

Mark Twain Elementary Language Policy

This document outlines the role that language plays at Mark Twain. It aims to define our beliefs about language, articulate our teaching pedagogy, and identify teaching practices. This policy reflects our Mission Statement:

Mark Twain is a community of life-long learners built upon a collaborative spirit that fosters inquiry-based learning. Our purpose is to promote and develop responsible, active, and reflective citizens of the world.

At Mark Twain, we believe:

- Language is an expression of culture and enhances our understanding of others.
- Diversity in language and literacy is respected.
- Language is integral to all learning for the construction of meaning.
- Language is spoken, written and non-verbal.
- Literacy in math, music, art, science, physical education, and technology is essential.
- All teachers are language teachers and language learners.

In support of these beliefs, we use language to discover truth and determine meaning. We use language to communicate, learn, and express our beliefs and values. We use language to distill ideas, hear different points of view, and reconsider our own conceptions. We realize the importance of sustaining one's mother tongue for personal and educational development and therefore, honor the over 20 home languages in our community.

Mark Twain has three interwoven programs that support our philosophy and pedagogy of language learning and demonstrates our local and global engagement:

- The Literary Development Center, a language enrichment program, is the heart of our language curriculum. All teachers generate inquiry-based learning experiences as they develop the IB Approaches to Learning – self-management, social, communication, thinking and research skills.
- The Dual Language Program, a Spanish/English immersion program, develops academic fluency in both languages and promotes intercultural understanding throughout the school community.
- The Spanish Language Program provides basic interpersonal communication skills and develops an appreciation of Hispanic culture.

Our goal is for our students to become effective communicators, appreciate the beauty of language, and apply their creativity in various aspects - writing, listening, speaking, reading, presenting and viewing. Our Primary Years Program transdisciplinary curriculum develops the skills and conceptual understanding of language learning throughout all grades and classes, including the specials classes in music, art, Spanish, physical education, environmental and science labs, and technology.

Our commitment to students is to enhance their ability to communicate clearly, concisely and persuasively, to be able to listen open-mindedly and objectively with respect and tolerance for the multiple perspectives of others, and to integrate the application of language arts for cultural expression. We recognize and honor the difference between creative communication and mastering the mechanics of language. We realize that we, as teachers, also learn by listening to our students' use of language. To fulfill our commitment to our students, we provide a range of meaningful experiences within authentic contexts in both written and oral language.

Ongoing professional development for effective methodologies and strategies in language arts is recognized as a key factor in accomplishing our goals. We maintain a collaborative environment to facilitate sharing and improving our instructional practices, as we seek to empower the voices of our students. By working together and following our programs and methodologies, we can empower this generation of students to master the art and science of language.