



## Academy for Discovery at Lakewood MYP Language Policy



### **Philosophy**

The ability to effectively communicate influences how learners construct knowledge and contributes to their cognitive academic growth and personal/interpersonal development. The greater a student's fluency in the language of learning, the greater the likelihood that they will experience success in school. Acquiring a new language encourages students to understand culture as it relates to a group's traditions, beliefs, products, and perspectives. It is important that our students respect the dignity of other cultural groups and understand how that respect can be demonstrated within their school, city, country, and beyond. To that end, all members of the Academy for Discovery at Lakewood (Lakewood) staff are language teachers.

Every learner within every classroom must feel accepted and safe – safe to express themselves, to participate in discussions and to practice developing language skills, even if their current skills differ from those of their peers. It is the responsibility of each Lakewood instructor to establish a classroom culture where every student contributes to their own and to their peers' abilities to learn.

We also recognize that skills in discussion, reading and writing contribute to deeper learning, retention of knowledge and stronger global awareness. To build our collective skills as teachers of language we will collaborate in interdisciplinary grade-level teams and vertical content specific teams to better recognize the language needs of our learners and to build our own professional abilities to meet those needs, whether that professional development can be addressed by accessing the collective abilities of our school staff or seeking the support of experts beyond our school site.

To ensure that our philosophy is enacted it is the intent of the Lakewood community to honestly monitor current conditions and take action to move toward the reality we intend to create.

### **Language Profile**

Norfolk, Virginia, with an approximate population of 240,000 is home to the world's largest naval base. Norfolk Public Schools operates forty-eight schools serving this urban community where military transfers contribute to a transient student population and deployments create temporary single parent homes where the stay-at-home parent may be new to speaking English.

Academy for Discovery at Lakewood is one of eleven specialty program schools offered to families in Norfolk, Virginia. It serves 800 students in grades 3 through 8 with lottery-based entry points at grades 3 and 6.

A survey conducted in early 2022 indicated the following about the Lakewood MYP student population. Currently, no students are eligible for ESL services from a district specialist. 95% of our MYP student population come from homes where English is most often or always spoken by their family. Additionally, thirteen students' mother tongue was not English, but was Tagalog, Spanish (8), Japanese, Chinese (2), Albanian, or Arabic.

Language Acquisition instruction in Chinese and Spanish is offered to all MYP students. NOTE: Year 1 Spanish during the 2021-22 school year focused on culture and basic Spanish due to hiring constraints requiring a long-term substitute teachers with limited Spanish training. The primary language of instruction at Lakewood is English.

## **Literacy**

### **Close Reading in all Subject Groups**

Many Lakewood teachers are trained to utilize close reading and close writing strategies to support the development of content knowledge and conceptual understanding within their specific discipline. They are available to mentor teachers new to Lakewood when needed. These strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Modeling of masterful reading of texts (print and non-print) at a complexity level appropriate for a students' grade.
- Multiple opportunities for students to reread, utilize marginalia, question the text, and uncover layers of meaning leading to deeper comprehension.
- Use of context clues, word parts, and figurative language to determine word meaning and author intent.
- Participation in discourse in pairs, small groups and whole class to deepen understanding.
- Use of Spider-Web Discussions and Leaderless Discussions.
- Opportunities for students to reflect upon their own thinking in the context of processing the thinking of others.
- Frequent opportunities for students to express their thinking in writing in response to both text-dependent and inquiry questions citing text evidence to support their reasoning.
- Skill development in the delivery and receipt of feedback from peers or instructor.
- Focus on progress rather than grades.

### **Utilization of Learning Targets and Performances of Understanding**

Providing, in student-friendly terms, a purpose for every lesson, learning targets let students know the why, what, how, and how well of every lesson's purpose. Aligned to content standards and a trajectory informed by learner needs, learning targets guide instruction and learning within daily lessons in every MYP subject.

A formal performance of understanding within every lesson lets students know how well they are doing on that lesson's target. This practice informs teachers' decisions as they develop a series of lessons designed to build students' skills, knowledge, and understandings effectively. In turn, lesson-sized feedback ensures that students that they are "on the right track," and able to practice new skills independently.

