

Pelham Middle School **Language Policy**

Philosophy

Pelham Middle School seeks to produce twenty-first century learners who have acquired refined language skills which will enable them to communicate in a linguistically and culturally accurate manner and an increasingly global society. Since language is the mode through which we communicate with each other, language skills and literacy are an essential part of all subject disciplines. According to the International Baccalaureate Organization, learning a language “enables students to increase their understanding of several cultures, including their own, and explore globally significant ideas and issues through different languages.”¹ Learning a language is a life-long process that can empower students and help them become better citizens of the world. Here at Pelham Middle School, students develop their language skills through courses in reading, language arts, English, Latin, and world language courses, as well as – in an interdisciplinary process – through all of their other courses. Understanding that all teachers are teachers of language, we endeavor to provide and support consistent reading, writing, speaking, and listening strategies across the subject areas.

Pelham Middle School endeavors to establish an environment that enables students to learn a second language by communicating in the target language, developing understanding of cultural and linguistic heritages, and learning to negotiate cultural differences. In addition to adhering to the MYP Language and Literature and Language Acquisition subject objectives, our instruction will address state-mandated standards as well as our district’s own strategic plan.

Our inquiry-based approach to learning allows students to explore their own and other languages which in turn will better their communication skills and prepare them for life in their multilingual world.

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction in the Pelham Public Schools is English. Communicating effectively is a lifelong skill, and our students initially cultivate fluency and literacy skills in English. Support services are provided to students whose mother tongue is not English so that they may develop increased fluency and literacy both in their native language and in English.

Language and Literature

Students at Pelham Middle School take Reading Skills and Language Arts in grade six, English 7 in grade seven, and English 8 in grade eight. These courses are taught by members of the English Department, whose vision statement is as follows: “The English

¹ <http://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/what-is-the-dp/learning-a-language/>

Department of Pelham Middle School and Pelham Memorial High School is dedicated to promoting independent, critical thinkers, inspired to read, write, speak and listen in a way that demonstrates genuine appreciation for the power of words and a variety of literature that encourages empathy and concern for others, the world around us, and relevant issues facing us today.” In these classes, students explore, analyze, and respond to informational and literary texts, learn to write in a variety of formats and genres, develop vocabulary, and learn English grammar. English courses at Pelham Middle School address - in addition to the MYP objectives - the Common Core State Standards. “The Common Core asks students to read stories and literature, as well as more complex texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas such as science and social studies. Students [are] challenged and asked questions that push them to refer back to what they’ve read. This stresses critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that are required for success in college, career, and life.”²

Support of Reading and Writing in All Subjects

Here at Pelham Middle School, we recognize that “since language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication.”³ In subject groups outside Language & Literature and Language Acquisition, such as our science, history, math, art, design, and health classes, teachers provide students with regular opportunities to express themselves accurately and fluently through written responses, process journals, lab reports, essays, and class presentations. Teachers work together across subject areas in order to establish consistent expectations regarding spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, as well as speaking and presentation skills. In addition, regular reading is necessary for success in all subjects, and Pelham Middle School teachers support a set of reading skills – first presented to students in sixth grade – that are highly applicable to reading in the content areas and the interpretation of informational texts.

Language Acquisition

Pelham Middle School world language students are expected to develop speaking proficiency in a second language. In Latin, students are expected to comprehend Latin and to demonstrate an understanding of the contributions of the ancient Romans to contemporary life. Since language instruction is inherently interdisciplinary, students make important connections to other languages and disciplines through their language study.

Pelham Middle School provides a three-year continuum of second language instruction in the following languages:

- French
- Italian

² <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>

³ IBO: Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy, 1

- Latin
- Mandarin
- Spanish

Enrollment is open to all students, who choose their preferred language of study prior to their entry into sixth grade.

The World Language Department of the Pelham Public Schools believes that every student should be proficient in two or more languages while understanding that every student learns and advances at his or her own rate.

To achieve this aim, the World Language Teachers will:

- Employ the MYP aims and objectives
- Create goals that encompass the needs of all learners
- Incorporate culture as an integral part of instruction
- Use technology to enhance language acquisition

Supports and modifications are provided so that all students have the opportunity to acquire a second language.

Support for Students

In order to provide for students' varying language abilities, Pelham Middle School provides support in reading, speech, and general English-language arts skills both through the Committee on Special Education and as an academic intervention service. Reading and speech teachers keep in regular, close content with the other academic teachers to create and implement individualized plans to improve the abilities and progress of each student. Teachers of all subjects strive to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with a wide range of language abilities. Teachers of Language and Literature and Language Acquisition courses provide additional support during scheduled Academy Periods after school.

Support for Mother Tongues

Pelham Middle School identifies students who are English Language Learners via diagnostic screening, and provides support, including dedicated ELL classes, for those students who qualify. Teachers of English Language Learners maintain a consistent dialogue with each student's parents and the rest of the academic team regarding their child's progress and individualized strategies for him or her. For those who qualify, state-mandated assessments may be offered in a student's mother tongue. Our school librarian strives to make copies of texts, including research materials, available in our students' mother tongues. School-to-home communications are provided in both English and Spanish, and our website is set up for translation through Google Translate. When necessary, translators are provided for parents and students. We are dedicated to

providing opportunities for students to continue to progress in their mother tongues while also becoming proficient in our language of instruction.

Policy Review Procedure

After the first year of implementation, the IB Steering Committee will revisit the Language Policy to ensure that it effectively meets the criteria and philosophy of an IB MYP school as well as the needs of our school and community. After that first year, teachers, principals, students, and other stakeholders may meet to review the policy as necessary.