

The Healdsburg School

Language Policy

Statement of Belief

At The Healdsburg School (THS), we believe that language is fundamental to the success of all student learning **and that all teachers are teachers of language**. This includes the ability to express oneself (communicate) through speaking, reading, writing, drawing, acting, etc. This also includes communication through different languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts. Language is essential to the construction of meaning and connects of all curriculum elements. THS accepts the responsibility to recognize and support language development of all students through the expectation and understanding that all of our teachers are language teachers, working together to make sure that language is not learned in isolated skill sets, but through integrated learning and meaningful contexts. Through inquiry, teachers provide students with opportunities to use language in many different formats, including debate, role-play, and art, as well as the traditional teaching of language both through the planners and as stand-alone subjects. Students work with reading materials that match their reading levels and focus on progression into more difficult text through assessment of fluency, recognition and comprehension. The writing process allows students to write for specific purposes, including their own choice of subject matter, and allows them to experience the practice of editing, revising, and publishing. The focus of the learning is that the experience is relevant, engaging and challenging to each student.

Our teachers are working to create a caring language community, where support is given in the learning of second and third languages. We are endeavoring to create a language-rich campus through technology, multimedia and library resources.

Language in the Classroom

In the classroom, language is supported through various literacy activities such as guided reading, writer's workshop, writing in context, classroom libraries, visuals, instructional vocabulary, word walls, and opportunities for students to use language during presentations and collaboration. Exposure to language during instruction, school announcements, and during ancillary instruction (which includes Spanish and Mandarin language instruction) also supports development. Homework is used as a window into the classroom, allowing students to apply their knowledge of the vocabulary at home.

Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individually assessed in their reading ability using the Renaissance Learning program, The Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project Units of Study in Reading and Writing, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, Wordly Wise, Words Their Way and can be organized into groups and literature studies. Spelling and Language Arts are assessed individually, focusing on spelling pattern, grammar and word mechanics. Writing is used to focus on meaning as much as technical skill, and self-expression is encouraged through regular intervals of written and oral reflection.

Language and the Program of Inquiry

Language learning is integrated throughout the Program of Inquiry. Higher level thinking and key concepts and questions lend themselves to having a strong vocabulary and language presence within the planners. Oral language (listening and speaking), visual language (viewing and presenting) and written language (writing to reading and writing to writing) may be present within planner activities.

World Language Instruction

At THS, stakeholders recognize that the acquisition of other languages and learning about different cultures provides students with a multitude of opportunities to develop international-mindedness through the attributes of the IB Learner Profile. All students in the Primary Years Programme have the opportunity to learn two world languages, Mandarin and Spanish, beginning in Kindergarten. As a result of exposure to, and experience with, these languages, students are encouraged to develop intercultural awareness, new perspectives, a culture of curiosity, as well as an appreciation of the richness of our world's diversity. In the PYP, students attend Mandarin and Spanish classes for 90-100 minutes each per week.

Students receive instruction using an interactive approach to second language learning. Teaching integrates the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. In addition, emphasis on grammatical structures and vocabulary development, especially in the upper grades, helps students to develop the tools needed to become effective communicators in our multilingual world.

International understanding, cultural awareness, and historical knowledge are enhanced through the study of the customs, traditions, songs, poems, and everyday life in Mandarin and Spanish-speaking countries throughout the world. In addition to this, upper school students have the opportunity to participate in trips to Mandarin and Spanish-speaking countries.

Second language teachers support the school's reading, writing and oral language practices, the IB Learner Profile, and the PYP attitudes, as well as the programme of inquiry, whenever and wherever appropriate.

Spanish and Mandarin are taught to students through several formats. Spanish and Mandarin teachers provide lessons relating to the PYP planners that include art, music, movement and cultural learning when appropriate. Morning assembly allows for additional learning – with components such as the Pledge of Allegiance stated in Spanish. Students write and perform short “conversational lessons” throughout the year in both Spanish and Mandarin classes, often performing skits, poems and songs during the weekly school wide assembly.

Mother Tongue Support

The mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of the students at THS is English, which is also the language of instruction at the school. However, within our student population there are bilingual students. Included in our multilingual, multicultural staff and parent community are speakers of several languages, who can be called upon to assist when translators are needed for parent conferences and/or student support.

Practices that reflect our beliefs

- As a school we work on providing a wide range of books, including a selection from various libraries, iPads, and classrooms with internet access to support and enhance the units of inquiry and language development.
- The classroom environment is rich in print with labels, signs, explanations, teacher and student writing.
- Reading is taught using leveled texts and phonics as well as fiction and non-fiction books.
- Children are given plenty of experience accessing information from books, reference materials and multi-media resources with the goal of developing independent learners.
- Children write for authentic purposes.
- Students are given the experience of using a variety of media, drama, oral presentations, exhibitions and multimedia presentations.
- Students are encouraged to read for pleasure during independent reading time.
- Reading at home is promoted through the use of reading logs or other schemes which contain an

accountability component.

- Teachers read frequently from both fiction and non-fiction books.
- Children are engaged in subject discussions as well as social conversations as appropriate.
- Children communicate their understandings and learning both in writing and orally.
- Children are given the opportunity to express opinions and feelings and are explicitly taught to use language responsibly and respectfully.
- Provisions are made for sharing reading and writing.
- A variety of approaches and teaching styles are employed to cater to individual needs.
- Children are involved in a variety of literature studies, exploring different genres, authors and styles of writing.
- Teachers model writing, reading strategies, listening skills and appropriate speech.
- Teachers actively foster respect for and interest in other languages.

Language assessments:

- The learning and assessment of our language program is based on oral (listening and speaking), written (reading and writing) and visual communication (viewing and presenting) strands.
- Throughout instructions the teacher will establish a language skill level to create an appropriate language learning plan for the students.
- A range of appropriate assessment methods such as portfolios, conferencing, writing sample analysis, writing journal, self and peer assessment are used.
- A range of assessment strategies and tools are used based on our assessment policy.
- Process (note taking, drafting, editing etc.) as well as product are assessed.
- All teachers consider language development in their planning and assessing and support language acquisition in their teaching.

The Healdsburg School Primary Years Programme Essential Agreement for Language Instruction

The faculty and staff at The Healdsburg School recognize that language is a vital instrument for learning, communication and expression, and that all teachers are language teachers. In order to promote inquiry-based language learning within the context of the PYP, it is understood that language instruction takes place all day and in all subjects. The Primary Years Programme faculty agrees that language learning at the school will:

- ◆ be consistent and age appropriate;
- ◆ support the development of skills and understanding in the language of instruction (English) as well as the additional languages offered at the school (Mandarin and Spanish);
- ◆ be reflected in the programme of inquiry, transdisciplinary planners and individual lesson plans.

Furthermore, the PYP faculty agrees to:

- ◆ work with all students so they may achieve mastery of the essential language skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing;
- ◆ utilize a variety of materials to enhance the development of language skills.

Review of the Language Policy document will take place at the end of each school year.

Approved by consensus of the faculty
May, 2016.