ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER
LANGUAGE POLICY

School Language Philosophy

Language instruction plays a crucial part in supporting the school's mission statement: "*a place where the study of languages and international perspectives is embraced and promoted".* The school strives to nurture and build upon the existing cultural diversity of its population to prepare students to become caring world citizens as well as independent critical thinkers, communicators and internationally minded life-long learners. Providing quality language instruction for children from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities requires from the school a strong commitment to foster international mindedness and multicultural awareness, and to recognize the important role that all teachers play in supporting the language development of all students.

School Language Profile

The student body and staff at Ada Merritt reflect the diversity of the school community. There are 766 students currently enrolled in Ada Merritt K-8 Center: 407 students in the Spanish program and 291in the Portuguese program: 72% Hispanic, 24% Anglo, 2% Black, 1% Asian, 1% other. All Portuguese teachers are from Brazil. Spanish teachers are also native Spanish speakers from Spain or Cuba. Thanks to a memorandum of understanding with Spain, the Spanish government sends teachers to the school under a 3-year renewable contract. Many parents in the Portuguese program are also from Brazil. Parents in the Spanish program reflect the Hispanic diversity of the Miami area with natives from Cuba, Spain, central and south American countries.

School Language Programs

Ada Merritt K-8 Center serves students from kindergarten to 8th grade. While the school language of instruction is English, the school aims for each student to reach the highest level of literacy and proficiency in both English and in their chosen language (Portuguese or Spanish).

Language learning is central to Ada Merritt K-8 Center's school mission. All teachers support the development of language and the home language of each student. They provide students with learning opportunities that promote language development and the development of the whole child. Reading and writing are incorporated throughout the curriculum to offer students ongoing opportunities to apply their language skills in real-life situations. Students see writing and reading as integral parts of their education, and not as isolated skills only used in the language arts or reading classes.

- **English Language Program:**

PYP students participate in a dual language program since kindergarten in a 60/40 instruction model: 60% in English, and 40% in their chosen language. Classes taught in English are reading/writing, language arts, mathematics, science, physical education and arts. PYP students receive 90 minutes of daily English language instruction and 150 minutes of weekly writing instruction. Teachers collaborate to develop transdisciplinary units of inquiry that are taught in both languages. They select authentic literature to support the units of inquiry. In Fifth Grade, when planning the PYP Exhibition, students are encouraged to select a language of their choice to conduct their investigations, exhibits, and oral presentations. The three languages of instructions English/Spanish/Portuguese are present in all school activities.

MYP students take a language and literature class of 85 minutes every other day at a standard or advanced level based on teacher recommendation and on their score on Florida Standardized Assessments (FSA) tests in reading and writing. Teachers align the district-mandated standards with the MYP objectives. They use their professional judgment as well as data collected and analyzed from formative and summative

assessments, and district-mandated assessments to tailor their instruction to students' needs. Language and literature teachers collaborate to ensure that their courses include a balance of language and literature, of genres, a range of literature and selections from world literature.
Protocols (spelling, referencing, bibliographic): Standard American English spelling, MLA

- **World Language Programs:**

The international curriculum at Ada Merritt K-8 Center was designed to expand multilingual education across a culturally diverse community of varied backgrounds, to increase opportunities for students to become bilingual and bi-literate, and to nurture and develop their mother tongue in a multicultural, sustained language learning context. All students at Ada Merritt can pursue dual language mastery at a higher level of fluency by participating in the International Studies (IS) Spanish program or the dual language International Education (IE) Portuguese Program. All language skills are reinforced throughout the curriculum as a vehicle for learning in all subjects.

In the **PYP**, students participate in a dual language program since kindergarten in a 60/40 instruction model: 60% in English, and 40% in their chosen language. Classes that are taught in English are reading and language arts, physical education and arts. Classes that are taught in Spanish or Portuguese are world language acquisition, mathematics and social studies.

In the **MYP**, students continue their studies of Portuguese or Spanish. Spanish students are placed in a standard Spanish class or International Studies (IS) class according to their level of proficiency. Placement in the IS MYP Spanish class is based on teacher recommendation and performance on the Spanish proficiency test administered in 5th grade. All students take an additional humanities class in their selected language, thus reinforcing their world language skills. This additional class allows students not only to reach a higher level of fluency in their target language but also to explore in depth the culture, history, geography and political context of countries speaking their chosen language, and to gain a greater understanding of global issues. Students in the standard track take advanced level courses and can earn high school credits. The IS track culminates in 8th grade with an Advanced Placement (AP) course in Spanish and Culture. Ada Merritt K-8 Center students achieve 100% success rate on the AP end of course exam. This is a tribute not only to the rigor of the school language program, which provides extended instruction in the target language, but also to the impact of the additional humanities class in Spanish.

