



Casita Center Language Policy

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IB MISSION

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.

CASITA CENTER MISSION

The mission of Casita Center is to develop a community of compassionate, responsible life-long learners who respect people's differences and take action to create a more peaceful world.

Introduction

Language plays a vital role in the construction of meaning. It empowers the learner and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking. In the PYP, it is recognized that the teaching

of language should be in response to the previous experience, needs and interests of the student, rather than the consequence of a predetermined, prescriptive model for delivering language.

(Making the PYP happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education. _2009, pg. 68)_____

Philosophy

The development of language is fundamental to communication: it supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. Language is a tool for self expression. Language empowers the learner and provides a framework to support conceptual development. The learning process involves language acquisition, instruction and application. At Casita, we believe that language should be taught in context and across all disciplines. We view language development as a collaborative and reflective process within and across all grade levels. Teachers recognize that students come to school in different stages of their language acquisition and therefore strive to address those differences by providing a personalized learning environment. Teachers take responsibility for teaching students to use language to promote inclusion and tolerance.

In line with our Common Core State Standards, our hope is that students “will actively seek thoughtful engagement with high quality literary and informational text that builds knowledge, enlarges experience and broadens worldviews.” We also value the opportunity to learn a second language in a meaningful context and at an early age so that we might better understand and appreciate other cultures.

Delivery of language instruction

At Casita, all teachers are instructors of language. The language of instruction is English. Our languages of communication are English and Spanish. Our language program is a balance of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Language instruction is provided all day, across all subject areas, in the grade

level classroom, and during our magnet labs. English Language Arts is provided to our special education students through the inclusion model, with support provided in the classroom via small group preview, review and front loading. The California Common Core and English Language Development standards guide the development of our PYP units. Magnet lab activities provide weekly opportunities to learn and use academic language in the context of science, technology, engineering, the arts and math.

Written: (reading and writing)

Beginning in Kindergarten, students are encouraged to express themselves and reveal their own voice through our writer's workshop instruction. We provide a progression of writing instruction through the grade levels giving students an understanding of writer's craft and process. Through our units of inquiry, students have the opportunity to practice and apply their writing skills. Students also have opportunities to practice foundational skills using digital programs such as Lexia. Inquiry walls support academic vocabulary and conceptual understanding in the context of the unit of inquiry.

A variety of literary and informational texts are used to deliver reading instruction within the current unit of inquiry. We use grade level appropriate resources that address individual student needs. MyOn, Epic, Readworks, and NewsELA are some of the online resources used. Students also have access to fiction and nonfiction text through our district-adopted language arts curriculum, Benchmark Advance. We explore and share a variety of strategies to achieve the Close Reading that is required by the Common Core State Standards. Students are encouraged to read, write and research topics of choice. Casita has a full time library media technician and a well stocked collection of literary and informational reading material. Our library technician works with grade level teams to find, procure, and circulate materials that are vital to the units of inquiry.

Oral: (speaking and listening)

Within a unit of inquiry, oral presentations and speeches are often required as part of the summative assessment. Students are given opportunities to practice

structured conversations using sentence frames, partner talk, reciprocal teaching, class discussions, novel studies, and number talks as methods to develop student's oral language. Students learn to speak like scientists using the Next Generation Science Standards conversation protocol. In addition, students practice expressing their thinking through visible thinking routines.

Visual (viewing and presenting)

Our units of inquiry utilize Google Apps for Education. Many of our learning engagements require the use of a variety of presentation platforms which include Jamboards, Flipgrid, Google Slides, and more. As a result, our staff is committed to developing media literacy. In addition, students are given a choice of the type of visual texts they use. They are able to use traditional forms of presentation (posters, graphs, charts, brochures) as well as other Information and Communication Technologies. Fourth and fifth grade students also have the opportunity to hone their presentation and communication skills through video productions and our news crew studio.

Language Acquisition / ELD

Students receive integrated English language support throughout the day. In addition, students receive designated language support within their class. All grade levels are using close reading and academic/structured language conversations along with resources directly related to grade level specific units of inquiry and have an online Language structure program, Lexia, available. In addition to team time, the ELD state standards and SLOP strategies are used to support instruction in all areas throughout the day.

Our Curriculum Support Resource Teacher works with teachers to ensure we have an effective ELD program. She works with grade level teams to develop and utilize appropriate scaffolding techniques. These methods are added into the PYP unit planner.

Additional Language

During the 2020-2021 school year, twenty percent of Casita students have a home language other than English. Sixteen percent of students have a home language of Spanish. Ten percent of Casita students are classified as English language learners. Some other home languages represented at Casita are; Danish, French, Filipino, and Vietnamese. Casita makes provisions for students to learn Spanish in addition to the language of instruction.

Our second language instruction is provided to all students, kindergarten through fifth grade, by a single subject Spanish teacher in our language and culture lab. Sonrisas Spanish Curriculum is used as a resource, along with materials directly related to grade level specific transdisciplinary units of study. Students are introduced to Latin American culture through language, arts, and music. Spanish instruction is differentiated to allow native Spanish speakers to develop biliteracy skills as they practice reading, writing, speaking and listening in their mother tongue. The goal of our second language instruction is not only to teach language, but to build multicultural awareness, intrinsic curiosity and open-mindedness.

In addition, our language specialist collaborates with other specialists and the IB coordinator weekly, and is available to meet with grade level teachers to help infuse Spanish vocabulary into their PYP units and classrooms.

Support of Mother Tongue

We encourage continuing mother tongue language development by providing reading materials in our library media center for checkout by parents and students. We also support links between parents who speak a language other than our language of instruction to school classrooms, events, and activities. All schoolwide oral presentations and written communications are translated into Spanish. A parent volunteer group, Cafecito, serves to include all parents in our school community while supporting teachers and staff with ongoing tasks. Our District translation department translates all official documents in Spanish.

Assessment of language

We currently use ongoing formative and summative assessment that is unit specific, as well as district and state mandated tests. Common Core aligned and concept based pre and summative assessments and rubrics are created for each inquiry unit. Students in all grades document their learning in their inquiry journals. Each trimester, students are assessed in language and math using the Fastbridge program. In Spring students in grades 3 through 5 are required to take the state's online tests in English and math, called California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The goal of these tests is to help monitor how college and career ready our students are for the 21st century by emphasizing critical thinking and problem solving.

Professional development

Teachers at Casita are committed to on-going professional development and collaboration. Some of our teachers have attended the Teacher's College Writers Institute at Columbia University in New York City. Many teachers have been trained in the Lucy Calkins Writers Workshop sponsored by the District. All teachers have received training in our district-adopted language arts curriculum, Benchmark. Working together, we are building a strong, well articulated writing program that is connected to reading. Kindergarten, first and second grade teachers received training in early literacy from the district. Teachers have been trained in the MTSS (Multi Tiered System of Support) which provides a basis for understanding how educators can work together to ensure equitable access and opportunity for all students to achieve the Common Core State Standards. During the 2015-16 school year Casita became a Personal Learning Challenge School where teachers researched and piloted innovative ways for students to learn. Utilizing flexible learning spaces and projects of choice, K-5 teachers will continue to collaborate with community partners to develop a Personal Learning Path for each student.

We believe that we should always seek out best practices in language development and ways to integrate language into all subject areas.

