



## **Primary Years Programme Language Policy**

### **School Context**

Granada Hills Charter (GHC) serves a student population and community with diverse language needs and experiences. Granada Hills Charter's TK-12 student population is extremely diverse with over 60 nationalities represented and approximately 40 languages other than English spoken at home. We welcome all students, and strive to create a learning environment that validates and celebrates diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

### **Language Philosophy**

At GHC we believe that language development is fundamental to our students' success as learners. It is through ongoing language acquisition that our Primary Years Programme (PYP) is able to effectively foster authentic guided inquiry that builds on the interests, previous knowledge, and needs of our learners so that they can develop and deepen their conceptual understanding. We believe that some of the key components of student achievement include the ability to express oneself confidently and to receive and interpret information from a variety of sources. To do this, the development of language is embedded into our units of inquiry and across all subject areas through oral, visual, and written language experiences. It is our belief that integrated and meaningful language development will lead to an increase in critical thinking skills, effective communication, and ultimately to stronger relationships built from deepening social skills. All of our teachers and staff members serve an important role in the development of our students' receptive and expressive language skills as they interact with our learners in authentic and meaningful ways both in the classroom and beyond.

### **Identification of Language Needs**

GHC follows federal and state guidelines for identifying English language learners entering the school for the first time. During enrollment, all families complete a Home Language Survey which indicates the languages spoken at home. When English is not a student's primary language, they are assessed with the Initial English Language Proficiency Assessments of California, or Initial ELPAC. The purpose of the ELPAC is to identify students who need additional support with English Language Development (ELD). A student who has been identified as needing additional language support is classified as an English Language Learner (ELL) and will participate in a Structured English Immersion (SEI) classroom where teachers instruct in English but offer ELL students additional scaffolding, supports, and language instruction in order to help them develop proficiency in meeting the California ELD Standards. ELD report cards are sent home twice a year and mark students progress

towards English language proficiency. GHC employs an EL Coordinator who coordinates placement testing for students whose mother tongue is not English, plans student community interactions, facilitates targeted intervention and support, leads school site professional development for teachers, and engages with families. The school's Language Acquisition and Support (LAS) Committee, made up of administrators, the ELD coordinator, and teachers, meets as needed to review the language acquisition progress of individual students.

### **Mother Tongue Support and Cultural Identity**

While English is the primary language of instruction at GHC, we are committed to the continued support and development of students' mother tongues. Whenever possible, GHC provides resources in an effort to carry out that commitment. Within our classroom communities, students are encouraged to share their home language and use it to make connections to English and other languages being explored. Through thoughtfully planned units of inquiry, various cultures are researched, shared, and honored as students explore concepts surrounding their identity and family history. Students are encouraged to develop skills in order to read, write, and speak in their home language and are taught to use our digital library as a resource for reading books in other languages. Our classroom libraries also host multicultural books and books in other languages. Our students are offered many opportunities to work collaboratively with their classmates where they are able to share their own unique experiences, languages, and backgrounds with other learners in their group. These shared experiences give all students "voice, choice, and ownership" over their learning outcomes and offer recurring opportunities to develop their communication and social skills all while celebrating their own cultural identity. Beyond the physical campus, we use technology to connect with students and people around the world and also invite families to share their language, culture, and experiences with our students in order to enhance learning and build community.

### **Additional Languages**

In addition to extensive English language instruction in speaking, listening, writing, and reading, our PYP students receive weekly language instruction in both Mandarin and Spanish starting in Transitional Kindergarten and continuing through the fifth grade. PYP Spanish and Mandarin instruction is focused on listening to and speaking in both languages as well as learning about the countries in which they are spoken. Spanish and Mandarin are integrated into elementary content standards at each grade level to promote communication skills and an appreciation for diverse backgrounds. PYP students can often be heard using both Spanish and Mandarin to greet one another on campus, sing together, play games, and celebrate the contributions and cultures of other countries.

Our aim is that through multilingual instruction our students will develop a broad appreciation for different cultures, perspectives, and languages that will lead to expanding international-mindedness. We believe that having the ability to communicate in multiple languages opens doors for new opportunities and helps us make connections with more people in our local and global communities. These connections further guide our learners towards fulfilling the IB mission of "recognizing their

common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet” in order to “create a better and more peaceful world.”

Learning new languages takes practice and students need to feel safe taking risks when expressing themselves in new languages. At GHC we strive to build caring and supportive classroom communities where our students are shown that mistakes are a natural and necessary part of the learning process. In order to help lower the affective filter for our learners, scaffolding is provided by our nurturing educators to support the learning process. We also aim to provide fun, engaging lessons in order to build a positive multilingual classroom environment.

### **Language in the Classroom and Programme of Inquiry**

Language is interwoven into every aspect of our classrooms through various social and literacy activities. Examples of these activities include writer’s workshop, daily read alouds, small and whole group discussions, collaborative group work, debates, oral presentations, inviting classroom libraries, guided reading, play, and much more. Language learning is central to all experiences shared in the classroom as it is through language that we discover who we are, what we believe, and how we will cooperate with others in order to share ideas and solve problems.

