

MYP (GRADES 6-10) LANGUAGE POLICY

Our Language Philosophy:

“No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world.”-Robin Williams

Language is fundamental to learning, thinking and communicating and therefore permeates all instructional practices hence all teachers are language teachers. We embrace the truth that literacy skills are utilized all of the time and therefore should be thoughtfully and strategically embedded into all MYP courses, projects, and extracurricular activities. Students need to be taught to be critical, creative and independent thinkers and comprehending, or meaning-making is what learners must do all of the time in order to be effective communicators. Developing advanced literacy skills during the adolescent years is paramount in propelling students into becoming independent, skilled, confident communicators. Strong language skills are essential to meeting the changing and challenging demands of college and career as well as developing the soft skills necessary to navigate life’s challenges.

Running alongside our commitment to ensuring our students are highly literate in English is our commitment to our language acquisition program. Our students will grow to be life-long language learners with a curiosity for and knowledge of the Spanish-speaking world. Students will be equipped with a variety of linguistic skills and cultural knowledge to communicate effectively in Spanish and in real-life situations.

Our Pedagogical and Literacy Learning Beliefs:

We believe that our literacy approach should encourage our students to become action-oriented lifelong learners, readers and writers who understand that access to power and privilege are deeply connected to one’s ability to communicate. With this access and understanding one can become an agent of change using acquired knowledge as well as critical, creative and independent thinking skills to be individuals who affect change and work to build a more peaceful world. Language is a vehicle for thought, creativity, self-expression, and social interaction.

We Will Do this by:

1. Embracing literacy instruction across all disciplines and committing to incorporating effective literacy instruction into our daily practice. It is evident that all aspects of literacy impact learning in all subject areas-reading/comprehending, writing, speaking, listening and accessing information from media.
 - a. Our MYP units across all subjects will have literacy embedded into lessons and our instructional practice.
 - b. Engaging in literacy development
 - c. IB and Louisiana state standards call for deep conceptual understanding which commands thinking, processing and synthesizing of complex and multifaceted information in a variety of ways –in all subject areas, and in more than one language

- d. Developing skills-listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting in a variety of contexts
- e. Applying linguistic and literary concepts and skills in a variety of authentic contexts and disciplines
2. Aligning literacy practices and procedures across all disciplines
 - a. Writing in all classes and use shared, common rubrics
 - b. Teach vocabulary across the curriculum Use aligned comprehension/close reading strategies
 - c. Developing oral fluency through academic discussions and discourse
3. Committing to having all students read authentic, interesting and challenging texts with a focus on international-mindedness as well as socio-political consciousness.
 - a. Thoughtful and communal text selection that contributes to the development of “opinion-forming, decision making and ethical-reasoning skills and further develops the attributes of an IB learner” (Language and Literature)
 - b. Grade level appropriate texts and supplementary readings
 - c. Independent reading expectations based on interest, choice, and exposure
 - d. Engaging with texts from different historical periods and a variety of cultures
 - e. Working to develop a lifelong interest in reading
4. Honoring growth, effort and self-awareness as well as sharing a sincere belief that every child can grow their language skills and become independent readers, writers and communicators.
 - a. Incorporating the growth mindset into our curriculum.
 - b. Helping our students perceive themselves as capable of being successful in school and empower them to recognize that they are in charge of their academic success.
 - c. Inspire lifelong readers, and learners, by deliberately and collectively working to improve students’ attitudes toward reading and learning.
 - d. Motivating older children to read is deeply hindered when they arrive dysfunctional readers and writers and the research is grim in terms of their ability to ever catch up. An individual’s success will be hindered if unable to interface with lots of information from various sources with ease, efficiency, and confidence. We must defy this and never stop believing that all students can become independent readers of complex
 - e. Motivating older children to read who come to us as functional or highly functional readers is equally important and challenging as many of the traditional practices in place in Middle Schools and High Schools kill any love, excitement or interest that our on and above level readers may bring. It also underestimates their ability by not offering them thoughtful, interesting challenges that push them to grow as readers and writers.
5. Embracing differentiated instruction driven by our commitment to inclusion utilizing all of the tools that technology offers us to do this effectively, honoring individual needs (while embracing the beauty and power of collaboration. We must attempt to strike a balance between individual growth empowered by self-awareness and ownership and the power and importance of collaboration.
6. Embracing computer literacy is essential to our students becoming career and college ready. Using technology and digital media strategically and capably will be supported and developed through a personalized learning focus

