



Northern Heights Elementary School

IB-Primary Years Program

School Language Policy



Northern Heights' Mission

Northern Heights Elementary School provides a balanced, engaging, and comprehensive education that prepares all students for success as global citizens. We strive to develop caring, principled individuals with a sense of community, who value individual differences and diverse perspectives. As reflective thinkers and inquirers, we are inspired to take actions that positively contribute to our ever-changing world.

School Language Philosophy

Successful citizenry in the 21st century requires that students develop strong language communication skills. The complex global society and technological workplace of the future will place significant demands on the use of written, spoken and visual communication, as well as media literacy. At Northern Heights we believe:

- Language acquisition is the foundation of all learning.
- Language is an integral part of social interaction, self-expression and effective communication.
- Language is learned all of the time; in all settings and through all experiences.
- Every adult within our school community is a language teacher.
- Language is best developed in a rich environment which includes modeling, sharing and demonstrating language tasks commonly expected in authentic, real world settings.
- There are specific conditions for learning that support language development for all learners.
- Language literacy includes reading, writing, listening, speaking and media skills.
- Language acquisition in the mother tongue and at least one additional language promotes cross-cultural understanding and enhances personal growth.

Language of Instruction:

English is the primary language of instruction at Northern Heights Elementary School. All core curricula, instructional resources, units of inquiry and the Program of Inquiry are written and presented in English. This supports development of the host country mother tongue.

Practices that help develop and maintain language skills

Teachers across the school incorporate many rich opportunities for informal sharing of culture and language that exist within their classrooms. Students are encouraged to use their home language, teach the vocabulary of their mother tongue to peers, and to share literature, music and artifacts that convey aspects of their home culture.

Family members are encouraged to visit the classroom and support their students in this endeavor.

Cultural awareness is emphasized as part of the diverse learning that occurs within units of inquiry that are well-planned to encourage international-mindedness.

Teachers strive to present information in a comprehensible format using a variety of language support strategies which serve to scaffold increasingly complex and sophisticated language across the curriculum. Optimum language development occurs in environments rich in visual and printed supports, with a combination of direct teacher modeling/demonstrations and ample time for students to participate in guided/shared and independent practice.

Teachers provide continuous, systematic, and supportive feedback tailored to students' language needs.

Home-school communications such as report cards, medical forms and other legal documents are available in twenty-three languages. Board-approved interpreters are also available for parent-teacher communication, as well as other school meetings and activities. In addition, staff access translation programs to assist with informal communications. School support staff, which includes an ML specialist teacher and a Family Resource Liaison, facilitate communication with families to encourage involvement in and understanding of school programs.

Core Beliefs About Language Acquisition

At Northern Heights, we believe:

- Students- right to be included in all instruction, no matter their first language
- Language acquisition is a foundational part of learning; therefore all teachers, regardless of the content they teach, are language teachers.
- Home languages must be valued to create a safe, equitable, and positive learning environments and to increase students' capacity to learn. A strong linguistic foundation in one's home language directly supports success in learning additional languages.
- Language is acquired through the exchange of authentic, meaningful messages and multiple opportunities to practice the target language.
- Linguistic and cultural assets are viewed as valuable resources to learning.

Resources:

Library and classroom resources include a continuously developing inventory of books, pictures, auditory and visual media presented in the mother tongue languages of our students. Texts may be mono or bilingual, often incorporating English with other languages.

Technology resources: Google translate, Epic, Pebble Go, ParentSquare, SeeSaw provide supports for all students, including those who are learning in a language other than their home/personal language

Language Resources: Really Great Reading, iReady,

Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategies (and other sheltered language strategies) are embedded in instruction to provide equity of access to the curriculum for all, including those who are learning in a language other than their home/personal language.

Second language development and support

World Language Program-Spanish Language Instruction

Philosophy:

It is recognized that language and communication are central to human existence, as is the importance of developing proficiency in the mother tongue and at least one additional language. Learning any language involves much more than the ability to simply speak and converse with others. Students must also develop cross-cultural understanding, apply varied language skills across cultures and disciplines, and integrate languages within their communities.

Curriculum: Due to budget cuts, this is currently under development.

Instruction: Due to budget cuts, this is currently under development.

Multilingual Learners

Northern Heights Elementary includes families who speak many different languages in their homes. Eight percent of Northern Heights students are in our Multi-lingual program and have a home language other than English in 2023-24. Their linguistic and cultural assets are viewed as strengths and strong funds of knowledge.

Supports for these students and their families to engage in learning in English, while growing their home language are provided in a variety of formal and informal ways:

Students acquire basic interpersonal communication skills and common conceptual vocabulary through the Multi-Lingual (ML) Program. Students with more advanced English language development receive ML services in their classrooms, integrated with the core curriculum taught to all students. Research-based instructional strategies are used to differentiate instruction and scaffold learning for these students.

In addition to direct services to students, the ML consulting teacher works alongside classroom teachers in a mentoring/coaching capacity. The ML teacher and classroom teachers are trained in sheltered language instruction (such as GLAD). Many teachers are also trained in and use of "Thinking Maps" and concrete-conceptual tools that support language learning.

Teachers find effective ways to integrate language instruction into Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, and Technology. The interdependence of these domains are highlighted in each unit of inquiry and related directly to Common Core Standards (CCSS) and English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPs).

Reading Instruction:

At Northern Heights we believe that reading:

- is an essential competency for success as a literate adult in the world of the 21st century,
- has important purpose; to entertain or gather information that helps in our lives,
- is a meaning-centered process of constructing meaning from text,
- requires active engagement and intentional application of strategies for text comprehension, and
- is a requisite process that facilitates learning content across disciplines.