## **Unit Planning**

Unit planning, especially within collaborative settings, provides teachers with an opportunity to consider how they may include strategies for building language and communication skills in all learners in all subject groups. When planning with peers who teach the same subject, teachers are able to share successful experiences and, when needed, ask for support in addressing specific language needs identified in some learners. Guidance in identifying differentiation strategies for struggling learners or those requiring more challenging experiences is supported by special education and gifted resource specialists. Collaborative teams also provide one another support in the development of assessment and the use of criterion-related assessment tools designed to clarify for students how they are progressing in areas related to language and what their next steps can be as they strive to improve.

## **Horizontal Collaborative Planning**

Discussions between teachers who share the same students helps to identify specific language learning needs for students as seen from multiple perspectives. Meetings also help teachers to identify common cross-curricular connections for possible interdisciplinary collaborations. Teachers' selections of texts often have a global connection, allowing students to explore through literature cultures beyond their own. Traditionally horizontal planning meetings are held during pre-service or early release days. Currently, efforts are made to accommodate horizontal planning after school.

## **Language Acquisition**

Language Acquisition instruction is offered in Chinese and Spanish to all Lakewood students. Grade 6 students take year-long Beginning Chinese or Spanish. Students continue their Language Acquisition studies in grades 7 and 8. Level 1 and 2 courses are offered in both Spanish and Chinese. Student proficiency and language learning needs help to determine the course they take in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Opportunities to continue Spanish are provided at every Norfolk high school. Students electing to continue their education by attending Granby High School, which offers the Diploma Programme, will be able to continue their language instruction in Chinese, but will need to begin French or Spanish instruction to meet the requirements for the grades 11-12 Diploma Programme.

During the 2021-22 school year, Language Acquisition instruction in Spanish was impacted due to a loss of two teachers during virtual instruction due to the pandemic. Hiring qualified teachers for these positions was not possible. Long-term substitutes with some or limited capabilities for teaching Spanish were used to provide continuing instruction. These circumstances will require adjustments to plans for the 2022-23 school year.

## **Support Services**

The following school-based services are available to support both teachers and students:

- School-wide Instructional Practice: C-R-C or CERC  
All subject teachers utilize a practice we call C-R-C (Claim-Reasoning with evidence-Conclusion.) Our school includes grades 3-5. The elementary students utilize the simpler C-R-C acronym. MYP staff move to CERC (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning, Conclusion) as students are challenged to include evidence to support their reasoning when writing or contributing to discussions. When

that evidence is supported by the work of others, MYP assessment criteria in Language & Literature, Individuals & Societies, and Sciences expect students to document the work of others by citing the sources of information used. These practices utilized over the past four years in all subjects, even math, arts, and PE supported students' language and thinking skills as evidenced in annual school-based assessments. NOTE: this practice suffered during virtual instruction due to Covid restrictions. Renewed efforts to fully implement this valuable practice are ongoing.

- **Fiction and Non-Fiction Reading Materials**  
Class sets and/or student copies of ancillary reading materials to support the instructional focus for MYP units are provided through school funds, PTA support, and grants to supplement traditional classroom texts. These materials are used in Language & Literature, Sciences, Individuals & Societies, and are also available in Spanish for Language Acquisition.
- **Media Services**  
Lakewood's librarian works closely with teachers, students, parents and school administration to make sure that curricular and support materials are available to support the development of language. Lakewood's materials available for circulation to students and staff continues to grow and includes materials supporting school literacy efforts, the study of world cultures and resources to support students whose mother tongue is not English as well as students beginning their study of Chinese and Spanish.