Language is supported through the integration of rich, diverse literature in order to promote a love of reading in our scholars. Our classroom and digital libraries offer a variety of books and research materials that students can access based on their unique interests and needs. Students participate in writing different genres for different purposes and we value the steps taken in the writing process in order to develop confident writers who are discovering their own voice and style as they draft and revise their work to suit the purposes of the task.

Our Programme of Inquiry demonstrates that language is integral to all aspects of our curriculum. Key concept questions drive instruction, while provocation, inquiry, transdisciplinary skills, and research promote the development of higher level thinking skills and the understanding of new concepts. Throughout all of our unit planners, oral, visual, and written language opportunities are present and drive the further development of language. Social interaction and cooperation are essential elements of our Programme of Inquiry and often result in a joyful learning community in which scholars feel motivated to initiate action as a result of concepts explored. At the heart of our Programme of Inquiry is the IB learner profile which promotes students being open minded, reflective communicators who are caring, knowledgeable, and willing to take risks in order to expand their horizons. All of these elements of our Programme of Inquiry promote authentic language development in our PYP classrooms.

### **Library or Language Resources**

#### *Digital and Media Literacy*

GHC provides a strong foundation for digital and media literacy from the earliest years in the PYP and throughout the MYP and DP. Supported by many tools in Common Sense Education, students learn to identify credible and trustworthy sources as they reflect on their own responsibility to create and consume information found in the digital world. GHC is committed to teaching

responsible digital citizenship through critical consideration of ethical and moral issues. The GHC language policy encourages students towards responsible participation and active engagement in the digital world. These 21st century skills help our students use our digital libraries and online resources responsibly and purposefully. PYP classrooms also host libraries complete with a variety of fiction and nonfiction books, research materials, and other resources that support our transdisciplinary units and students' interests.

### **Assessment and Reflection**

Assessment informs teaching and learning at GHC. In order to assess a student's language development, we utilize a range of tools and strategies in order to determine a student's knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes towards language. The information gathered from these assessments guides our planning within our program of inquiry and overall instructional program.

Pre-assessment is used to determine what students already know and can do with language. Some of the ways this is done is through oral discussions, surveys, KWL charts, writing prompts, and observations. Throughout units of inquiry and other curricular activities, formative assessments are administered in order to monitor student progress and offer meaningful feedback to guide next steps. Examples of formative language assessment include teachers giving feedback on a drafted essay, informal quizzes on grammar, word study, or comprehension strategies being covered, teachers reviewing and responding to students' anecdotal notes on a reading passage, a student sharing their plan for an oral presentation, and information gathered from ongoing running records. Throughout the year students are given opportunities to self-reflect, set goals, and to work with peers to give and receive feedback on various language tasks. This provides valuable information on language learning in the PYP. At the end of a unit of study, summative assessments are administered in order to assess student learning. Unit tests assess skills and strategies covered for comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, phonics, listening, speaking, and writing in order to assess a student's current knowledge and understanding and to inform future planning. At the end of each school year, all ELLs take the ELPAC to monitor the progress they have made in developing English language proficiency in order to inform instruction the following school year. Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, our PYP teachers will collaboratively develop a system for Language Portfolios in order to gain consistent and ongoing information on the progress students are making in acquiring the two additional languages taught in the PYP, Spanish and Mandarin.

Family involvement can be a powerful tool to help extend learning outside the classroom and create a more positive and supportive experience for the learner. At GHC, we believe that family involvement increases when there is ongoing communication between the home and school. Results from language assessments and a student's overall language progress is reported to our families in different ways. On a regular basis, our teachers send home graded work with constructive feedback, rubrics, and current level of performance. In the fall, students, parents, and teachers meet for a conference to discuss student progress, achievement, and goals, while in the spring semester, students demonstrate agency by leading the conference sharing some of their work samples, reflections, and IB portfolios with parents. Students receive progress reports at the midpoint of each semester and report cards at the end of each semester informing parents about their child's language learning. ELL parents receive ELD report cards twice a year and are provided the results of

ELPAC assessments. An annual parent workshop is held by the ELD coordinator to review ELPAC scores and explain the resources available to support students and families.

### **Communication of Language Policy to the GHC community**

The language policy is introduced to the GHC community in several ways including staff meetings, PTSA meetings, at Back to School Night, through parent workshops, and at Governing Board meetings. It is published on our school website <https://www.ghctk12.com/> so that parents and staff members can access it whenever needed. New staff members will be introduced to this document during staff orientation.

### **Review Process**

The implementation of our language policy will be assessed regularly by the Pedagogical Leadership Team. At the end of each year the policy will be reviewed by that team along with input from additional teachers, parents, and administrators. Input that is allowable within the bounds of our school charter will be discussed to determine whether changes will be made for the following academic year. The language policy is reviewed through its governance structure during the charter renewal cycle.

**Policy Reviewed/Revised - June 2022**