- a. IB states, "Students are encouraged to use applications such as databases, presentation, software, online games, podcasts, social media, simulations, spreadsheets and search engines. One of the aims of language and literature is 'to engage with a variety of media and information and communication technology in order to explore language (Language and literature pilot guide 2012)
- b. This includes blogs, websites, emails, films, music videos, digital advertisements and other electronic media as examples of the texts students should be reading, producing, listening to and viewing as part of their education. Additionally, one of the aims of MYP design is also to use and apply information communication technology (ICT) tools effectively." (Connecting IB to the Core IB and the Common Core State Standards, page 21)

Our Approach to Language Acquisition:

Learning to speak another's language means taking one's place in the human community. It means reaching out to others across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Language is far more than a system to be explained. It is our most important link to the world around us. Language is culture in motion. It is people interacting with people. ~Savignon (1983)

An integral part of the MYP students' academic experience is learning how to communicate in multiple modes and in more than one language. IB encourages not only multilingualism but also intercultural learning. "The study of additional languages in the MYP provides students with the opportunity to develop insights into the features, processes and craft of language and the concept of culture, and to realize that there are diverse ways of living, behaving and viewing the world." (Language Acquisition Guide, page 4).

Language acquisition classes are part of our core curriculum and students have the opportunity to study at least one language other than their mother tongue. Learning languages beyond their mother tongue develops students' international-mindedness by increasing students' understanding of others' perspectives and cultures. MJCS MYP students have a wide range of prior language learning experiences, which require different phased courses to meet student needs. At MJCS, we offer phased courses of Spanish Language Acquisition.

We determine MYP students' language acquisition phase by

- A. Screening prior Spanish knowledge and skills
- B. Determining an appropriate Language Acquisition phase
- C. Monitoring progress through the phases
- D. Reviewing progress to determine speed students move through phases.

We are All Responsible for Language Acquisition:

All MJCS faculty, staff, students and students' families are responsible for modeling and exhibiting IB Learner Profile Attributes, particularly 'communicator' for all MJCS students.

The Principal, Director of Student Supports and Services, Director of Finance and Operations, and Development Director are responsible for raising funds, budgeting, and allocating school resources to support all students' Language Acquisition development.

The MYP Coordinator and Language Acquisition Department Chair are responsible for developing staff skills and delivering language acquisition instruction, including teaching and ensuring resources are efficiently and effectively used to support all students' Language Acquisition development.

The Language Acquisition Teachers, Special Education Teachers, and Teaching Assistants are responsible for collaborating with each other and delivering instruction effectively to support students' language acquisition development.

The MJCS Language Acquisition Mission:

Our students will grow to be lifelong language learners with a curiosity for and knowledge about the Spanish-speaking world. Students will be equipped with a variety of linguistic skills and cultural knowledge to communicate effectively in Spanish in real-life situations, as well as strive to be conversational by the end of 10th grade.

How We Teach Language Acquisition:

1. The MJCS MYP Language Acquisition Program is an extension of the MJCS PYP Spanish Program. In the PYP Spanish Program, students receive daily language classes, beginning in Pre-K. In the early PYP, the emphasis is placed on developing listening skills and exposing them to the language in multiple modes. Similar to the PYP, in the MYP students learn to listen, speak, read, and write, but they also receive explicit grammar instruction with the intention of helping students understand how language works and to help them become independent language learners. Many of these concepts are transferable to Language and Literacy.
2. The MYP program provides students with language instruction each school day exceeding the 50 hours of instruction in Spanish per the IB requirements for the MYP.
3. Students have the opportunity to earn high school credit, throughout their MYP studies in middle school.
4. Students study IB units of inquiry and complete IB summatives using rubrics from the IB.
5. All Spanish language learning is assessed according to MYP Objectives and Criteria.
6. Language Acquisition classes are differentiated to meet individual student needs. This is done by grouping students by phases, per the IB norms. Class groupings and materials are also differentiated according to a student's phase and a student's prior experience with language and literacy.

Our Approach to Support for English Language Learners:

At Morris Jeff Community School our language of instruction is English. We recognize that language learning occurs in all settings, through the entire school, and that all teachers are responsible for teaching language. Per the IB, "Language learning in school is not a separate discipline isolated from all other learning. As well as being part of social and personal development, language learning in school is crucial for academic cognitive

growth and the construction of knowledge.” (Learning in a Language Other Than Mother Tongue in IB Programmes, page 4).

