



Shaker Heights City School District

Language Policy

2015-2016

The Shaker Heights City School District recognizes that language skills are one of the most valuable ways in which humans interact, collaborate and communicate their learning and knowledge: this is reflected within the School's mission statement of developing students "*who are confident, competent communicators...*" To this end, Shaker Heights values the development of language skills in all students in all classrooms, developing not only the content knowledge of a discipline but the language skills necessary to effectively communicate in that discipline as well. This commitment to the development of language in all disciplines is reflected in the expectation that all students are:

- taught language skills by all staff and have opportunities to read, write, view, investigate, inquire, and present across the curriculum
- taught literacy skills in context
- exposed to a broad range of literature reflecting a variety of cultures and perspectives
- encouraged to share and develop their work in a social context
- encouraged to maintain and value their mother-tongue and to value the mother-tongue of other students
- given ample opportunity to become proficient in more than one language

While Shaker believes, as supported by the Common Core standards, that all teachers are literacy teachers in their discipline, Language & Literature (English Language Arts) courses at Shaker display a wide range of exemplary literary choices and skill sets rooted in the MYP objectives. Students have enrichment choices in Language & Literature at the onset of our MYP program in the 5th grade, and the diversity of course level and content only grows from there: by 10th grade, students have choice between a great range of depth, or even a Language & Literature and Individuals & Societies (Social Studies) interdisciplinary course called American Experience.

Students who need extra support in developing Language & Literature skills may also engage in additional coursework at all levels of the MYP. At Woodbury (grades 5-6), students may choose to have additional reading support before, during and/or after school in the form of SuccessMaker Reading or Reading+. Additionally, some students experience the Repeated Reading Program in which a host of parent volunteers work on reading fluency with students in 3 minute breaks during Humanities class. Students at the Middle School (grades 7-8) who need additional support may take a reading class for one period a day which employs the programs SuccessMaker Reading, Leveled Literacy and Read180. The High School maintains the dedication of a daily period of reading and extends the use of Read180 to scaffold the student to language and literary success. The courses at the Middle School and High School may be taken in addition to a Language Acquisition (World Language) or in its place as students work to master their mother tongue.

Language Acquisition offerings are equally diverse, allowing students to choose French, Spanish, Latin, German or Mandarin Chinese in 6th grade and experiencing that language all the way to their 10th grade year or beyond. Special attention is paid to vertically aligning Language Acquisition courses across the continuum of grades 6-10, ensuring strong transitions from course to course and building to building. Some courses, such as French I, Spanish I and Latin I, are offered at both the Middle School and High School; the vertical alignment allows students to have similar experiences in these courses no matter when they display the readiness to begin them. Varying levels of difficulty to these courses are introduced in the 9th grade, allowing students to self-select the difficulty and depth with which they wish to engage in a second language. If scheduling permits, students may also introduce a *third* language to their coursework sometime during the continuum. All students are expected to enhance mother tongue skills through language and literature while continuing the development of a second language, but some may also add the breadth of a third. This most notably occurs at the high school in which some students elect to take Greek as a period “zero” course before school in addition to their other language courses, but also may occur during “Raider Time” at the middle school.

While English is the language of instruction for nearly all courses in Shaker Heights, significant mother-tongue support is given to students who are English-language learners (ELL). Students who qualify for ELL support engage in ELL courses with Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) educators. During ELL time, students are given help with reading, translating and completing core curriculum class work. In this way, students have continuous and concurrent English support in an immersion environment, helping them to learn English in context and remain successful in other content areas. ELL courses are constructed through an “additive” approach in which English skills are intended to increase success within the district, rather than replace mother-tongue skills. The MYP also intends to help our ELL students maintain connections with their home culture while sharing it with their peers in Shaker, supported by teachers that develop curriculum with international values and global contexts.

To assess the needs of students, the Language Assessment Survey (LAS) and the Ohio Test of English Language Acquisition (OTELA) are used to annually determine the level of support each student needs. In 2013-2014, Shaker identified (at least) the following languages from around the World that are spoken by our students: Spanish, Marshallese, Mandarin, Ibo, Arabic, Tagalog, Portugese, Swahili, Dutch, Chinese and French. When English proficiency has been reached (as determined by the LAS and OTELA), the student “graduates” from the ELL course and enters a period of monitoring for success without formal intervention. If, after the year of monitoring, the student, parent(s) and teachers feel as though the student is capable of maintaining success in his/her coursework, they are considered fluent English speakers and may use their ELL period for electives or other coursework of desire.

References:

- Discovery College MYP Programme – Language Policy.
<http://www.discovery.edu.hk/cms/index.php/en/information/policies-and-procedures/learning-and-teaching/language-policy>