St. Francis of Assisi Elementary

Language Policy

Final Revision: November 2024

Mission Statement

In the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, we are an inclusive school community that attentively nurtures love, understanding, faith, knowledge, and individuality.

Language Philosophy

Since language is the primary means of communication and learning, all teachers at St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School share the responsibility of instructing students in language development via writing, speaking, and reading. Students are expected to become proficient in English. In addition, St. Francis offers both Spanish (PYP & MYP) and Italian (MYP) as second language acquisition courses.

St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School seeks to develop and continue the Franciscan philosophy by cultivating a global outlook and an acceptance of diverse world cultures and values. This global understanding will prepare students to effectively empathize, communicate, and contribute to the world around them. Teaching towards a global perspective provides students with the necessary learning environment to acquire multicultural appreciation and the ability to communicate in a world of linguistic and cultural diversity.

School Language Profile and Demographics

English is the central language of instruction at St. Francis with a second language, Spanish, being introduced at the TK level. Beginning in the MYP, students have the choice of continuing with Spanish or studying Italian.

Mother Tongue Development

English is the main language of students attending St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School. ON an annual basis, we serve less than 3 students for whom English is not their first language. These students typically need minor supports in their English language acquisition. English Language Learners are supported in a variety of ways including: information presented in a variety of learning modalities (visuals, hands-on, auditory). Teachers employ the use of scaffolded materials in the benefit of all students' language acquisition. The Education Achievement Specialist supports the language needs of all students, and collaborates with all

teachers and parents. The Student Support Team is available to make individualized plans based on a student's needs. In the event that an interpreter would be needed for parent-teacher conferences, the school would partner with families to ensure that communication lines are established and conversations are beneficial, especially in meeting the needs of our children. Additionally, parent information materials may be translated as needed.

Beyond these measures, we currently use an online language program, DuoLingo, in order to support our Spanish and Italian programs. This resource is also available in multiple languages to help families in their home languages. DuoLingo is available to families to work on at home and continue the development of their family language. Also, we partner with the Italian Consulate to fund and support Italian in our MYP program. This is a model that we are working from to engage other organizations and consulates to provide resources, home language literacy, and cultural experiences.

In an effort to build awareness of and expand the multilingual/multicultural nature of our community, cultural events are planned with an objective toward developing an appreciation for different languages and traditions that are part of our school family. We celebrate the diverse cultures of our school community. Parent Club hosts an annual International Day where parent and student volunteers present countries' cultures and customs, allowing students to engage in traditional activities. Throughout the year, teachers model and encourage students to share their individual cultures and backgrounds in the classroom. This is done through projects, presentations, and the arts. All teachers are committed to building and offering multicultural literature and resources.

Current Practices of Language Teaching and Learning

Intentional and active reading in all subject groups advances the development of language skills that nurture a knowledgeable and open-minded learner. Across grade levels, we have purposefully chosen texts and literature that represent a multicultural lens and promote an appreciation for different languages and cultures. These diverse texts are leveled for readers of varying abilities. Teachers use an online reading program (Accelerated Reader) and vocabulary program (Spelling City-3rd & 4th and Membean-5th-8th) to aid in personalized and differentiated instruction. Order PYP reading curriculum by August.

In Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten, students develop phonological awareness, comprehension skills, and fundamental writing concepts such as letter formation and sentence structure. TK and Kindergarten students also acquire communication and language through social interactions, play, and the arts. In first and second grade, students build on their phonemic awareness through reading a variety of genres and interacting with text. In grades three through

five, students continue to build on these skills, while leading towards deeper ability to read and analyze text.

Intentional and active writing in all subject groups supports the development of language necessary for the clarity and creativity of thought that drives a true inquirer. Currently, our Writing Coordinator works with teachers and their students to develop consistent writing practices and processes and assists with the incorporation of writing into IB units throughout the subject groups. In MYP, our preferred bibliographic style is MLA.

Intentional and active listening and speaking in all subject groups is the foundation for the development of language necessary to be an effective communicator. Students engage in thought-provoking, meaningful discussions that promote language fluency and proficient use of domain-specific vocabulary. We use music, as well as the visual and performing arts, as modes of communication to enhance the understanding and power of language and celebrate other cultures. Most importantly, students practice listening and speaking skills that lead to the open-minded, caring reflection that deepens understanding.

In the PYP, the acquisition of vocabulary is incorporated transdisciplinary throughout the units of inquiry. For example, science related terms are reinforced through the reading and writing process. In the MYP, domain-specific vocabulary is inherent and emphasized in each subject group. For example, in the MYP Design Class students are expected to learn the strategies to engineer a solution to a problem by utilizing various current Computer Science vocabulary and concepts.

For students who require language development assistance, the school has an Education Achievement Specialist who works with individuals and small groups regularly. Also, all students have access to our school library to select reading materials that meet their individual reading levels and interests across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

Admission

Our language policy aligns with our admission policy in welcoming students of diverse backgrounds. While all students are expected to work toward high-level mastery of the English language, we support students' language learning regardless of their linguistic background.

Assessment

St. Francis teachers use students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to assess language development. These skills are assessed in a variety of ways through formative and summative assessments, including STAR standardized tests (Grades 1-8) and the ACT Aspire

tests (Grades 3-8). Data from the STAR and ACT tests and are organized into data binders by grade level, updated during the school year, and passed on with the class to its next grade level. Anecdotal notes allows a teacher to make ongoing adjustments to instruction, and are passed onto the next grade level, as needed.

Language Programmes at SFE

The Spanish and Italian (MYP) programme emphasizes the development of the basic language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students are provided opportunities to recognize and reflect upon ancient and modern cultural traditions and to discover modes of expression. In addition, students explore the connection between the ancient language of Latin within the English language and other languages they study.

PYP
Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten students receive 30 minutes of a Global Language (Spanish) once a week, while first grade through fifth grade students receive 45 minutes of a Global language (Spanish) instruction twice a week. Students are introduced not only to the Spanish language but also to the cultures of Spanish speaking countries. In the PYP, Spanish is integrated into the units of inquiry to reinforce the central idea.

MYP
Students in grades six through eight opt to study either Spanish or Italian. Students explore their language of choice and its culture in order to be open to the perspectives, values, and traditions they encompass and to encourage international mindedness. The development of basic communication skills is balanced with appreciation, empathy, and respect for the people, their cultures, and traditions.

Communicating the Language Policy
The language policy is communicated to our entire school community by posting on the school website and publishing in the Parent/Student handbook.

Reviewing
The language policy is reviewed and revised by all faculty members on an annual basis to reflect the current needs of our school community and to ensure consistency with IB expectations.

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