



Mount Vernon High School Language Policy 2022-2023



Language Philosophy

The Office of PreK-12 Curriculum and Instruction and the Office of Language Acquisition collaborated with representatives of our IB schools, including IB coordinators, ESOL teachers, English teachers, and World Language teachers, to develop our language policy. This is a working document.

The essence of human interaction is founded on language and communication. The world that our students will encounter as adults will be vastly different from the one we know today. The rapid development of electronic communication will make the ability to communicate in more than one language a necessity. Therefore, it is important to prepare our students for this multilingual environment by ensuring that they are able to function in at least two languages. During the learning process, they will derive the benefits of developing insight into their own language and culture as they learn to communicate with others and experience diverse cultures.

Primary Goals and Student Achievement

Mount Vernon HS supports reading and writing across the curriculum; we believe that it is the responsibility of all teachers to improve our students' ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing. Since language is the foundation for teaching and learning, all teachers at Mount Vernon High School are language teachers. Although English is the language of instruction, all languages are respected, and the development of a student's mother tongue is supported.

The primary goals of the world languages program in Fairfax County Public Schools are to ensure that students:

- Communicate in languages other than English
- Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures
- Connect with other disciplines and acquire information
- Develop insight into the nature of language and culture
- Participate in multicultural communities at home and around the world

These goals include a comprehensive focus for instruction that takes language learners beyond the traditional confines of the classroom. In the world language curriculum, students will not only learn to communicate with native speakers of the language, but they will do so with the cultural knowledge necessary to interact in an appropriate way.

The IB programs in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) support the FCPS Portrait of a Graduate, which outlines attributes students are to develop to be life-long and successful learners. Students of all FCPS schools are expected to become an Ethical and Global Citizen and a Communicator, both attributes that develop language learning. Additionally, the FCPS School Board Student Achievement Goals outline two precise targets for all students to aspire to meet.

It is also our goal that all students will take at least one advanced academic course, to include IB, prior to graduation. FCPS IB programs operate via open-access where any student who wishes to challenge themselves can do so according to their strengths and interests. FCPS is focused on closing the achievement gap for all students, including our underrepresented minority populations as well as our English Language Learners

Support of Mother Tongue

Mount Vernon High School is a vibrant educational environment characterized by commitment to excellence. Located less than a mile from George Washington's home, Mount Vernon High School is steeped in tradition. Founded in 1939, its long history of excellence is evident in its current students, faculty, and staff.

Mount Vernon High School serves a culturally and linguistically diverse student body of approximately 2,000 students. The reported ethnicity of our student body is 15.79% White, 53.77% Hispanic or Latino, 5.06% Asian, 21.47% Black, 3.46% Multi-Ethnic, and .21% American Indian or Native Hawaiian. Collectively, we were born in over 41 nations. 22.62% of our students are currently considered Limited English Proficient (LEP), an additional 5.7% are classified as Formerly Limited English Proficient and more than 47 different primary languages are spoken in our students' homes.

Mount Vernon High School values the cultures of our students and supports them to grow in both their native and emerging languages. Our goal is to embrace and respond to this diversity through language instruction that explores a variety of cultures and is appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of all students. This is the goal in all classrooms regardless of the subject area. MVHS teachers are encouraged to give students the opportunity to reflect and communicate in their mother tongue as a scaffold to understanding. We believe that allowing students to process the content in their native language is effective in building knowledge.

To better meet the needs of our community, Mount Vernon High School employs two family liaison/interpreters, proficient in Spanish, to communicate important information between the school and home for our Spanish-speaking families. The family liaisons also make themselves available for translation services during parent information sessions. Additionally, a number of our administrative assistants are either native speakers, or fluent in Spanish. To support communication between staff and our diverse community, we have access to United Language, a translation service for 8 different languages. Additionally, we continue to look for and add new resources for staff to utilize. During the 2022-2023 school year, we have added Talking Points, a family engagement platform in which stakeholders can communicate via text and receive messages in the language they have listed as their correspondence language.

Mount Vernon High School also hosts a diverse group of student-led clubs and organizations that encourage cultural and language development to include the Latino Student Alliance, African Student Association, Black Student Union, Muslim Student Association, German Club, French Club, APIA Club, English Learners' Club and language honor societies. In the spring, students host an International Night that spotlights all of the cultures and languages represented in our school community.

Finally, the Mount Vernon High School media center includes a collection of authors and diverse fiction/non-fiction titles and also contains a number of language dictionaries.

Course Offerings Language of Instruction

The English department of MVHS offers a number of choices at each grade level to fulfill state as well as IB requirements. Specifically, in the English Department, the following core courses are offered at the 9th and 10th grade levels: English 9, Honors English 9, English 10 and Honors English 10. All students enrolled in these courses complete the Language A - IBMYP assessments. The Honors courses are designed to allow intellectually curious, highly capable and motivated students to move at a faster pace, deal with more abstract and complex material and begin to focus on the writer's use of language. The Honors courses are open access and students seeking a challenge are encouraged to take one or both courses.

