

## **Avon Elementary School's Language Policy**

*"In Eagle County Schools, our two largest demographic groups are Hispanic and Anglo, and these two make up nearly a 50/50 split district-wide. Our district also has nearly 40% of students who are Spanish-speaking and who are learning English. We can turn these factors into a tremendous advantage for our students by expanding opportunities for learning multiple languages."*

*Dr. Jason Glass  
Eagle County Schools Superintendent*

### **The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme's Mission Statement**

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

### **Avon Elementary School's Mission Statement**

Avon Elementary, the heart of a world-class, multi-cultural school community, is committed to maximizing the potential of each individual learner. In a safe and nurturing environment, we educate and empower our students to become high achieving, well-rounded, multilingual global citizens. In partnership with our families and community, we strive to instill compassion and a lifelong love of learning.

### **Eagle County School's Mission Statement**

In safe environments, we teach the children of Eagle County to have creative and active minds, compassion for others, enthusiasm for lifelong learning, and the courage to act on their dreams.

Vision: Internationally competitive graduates

Values:

- Respecting educators
- Engaging students and improving achievement
- Equitably preparing a diverse student body
- Involving the community
- Delivering a challenging curriculum

### **Language Philosophy**

Avon Elementary School is a community of language learners. We use English and Spanish languages as a medium of inquiry, providing opportunities to challenge,

nurture and develop speakers of two languages. We integrate language instruction throughout all of our curriculum. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are integrated throughout all the transdisciplinary programs of inquiry. We view the ongoing language development for all students as a collaborative endeavor involving all staff members, students and parents. Learning language is integral to the development of personal, cognitive, social and cultural identity, and to make meaning of the world around us. We value students' mother tongues and believe their background knowledge and experiences can support academic success. Through language and international-mindedness, we encourage intercultural awareness, new perspectives, and an appreciation of the world's diversity. In addition, we encourage students to remain in touch with their cultural heritage, while at the same time helping them adjust to their new home community and educational system. Our school empowers students to be risk takers in their learning process. Our teachers provide comprehensible input, as well as acceptance and respect for the language and culture of its students.

Eagle County Schools has a high percentage of emerging bilinguals, native Spanish-speakers being the most common, and therefore, we share our language philosophy with our superintendent, Dr. Jason Glass, who states:

*Imagine if every student who graduated from Eagle County Schools had a masterful command of English, spoke and understood Spanish at a very high level, and in many cases also acquired a third language by the time of graduation. In this increasingly global economy, the knowledge of multiple languages for Eagle County students can be more than just the sign of being raised in this international community with world-class expectations – it is a competitive advantage we can give our students that will pay returns on this investment for a lifetime.*

### **Language of Instruction**

We follow a 50/50 dual language model. All core subjects are taught in English and Spanish equally, preschool through fifth grade. Our school has high expectations for student success in becoming bilingual, bicultural and bi-literate.

Our staff collectively developed our school's essential agreements including our beliefs and practices for the teaching of language. Teachers implement these instructional strategies daily into their classroom to support language and learning.

### **Essential Agreements for the Teaching of Language: Beliefs and Practices**

All students are regularly:

- Provided ample opportunity to read, write, listen, and speak across the curriculum.
- Taught literacy skills in context.
- Taught strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, respond to, appreciate, and construct texts.
- Taught through a variety of technological and informational resources.

- Encouraged to express themselves orally and in writing, in a variety of media and situations.
- Encouraged to share and develop their work in a social context (brainstorming; facilitating verbal discussion; cooperative learning).
- Encouraged to see language as a tool for thinking, inquiring and learning.
- Encouraged to maintain and value their mother tongue and to value that of other students.
- Provided the opportunity to become proficient in more than one language.
- Exposed to a broad range of literature reflecting a variety of cultures and perspectives.
- Encouraged to develop a love of language and literature.
- Provided with constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers (e.g., restating, probing student contributions to uncover meaning, building on what students say, etc.)
- Given opportunities to access prior knowledge and connect new content (e.g., link new learning to past experiences, use cooperative learning for verbal classroom discussion, concept mapping, KWL chart, etc.)
- Using strategies to meet varying language proficiency levels (e.g., analyzing linguistic similarities and differences among languages, bridging, utilizing native language, implementing activities that reflect the specific proficiency levels, emphasizing meaning in addition to word accuracy, provide access to different resources, such as books, internet, etc., connecting into home and community, using the home language as a resource for learning, connecting learning to relevant issues in students' lives, etc.)
- Accessing differentiated core literacy instruction (e.g., scaffold instruction through use of a gradual release model, use sheltered instruction, such as building background knowledge, key vocabulary, comprehensible input, interaction, supplementary materials, hands-on activities-, direct instruction with modeling, reteaching, etc.)
- Provided with differentiated core literacy instruction: language development (e.g., include and integrate targeted language structures to support language development into content instruction, sentence stems and language frames, students' discourse, oral and written products -artistic, graphic representations-, etc.).
- Provided with differentiated core literacy instruction: literacy components (e.g., provide reading fluency practice, provide word work instruction, provide reading comprehension instruction, ensure that writing instruction incorporates direct instruction and interactive approaches, etc.).
- Provided with differentiated core literacy instruction: supportive classroom environment (e.g., cooperative learning, interactive learning, nurture a safe environment, provide sufficient wait time, validate approximations to correct responses, encourage multiple attempt, etc). Using resource based, curriculum and instruction.
- Provided with differentiated core literacy instruction: progress monitoring to inform instructional decision making (e.g., provide repeated and varied opportunities to demonstrate proficiencies, progress monitoring, determine

core rate of progress relative to norms -peer comparisons, instructional differentiations -assessment in forms content differentiation, etc.).

