

## **Primary Years Programme Language Policy Morris Jeff Community School**

### **Our Language Philosophy:**

At Morris Jeff Community School (MJCS) we understand languages to be at the center of our relationships with each other, our community and our world. We recognize that as individuals and groups we communicate in many ways including a variety of spoken and sign languages, the arts, adaptive and assistive technology, genres of writing, nonverbal communication, and technology. In our approach to language learning we embrace Michael Halliday's three aspects of language learning:

“learning language--as learners listen to and use language with others in their everyday lives; learning about language--as learners grow in their understanding of how language works; and learning through language--as learners use language as a tool to listen, think, discuss and reflect on information, ideas and issues” (Halliday, as cited in MTPYPH, 2009, p. 68).

Recognizing this, we believe that language is best learned through authentic speaking, listening, reading, and writing across disciplines as well as specific teaching of the fundamentals of language(s) such as phonics, spelling, and grammar. Language learning, as the connective element in the curriculum and our relationships, is central to our mission of offering “an education that is a source of freedom and possibility for all students permitting them to develop their talents fully, become contributing global citizens, and attain the foundation needed to excel at college, career, and beyond.”

### **Our Approach to Learning Language of Instruction (English):**

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) at Morris Jeff Community School (MJCS) places transdisciplinary learning at the forefront giving the classroom teacher the responsibility for the language of instruction (English) in the context of “learning that transcends the confines of the subject areas” (MTPYPH, 2009, p. 67). We understand that language “is the major connecting element across the curriculum” and “provides a vehicle for inquiry” (MTPYPH, 2009, p. 69). With this emphasis and understanding, MJCS follows best practices for balanced literacy where, as noted in our language philosophy, students learn language, learn about language, and learn through language in the context of receptive and expressive oral, visual, and written language.

### **How we teach language of instruction (English):**

- Balanced literacy including:
  - Active and purposeful listening and speaking to both communicate and construct meaning for deeper levels of understanding
  - Viewing and presenting to develop skills for “interpreting, using, and constructing visuals and multimedia” (MTPYPH, 2009, p. 73)
  - Reading to create meaning from complex texts based on the interactions of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and

comprehension through the Core Knowledge Language Arts foundational skills and Wit & Wisdom curricular as well as personalized learning through technology

- Writing workshop to guide students in organizing and communicating thoughts, ideas, and information and in the development of structures, strategies, and literary techniques as well as language conventions
- Reading and writing literary and informational texts as integral to Units of Inquiry
- Regular library classes for all students
- Connections to the school library (over 12,000 books) for research, units of inquiry, and Exhibition

### **Our Approach to Additional Language Learning (Spanish):**

At MJCS we believe the students will grow to be life-long language learners with international mindedness demonstrating *empathy for, curiosity of, and knowledge about* the Spanish-speaking world as part of a global community. Our students will be able to apply a variety of skills and cultural knowledge to communicate effectively in Spanish in real life situations.

The MJCS PYP Language Acquisition program believes that teaching is “*the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards*” (Anatole France). We strive to instill a love and enjoyment for Spanish through meaningful activities, projects, and lessons where the students are empowered with their potential. Language is best acquired through authentic meaningful lessons where students are challenged with careful consideration of possible frustration levels. Teachers at MJCS PYP use a proficiency-based and comprehensible input framework in order to engage students in interactions of language and culture in the four modalities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

### **How we teach additional language learning (Spanish):**

- Daily Spanish instruction at most grade levels
- Transdisciplinary connections with Units of Inquiry
- Incorporation of cultural knowledge and understanding of Spanish speaking countries
- Whole school Spanish presentations focused on cultural knowledge, language learning, and showcasing student work
- Emphasis on communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing promoted through proficiency-based strategies
- Using understandable input that is repeated in many compelling ways through the incorporation of songs, experiences, presentations, gestures, storytelling, movie talks, and illustrations among other strategies

### **Our Approach to support English Language Learners :**

The goal of the ESL instructional program at MJCS is to develop proficiency in the English language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) using state standards and

recommended strategies through full inclusion in the general education classroom setting. Students who have been screened and identified as having limited English proficiency are provided ESL instructional services inside their regular education classroom, along with their native-speaking peers. ESL instruction is guided by staff who have ESL knowledge/skill/certification. Teachers use ESL methodology to appropriately deliver instruction to those students who have limited proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking English.

Newcomers may be pulled-out of their regular education classroom for focused, sheltered English instruction with the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, as appropriate. ESL learners are supported in the regular education classroom through differentiated instruction and ESL support. Considering English is the common language of MJCS, students need less service minutes in individualized/small group instruction with the ESL teacher; they benefit from being in the English full-immersion classroom from the start of the academic year. (Cummins, J., 2000. Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.)

#### **How we support students learning English:**

- Identification of students with limited English proficiency through a home language survey
- Assessments of English language proficiency by MJCS staff (both placement and state mandated ELDA test)
- Creation and implementation of LEP plans for students who qualify for accommodations
- Support from Response to Intervention (Rtl) when warranted for additional support
- Translation of school documents into Spanish
- Spanish translation available at conferences

#### **Our Approach to support students' development of their mother tongue:**

MJCS recognizes the cultural, personal, and academic importance of a student's mother tongue. Students whose mother tongue is not English receive support and differentiation through our ELL program staff and the classroom teacher.

Morris Jeff Community School strives to support all students by developing the library collection and additional resources reflective of our evolving student body. Our library includes:

- Bilingual texts (Spanish and additional languages)
- Special collection in Spanish to support language acquisition program and students whose mother tongue is Spanish
- Texts in a variety of languages and from around the world
- Electronic resources with language translation feature
- Regular additions to library collections to reflect incoming students' backgrounds

In addition to library resources, MJCS also supports students' mother tongue by encouraging

- Independent reading in a student's mother tongue
- Use of curriculum materials in mother tongue when available and appropriate (ie Eureka Math)
- Performance of songs from countries from different parts of the world through music class
- Visits by family members to share language and culture
- Participation in school events which celebrate our diverse community such as International Family Night, Feria de Primavera, and Prime Time Family Reading Time
- Building multi-language home libraries through book giveaways at conferences, Prime Time Family Reading Time, Fall Literacy Festival, and library classes