# Ruth Barker Middle School

# LANGUAGE POLICY

## RBMS MISSION STATEMENT

Ruth Barker Middle School's (RBMS) mission is to cultivate an internationally-minded community that fosters curiosity, integrity, and empathy. We are dedicated to nurturing resilient, respectful young scholars and inspiring a passion for learning. Through engaging units of inquiry, we embrace each student's unique potential with enthusiasm, ensuring their growth and development.

## RBMS VISION STATEMENT

To inspire a generation of learners who lead with empathy, see the world clearly, and act courageously to improve it.

## Philosophy

At Ruth Barker Middle School, we understand that in order to become effective and open-minded communicators and thinkers in an increasingly global society, intensive language learning must take place. Through reading, writing, listening, and speaking, students explore diverse cultures and perspectives to develop empathy, curiosity, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world. Being able to effectively communicate in more than one language is essential for students to become internationally-minded citizens, which is the ultimate goal of the International Baccalaureate Programme.

## Beliefs

- Multilingualism is embraced as a fact, a right, and a resource.
- Language is central to all learning, making all teachers language teachers.
- Minimizing language barriers allows each student to participate in the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP).
- Language acquisition varies for each learner, so instruction should be designed to support diverse language learning needs.
- All home languages within our school community must be respected and supported.
- Access to high-quality, diverse literature allows students to engage in critical literacy, analyzing how language shapes culture and context across different literary traditions.
- Learning a second or other language strengthens students' understanding of their mother tongue language.

## Practices

- RBMS utilizes the High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) adopted by Bentonville Schools to support English language instruction.
- All teachers must demonstrate awareness or proficiency in the science of reading.
- Learning activities that provide multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression are incorporated across all content and grade levels.
- Student progress in language learning is regularly assessed to ensure each student is making adequate progress, and interventions are provided as needed.
- All students at RBMS have access to a language acquisition course.
- Multilingual and multicultural resources are consistently reviewed and updated by the media specialist to reflect our school community.

## Home and Family Language Profile

The home languages and/or dialects represented at RBMS based upon information provided during enrollment are as follows:

| Language | # of Students | Language | # of Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arabic | 1 | Pujabi-Panjabi | 1 |
| English | 461 | Russian | 4 |
| French | 1 | Spanish | 65 |
| Hmong | 1 | Swahili | 1 |
| Laotian; Pha Xa Lao | 1 | Tagalog | 1 |
| Mandarin | 2 | Tamil | 10 |
| Marathi | 1 | Telegu | 10 |
| Marshallese | 11 | Turkish | 1 |
| Oriya | 1 | Urdu | 4 |
| Persian; Farsi | 2 | Vietnamese | 4 |
| Pingelapese | 1 | Chinese; Zhongwen | 3 |
| Portuguese | 1 | **Total** | 588 |

*This chart is updated annually between October 1st and 15th.*

Students and families are encouraged to use their home language with pride. These languages and cultures are recognized and celebrated throughout the year during assemblies, activities, announcements, and other events such as our Multicultural Night.

## Support for Language Development

In order to meet the individual needs of all learners, our school provides various language supports. The following table represents the general guidelines for language instruction.

| | |
|---|---|
| Working Language | English |
| Language of Instruction | English |
| Response Language | English |
| Language Courses | Language and Literature - English |
| | Language Acquisition - Spanish |

In addition to the language courses listed above, additional supports for language learning are available including:

- Special Education: Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) guide language instruction for eligible students in the least restrictive environment.
- English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL): The ESOL team assesses and supports English Learners (ELs) by providing rigorous and scaffolded lessons, assisting teachers with differentiated instruction, cultivating connections between school and families, and facilitating translation services when necessary.
- Interventionists: Provide differentiated instruction and monitor progress.
- Response to Intervention (RtI): Teachers provide interventions as needed based on assessment data.
- Media Center: The media specialist collaborates with teachers, curates multilingual materials, creates displays, and develops activities that inspire students to engage with books and other media that represent multiple languages and cultures.
- Technology: Chromebooks, smart boards, and assistive software support language learning and communication.
- School Status: The district parent-school communication platform allows parents to translate school communication into their native language.

