



Durham Elementary School Language Policy



Mission

Durham Elementary equips multi-cultural learners, through inquiry and rigorous instruction, to compete at the highest academic levels, take action, and positively impact their world.

Philosophy

At M.E. Durham 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 which includes books, periodicals, environmental print, online resources, and teacher and student writing. Teachers are role models for using and learning language and can foster a positive attitude toward language and literature. Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Therefore the focus is on not only language and literacy, but also on its application across the subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. The English language arts are not perceived as individual content areas, but as one unified subject in which each of the five areas supports the others and enhances thinking and learning. The integration of knowledge, skills and strategies of the English language arts enables students to solve problems and think critically and creatively in all subject areas.

Language of Instruction

Durham Elementary is a Dual language school, where approximately half of the classes split the day between Spanish instruction and English instruction using the 50/50 model.

Classes which are not dual-language receive instruction in English only except for Spanish enrichment 45 minutes per month. Students who speak English as a second language are provided supports through language acquisition strategies. All teachers of English Language Learners are trained and certified to provide these supports.

Language provides a vehicle for inquiry. The POI provides an authentic context for learners to develop and use language. Wherever possible, language is taught through the relevant, authentic context of the units of inquiry. The Houston Independent School District English language arts curriculum guides as well as the PYP language scope and sequence document identify the major expectations considered essential in language learning.

Literature is an integral part of the curriculum. By learning language as well as learning about and through language, an appreciation of the richness of language and a love of literature is nurtured. Books are selected to reinforce the units of inquiry and the development of reading skills, as well as to reflect various cultural aspects. Students learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts. Books are read for enjoyment and can also be discussed, analyzed, compared and contrasted. Students learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts; to think critically about what they read; and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in the text.

Language learning at Durham extends beyond the classroom and has close connections to the media center. Teachers and students both use the media center/library to enrich their language learning as well as learning in other subject areas.

Dual-Language Specifics – Taken from HISD’s Multilingual Department

What are the goals of the program?

- Development of fluency and literacy in English and Spanish for all students
- The integration of native English speakers and English Language Learners for academic instruction. Whenever possible, each campus program should have 50 percent of each
- The promotion of bilingualism, biliteracy, cross-cultural awareness, and high academic achievement

What are the characteristics of the program?

- *An enriching bilingual environment that has full support of the school’s administrators, teachers, and parents*
- A minimum five-year commitment, but ideally from kindergarten through 12th grade.
- Both English and Spanish speakers are instructed together.
- Separation of the two languages, with teachers using the language of instruction
- An active parent-school partnership

Why is Dual Language beneficial for both Spanish and English speakers?

- Spanish speakers maintain their first language while learning a second language.
- English speakers experience no risk to their dominant language. They are taught academics in Spanish with second-language approaches to ensure their success.

Why should my child be in a Dual Language program?

- Being bilingual expands opportunities by enabling students to communicate and interact with more people from around the world, giving them the skills and knowledge to function competently and confidently in a global society.
- Dual Language students display greater academic, cognitive, and social skills than those in all-English classes.

Language Instruction

EMPOWERING WRITERS

Durham uses the Empowering Writers approach to language instruction. The classroom environment is rich in print and literature to equip students with the tools they need to become lifelong readers and writers who can communicate their thoughts. Teachers act as facilitators who model writing, reading strategies, listening skills and appropriate speech. The workshop model emphasizes student choice of text, flexible grouping, and conferencing with students. Durham follows HISD's practices of Literacy by 3 which include a daily interactive read-aloud, guided reading, and work stations that provide opportunities to the students for engaging in the practice and refinement of the language acquisition skills.

ORAL LANGUAGE

Teachers realize students come from different cultures and backgrounds and strive to demonstrate conversational accuracy with sensitivity. Teachers value hands-on experiences in order to reinforce primary and secondary language in addition to the classroom. Through oral productions, skits, songs, debates, stories, listening stations, etc. students become enthusiastic and open minded about other cultures. Teachers will provide ample opportunities for students to learn unique ways to communicate with each other. Language as a common practice opens doors to a lifetime of open mindedness and an appreciation of learning.

WRITING

Writing across the curriculum is a significant activity across all grade levels. The writing process involves creating an environment where students can acquire the skills necessary to produce written products for a variety of purposes. The written product can be informative, persuasive, poetic, or in the form of a story or dialogue. When learning to write, students are encouraged to focus at first on meaning rather than accuracy, and to enjoy the writing process.

Second Language Instruction

Prekindergarten through 5th grade students at Durham have Spanish once a month for forty-five minutes. All students remain with their homeroom for their lesson. Students who are already fluent in Spanish work flexibly in this class to support their peers and further develop their appreciation for Latin

cultures and the language itself. Much of the school is labeled in both English and Spanish as is most literature (paper based and online) which is sent home and out to the community. We strive to create a campus which values bi-literacy. Administrators and teachers who are not biliterate are also working to grow in their language acquisition.

CULTURE

Students learn about the Spanish-speaking areas of the world. By learning about the people, traditions, music, history, and customs of another country, students discover what is unique about each region, and what we have in common. This leads the students to the appreciation that the world is enriched by its many cultures.

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 and guest speakers. Our library has books in the home languages of all 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 will seek more opportunities to highlight and support other mother tongue languages.

Support for Language Development

LIBRARY

The librarian collaborates regularly with teachers to support the students' needs. She provides lessons, research support, book selection and acquisition of resources. The library currently operates on a fixed schedule with a volunteer 1-2 days/ week. We have a large and growing collection of books, periodicals, reference materials, and online databases that received a large refresh in 2022 to better match our mission of creating multicultural students that understand the world around them. The Real Men Read and Name That Book Program help increase student participation and exposes them to a variety of literature in different genres.

TECHNOLOGY

Students have access to a wide range of technology that supports language development. Laptops, tablets, Chromebooks, document cameras, webcams, CleverTouch and projectors all help students compose, share and connect ideas. Software includes word processing, presentation, graphic organizing, photo editing and illustration in addition to many apps which allow students to inquire and share their learning in a multitude of ways.

INTERVENTIONISTS

The interventionists work closely with students and teachers in the classroom. They provide supplemental resources, extra support and differentiated instruction to help students be successful in the classroom and reach their learning goals. They are able to closely monitor progress and collect data to help better inform instruction.

Assessment

Students are assessed in their development of oral language, written language, and visual language including viewing and presenting. While the end product is often assessed as an indicator of growth, the process is also vitally important and informally assessed. Students are given feedback based on both their growth towards individual learning goals and our state standards using a variety of strategies and tools. (See Durham Assessment Policy for more detail.)

Plan for Implementation and Review

The Pedagogical Leadership Team accepts the responsibility for ensuring the language policy is put into practice. Teachers and administrators will communicate language policy to parents. The Leadership Team will regularly evaluate implementation of language policy as evidenced by classroom observations and school presentations.

The Durham Language Policy will go into effect August 12, 2013 and will be reviewed every three years or earlier as needed by the 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
- . HISD Multilingual Department