

## **Garden Hills Elementary School Language Policy**

This policy outlines our beliefs and values about language learning and teaching at Garden Hills Elementary School. Instructional representatives have created and revised the content of this document.

Developed: 13 April 2005

Last Revised: 4 March 2013

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### **Philosophy**

At Garden Hills we believe that language is a powerful instrument for learning, communication and self-expression. Students will utilize language to receive and express themselves in order to solve problems, explore their environment, influence change in others, and identify their own self concept. All students will be surrounded by the English Language in Visual, Oral, and Written ways. Spanish, our second language, will also be explored in this way. Language development is an ongoing process with emphasis on:

- Listening as a means of communicating effectively.
- Speaking as a way of transferring language from school to home
- Reading to develop understanding and knowledge of the world
- Writing to communicate different ideas, opinions, and perspectives
- Viewing to create a purposeful learning environment
- Presenting as an expression of knowledge acquired

The process includes the language of instruction, the school's second language, and the learner's mother tongue facilitated through inquiry-based learning.

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme inspires our instruction. Multi-cultural beliefs, values and parental involvement from home to school draw upon and enhance prior knowledge and experience to empower students to be global life-long learners, caring citizens, responsible risk-takers, and effective communicators. Students learn to use language in a positive manner to successfully interact with people of all cultures and increase their acceptance of diversity.

### **Practices**

At Garden Hills we believe that students are best served through opportunities to utilize language in the following ways:

- Reflection on learning and self
- Writing throughout the curriculum
- Responding to constructed response prompts/questions
- Using technology to improve communication
- Reflecting on language and making comparisons to Spanish, and languages from other cultures

We believe that teachers teach language best through:

- Presenting language in authentic contexts
- Integrating language across curriculum
- Helping students to identify language structures

- Encourage students to reflect on language
- Embracing alternate forms of student expression include mother tongue development
- Providing a physical space which enriches language development
- Supporting positive attitudes toward improved communication skills
- Acknowledging differences in student experiences, skills, and learning styles
- Utilizing a variety of assessment strategies

Facilitation of language instruction will take place through:

- Implementation of the Units of Inquiry
- Teachers as facilitators
- Teachers as mentors in the writing and speaking processes
- Implementation of a writing process through each grade
- Fostering discussing with student groups
- Modeling effective language use
- Providing opportunities for student-centered and student-selected research
- Student created presentations
- Parent involvement
- Acquisition of a second language
- Student led conferences

### *The Language of Instruction*

#### *Kindergarten through Second Grade*

The primary language of instruction at Garden Hills Elementary is English. In the K-2 PYP classroom at GHES reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing skills are necessary tools for effective communication. The mastery of these skills is essential for enrichment and lifelong learning. Students need multiple opportunities to build essential skills in the classroom. The following are the components of our language-based instruction:

- **Reading:**
  - **Concepts of print:** environmental print, choral reading, word walls, word families, use of big books, morning message
  - **Phonics/phonemic awareness:** nursery rhymes, poetry, songs, literacy centers, various phonics programs, interactive internet sites
  - **Fluency/vocabulary/comprehension:** guided reading, leveled readers, read aloud, shared reading, Accelerated Reader, Junior Great Books, and Thin Client
- **Writing:** writer's workshop, daily journal, reflections on units of inquiry, reports, graphic organizers (webs, Venn diagrams), student created books
- **Listening/Speaking/Viewing:** show and tell, computer, author's chair, listening center, role play, oral presentations

Through these language components, students develop skills needed to build their knowledge of the world.

#### *Third Grade through Fifth Grade*

In order to differentiate instruction and to support language in grades 3-5, teachers and support staff utilize a variety of inquiry-based methods in the classroom setting to meet all learning styles. The students are actively engaged in the following learning experiences:

- Writer's Workshop
- Read Aloud (chapter books)
- Literature Circles
- Creative Environment Print
- Using Graphic Organizers
- Shared Reading and Writing
- Poetry, Plays
- Research Projects
- Journal Writing
- Books or Stories on Tape
- Interactive Internet Sites
- Newspaper Reading
- Writing With a Purpose
- Thin Client
- "Book Talk"
- Accelerated Reader
- Vocabulary
- Junior Great Books

Students' learning is enhanced through language support strategies such as phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and writing.

#### *Kindergarten through Fifth Grade*

Language standards are integrated into the transdisciplinary curriculum through the PYP planners. Students are exposed to a variety of leveled reading and to international literature. The media center provides a rich source for print and visual literacy including DVDs, United Streaming, reference materials, literature, and technology. Skills and concepts are assessed formally and informally through peer or student self-assessments; as well as, pre-, formative, and summative assessments.

#### *Gifted, Early Intervention Program (EIP), Program for Exceptional Children (PEC) and Student Support Team (SST)*

We recognize that due to diverse backgrounds and prior educational experiences, students' strengths and weaknesses vary at Garden Hills. We meet the need for added support through the use of:

- SST process: a team of specialists who evaluate a child's academic/social needs and obtain information in order to equip teachers and parents with specific strategies. A translator are available to support when needed
- EIP: a support service that provides remedial, small group intervention for qualifying students
- Tutorial Services: provided by teachers and business partners (Jewish Coalition for Literacy, Atlanta International School, et al)

- Gifted Education: an accelerated student achievement class designed to enhance curricular experiences
- PEC: designed to support services and to provide strategies and support staff for specific learning disabilities such as speech, language and hearing impairments

### English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

The goal of the ESOL Program is to enhance language acquisition around organized themes, and to introduce and to practice skills students use in the mainstream classroom. Students enter the program following an assessment which shows a need for English language support. Children's language progress is assessed on a regular basis several times during and at the end of the year to determine their level of proficiency.