## Language Acquisition Instruction

All students have access to Spanish language instruction weekly as their language acquisition course. In addition to language skills, lessons explore the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries through stories, games, songs, and research. Whenever possible, students will be placed in classes based on a designation of emergent, capable, or proficient in Spanish.

For students with characteristics of dyslexia or other learning impairments for whom a Spanish language acquisition course is not recommended based upon an IEP, LPAC, or RtI committee decision, SPIRE, UFLI Foundations, or other language programs may be substituted for Spanish as the student's language acquisition course.

Additionally, for students whose mother tongue or home language is not English, their English literature and language classes as well as any ESOL classes will count toward the language acquisition requirement.

### Plan for Implementation and Review

Ruth Barker Middle School will have a Language Policy Committee and school Leadership Team who will oversee the implementation and review of this policy. These teams will:

- Communicate the policy to parents through the IB Coordinator and school website.
- Evaluate the policy annually to ensure it is in alignment with IB philosophies, district policies, state and federal laws, and community needs.

## Appendix: Definitions

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** This is a written plan that describes the special education services and support a child with a disability will receive at school. It is created by a team that includes teachers, parents, and specialists to help the child succeed. The IEP includes learning goals, classroom accommodations, and any extra help the child may need. It is reviewed each year to make sure it meets the child's needs.

**Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC):** A group of educators, administrators, and parents that makes decisions about the language support services for students who are learning English. The LPAC reviews language assessment results, determines if a student qualifies for English language services, and monitors progress to ensure they receive the appropriate support. This committee meets regularly to adjust services based on the student's needs and state requirements.

**Mother tongue:** The very first language a person learns to speak at home during early childhood.

**Multilingualism**: The ability to speak, understand, or use multiple languages. In education, it refers to recognizing and supporting students who speak more than one language, treating linguistic diversity as a strength.

**Response to Intervention (RtI):** A structured approach used in schools to identify and support students who need extra help with learning. It involves providing different levels of support based on students' progress and needs.

> Differentiation: A teaching strategy that adjusts instruction to meet the diverse needs of students. This can include adjusting lesson content, teaching methods, or assessment types to ensure all students can learn effectively.
>
> Scaffolding: A teaching method that provides temporary support to help students grasp new concepts or skills. As students gain confidence and ability, the support is

gradually reduced, allowing them to work independently.

Enrichment Opportunities: Activities and learning experiences designed to challenge and engage students beyond the standard curriculum. These may include advanced coursework, hands-on projects, field trips, or creative problem-solving activities.

**Specialized Program Individualizing Reading Excellence (SPIRE):** A multisensory reading intervention program created by EPS Learning to help students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties.

**UFLI Foundations:** Created by the University of Florida Literacy Institute, UFLI Foundations is an explicit and systematic program that teaches students the foundational skills needed for proficient reading.

# Resources and References

### District Policies and Models

- Bentonville Schools Board Policy Manual
  - Code 5.1: Curriculum Development and Review
  - Code 5.10: English Language Learner
  - Code 5.5: Gifted and Talented
  - Code 5.6: Special Education
- The International School at Mary Mae Jones. *Language Policy*

### State, Federal, and International Legislation


- Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2022). *Reading legislation guidance document*
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq. (1990)
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (1974)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. (2004)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794
- U.S. Department of Education. (2025, September 23). *Equal education opportunities for English learners*. Website


### International Baccalaureate Organization


- (2022). *Access and inclusion policy.* IB
- (2008). *Guidelines for developing a school language policy*. IB
- (2014). *Language Policy.* IB
- (2016/2020). *Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes.* IB
- (2014/2023). *MYP: From principles into practice*. IB
- (2018/2020). *Programme standards and practices*. IB

ChatGPT was used to support the organization and clarity of this document