MYP Language Phases:
The MYP language acquisition courses build upon language skills acquired in the PYP in a dual language instructional model. The MYP offers one level of Portuguese instruction and two levels of Spanish instruction and is organized in phases:

		Standard Spanish	IS Spanish	Portuguese
Year 1	Phases	2-3	3-4	2-3
Year 2	Phases	3-4	4-5	3-4
Year 3	Phases	4-5	5-6	4-5

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Admission Requirements
Since entry level into the school is in kindergarten, very few openings are available in other grades. Students applying for those few openings are randomly selected from a list of all eligible applicants. To be eligible for the program students in grades 2-8 must take an admission test in their chosen language and demonstrate language proficiency at a level commensurate to that of other students in their grade level.

Student support:

- **Support for English Language Learners (ELL):**

Students receive differentiated instruction within their language class with an ESOL endorsed teacher to develop proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in the English language. They receive support until they reach ESOL level 5 and can exit the support program. However, they continue to be monitored post-program for two years after exiting. They have access to additional language support through applications on the district portal: Imagine Learning (for ESOL level1) BrainPOP for ELL and Duolingo.

- **Support for low performing students**

  Students who perform below proficiency on state standardized tests in reading are identified to receive support:
  - **PYP students** receive additional small group intervention daily for 30 minutes from a reading interventionist. This intervention provides targeted instruction of specific language arts skills to improve reading proficiency.
  - **MYP students** are required by the school district to take an additional **intensive reading** class. This class provides instruction in a small group setting to improve reading proficiency.

- **Support for mother tongues and multilingualism**

  Most students at Ada Merritt K-8 Center are of Hispanic or Portuguese origin. They receive extensive support for their mother tongue in several ways:
  - access to a rich selection of books in Spanish and Portuguese in the media center and individual teacher classrooms
  - support from the Spanish consulate, Brazilian educational office and parent groups: supplying books and inviting authors to speak about books that students read in class, inviting actors, artists and athletes to talk about their career, sponsoring school activities such as Festa Junina (Brazil), Focus Brazil events, Hispanic Heritage activities
  - access all district documents translated in Spanish and Creole. Most of the school staff is bi-lingual, therefore able to assist non-English speaking students and parents.

- **Support for multilingualism**
  - access to a district digital library in many languages
  - access to digital applications for language learning through the district student portal: BrainPOP and Duolingo
  - encouraging the use mother tongue at home.

Language learning and teaching
To support the staff in their knowledge of language teaching and learning, teachers and administrators regularly participate in professional development (PD) activities:

- language arts teachers participate in district mandated professional development (PD) activities
- language acquisition teachers participate in PD sessions at the Spanish Consulate or Portuguese Cultural Office.

Media Center

The Media Specialist provides assistance to teachers and students in the form of resources and help in the media center which is increasingly well stocked with resources in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, as well as magazines, periodicals and audio-visual resources. The library serves as a hub for language resources, researching, information literacy, and classroom support and extension. PYP and MYP students have access to the library during and after school. Students are taught the importance of the library as a fundamental aspect of independent learning, and how to use it properly. Students are taught information literacy skills, including instruction on avoiding plagiarism and following the school's Academic Integrity Policy. Students also have access to broader and richer M-DCPS online resources accessible from their student portal at school and at home.

Parents

The role of parents is vital in ensuring a positive approach and outlook to the study of languages. Parental awareness of the challenges their child may face and of the support that they can offer is essential to the success of their child in the program. Parents are encouraged to promote language learning at home and, if possible, to engage with them in the languages they are learning.

Parents at Ada Merritt K-8 Center is very supportive of the IB programme. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as well as the Portuguese and Spanish Parents Associations (PIPA and SIPA), take an active role in supporting and promoting language skills by:

- providing funds towards a reading incentive plan aimed at motivating students to read through the Accelerated Reader program
- organizing book fairs with print material in all languages studied at the school
- sponsoring multicultural events and field trips.

Language Policy Review Process

To make sure that the language policy is a working document and a resource for all members of the school community, it is revised regularly by a steering committee. Members of the steering committee include representation from the leadership team, language and ESOL teachers. Revisions aim to reflect changes in the needs of the local community and changes in district and IB requirements. The language policy is reviewed annually by the faculty, parents and students who are invited to provide feedback and suggestions. All school policies are shared with the community on the school website at http://adamerrittk-8center.org and in the Parent and Student Handbook.

Resources:

IB From Principle into Practice
Guidelines for developing a school language policy
Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy

Last review date: August 30, 2022