- Making connections between school and community experiences (text-to-self connection).
- Engaged in activity-based tasks and learning that broadens students' cultural perspectives (e.g., research based projects that help students develop international mindedness like holidays, traditions, etc., around the world. Providing access to materials to support their research).

All teachers are regularly:

- Using students' own interests to build learning engagement and interactions.
- Respecting students' learning preferences and culturally-based methods of learning (e.g., use of wait time, analogy, emphasis on oral/traditional time management, self-management, cross cultural communication).
- Accepting varied levels of responses for students acquiring English or Spanish as a second language (e.g., approximations to correct responses, multiple attempts to be successful, etc.).
- Using physical and visual materials for classifying or grouping information, building students' shared understanding of concepts and skills, examining abstract concepts (e.g., graphic organizers, etc.), identifying and acquiring vocabulary of key concepts and identifying similar patterns of vocabulary/content across different subjects (e.g., similar words and information are seen in reading passages and social studies material).
- Making necessary classroom management changes to address behavior needs (e.g., teacher-student proximity, positive reinforcements, reviewing/restating class routines, restructuring process for transitioning to/from activities, etc.)
- Meeting diverse needs with culturally responsive classroom management (limited prior experiences in school and accommodating for acculturative stress).

We use the WIDA ACCESS and formative assessment to inform our instruction, and to determine which of the previous language instructional strategies to use with students at various language levels.

Language and literacy instruction is taught through the International Baccalaureate Programme and the U.S. Common Core curriculum. Language learning supports the IB fundamental concepts of intercultural awareness and communication. Through their language development, students explore cross-curricular themes and develop the Learner Profile attributes. Students' language progress is developed through reading, writing, speaking, listening, media literacy, viewing and presenting, with a goal of expression and communication. We encourage students to be risk takers and become confident with their expressive communication in both languages. For all second language learners to achieve their potential, appropriate scaffolding and differentiation across all content areas of the curriculum is required.

Reading extensively outside the classroom and developing a richer vocabulary in both languages is strongly encouraged.

### **Testing and Placement of English and Spanish Emerging Bilinguals**

For students in the Primary Years Program, performance in English Language Arts is regularly monitored through common formative classroom assessments, as well as DIBELS, TRC, and the summative assessments WIDA and PARCC. For students in the Primary Years Program, performance in Spanish Language Arts is regularly monitored through common formative classroom assessments, as well as Istation (K-3), AIMSweb, IDEL, and TRC (K-3)/EDL (4-5). This ensures that instruction reflects appropriate rigor to develop student language skills, and to ensure that appropriate interventions are in place to support the learners. We also analyze the WIDA ACCESS during the Response to Intervention (RtI) process with struggling students, to see whether they're acquiring the English language at the state's expected rate, as well as identify students in Gifted and Talented if they have had rapid language acquisition. Language will be assessed based on our Assessment Policy.

### **Mother Tongue Beliefs**

As a school, we promote international mindedness by encouraging access to different cultures, perspectives and languages.

In order to achieve our goal of bi-literacy, we strive to have students:

- acquire an additional language while respecting the development of the mother tongue because this aids the learning of the target language
- value the cognitive advantages for being multilingual
- retain self esteem and/or personal identity
- become highly proficient in both languages of instruction (students are never retained due to a language barrier)
- maintain their cultural identity and emotional stability

### **Future Goals**

Our language policy is a living document that will be formally reviewed at least once during each 5-year PYP evaluation cycle, and will include the school community's perspectives regarding language learning. All teachers will have an equal voice in helping to develop and revise our language policy and language learning practices.

Avon Elementary School's Language Policy will be promoted to all staff, parents and community members on the school's web site. Articles in the school newsletter will refer to components of the language policy. All staff is knowledgeable about the policy and can help communicate this knowledge with parents at back-to-school night, parent teacher conferences, and various school events.

To improve the resources in our school, we will allocate building funds and grants to purchase language learning and inquiry based materials and media. The media specialist will manage the building library budget with input from staff, parents and students. For the small percentage of students who use mother tongue languages other than English or Spanish, we are committed to supporting families as much as possible and therefore, additional library and media materials will be provided. The school will actively help and support any parent who is seeking mother tongue resources for their child.

High quality professional development opportunities will be available for staff to further their knowledge of best practices for guiding students' language learning, including dual language, district and IB workshops, collaboration with other schools, membership in professional organizations, book studies and/or sharing of best practices through professional learning communities.

The district provides schools with the language learning standards, curriculum, resources and common required assessments. The building IB coordinator provides professional learning to staff about the PYP Standards and Practices related to language teaching and learning. The coordinator receives information about updates to program standards and practices via the IB Online Curriculum Center and promotes the use of the OCC among staff as well, so they can directly access PYP documentation related to language practices.