

Shepherd Elementary School Language Policy

Statement of Philosophy:

Shepherd Elementary School is an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. Our goal is to develop inquisitive, international-minded learners, who think globally and act compassionately. 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 additional languages using the Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) model. We also consider math, visual arts, music, and other content areas as valuable languages in which all students are encouraged to use to understand the world.

At Shepherd, we believe that language is enhanced through the four modes of communication: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

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

- reflect on their learning and self-assess
- express their thoughts and ideas
- make connections between their mother tongue and other languages

We believe students learn best when teachers facilitate learning by:

- implementing inquiry-based instructional practices
- presenting language through meaningful authentic contexts
- assisting students in discovering language structures
- recognizing and respecting the different ways in which students express themselves, including mother tongue development
- providing students with a rich print environment that supports language development
- providing a wide range of opportunities to improve communication skills
- differentiating instruction through using a variety of teaching strategies and accommodations
- providing rigorous learning experiences to improve critical thinking
- incorporating students' multicultural backgrounds and interests into learning experiences

Mother Tongue Support

Shepherd provides resources for students who qualify for English language learning support in the following ways:

- English Language Learner (ELL) Program: Two full-time ELL teachers support students through pull-out small group instruction and in-class assistance.
- Language Acquisition Division (LAD): Shepherd draws on the resources of this district office for a variety of supports for students and parents whose mother tongue is not English. Their intake department assesses the educational development and English language proficiency level of students when they first enter 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:** Currently, French, Spanish, and English, are the languages represented in our school library as well as some Russian, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Amharic resources provided through our school's ELL teachers. Teachers can also refer parents to the local Shepherd Park D.C. Public Library. This library also 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 can utilize these resources for their students who need that support and inform parents on 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 PK3 at least twice a week. Language instruction is guided by the Foreign Language in Elementary Schools model, the District of Columbia World Language standards, and our school's IB Programme of Inquiry. In order to reach proficiency, we recommend students select a language track and study that language until they graduate in fifth grade. Through listening, speaking, reading, and writing, all students acquire a standard level of proficiency in Spanish or French. As the grade levels progress, the vocabulary expands, and students gain the knowledge and skills needed to use the target language. The acquisition of language is a continuum, and each individual student progresses at his/her own pace throughout the school year.

Language Development and the Student Profile

In line with the PYP, we strive for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable them to be successful language learners by incorporating the following IB learner profile attributes into daily instruction.

Inquirer: We are curious. We ask questions and search for information. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm.

Thinker: We use creative thinking skills to better understand and take responsible action on difficult problems. We take initiative and make good choices.

Communicator: We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language. We listen carefully to the ideas of others.

Risk taker: We are courageous and determined. We work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and strategies.

Knowledgeable: We develop and use our understandings by exploring a variety of subjects. We explore local and global issues and ideas.

Principled: We act with integrity and honesty. We have a strong sense of fairness and justice and respect others. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

Caring: We show empathy, compassion, and respect. We have a commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and the world around us.

Open-minded: We appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We have tolerance. We consider other points of view and are willing to grow from the experience.

Balanced: We strive to develop healthy minds and bodies. We understand the importance of our relationships with other people and the world.

Reflective: We think about the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to learn and grow.

At Shepherd Elementary, language is the foundation of learning throughout the curriculum. Through language, students can connect with both their local and global communities. Shepherd's teaching and learning is driven by the idea that through language instruction students can develop the 21st century skills needed to be successful in an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.