

W. H. Council Traditional School

Language Policy

Established: September 2006

Revised: February 2011

Philosophy

Language is a tool that enables us to acquire knowledge and communicate in many modes, for many purposes, and to many different audiences. Although conventions are important, the construction of meaning and the emphasis of creative expression are of equal importance. Language learning is central in all areas of the curriculum.

Because each strand of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, nonverbal, and presenting) requires different cognitive processes - some simple, some complex - we recognize and honor our students' developmental levels and learning styles, adjusting our instructional strategies accordingly. A constructivist approach allows teachers to meet students where they are and build upon prior knowledge to make learning more meaningful, authentic, and streamlined.

Ultimately, we strive to produce students who effectively communicate their needs, feelings, ideas, and experiences with creativity and confidence.

Language Practices

English is the language of instruction at WH Council Traditional Magnet School. Students are taught conventions of English through classroom instruction in all seven strands of language. The strands of language are interrelated, and mastery of one strand fosters heightened development of the others. Incorporating the seven strands of language into all disciplines is vital to the success of our students' language development.

Listening: Listening is not a passive skill. Our students must apply active listening skills to gain information and analyze it properly. In addition, students must demonstrate appropriate listening etiquette.

Specific activities that support listening include:

Cultural arts assemblies

Guest speakers

Morning announcements

Presentations

Read alouds

Speaking: Students use oral language skills to ask questions and to share ideas, opinions, information, and feelings. They must develop proper pronunciation, inflection, intonation, and fluency to become confident and skillful speakers.

Specific activities that support speaking include:

Presentations

Book shares

Morning announcements

Reading: Guided by the tenets of the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Council students receive systematic, explicit, instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Students then

apply those skills across the curriculum. We hope to instill a love of reading by exposing students to a wide range of genre and author styles and by allowing self-selection of independent reading titles.

Specific activities that support reading include:

- Adopted Reading Language Arts Program (Reading Street)
- Literacy centers
- Accelerated Reading Program
- Interactive Internet Sites
- School and classroom libraries

Writing: Writing is a complex, developmental process by which students communicate information, ideas, opinions, and feelings. To address the demands of high-stakes tests, many writing and mechanics skills are taught through systematic, explicit instruction. We recognize, too, that the message should not be lost in the mechanics. Teachers model for students, write with students, and allow students the opportunity to write independently. Cumulative portfolios passed on from year to year allow teachers to customize instruction to meet the needs of each child.

Specific activities that support writing include:

- Mobile County Public School System Writing Curriculum
- Journals
- Reflections on Units of Inquiry
- Reports
- Graphic organizers

Viewing: Through the use of integrated technology and multimedia resources, students gain exposure to a wide array of visual experiences. The students learn to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs, making informed choices about personal viewing experiences.

Specific activities that support viewing include:

- SMART Board
- Educational videos
- Art Class
- Internet research

Nonverbal: Students recognize and react to nonverbal signals and learn to use and interpret symbols as a means to provide information.

Specific activities that support nonverbal communication include:

- Posters created for various purposes (class projects, Student Council elections)

Presenting: As a magnet school of communication, Council provides students many opportunities to apply and synthesize their learning through a variety of projects and presentations. Through presenting original work, students must apply skillful strategies of all the aforementioned language strands.

Specific activities that support presenting include:

- Power Points
- Costuming
- Geography Week / Global Tour
- Reader's Theater
- Production of visual aids

Language and the PYP

Our commitment to nurturing language development supports students in demonstrating the PYP Learner Profile. Council students, through language, are:

Balanced: Students express themselves in each strand of language, using different mediums, and for varied purposes and audiences.

Caring: Students demonstrate empathy, compassion, and respect to others through each strand of language.

Communicators: Students communicate confidently and creatively in both written and oral forms for pleasure and for practice.

Inquirers: Students exhibit natural curiosity about language and use that innate curiosity to make sense of the world around them.

Knowledgeable: Students acquire in-depth knowledge of language structure (in all strands) in both English and Spanish.

Open-minded: Students appreciate and accept differences in communication styles and use language as a tool to share their own cultures and personal histories.

Principled: Using the various strands of language, students exhibit integrity, honesty, and respect.

Reflective: Students reflect on their successes and shortcomings to further their language development and become more skilled listeners, speakers, readers, and writers.

Risk-takers: Students accept language challenges with gusto and rise to meet high teacher expectations across all strands.

Thinkers: Students express their thoughts and ideas coherently, creatively, and confidently.

The School's Additional Language

The additional language at WH Council Traditional Magnet School is Spanish. Students are offered support through biweekly instruction. The classes emphasize oral communication and include journeys into the Spanish culture and its relationship to the host nation culture. Printed materials are provided in Spanish in both the classroom and library for vocabulary and reading practice.

Mother-Tongue Support