

Bess Streeter Aldrich Elementary

Language Policy

Statement of Philosophy:

Language is the cohesive element in a global society that empowers learners to gain knowledge and insight into the world around them. It gives learners the tools to look beyond their own community and into the windows and communities of the world beyond their reach both past and present. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are thinking processes inextricably related to lifelong learning. Through language, students experience pleasure and gain insights into their own lives and the lives of others.

At Bess Streeter Aldrich Elementary we believe that:

1. Language is fundamental to learning and permeates the Primary Years Programme.
 - The learning process concurrently involves learning language (as students listen to and use language with others in their everyday lives), learning about language (as students try to understand how language works), and learning through language (as students use language as a tool to think about, or reflect on a theme, concept or issue).
2. Language consists of the interrelated strands of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting. In the area of oral communication (listening and speaking) students will learn to:
 - listen and respond to a range of texts and to the ideas and opinions of others, improve fluency and accuracy when speaking
 - ask and answer questions; relate and retell; persuade; talk about needs, feelings, ideas or opinions; contribute to discussions in a range of formal and informal situations
 - recognize their oral language needs to be appropriate to the audience and to the purpose
 - communicate orally in more than one languageIn the area of written communication (reading and writing) students will learn to:
 - read and write for enjoyment, instruction and information
 - recognize and appreciate the variety of literary styles, genres and structures; poetry, plays and stories; creative, informative, instructional, persuasive and reflective text
 - understand and apply a variety of structures, strategies and literary techniques (spelling, grammar, prediction, plot, character, punctuation, voice)In the area of visual communication (viewing and presenting) students will learn to:
 - understand, critically analyze and communicate information and ideas through a variety of visual media
 - make informed choices in their personal viewing experiences
 - use appropriate technology for effective presentation and representation
3. Language is the most important medium for communication and inquiry.
 - Whenever possible, language should be taught through the context of the units of inquiry. The teacher plans language instruction that supports students' inquiries and the sharing of their learning.
 - Through meaningful interactions, we communicate with and understand others, the world and ourselves to develop multicultural awareness.
4. Language is fundamental to learning and is developed across all curricular areas therefore; all teachers are teachers of language.
5. The school community is a resource to foster language learning. The development of mother tongue is crucial for maintaining cultural identity.
6. The acquisition of more than one language enriches personal growth and facilitates international understanding.
 - Students will become better able to understand other people's points of view, ways of life, and contributions to the world and extend these learning experiences to multilingual communities at home and around the world.
 - Students will reinforce and further their knowledge of other curricular areas through the language classroom.

- Students will examine cultures and analyze similarities and differences through language perspectives other than their own.
 - Students will develop effective listening and communication skills beyond their mother language in order to participate effectively in a global community.
7. Students must be immersed in an environment which enriches their language development.
 - Students are surrounded by language and are given many varied opportunities to learn to communicate effectively with an audience, to listen to others, and to respond appropriately.
 8. The IB Learner Profile is integral to teaching and learning language because it represents the qualities of effective learners and internationally minded students. The learner profile, together with the five essential elements of the programme (knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action) informs planning, teaching and assessing in language.

IB PYP Making the PYP Happen 2009

The Language of Instruction:

English is the language of instruction at Bess Streeter Aldrich Elementary. An effective language arts curriculum involves a collaboration of learners, including students, teachers, parents, administrators and the community at large, who are active participants in the learning process. The language arts program is based on the premise that literacy is the foundation for all learning. It embraces the philosophy that students naturally use language to communicate and to learn and that an effective language arts program integrates reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting into all language instruction.

Belief Statements K-5:

- Literacy is power.
- Integrated literacy instruction is relevant and meaningful.
- Success occurs for children when instruction is developmentally appropriate and when a variety of learning styles and rates are addressed.
- The language arts are inter-related and key to all content areas.
- Daily reading and writing are done for a variety of purposes.
- Assessments are diverse and on-going.
- Parents, teachers, and children are partners in literacy learning.

Our language arts curriculum combines the five essential components of a scientifically research-based reading program as identified by the National Reading Panel Report in 2000. These components include:

1. **Phonemic Awareness** is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of speech sounds or phonemes.
2. **Phonics** instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. It teaches children to use these relationships to read and write words.
3. **Vocabulary** refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. Vocabulary can be described as oral or reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print.
4. **Fluency** is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking.
5. **Text Comprehension** is the reason for reading. Comprehension is defined as “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interaction between text and reader.”