ESOL teachers participate as much as possible in planning with mainstream teachers and provide these teachers with support in working with ESOL children in mainstream classrooms.

English language instruction develops the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and speaking skills are developed through chants, choral reading, question and answer exercises, targeted language practice, real-life demonstrations, and use of technology (ex. Internet, tape recordings, video recordings). Reading and writing skills are developed through graphic organizers, word walls, graphophonics, whole language activities, use of picture dictionaries, as well as materials reinforcing those mainstream classroom skills aimed at making students more independent in the mainstream classroom.

The students' mother tongue is used to make connections between previous knowledge and newly acquired language and content. This includes all four skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting.

ESOL teachers also communicate on a regular basis with parents to inform them of their child's progress and to advise them on how to reinforce learning at home.

ESOL teachers hold workshops or meetings on an as-needed basis with groups of parents to familiarize them with school procedures and learning strategies which are helpful for their children's progress.

### Mother-Tongue Support

Garden Hills is a polyglot environment. The number of home languages fluctuates year-to-year rarely falling below 20 and going as high as 50. Spanish and English are the primary two home languages. English is the language of mainstream classroom instruction and the language of systematic access. Spanish is the primary home and community language of daily discourse. A significant, stable minority of students is Bengali speaking.

The faculty and staff at Garden Hills speak 15 languages. They are: Spanish, English, Bengali, French, Italian, German, Amharic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Oromo, Hindi, Tigrina,

Polish, Portuguese, and American Sign Language. Garden Hills' staff members use students' mother tongue to communicate with them in daily discourse situations outside the mainstream classroom. The parents who speak Arabic or Russian act as liaisons and assist with translations for those parents who are not fluent in English since at present there are no staff members who speak those languages.

Garden Hills' also offers:

- Tutorial services as need be in mother tongue in academic areas, transportation provided by the school
- Printed materials in mother tongue pertinent to curriculum objectives/mandated testing objectives
- Clearing house/ point persons familiar with community organizations.
- Interpreters provided as needed on a "drop in basis"
- Push in inclusion of interpreters/tutors on an ad-hoc, on call basis (transitional pedagogical technique not viewed as bilingual instruction)
- Support of home language encouraged: parents are advised by school personnel to use the home language in helping their children with academic skills provided.
- Assessments administered in student's mother tongue
- Home-school liaison to interpret for the Spanish speaking parents in SST meetings, PEC meetings and parent-teacher conferences
- Parent English language classes
- All correspondence in English and Spanish; and in other languages on a limited basis
- Support of Atlanta Public Schools' English Language Center (Campbell Center) to students, parents and teachers
- Cultural experiences (plays/performances) in English and Spanish

Students of third, fourth and/or fifth languages will be supported to the degree possible and at a minimum through the discussion of their languages as they appear in literature, through recognition of these languages in materials in the media center and signs in those languages being posted throughout the school.

### Second Language Instruction

Spanish is Garden Hills' second language of instruction for kindergarten through fifth grade. Spanish class provides a complete language environment. The Spanish teachers provide 30-45 minutes of daily instruction and accomplish a variety of objectives.

The teachers link the grade level curriculum (language, math, social studies, science, music, physical education, art, etc.) by reinforcing them and supporting the PYP units of inquiry throughout the year. The second language instruction includes the four areas of expression: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using an extensive variety of individual, pair, and small group activities such as role play, Total Physical Response (TPR), authentic songs, reading passages and books, journals, projects, murals, vocabulary development, resources, Spanish and bilingual reference materials, Spanish websites, and dialogues. Techniques of grouping and differentiated instruction are utilized in order to meet the needs of all students. Spanish instruction also integrates target

language culture in the curriculum. Cultural celebrations such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Dia de los Muertos, and Dia de los Reyes Magos bring to life the Hispanic culture.

The Spanish teachers give support by interpreting during parent-teacher conferences, translating newsletters and notes to the parents/guardians.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Garden Hills is informed on and committed to the IB programme standards and practices in relation to teaching and learning through the PYP coordinator and IB websites. We are informed regarding current research and best practices in language learning through district workshops, professional learning communities, conferences, and in-school redelivery.

Garden Hills' resources are obtained through grants, Title I, parents, volunteers, staff, community and business partners. The literacy coach, media specialist, media committee, Parent Teacher Association board, teachers and administrators are responsible for provision of resources for classroom libraries and the media center.

The IB Team ensures that the language policy supports the PYP philosophy. Staff meetings, committee meetings, common planning, and training ensure all teachers are PYP teachers and part of the PYP community. Teachers, support staff, administrators and PYP coordinators are responsible for communicating the language policy to all Garden Hills constituents. Principal, Assistant Principal, PYP coordinator, Instructional Coach and district program coordinators are responsible for teachers' professional development regarding language teaching and learning. Garden Hills will ensure the language policy is implemented, understood and supported by all its constituents through staff and PTA meetings, parent workshops, and communication of the policy. Garden Hills will ensure the language policy is implemented, understood, and supported by all its constituents through staff and PTA meetings, parent workshops, and communication of the policy by teachers.

Progress in the practices will be assessed and recorded using benchmark tests, unit tests, GKids, GA CRCT, ITBS, CORE, ESOL testing, and informal Spanish assessment. The PYP coordinator, IB Team and Language Policy Team will review and revise Garden Hill's language policy annually.

### **Admissions Policy**

During student enrollment, the parent and/or guardian identifies the child's primary and home language on the enrollment form. All students whose home language is not English are assessed for the need of English language support. The enrollment form asks if the child has received ESL, Gifted, or PEC services at a previous school. It also asks if they attended pre-kindergarten.