



Bluebonnet Trail Elementary Language Policy 2019

Philosophy

At Bluebonnet Trail Elementary, we believe language is a vital tool for learning, communicating and being an active member of a global society. As communication in the world changes, we have the responsibility for supporting our students to be multilingual learners. Language opens the mind and presents opportunities that will cultivate internationally minded citizens.

We believe language acquisition is best supported by a language rich environment including books, periodicals, environmental print, online resources, and teacher and student writing. All instructional staff members are language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication. Learning a language is part of forming one's own identity, exploring thoughts and having an awareness of the thoughts and identities of others. It is, therefore, key to our personal, cognitive, and cultural development.

Language is used to communicate our needs, feelings, ideas, and experiences as well as understanding others. We do this by appreciating, exploring, and reflecting on our ability to express ourselves using a variety of forms including literacy, math, science, technology, and the arts. Language, in all its forms and in all systems, is the fundamental way we learn about ourselves, about others, and the world around us.

Practices

We believe oral, written, and visual language permeates the whole curriculum. Language is the medium through which the entire curriculum is taught and learned. It facilitates communication and incorporates the skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking, and media literacy. There is a reciprocal relationship between using inquiry to facilitate language and using language to facilitate inquiry. All students are provided a safe, nurturing, language-rich environment that supports learning as well as social-emotional development and well-being. Our school community benefits from access to different cultures, perspectives and languages, which increase cultural awareness and international-mindedness. We value and encourage students to respect the language, literature, and culture of their home country. We strive to create a caring language community in which all students feel accepted and supported, thereby feeling confident to be risk-takers.

To add complexity to the student experience, all teachers are viewed and expected to maintain certain literacy standards with their course work. All staff members hold students accountable to proper grammar and structure, both written and verbal in everyday interactions. Teachers provide ample opportunities for students to learn unique ways to communicate with each other; and tools and strategies evaluate student language acquisition. Students' journal entries are tools to evaluate literacy.

In order to achieve our aims, teachers will:

- Use a workshop approach to Reading & Writing
- Model and teach the correct use of language
- Encourage inquiry through authentic whole-class conversations, problem-solving, hands-on science activities, writing assignments, reading responses, and class meetings

- Teach language in context and address the following modalities: listening, speaking, reading, writing, presenting, and viewing according to the Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills and the IB Approaches to Learning, especially communication skills
- Provide a variety of learning experiences to ensure balance and progression in the acquisition of language
- Differentiate activities to meet children’s language needs
- Expose children to new and stimulating vocabulary linked to PYP Units of Inquiry and encourage them to use this to develop listening, speaking, reading, writing, presenting, and viewing skills.
- Create an atmosphere of acceptance and respect of cultural differences.
- Incorporate and apply literacy throughout the day, across disciplines, through meaningful tasks in authentic contexts.
- Recognize and respect the different ways in which students express themselves including mother tongue development.

Second Language Instruction

All students at Bluebonnet Trail Elementary receive Spanish instruction once a week. Students in Kindergarten through fifth grade participate in a fifty-five minute lesson with a second language teacher.

During Spanish instruction, students learn to speak the *language*, but they also learn *about* language (how it works, similarities and differences between languages, etc.) and they learn *through* language as they explore the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world.

The Spanish teacher is purposeful about supporting and enriching grade-level units of inquiry. Spanish is visible throughout the school and classroom labels, Spanish books in the classroom and library, translating key concepts into Spanish.

Mother Tongue Support

The faculty and staff are all accountable for communicating our support of mother tongue languages. We feel that students and parents who speak another language bring an added perspective to learning. We value their views and encourage them to share. We utilize their knowledge as resources. Our library has books in the home languages of many of our students and continues to look for more resources to support both second language acquisition and other mother tongue languages. As the language program develops, we continue to seek more opportunities to highlight and support other mother tongue languages.

Learner Profile

Language utilizing the Learner Profile Attributes is a campus wide practice.

Assessment

- All students are assessed in their development of oral language, written language, and visual language including viewing and presenting; assessments used for the monitoring of language development include AIMSweb, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). Students in Grades 3-5 will also be assessed with The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in Math and Reading. Additionally Grade 4 students are required to take the STAAR Writing Assessment; Grade 5 students are required to take the STAAR Science Assessment. (See Bluebonnet Trail Elementary Assessment Policy for more detail.)

Support for Language Development

Bluebonnet Trail Elementary has several support services available, as needed, to assist students in their language development. These include:

- Limited English Proficient students are placed in classrooms with teachers who are ESL certified.
- Speech, Dyslexia and other Special Education services
- Gifted and Talented (AIM)
- Response to Intervention (RtI)

- The librarian supports classroom learning with specific lessons, literacy promotion, book fair, and reading programs.
- Technology
- Intervention groups
- Campus Literacy Library

Plan for Implementation and Review

- The Language /Assessment Policy Committee and Pedagogical Leadership Team accept the responsibility for ensuring the language policy is put into practice.
- Teachers and coordinator will communicate language policy to parents, and Campus Communication Representative will ensure electronic posting on the school website.
- Principal and Assistant Principal will regularly evaluate implementation of language policy as evidenced by classroom observations and school presentations.
- The newly revised Bluebonnet Trail Elementary Language Policy will go into effect January 7, 2020 and will be reviewed every year or earlier as needed by the Language /Assessment Policy Committee and Pedagogical Leadership Team.

Resources

- Guidelines for developing a school language policy, IBO
- Making the PYP Happen, A curriculum framework for international education
- Language Scope and Sequence, IBO
- Sample Language Policies from the following schools: Chandler Oaks Elementary and Spicewood Elementary