



Academy for Discovery at Lakewood

IB Candidate School

MYP Language Policy 2016-2017

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 practice, 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 of which 46% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

A student/staff survey conducted in January 2016 indicated the following about the Lakewood community. Currently three students are eligible for ESL services from a district specialist. Additionally, thirteen students' mother tongue was not English, but was Portuguese, Spanish (6), Russian, Chinese, French (2), Tagalog, or American Sign Language.

Lakewood's instructional staff includes two teachers who are native speakers in Spanish and Tagalog and more than half the staff of 61 is moderately comfortable speaking a language other than English.

Language Acquisition instruction in French and Spanish was offered to approximately two-thirds of Lakewood's middle school students during the 2015-16 school year. In 2016-17 all middle school students will have the opportunity to study French, Spanish, or Chinese.

The primary language of instruction at Lakewood is English. Eighty-six percent of current middle school students scored proficient or better on the Virginia Standards of Learning state exams in reading in the spring of 2016. School-based assessments administered in 2015 indicated that many students struggle to effectively convey their thinking in writing or content-related class discussions. When examining this data along with walk-through observations, an interdisciplinary, multi-grade team of teachers reported that approaches to learning in communication, collaboration, and self-management are often not included in the planning for or delivery of instruction in all subject areas. This realization contributes to our recognition that ALL teachers are language teachers.

Teacher comments in grade-level meetings highlight a need for differentiation to meet the language learning needs of students whose abilities vary markedly from their class peers. With 282 students identified as gifted according to district guidelines and a special education population of 38, both mainstreamed, at times, into the same classes, the need for differentiated instruction to meet students' developing language needs is clear. The differences in teacher abilities to meet these learning needs is evident from instructional rounds (focused observations) and must become an emphasis for future professional development.

Literacy

Close Reading in all Subject Groups

All 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. These strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Modeling of masterful reading of texts (print and non-print) at a complexity level appropriate for 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.
- 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.

A formal performance of understanding within each lesson lets students know how well they are doing on this lesson’s target, informs teachers about each student’s progress, and provides for immediate feedback to learners prior to the close of a lesson, thereby informing learners and teachers of appropriate next steps.

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 they’ve identified in some learners. Guidance in identifying differentiation strategies for struggling learners or those requiring more challenging experiences is provided 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.

Grade Level Interdisciplinary 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 help teachers to identify common cross-curricular connections for possible interdisciplinary collaborations. The most common connections made thus far connect literature units to world geography or history and science coursework. Teachers’ selections of texts often have a global connection, allowing students to explore through literature cultures beyond their own.

Language Acquisition

Language Acquisition instruction will now be offered in Chinese, French or Spanish to all Lakewood students. In grade 6, students participate in a language carousel taking one trimester each of introductory Chinese, French, and Spanish. Following grade 6, students select Chinese, French or Spanish to continue their Language Acquisition studies in a full year program. Students not able to participate in Language Acquisition in 2015-16 will be offered the opportunity to participate in the language carousel or to begin year one of language instruction in the language of their choosing. Once students begin instruction in the language they've chosen, they will continue their studies of that language throughout their time at Lakewood. Opportunities to continue their studies in French and Spanish will be provided at any Norfolk high school they choose to attend. Students selecting to continue their education by attending Granby High School, which offers the Diploma Programme, will be able to continue their language instruction in Chinese, French, and Spanish.

Support Services

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

- **Response to Intervention**
Students who are struggling in reading, math, science and social studies are identified early through teachers' use of formative assessments and daily performances of understanding. In addition to the support provided by each classroom teacher to these students, 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.
- **Instructional Rounds**
All instructional staff members are encouraged to participate in Instructional Rounds. This process allows teachers to observe peers whose instructional practices provide exceptional support to students in development of language skills or to identify practices which impede student progress in language skills. Instructional Rounds includes a non-judgmental evaluation of observation data and a collaborative reflective discussion of effective instructional strategies which should be shared and promoted, as well as honest, frank discussions addressing identified areas requiring improvement. While the observations provide data, the strength of Instructional Rounds is found in the collegial discourse which raises the professionalism of the entire staff. Our abilities to meet students' language needs is a shared journey.
- **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. As a new school, significant efforts have been taken to provide 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, French 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.

Review and Distribution of Policy

Policy Review

- A Language Policy steering committee consisting of teachers, specialists, administrators, parents, students, and community members will review drafts of this policy and provide suggestions for any improvements or alterations.
- Each of the literacy practices outlined here will need ongoing development and assessment to provide improvement for teachers and thus for students. Professional learning opportunities will be provided to support Lakewood staff in these efforts.
- Connections to the Assessment Policy and Inclusion/Special Education Needs Policy will assist in monitoring progress in language development for all student populations.

Communication of Policy

- The completed Language Policy will be shared with the entire faculty in a formal meeting and will remain on the school's shared drive for staff to access as needed. Additionally, copies of the policy will be available upon request from Lakewood's media specialist and will also be available on the school's website.

Provision for Growth/Improvement

- Related student and staff progress data will inform school leadership and the Language Policy steering committee of any needed next steps as progress is made or new learner needs are identified.
- As all of Lakewood’s middle school students participate in the Middle Years Programme now, adaptations to meet student learning needs may be required in the following areas:
 - development of a process for identifying and meeting the needs of bilingual students
 - professional development to assist teachers in meeting the needs of ESL learners
 - recognizing that every student will not meet the same level of language proficiency at the same time, a continuum of Language Acquisition courses/schedules may need to be developed to meet the developing academic and social needs of new language learners in order for each student to achieve his or her personal best.
- Lakewood’s student population will grow as the school is fully populated over the next two years. As staff is added, plans for their professional development to appropriately meet the language learning needs of all MYP students will need to be provided.

Steering Committee and Policy Development Process

Development Process

1. One Language Acquisition teacher, the MYP Coordinator, a Reading Specialist, a Math Specialist, and a Gifted Education specialist developed and/or reviewed the policy first draft.
2. Review of draft one was conducted by the school’s administrative team.
3. Draft one with revisions agreed upon by those conducting initial review was shared with Lakewood’s IB Consultant and the school’s Leadership team and a second formal draft was developed.
4. Draft two was shared with Lakewood’s full Language Policy Steering Committee, a group including faculty, administration, students, parents, and community members.
5. Final draft compiled from the collaborative efforts of Lakewood’s Steering Committee team and the full development process completed this 2016-17 Language Policy.

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.