Northern Heights' teachers use the Reader's Workshop model and incorporate research-based instructional strategies to develop a student's knowledge and skills in five key areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Teachers embed instruction and skill development in a variety of reading experiences that include shared, guided and independent reading.

Dynamic grouping allows children to support one another and to interact within a community of readers, while guided reading provides opportunity for focused skill development with children of like need. Primary grade students first learn the basics of letter-sound relationships in spoken and written language. Children apply this learning when interacting with a variety of text.

Reading is taught using a variety of approaches including direct instruction and guided inquiry. Reading is taught within and outside of the units of inquiry at each grade level. Text selections are most frequently related to central ideas and lines of inquiry within the school-wide Program of Inquiry. Supplemental reading materials are purchased to provide additional text resources aligned with the Program of Inquiry.

Writing Instruction:

At Northern Heights we believe:

- competence in written language is requisite for success in the world of the 21st Century,
- writing is purposeful as a means of self-expression and interpersonal communication,
- reading and writing are complimentary processes that involve construction of meaning,
- the developing writer is supported by exposure to a wide variety of text during reading,
- children become effective writers by engaging in multiple opportunities to write for a variety of audiences and purposes,
- writing opportunities that incorporate the use of technology for drafting, revising, publishing and/or presentation are essential.

The writing program consists of two key components: the writing process and text forms and features. Each component is considered to be integral within a balanced, comprehensive writing program. The emphasis on each component changes as children move through the grades and their own naturally developing stages as writers.

In preschool and kindergarten, early attempts to approximate writing are valued as first steps toward gaining control of letters and words. This leads to a more developed understanding that words convey meaning.

Students in first and second grade are more formally introduced to writing processes: matching pictures with words, adding details and conveying meaning.

Students at all grade levels learn to write in various forms, appropriate to their developmental readiness. Every child experiences multiple opportunities to write for a variety of audiences and purposes. Narrative, informational/explanatory and opinion writing are taught at various levels. The Program of Inquiry, student-generated questions and subsequent research provide rich opportunities for students to apply the skills and processes of writing in the context of their learning.

Core instructional resources include ***David Matteson & Associates (DMA) Frameworks for Writing*** and ***Teachers College Writing Units of Study***. Teachers use a Writer's Workshop approach, including writing demonstrations, interactive writing, guided writing and independent writing. Students typically house their writing in draft books or writing journals. Technology is commonly used as a tool for writing, revising and publishing. Writing is an integral part of each transdisciplinary unit of inquiry at all grade levels as students gather information, write to share information and engage in self-reflection.

Listening and Speaking:

At Northern Heights we believe:

- communication is a requisite life skill that includes listening and speaking among and between individuals,
- competence in communication enhances personal relationships, the ability to gain and keep employment and an individual's effectiveness in influencing others and his/her world,
- feedback and self-reflection play an important role in the development of listening and speaking skills,
- communication is the vehicle for expression of discipline-specific, intellectual thinking.

Learning experiences are designed to provide opportunities for children to listen and observe, collaborate with each other, make oral presentations and appropriately respond to the contributions of others. Common Core State Standards and performance expectations guide instruction in each of these areas. Oral/aural communication, collaborative learning and student presentations are solidly embedded in the learning experiences for each unit of inquiry. Listening and speaking skills are also explicitly related to student goals and self-reflection, based on the attributes of the Learner Profile.

Language and Technology Integration:

Technology and the language program at Northern Heights are integrated. Language learning is strongly supported when students use technology for brainstorming, sharing ideas, representing information, writing papers/reports, creating projects, responding to assessments, interacting with web-based curricula, and communicating with parents and others within their world.

We encourage students to be actively engaged as they use technology for individual and collaborative learning activities. Teachers provide students with opportunities to:

- create and use online resources to facilitate inquiry,
- engage in inquiry-based projects based on central ideas and lines of inquiry,
- research, analyze and problem solve in a global context,
- use modeling and simulations,
- write, develop and publish individual and collaborative products,
- invent products through programming and/or productions,
- use classroom-based assessments, self-reflect and evaluate their own work,
- initiate self-directed communication through web-based tools,
- use online library catalogs to create book reviews and recommendations, and
- collaborate with students around the world using web and video-based communication technologies.

Our students gain ability to use technology responsibly, creatively and effectively as they apply technology in real-world settings, adapt to changing technologies and personalize technology to meet individual interests and learning styles. Our students develop fluency in their use of technology when they communicate, integrate and evaluate information, solve problems, share knowledge, and improve learning across subject matter and in life experiences. Core instructional resources in the area of Information and Technology Skills are **Common Sense Media's Digital Citizenship Lessons**, the **Super Three (primary grades)** and **Big Six Models (intermediate grades)**.

Language Policy Review Process

This Language Policy is a working, living document and will require the commitment of an ongoing review process to revise and reflect changes as we continue to learn emerging best practices and research around supporting multilingualism and translanguaging in classrooms.

The following outlines steps for undertaking this review process:

- A Policy Review Committee will collaboratively review and revise the Language Policy each year.
- The Policy Review Committee will share revisions and ask for input from various stakeholders, including grade level teachers, support staff, families/community, IB Coordinator, and administration.
- The Policy Review Committee will reach a consensus and revise the Language Policy as appropriate/necessary for the following school year.

Reviewed and Revised April 2024

Goals for future revisions:

- New Format Revisions: [Draft Future Revision Formats NH-- Language Policy 24-25.docx](#); include chart of Rights and Responsibilities for all Stakeholders
- World Language Program—add system-wide curriculum and instruction