IB English is a two-year program offered in grades 11 and 12. Students may move into IB English I from regular English 10, although students planning to take IB English are encouraged to take the Honors courses. Additionally, MVHS now offers Honors English 11 and Honors English 12 for students not ready for IB English but who demonstrate an interest in a greater challenge in language arts.

In 11th grade, students have the option to enroll in IB English Literature I, IB English Language and Literature I, Honors English 11 or English 11. In 12th grade, students are encouraged to finish off the course they began in the previous year. Students are counseled for course selection by the guidance counselors, their English teachers, and their Major Time teachers.

Collaboration is heavily emphasized at MVHS. Consequently, best practices for instruction are being shared between teachers of honors classes and teachers of general education classes. This ensures that students in general education courses are being introduced to skills that will help them in IB coursework.

English instruction is a whole language approach and follows the standards set forth by the National Council of Teachers of English. Students are actively engaged in reading, writing, speaking and listening, both informally and formally. Many teachers in the department have been trained through the National Writing Project, whose philosophy embraces the importance of drafting, feedback, revision and publishing. Students are taught how to talk about writing in peer revision groups and how to make substantive changes to their own work based on the feedback of others. Students are invited to revise multiple times, learning to refine their language, clarify ideas, and develop their thoughts in detail. The relationship between the reader and the writer is emphasized through the use of reader response and structured Socratic Seminars. Opportunities for writing and speaking for different purposes and different audiences are provided throughout a student's academic career at Mount Vernon High School.

The English Language Learner (ELL) program at MVHS makes language central to all learning and teaches language through the content of the subject of instruction. **At MVHS the role of all teachers, not just language teachers, is to facilitate interpersonal and global communication.** Our teachers employ best professional practices and actively collaborate across disciplines to facilitate and enrich the learning experience for our students. ELL teachers regularly collaborate with content teachers in Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs) in a variety of core and elective classes. Collaboration helps bridge the transition from a sheltered ELL environment to mainstream content classes.

Language Acquisition and World Languages

As one of the most diverse schools in Fairfax county, Mount Vernon High School takes great pride in the rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds of our students and their families. MVHS is a true international school both demographically and philosophically. For this reason, MVHS seeks to provide an education that combines intellectual challenges while supporting language acquisition in English and preserving our students' knowledge of their native language.

The IBDP at Mount Vernon High School, as applied to the World Languages Department, currently offers language instruction in Language B and ab initio in French, Spanish and German. We also offer Spanish for Heritage Speakers Levels 1,2,3 which includes Spanish language and literature. French, German, and Spanish are offered at the SL and HL levels. Our IBDP classes include both SL and HL students. As such, all students are exposed to the additional rigors of the HL requirements. This gives them the opportunity to better choose which level is best for them as they complete the second year of the course during the 12th grade. As with our Language A colleagues, the Language B teachers ensure that the HL students are given ample opportunity within the two years of the course to explore the unique aspects of their curriculum.

The ab initio level is provided for those World Language students that are only able to complete up to 3 years of a language. We offer Spanish, French, and German at the ab initio level. These students do not sit in a specialized ab initio class. They will sit for instance, in a regular Spanish 2 or 3 class. Students are required to meet with their language instructor during MajorTime (remediation/enrichment block) which occurs for an hour every other day to take released tests, practice their oral skills, work on their writing, as well as any other skills to prepare for IB assessments. A very small number of students test at the ab initio level each year.

We focus our efforts on helping our students to become conversant in their Language B and to be effective writers as well. In order to accomplish this, they are expected to demonstrate appropriate and accurate use of vocabulary, grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions; to obtain and to process information from written, oral and visual sources; to be culturally aware through gaining an understanding of and an appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity; and to communicate in formal and informal settings (accurately and effectively in writing and speaking). Students learn to use the appropriate “register” in written and oral communication; develop the ability to understand and respond to language demands of social contexts; use their linguistic base for further study, work and leisure; and use the target language in social, academic and cultural arenas. All aspects of the IB Learner Profile are incorporated in our classes which further help students in their development of effective communication skills.

The World Language Credit exam is offered for students to exhibit their proficiency in another language(inclusivity). The credits may fulfill the World Languages requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma. The FCPS World Languages Credit Exam is also an approved assessment for awarding the Virginia Department of Education’s Seal of Biliteracy. In general, the content of the World Languages Program of Studies is organized around seven essential strands of language development and application for students: Person-to-Person Communication; Listening and Reading for Understanding; Oral and Written Presentation; Cultural Perspectives, Practices, and Products; Making Connections through Language; Cultural and Linguistic Comparisons; and Communication across Communities.

Formulation and Dissemination of the Policy

The Language policy is to be reviewed annually by teachers and staff at Mount Vernon High School and updated as needed.

Reviewed and Updated

Edited by:

2023 Language Policy Contributors

Students

General Education Teacher

IB Teacher

IB Coordinators

Language Acquisition (World Languages) Department Chair

Language & Literature (English) Dept. Chair

Parents

Administrators

ESOL Instructor

School Librarian

ESOL Department Chair

Reviewed by: MHVS Instructional Leadership Council, MVHS Faculty

Approved by: MVHS Administrative Team

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