

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 the use of supplemental materials, teachers encourage students to explore topics that interest them, and write coherently and clearly about their thoughts.

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction at William Rainey Harper is English. All students also receive Spanish instruction PreK-5th grade at least one forty-five-minute period a week. Spanish language instruction continues through Middle School.

Units of Inquiry

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.

Mother-Tongue Development and Maintenance

William Rainey Harper works hard to create a space where all scholars are welcome and celebrated in their mother-tongue languages 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.

In addition, students who are identified as needing additional support will be provided with small group instruction with a licensed ESL teacher. Students who are receiving support will have their progress in reading, writing and speaking in English tracked with the yearly OCTELA test, which is required by the state of Ohio.

Families and students are encouraged to read, write, and speak in their mother-tongue outside of school, as the skills will transfer to students' progress in learning English. As a school community, we 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. PYP 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, as required by the district. This test measures students' skills in reading and comprehension. Students in Kindergarten through third grade who are identified as needing extra support receive small group instruction in reading and writing skills.

In addition to the NWEA test, beginning in 3rd grade students are also assessed on one end of year state assessment. This test is required by the state, and assesses students' ability to read, write and comprehend ELA grade level appropriate materials.

Annual Policy Review

The language policy will be reviewed by the IB Committee annually.