

Ocean Avenue Elementary School Language Agreement

Philosophy

- Language is an essential means to accessing information, enhancing intellectual growth, fostering communication (oral, written and visual/physical), developing social skills and values, maintaining and exploring cultures, and examining who we are. Language is central to the development of critical thinking, which is essential for cultivating intercultural understanding and responsible membership in local, national and global communities. Language provides an intellectual framework that supports the construction of conceptual understanding.
- Literacy skills are central to 21st century communication, problem-solving, development of new knowledge and engagement in the demands of our global society as informed citizens.
- Learning revolves around language; therefore, every educator and staff member at OAES is a language teacher.
- Students learn from each other and their own experiences, as well as from the adults around them both in and outside of school, therefore we recognize that language learning is a school-wide opportunity as well as everyone's responsibility across our community.
- We are committed to providing a learning environment that promotes the acquisition and instruction of English as well as our second world language, Spanish.
 - Providing support for English language instruction, both for native speakers and English language learners, is at the core of equal access to academic and social opportunities.
 - Requiring students to study a language other than the language of instruction enables students to develop a deeper understanding of diverse modes of communication and culture.
- We recognize and cultivate the language diversity and background knowledge that our multicultural students bring to OAES. Honoring each student's native language (or mother tongue) is necessary to respecting, maintaining and sharing each student's home culture.
- Language is a key tool in the development of "international-mindedness." Our entire school community embraces the IB Learner Profile and the five Essential Elements—knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action—as integral parts of teaching and learning language.

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction at OAES is English. All teachers are language teachers and therefore are expected to create a print- and orally-rich language environment, to teach with best-practice instructional strategies, and to act as models of effective communication for all learners. In all our PYP classrooms, language is accessible in all its forms, including leveled, balanced-fiction/informational classroom libraries, environmental print materials generated by teachers and students, and rich classroom conversations that cultivated inquiry-focused speaking and listening skills, and encourage a supportive environment for all students to communicate their ideas.

Classroom instruction supports the development and expanding use of oral and written English through authentic inquiry-learning opportunities, targeted skills learning, and across the content areas, including reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, arts and personal/social exploration. Teachers support language learning by utilizing best practices such as: identification of language learning goals for units of inquiry and reading/writing workshops; accessing prior knowledge at the start of units or lessons; pre-teaching; modeling and scaffolding; differentiating instruction; small-group and individual instruction; multi-sensory learning opportunities; reading, writing and speaking for authentic purposes;

group work and cooperative learning where appropriate; student-guided projects and student choice; orientation toward conceptual understanding and making connections across content areas; and, student reflection on their learning and new questions.

Language of Instruction Support Services

OAES has multiple instructional services that support/enrich language learning, in addition to classroom and specials teaching. These services include:

Literacy Coaching

Individual/small group literacy instructional support

Gifted and talented enrichment

Special Education instruction

English Language Learning instruction

Speech and Language therapy

Social Work services

Additional Language Instruction: Spanish

At OAES, Spanish language instruction begins in Grade 2, for 30 minutes each week. Students in Grade 3 receive 45 minutes weekly of Spanish instruction, and Grades 4 and 5 students receive two 30-minute Spanish sessions each week. Spanish instruction is designed using research-based best practices of teaching and language learning as articulated in the Maine Learning Results state-wide standards. To the extent feasible, Spanish instruction connects to content and concepts in the grade-level Units of Inquiry, the Learner Profile and the PYP five essential elements. The majority of the instruction is conducted in Spanish so that students receive authentic and meaningful input in the target language. Focus is placed on oral communication development, building both receptive understanding and expressive knowledge. In addition, Spanish vocabulary and phrases that build on IB language are made visible and active to students through student-made signage in classrooms and shared school spaces, and are regularly incorporated into the monthly all-school assembly program.

English Language Learners

Our English Language Learners (ELLs) at OAES are a heterogeneous group bringing a wide range of life situations and educational experiences. They take varied paths to acquire a new language and to adjust to their new cultural environment. Within the safe and welcoming school environment, all our staff make opportunities to tap the rich resource of knowledge and perspectives that our ELLs bring to school, thereby enriching the learning of all our students. The role of the school and teachers is critical in supporting students' self-concept as learners, and in helping students shape a vision of their future in a global society. We are committed to providing appropriate placement, along with curricular, instructional and other related services, to ensure that ELLs are able to participate effectively in our rigorous, content-rich IB educational program. Our ELL teaching staff provides pull-out and push-in services and supports, including ELL identification, assessment, placement, instruction and appropriate exit from English Language Development programming. They also ensure appropriate identification of ELLs who may require special education and gifted/talented services. Maine has adopted *World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)* to provide guidance in our ELL standards and assessment. We also adhere to State of Maine standards for English Language Proficiency that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

Native Languages Support

We encourage our parents and students to continue to speak their native language at home. This strengthens these students' language learning skills and also instills a sense of confidence and importance about their home cultures. At OAES, we support the use of native languages among our multilingual students and families in several ways. Our school library and some classroom libraries house growing collections of texts that are written in the languages of our major ELL populations: French, Portuguese, Spanish, Somali, Arabic, and others. The library is also building resources around the cultures and histories of our multicultural students and families. Additionally, the Portland Public Schools district offers a robust translation service, both in written and oral form, to foster full communication and information exchange among all our families. The district employs a cadre of Community Liaisons who are fluent in the major non-English languages represented in our district and who provide valued communication and other supports to our families.

The Portland district offers a **Multicultural Resource Library**, which was created to meet the needs of cultural and linguistic minority populations, as well as the people who work with them and wish to learn more about them. The library is unique in the State of Maine. The collection includes sections on Native American, African-American, women, and immigrant/refugee populations new to Portland, as well as instructional books and professional materials related to cross-cultural understanding and teaching English Language Learners. Books and materials are available on loan to staff, parents, and other community members.

RESOURCES

Literacy and language instructional standards at Ocean Avenue School adhere to the Maine State Learning Results, which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. These standards also accommodate the expectations of the IB PYP language and social studies scopes and sequences.

Technology in classroom and building: All grade-level classrooms throughout our building have smartboards and document cameras which teachers utilize regularly, usually with their laptop computers, to conduct inquiry, teach content and skills, and access a wide range of resources. In addition to the school computer lab, classrooms for grades K, 1 and 2 have two or three desktop computers for student learning and exploration. Grades 3, 4 and 5 share carts of 30 laptops. Teachers also have access to a cart of iPads through the afterschool program Learning Works housed at Ocean Ave School.

Library: The library offers a growing collection of fiction and information resources, building the non-fiction resources with the IB units of inquiry in mind. The collection is mainly in English at this point, with growing fiction and non-fiction resources in Spanish as well as texts in some of the most frequent languages among our students. These languages do vary year to year, but Somali, French and Portuguese are currently the additional target languages for non-English texts purchases. Also, we are adding non-fiction texts that explore the home cultures of our diverse student body. Our current English Language Learner students are immigrants primarily from central and northeastern Africa, but also from European and Asian cultures.

Approved by OAES staff September 2015