**William Rainey Harper Language Policy**

**Philosophy**

The mission of William Rainey Harper is to build strong scholars, with active and creative minds, while encouraging curiosity with no fear! We stress the development of the whole child who values diversity and is responsive to the needs of the world. Harper’s curriculum is designed to encourage students to think deeply and creatively across subject areas and topics. Students explore the wider concepts of the world through integrated, transdisciplinary themes. To that end, the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and number skills are emphasized throughout the school. Through this approach, we hope to develop enthusiastic learners who critically think about social issues globally and in their own community.

Throughout our PYP program, from preschool to 5th grade, students develop the ability to write, to read, to speak, and to listen. Our language arts curriculum stresses the use of quality literature, while encouraging students to develop writing skills that encompass all parts of the writing process. Through supplemental materials, teachers encourage students to explore topics that interest them and write coherently and clearly about their thoughts.

As students move from the PYP into the MYP program, we emphasize a continuum of learning. Scholars are asked to think more deeply about topics. There is an emphasis on the written language, in accordance with state expectations for MYP scholars. Scholars are also encouraged to become independent readers who can articulate their beliefs and thoughts about what they have read.

**Language of Instruction**

The language of instruction at William Rainey Harper is English in all grade levels PreK-8th grade. All students also receive Spanish instruction PreK-5th grade at least one fifty-minute period a week. Spanish language instruction continues through Middle School; scholars are enrolled in language acquisition either two or three days a week. Students who meet the qualifications can complete advanced Spanish classes for credit.

**Language Instruction**

In preschool and kindergarten, our scholars learn four units of inquiry, and in the 1st through 5th grades, all six unit themes are studied. These units form the framework for language instruction for all students in prek-5th grade. William Rainey Harper staff work collaboratively to create and teach units that reflect each of these units of inquiry, taught in English. In addition, students are taught a unit of inquiry in Spanish as well, throughout the year.

As students move into the MYP program in 6th grade, there is a continuation of language learning. Scholars take a daily, full year of Language and Literature in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. Scholars are expected to read grade-level appropriate novels and engage in communication skills as they analyze their reading and writing with their peers. In addition, all scholars in MYP are enrolled in a language acquisition class, which for William Rainey Harper is Spanish.

**Home Language Development and Maintenance**

William Rainey Harper works hard to create a space where all scholars are welcome and celebrated in their home language and home cultures. At the beginning of the school year, teachers are made aware of students who speak a different language at home. Every effort is made to communicate with families in the appropriate language, as well as books and materials in the classroom that celebrate different cultures and languages present within the school community. For families and staff who need it, instantaneous translation services are available throughout the district in over forty languages.

In addition, students who are identified as needing additional support in learning English will be provided with small group instruction with a licensed ELL teacher. Students who are receiving support will have their progress in reading, writing and speaking in English tracked with the yearly OELPA test, which is required by the state of Ohio. Scholars who qualify can also have certain accommodations on the state test, such as language access read aloud on the standardized test.

Families and students are encouraged to read, write, and speak in their home language outside of school, as the skills will transfer to students’ progress in learning English. As a school community, we can use the extensive Cuyahoga County Library system to find resources for students and teachers in mother-tongue languages as needed for research, projects, and presentations. Both PYP and MYP students also have access to a variety of internet resources to assist in their studies in both mother-tongue languages and English.

**Standards and Assessments**

All PYP teachers at William Rainey Harper utilize the Ohio Standards of English Language Instruction, as required by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and the state of Ohio. The preschool teachers utilize the Ohio Early Learning Standards.

In preschool and kindergarten, students are regularly assessed on reading, writing and speaking skills in English, as required by the state and district. Beginning in 1st grade, students are assessed three times a year using the NWEA ELA test. This test measures students' skills in reading and comprehension. Students in Kindergarten through third grade who need extra support receive small group instruction in reading and writing skills.

In addition to the NWEA test, 3rd – 8th grade scholars are assessed on one end of year state assessment, though 3rd grade also takes an extra fall assessment to check for comprehension. This test is required by the state, and assesses students’ ability to read, write and comprehend ELA grade level appropriate materials.

**MYP**

All teachers will align their assessments of language with our assessment policy and IB expectations.

**Whole School Guiding Principles:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PYP** | **MYP** |
| We give appropriate and current feedback to students in all languages of instruction. | **x** | **x** |
| We value professional development and work to explore up-to-date research and best practices. | **x** | **x** |
| We use both English and Spanish as a method of inquiry, allowing first and second language speakers to develop their skills. | **x** |  |
| We include families, the community, students and staff in the development of language. | **x** | **x** |
| Language support is available to all scholars who need it – in the classroom, small groups, and individuals as needed. | **x** | **x** |

**Annual Policy Review**

The language policy will be reviewed by staff annually.

*Policy Draft: Sept. 2022*

*Policy Review: June 2023*

*Policy Revision: March 2024*