Language Policy

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Philosophy
We believe that all students are learners of language, and that all languages are equally valuable in making meaning of the world and deepening our engagement with it. In fact, multilingualism is an asset in today’s globalized society. With Language and Literature and Language Acquisition representing two of the eight MYP subject groups, it is clear that students need to be developing more than one language in order to develop as engaged citizens of the world.

The teaching of language, however, is not intuitive, so teachers must receive ongoing, personalized professional development in order to support students. All teachers in Denver Public Schools receive a foundational training in English Language Acquisition that requires 150 hours of training on topics such as academic language and sheltering. Additional professional development should reflect an emphasis on both oral and written language, with the understanding the oral language typically is developed before written forms. Also important to consider is that both basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiencies need to be taught so that students can transfer their language usage into multiple contexts. Within a framework of culturally responsive teaching, language instruction has the power to affirm identity, thereby promoting a learner-centered program like the MYP.

Language Profile and Language Learning Needs
Every family in Denver Public Schools completes a home language questionnaire to identify the languages spoken at home. Those questionnaires reveal that the following languages are spoken by our students and/or their families:

- English - 169
- Spanish - 43
- Sidamo - 1
- Arabic - 1
- Zama - 1
- Kunama - 1
- Swedish - 1

When asked to identify a preferred language for school communications, 26 parents identified Spanish as their preferred language. The preferred language of all other parents is English.
Among our staff, one person speaks French, and four people speak Spanish.

**Support for Mother Tongue**
Supporting the languages that students speak at home is important to us. To that end, the school district provides convenient and complimentary translation services -- for written communication and in-person presentations.

We want students to engage with texts that feel authentic to them, which means they may be reading texts that are not written in English. Of the 6000 books in our library, there are 320 books in Spanish, 25 books in French, and 9 books in other languages. The district provides access to a hundred of e-books, over a thousand of which are in Spanish. The following databases provide an option for translating to numerous languages, including Spanish: Student Resources in Context, Opposing Viewpoints in Context, Unite for Literacy.

Students who speak Spanish at home should have the opportunity to learn *another language* or engage in a Phase 5-6 Language Acquisition Spanish class in order to develop reading and writing skills. We want to encourage students to use their multilingualism; to that end, students will never be discouraged from speaking their home language at school.

**Practices to Support the Language of Instruction**
The language of instruction at McAuliffe Manual is English. To nurture the acquisition and use of this language in all of our students, the following common practices have been established:

- Claim-evidence-reasoning paragraph structure
- Directed text annotations
- “Call the game” reading protocol to promote fluency
- Sentence stems for writing and discussion
- Word walls, visual cues, and anchor charts
- Advanced cues for using target vocabulary
- Multiple opportunities to use the target vocabulary before assessment

Currently, students who are reading below grade level and on a READ Plan are enrolled in a separate literacy support group, and their plan is shared with general educator teachers. The students receive targeted interventions in a small-group setting and in-class supports from their general education teachers. In line with our Inclusion Policy, students receiving language support from a READ Plan, IEP or 504 receive reasonable accommodations when given tasks in other classes that require English language usage. All students’ growth in reading is measured regularly through the STAR reading test. This assessment provides data, along with the interim assessment described in our Assessment Policy, to monitor student achievement.

Students who speak a language other than English at home and score within a certain range on the state ACCESS English language test receive services in accordance with district English Language Development (ELD) regulations. Currently, students are enrolled in a separate class. Moving forward, a “push-in” model that relies on collaboration between general education teachers and and ELD teacher is being investigated.

**Language Acquisition Placement and Progression**
Because Denver is unofficially a bilingual city, with over one-third of the population identifying as Hispanic, we promote Spanish as the primary language acquisition choice. We will be phasing out our French program so that at full build-out we will offer four levels of Spanish. Course are aligned with MYP Language Acquisition phases as follows:
Most students entering McAuliffe Manual in sixth grade have very little prior language acquisition experience, and so they enter Course 1A. Placement in any other course in their first year requires a conversation with parents and language acquisition teachers; a placement test may also be used to determine the suitability of a course. Should a student need coursework to provide support in phases 3 or 4, an independent study option would be developed.

Students must acquire one single language in their time at McAuliffe Manual; they will be presented with other options only after achieving Phase 4 proficiency. Progression in language learning is largely accomplished through the Comprehensible Input (CI) methodology, which privileges message of over form, and involves gestures, stories, visuals, and deskless rooms. It is an effective pedagogy that supports most MYP Language Acquisition objective strands. Activities beyond what the district provides through CI can support the strands related to written structures, grammar and pronunciation.

**Policy Maintenance**
- The language policy steering committee, or substitute representatives, will review the language policy at the beginning of each academic year. Significant changes in philosophy, practice, or external requirements will require that the committee revise the policy.
- The MYP coordinator will communicate changes to the Instructional Leadership Team.
- The most recent inclusion policy will always be available to the school community on McAuliffe’s public website.