

Shepherd Elementary School Language Policy

Statement of Philosophy

At Shepherd Elementary language is the foundation of learning throughout the curriculum. Through language one is able to form his or her own identity, explore their environment, solve problems and influence the thinking of others.

At Shepherd Elementary, all students experience an enriched language program in which English is the primary language of instruction, and French and Spanish are taught as an additional language using the Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) model. We consider math, visual arts, and music as other valuable languages in which all students are consistently exposed and encouraged to use to understand the world.

At Shepherd, we believe that Language is enhanced through reading, writing, listening, speaking, and presenting.

We believe students learn best if they are provided with opportunities to...

- reflect on their learning and self assess
- write across the curriculum
- utilize the RACE strategy to respond to constructed response questions
- participate in school wide book clubs
- serve as announcers on the morning messages/broadcasts to express their thoughts and ideas
- use music and art to increase vocabulary and develop their language
- reflect on language through comparisons with foreign languages

We believe students learn best when teachers...

- present language through meaningful authentic contexts
- integrate language and other subject areas
- assist students in discovering language structures
- encourage students to reflect on language and develop language awareness (including but not limited to form and audience)
- recognize and respect the different ways in which students express themselves, including mother tongue development
- provide students with a physical environment, which enriches their language development
- support the development of positive attitudes toward improving communication skills and provide a wide range of opportunities to do so
- use a wide range of teaching strategies to teach language through a balanced language program that includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- provide challenges to students allowing them opportunities to reach their full potential
- acknowledge differences in developmental stages, learning styles, as well as, previous language experiences
- use a wide range of teaching and assessment strategies

To facilitate language instruction teachers will...

- implement unit plans
- serve as facilitators
- serve as Book Club sponsors
- implement the Literacy Block with legitimacy
- implement their transdisciplinary units of study
- engage students in cooperative discussions
- model effective reading, speaking, writing and listening skills
- provide students opportunities to make presentations
- provide students opportunities to research
- express their feelings and opinions and encourage others to do the same
- express needs, feeling, ideas, and opinions using the acquisition of learning a foreign language
- encourage parental involvement
- publish student work

Mother Tongue Support

The students at Shepherd Elementary School are predominately English-speaking in their homes. Only 9 percent of the student population has a mother tongue other than English.

Nonetheless, Shepherd provides support for those students in the following ways:

- **English as a Second Language (ESL) Program:** A full-time ESL teacher supports students through pull-out small group instruction and in-class (mainstream) assistance.
- **Office of Bi-lingual Education (OBE):** Shepherd draws on the resources of this district office for a variety of supports for students and parents whose mother tongue is other than English. Their intake department assesses the educational development and level of such students when they first enter the DC Public Schools. They provide print resources in a variety of languages for parents and teachers upon request. Also, they provide oral and written translation services when requested by a school or parents.
- **Library Resources:** The school library is limited in resources for languages. Currently, French, Spanish, and English, are the only languages represented in our school library but, Russian and Amharic resources will be available soon. Teachers refer parents to the local D.C. Public Library Branch, the Thornton Branch in Shepherd Park. This library has resources in a variety of languages.
- **Embassy Resources:** The uniqueness of Washington, DC as a capital city enables schools, students and parents to take advantage of the print and audio resources available in the cultural affairs office at each embassy. Teachers utilize these resources for their students who need that support and let parents know how they can utilize these resources as well.

Learning a Second Language

Shepherd Elementary provides second-language instruction to all students in French or Spanish beginning in Pre-kindergarten. Students remain on their language track until they graduate in Fifth grade. Through language instruction, all students acquire an acceptable standard of proficiency in the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing basic Spanish or French. Cultural awareness and understanding play a fundamental part in each lesson. As the grade levels progress the vocabulary becomes increasingly sophisticated, and students are able to produce their own language within a limited scope. All students will have the knowledge of and the ability to use two languages, but not all of them to the same extent. The acquisition of language must be seen as a continuum along which each individual student progresses at his/her own speed.

Language instruction is guided by the District of Columbia World Language standards.

Language Development and the Student Profile

In line with the PYP, the language program at Shepherd Elementary not only helps students gain an instrumental means of communication, it helps them develop the cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal skills which promote a well-balanced and holistic education. We strive for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to be:

Inquirer: They use language to acquire information and to make sense of the world around them.

Thinker: They are able to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and succinctly.

Communicator: They are competent users of oral and written language in a variety of situations. They listen attentively and pay attention to detail. They speak confidently and clearly. They read fluently with good comprehension. They write clearly, concisely, accurately and in a style appropriate for the purpose.

Risk taker: They are willing to attempt to read, write or speak in situations where they may not feel totally confident.

Knowledgeable: They have acquired the vocabulary and understanding to discuss literacy styles.

Principled: They are aware that language is powerful and that it can have a profound effect, thus it must be used responsibly

Caring: They show caring in their use of language and are aware of how the use of language can affect others.

Open-minded: They respect differences and similarities between languages, dialects, and personal communication skills.

Well-balanced: They can express themselves orally as well as in writing and find a balance between listening and speaking in communicating with others.

Reflective: They reflect on their language usage and development and consciously work at improving their language proficiency.

We believe that through an exploration of language, students become independent thinkers, responsible world citizens, and excellent communicators in a multilingual world. In practice, all teachers are language teachers. Therefore, Shepherd's teaching and learning is driven by the idea that through language instruction students develop intercultural awareness and new perspectives. At Shepherd, students enter a culture of curiosity where there is an appreciation of the richness of the world's diversity.

Revised 10/29/2010