates and changes to the needs of our community.

### **Resources**

- Atlanta Public Schools, *APS PreK-12 literacy plan: A guide to comprehensive, coherent, and high-quality literacy instruction*, 2019
- Beecher Hills Elementary School, *Language policy*, 2018
- Bolton Academy, *Language policy*, 2018
- International Baccalaureate Organization, *Programme standards and practices*, January 2014 (Revised 2020)
- Primary Years Programme. *PYP Principles into practice*. October 2018