At MJCS some of our students study in a language that is not their mother tongue. Our ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Program is responsible for identifying, supporting, and monitoring the progress of ELLs (English Language Learners). The ESL teacher is responsible for supporting students and teachers both in the whole class setting and in small group settings, when appropriate. In working with ELLs, the four dimensions of teaching that are particularly important in ensuring learner participation and promoting engagement are:

1. to activate prior understanding and build background knowledge
2. to scaffold meaning
3. to extend language
4. to affirm identity

The student population of Morris Jeff mirrors the racial, economic, and linguistic diversity of the city of New Orleans. The IB curriculum aims to help students develop into multilingual and multicultural members of the global community. We seek to support our ELLs in their development in the English language and in their understanding of our local cultures.

We are All Responsible for supporting students learning in a language other than their mother tongue (ELLs):

All MJCS faculty, staff, students, and students’ families are responsible for modeling and exhibiting IB Learner Profile Attributes, particularly ‘communicator’ for all MJCS students.

The Principal, Director of Student Support Services, Director of Finance and Operations, and Development Director are responsible for raising funds, budgeting, and allocating school resources to support our English Language Learners.

The MYP Coordinator and ELL Teacher (English Language Learner Teacher) are responsible for developing staff skills at supporting ELLs, both in and outside the classroom. They are also responsible for ensuring resources are efficiently and effectively used to support all ELLs.

The ELL Teacher, MYP Teachers, Special Education Teachers, and Teaching Assistants are responsible for collaborating with each other and delivering instruction effectively to support students’ language development.

How English Language Learners are Supported, at MJCS:

MJCS will support students with Limited English Proficiency in English language and literacy in the following ways:

1. Per the mandates of the Louisiana Department of Education, all ELLs will be identified as students whose home language surveys designate any language other than English on their home language survey.

2. At the beginning of each year, incoming Kindergarten-8th grade ELLs are assessed using the Woodcock-Muñoz Diagnostics, to determine their levels in conversation, reading, and writing.
3. Learning accommodations for ELLs are written in collaboration with the Student Support Team, teachers, and families, for each ELL.
4. At the end of each year, ELPT (English Language Proficiency Test) is administered to ELL students, to monitor their growth.

Our Approach to Support Students' Mother Tongue:

The IB program requires that schools provide students with opportunities to continue developing in their mother tongue.

We are All Responsible for Supporting Students' development of Their Mother Tongue:

All MJCS faculty, staff, students, and students' families are responsible for modeling and exhibiting IB Learner Profile Attributes, particularly 'communicator' for all MJCS students.

The Principal, Director of Student Supports and Services, Director of Finances and Operations, and Development Director are responsible for raising funds, budgeting, and allocating school resources to support all students' language development. They are also responsible for providing communication with families, in the Spanish language.

The MYP Coordinator and Language Acquisition Department Chair are responsible for helping support students in the development of their mother tongue through instruction and through the acquisition of language learning resources.

The MYP Language and Literacy Teacher, Language Acquisition Teachers, Special Education Teachers, and Teaching Assistants are responsible for collaborating with each other and delivering instruction effectively to support students' continued development of their mother tongue.

How Students are Supported in Their Mother Tongue:

1. To support student and family communication, the school newsletter and other school notices are made available in Spanish, which is the second most widely spoken language in the school. Parent/teacher meetings and other phone or in-person communication are also available in Spanish.
2. The library includes materials that support the continued use of the mother tongues of our students.
3. The literacy collections referenced in the Language and Literacy section of this document will include books related to the languages and / or cultures that represent the backgrounds of our student bodies, as well as other world languages and cultures.
4. MYP students will be provided with the opportunity to learn additional languages, with the use of technology. The languages may include languages spoken by students, at home.
5. Native Spanish speakers will attend Language Acquisition Spanish classes with the goal of supporting their mother tongue. Classes will offer these Native Heritage Speakers a more thorough understanding of the grammar and syntax of the Spanish language. The class will also offer them the opportunity to develop their writing skills and learn about a variety of Spanish-speaking cultures.

Our Language Policy was developed by a team of dedicated Morris Jeff Community School administrators, teachers, and teaching assistants and will be reviewed yearly by the same.

Citations for Documents Used to Create the Morris Jeff Community School Language Policy

1. International Baccalaureate Organization. Connecting IB to the Core. International Baccalaureate Organization (UK) Ltd Peterson House, Malthouse Avenue, Cardiff Gate, 2013
2. International Baccalaureate Organization. MYP: From Principles into Practice. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008.
3. Middle Years Programme Language and literature pilot guide. Unpublished, June 2012.