The writing curriculum includes a balance between grammar, mechanics, and spelling while using the writing process to express ideas. Teachers use a developmental continuum of the six-trait writing model to help students improve their written language. Direct instruction in handwriting is given using the Zaner-Bloser Handwriting Program.

Reaching All Learners:

We believe that curriculum and instruction must be carefully planned to provide for students who need varying levels of intervention and challenge. Students require additional instruction, practice, and extension at different times and in different degrees. Some students need occasional reteaching and slight modifications in pacing, while others are at greater risk and require more intensive intervention. Students with learning difficulties need more review and practice to perform a new task automatically. Instruction should cumulatively integrate simpler or previously learned tasks with newer, more complex activities.

- ❑ Reading difficulties can stem from inaccuracy in identifying words.
- ❑ Intervention should be geared toward a student's level of reading development.
- ❑ Diagnostic testing results should show what students know and what they need to know; frequent assessment is critical.
- ❑ Instruction should be direct and explicit.

We believe that students who already meet or exceed grade-level expectations need opportunities for enrichment or acceleration. They need to be challenged by vocabulary extension study and exposure to sophisticated literature in a variety of genres. Students may also be encouraged to carry out investigations that extend their learning. Such activities should promote sustained investigative skills: raising questions, researching answers, and organizing information. An instructional program that clearly provides for differentiation at a variety of levels can be the tool teachers need to provide universal access to high-level standards.

We believe that assessment is integral to instruction. By choosing the appropriate assessment tools and methods, we can find out where students are instructionally and plan accordingly. Knowing how well a student can use literacy skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking is vital to effective instruction.

- ❑ Assessment is the process of collecting information in order to make instructional decisions about students.
- ❑ Systematic assessment informs instruction and helps teachers differentiate instruction.
- ❑ Assessments for monitoring progress should be used to determine ongoing priorities for instruction.
- ❑ Students take responsibility for their individual growth with the support of teachers and parents.
- ❑ Student progress needs to be communicated to parents and guardians on a regular basis.

The staff at Bess Streeter Aldrich recognizes the importance of establishing a professional learning community of learners who work collectively to guarantee academic excellence and the development of principled young people who become active, inquiring and compassionate life-long learners.

Mother Tongue Support:

Curriculum and instruction at Bess Streeter Aldrich are structured to meet the needs of English-language learners. Depending on their level of English acquisition and their grade placement, English-language learners need varying degrees of additional support in areas such as oral language, English phonology, vocabulary, background information, and the academic language of school.

In addition, we believe that mother tongue language is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and emotional stability. It is our responsibility to recognize and support each and every aspect of language development and provide opportunities for individual students, parents and families to share their heritage with us. Our library media specialist has purchased resources to support other languages being spoken in the home. These resources can be checked out by students and/or parents to help reinforce their mother tongue and culture.

The district has a K-12th grade ELL Specialist who provides professional development to schools, teams and individuals. She models in classrooms and provides instructional coaching for teachers. Additionally, she has an online course called SIOP or Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol which is about using best practices with all students to reach your ELL students.

There is an explicit recognition that language acquisition takes place across the content areas and therefore collaboration among educators is required to enhance and excel the learning experiences of English language learners.

Content area teachers and ELL teachers work together to understand and leverage the language and literacy practices used across content areas.

The School's Additional Language:

Spanish is the second language of instruction at Bess Streeter Aldrich Elementary. We have a full time Spanish teacher. Students in kindergarten through 5th grade receive 30 minutes of direct instruction twice a week. Whenever possible, the approaches to language teaching connect with the IB PYP Units of Inquiry and are integrated with other disciplines in the curriculum.

Students acquire language through a focus on meaning rather than grammar. Various strategies are used such as: songs, dances, rhymes, games, Total Physical Response (TPR), etc. Lessons draw on all five aspects of the National Standards: Connection, Culture, Communication, Comparisons and Communities.

Policy Review:

The following process will be followed to ensure Aldrich's language policy remains a working document:

- Annually, through collaborative reflective practices, grade level teams review the language policy, as well as all documents referred to in policy, to ensure accuracy and sustainability
- Policy is updated by the IB Coordinator, based upon the feedback of the staff
- Grade level and subject level teams work together throughout the school year to ensure the policy is implemented with fidelity
- Updated language policy is uploaded to the Aldrich website for community members to access