The following district services support students learning a new language, including those new to speaking English:

- **Norfolk Public Schools Foreign Language and ESL**  
The purpose of the Foreign Language and English as a Second Language programs in NPS is to ensure that students exceed local, state, and national standards for foreign language and English as a second language. NPS provides an opportunity for all students to become fluent in more than one language, with the understanding that: all students are capable of learning an additional language; the best time for a child to begin to learn a second or third language is before age 10; longer sequences of instruction lead to higher levels of language proficiency; children who study another language have an openness to and appreciation of other cultures; the 21st-century interdependence of national and world communities will require educated people to develop communication skills in other languages.
- **ESL Screening**  
The WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test is used as an English language proficiency "screener" test for incoming students who may be designated as English language learners. It assists educators with programmatic placement decisions such as identification and placement of ELLs. The W-APT is one component of WIDA's comprehensive assessment system.

## **Alignment with other policies**

### **Inclusion Policy:**

Students who are struggling academically are identified early through teachers' use of formative assessments and daily performances of understanding. Language instruction in all subjects can reveal the need for additional support. Trained specialists are available to provide assistance to teachers and/or additional instruction to students. These specialists provide support in reading, math, instructional planning and delivery, differentiation, special education resources and strategies, media literacy and research skills. Every effort is made to ensure that students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan are able to continue taking all eight MYP subjects. When this is not possible, students requiring additional support in a resource class can elect to remain in a language acquisition course. This decision is reached with input from parents, student, and instructional staff.

### **Assessment Policy:**

Lakewood's assessment policy states that a primary purpose for assessment is to *provide meaningful, useful feedback to support learner progress and to enable all students to become stronger, more self-regulated learners*. MYP objectives assessed using Criteria C in Language & Literature, Language Acquisition, Individuals & Societies, and Mathematics assess students' abilities to express their thinking through language. Criteria D in Sciences, Arts, and Physical & Health Education do so as well. Lakewood's assessment practices strive to develop students who are able to use assessment to become stronger learners.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

Lakewood's policy for academic integrity includes a signed pledge students commit to which addresses plagiarism in addition to other integrity infractions. The documentation of sources practices addressed in this language policy support those efforts.

## **Review and Distribution of Policy**

### **Policy Review**

- Lakewood's Language Policy is reviewed during quarter one by MYP staff consisting of teachers from each subject group, special education, gifted, resource, and administration. The last review took place during preservice week (August 30-September 3, 2021.) We plan to extend a review of this policy to parents, students, central administration, and the community soon. We may find more success doing so via Zoom, taking time to explain any changes at that time. This would be similar to the review practices used for Lakewood's Assessment policy. Attendance and interest is greater with those practices and in that setting.
- Literacy practices need ongoing development and assessment to provide improvement for teachers and students. Lakewood's annual school-wide pre- and post-assessments in Close Reading (text-dependent question and extended response) provided that feedback for every school year prior to March 2020. Student growth demonstrated by that data urges us to once again implement those practices. We hope to do so in the 2022-23 school year. Professional learning opportunities will be provided to support Lakewood staff in these efforts.

- Lakewood’s utilization of MYP assessment practices, as outlined in our Assessment Policy, also provide data indicating those practices also support the language communication growth of our students in English. We plan to build stronger connections for students with special needs in our Inclusion Policy as well.

### **Communication of Policy**

- When updated, the Language Policy is shared with the Instructional Leadership Team. Those members share it with their specific subject groups. A copy of the Language policy is available to staff on the Lakewood shared Google Drive. Additionally, copies of the policy are available on the school’s website and upon request from Lakewood’s media specialist.

### **Provision for Growth/Improvement**

- Related student and staff progress data will inform school administration and the Instructional Leadership team of any needed next steps as progress is made or new learner needs are identified.
- Periodically, Lakewood’s staff, especially those newly hired, will need support in
  - identifying and meeting the needs of bilingual students
  - meeting the needs of ESL learners
  - implementing Lakewood’s CERC practices in every subject

### **Resources**

International Baccalaureate Organization (2014). *MYP: From principles into practice*

International Baccalaureate Organization (2008). *Guidelines for developing a school language policy*

International Baccalaureate Organization (2008). *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*

International Baccalaureate Organization (2010). *Language Acquisition subject guide*

Granby High School, <http://schools.nps.k12.va.us/ghs/>

Brookhart, Susan M. and Connie M. Moss, Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding Today’s Lesson. ASCD, Alexandria, VA. 2012.