

## Discovery School's Language Policy

*To provide each child the educational opportunity to discover, with perseverance and imagination, the joy of learning and the interconnectedness of our world.*

### **Statement of Belief:**

We believe that language is a vital component to the success of all student learning. Language is defined as the ability to express oneself through speaking, reading, writing, performing, drawing, etc. We also recognize that each discipline carries its own language, such as the language of science, the language of math, the language of the arts. Language connects all curricular areas. Discovery School believes that all teachers are responsible for teaching language. Language, as with other concepts, cannot be learned in isolation; rather, language must be taught as a purposeful, integrated part of all curricular areas.

### **Language A Policy:**

Literature is an integral part of the curriculum, students are assessed formally several times throughout the year to establish reading and writing levels, writing is as much about meaning as it is about structure and form, self expression is encouraged by regular intervals of reflection, opportunities for presentation skills and other oral language opportunities, skits, songs, debates. Teachers model speech, vocabulary, and other forms of speech. Selection of materials are made to reflect the units of study, matching reading levels and moving into more challenging texts focusing on fluency, comprehension, recognition, writing process, relevant, and engaging.

Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individually assessed in their reading ability using the Fountas and Pinnell system, organized into groups, book clubs, and literature studies. They participate in Daily 5 language organization and buddy reading as well. Spelling is assessed individually using Words Their Way and organized into groups focusing on spelling pattern and transfer. Writing is used to focus on meaning as much as technical skill, and self-expression is encouraged by regular intervals of written and oral reflection. Writing is taught using Units of Study, an inquiry based writing program created by Lucy Calkins and the Teacher's College of Columbia University. This program has helped create better vertical alignment in our language program and in writing specifically.

### **Language B Policy:**

Mandarin, as our language B, is taught to students through several formats. Students in grades K - 4 attend Mandarin classes for a minimum of sixty minutes per week.

Students in grades 5-6 attend Mandarin classes for a minimum of one hundred and twenty minutes per week. Our preschool and prekindergarten students have exposure to Mandarin language for a minimum of sixty minutes per week.

Though not directly instructed, students also have learning experiences with Spanish as it is combined during their library time.

Both languages are supported throughout the school environment by labeling objects in both languages, using common greetings from both languages with each other, and through other cultural experiences with art, music, and dance.

### **Identification of Language Needs:**

Through inquiry, teachers provide students with opportunities to use language in many different forms: role-play, debate, acting, and art, as well as the traditional teaching of language through the planners. Students read materials that match their levels. Student writing samples are taken throughout the school year to demonstrate growth in all six traits of writing: ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions. Reading and writing are also interwoven into all curricular areas as students read materials that are generated from the planners and write in response to activities generated from these. The focus of the learning is for the experience to be relevant, engaging and challenging to each student.

Students whose growth is not as anticipated are screened and intervention is provided regarding the specific language areas in which they are demonstrating difficulty.

### **Home Language Support:**

Discovery School seeks to encourage our families to continue using their home languages with their children. We celebrate the cultural diversity that all languages bring to our school and our community. In order to understand better what languages are spoken in the homes of our students, we send home an annual survey to collect this information. As well, we encourage our parents and families to come into school and share their language with our students. We feel that having access to multiple languages gives our students different perspectives which are invaluable to their learning. We encourage international mindedness in our families, students, and staff.

Several members of our faculty possess their English Second Language (ESL) certifications, and several staff members have taught in countries whose language of instruction was in a language other than English.

**Language Resources:**

Discovery School is working to enhance its language resources. Our library is an area of focus due to funding challenges to gather resources as well as scheduling challenges. Currently, we have a dedicated school library that students use, at minimum, weekly to select literature and to use as a place to find resources both in print and electronically. As well, our classrooms are rich in print and provide many options for students at various reading levels. All teachers have access to an online resource: [readinga-z.com](http://readinga-z.com), that provides numerous resources, both in English and in Spanish, for students reading at a emergent level to those reading chapter books. Finally, all teachers have access to Brainpop, another online resource for teachers to use across the curriculum.

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