

Helen Keller Language Policy

Fall 2018

Philosophy

Helen Keller Elementary recognizes that language is fundamental to all learning, therefore, we foster the development of the language of instruction, world languages, and the mother tongue throughout our curriculum.

We believe

All Helen Keller teachers are language teachers.

Language is a primary means of learning and communicating.

Mother tongue languages help form cultural and personal identity and should be respected.

The shared experience of learning language creates cohesion among students from diverse backgrounds and promotes international-mindedness.

Learning world languages is an integral part of becoming a global citizen.

Goals of the Language Program:

At Helen Keller we work to:

Encourage students to learn and use language competently and confidently in a variety of social and academic contexts.

Increase students' proficiency in written and oral communication through systematic assessment.

Promote student understanding and enjoyment of literature.

Promote student acquisition of academic vocabulary and language structures throughout all content areas (Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics).

Support of Mother Tongue Languages:

The media center has well over 100 books that support Spanish and other language acquisition needs.

Interpreters/Translators are provided by the English as a Second Language (ESL) Coordinator if needed to communicate effectively with parents or other stakeholders. The Bilingual Liaison Protocol is a document used to guide personnel in determining whether a parent needs an interpreter.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) department houses many resources, which are also available to families in our school. These include adult ESL resources, bilingual materials, and software such as the Rosetta Stone language acquisition program.

Language of Instruction:

English is the language of instruction at Helen Keller Elementary. It is the major connecting element across the curriculum and provides a vehicle for inquiry. Whenever possible, language is taught through the relevant, authentic context of the units within the Programme of Inquiry (POI). By integrating language into every aspect of the curriculum, we teach students the importance of culture, diversity, and sensitivity towards others, which in turn facilitates international mindedness.

Support of the Language of Instruction for all students:

Helen Keller Elementary supports language instruction in the following ways:

Implementing reading and writing strategies across the curriculum.

Selecting and providing access to literature from a variety of backgrounds and cultures around the world

Providing multiple opportunities at all levels for students to read and write in a variety of genres

Providing ample choice in reading materials and encouraging students to read for enjoyment

Providing differentiated instruction for students with special needs, including students with learning disabilities and students who are academically advanced.

Using formative assessments regularly to determine levels of understanding in order to provide support to students who need extra time to develop skills and strategies.

Support of the Language of Instruction for Limited English Proficiency Students

Helen Keller will support students with limited English proficiency in language acquisition in the following ways:

Highly qualified ESL Instructors provide academic support to students whose mother tongue is not English.

ESL instructors work with classroom teachers and analyze data to create a program of instruction designed to improve academic performance of English Learners in each content area.

General education teachers accommodate instruction and assessments to meet the language needs of English Learners based on the WIDA Can Do statements.

ESL instruction includes units based on the WIDA (World Wide Instructional Design and Assessment) standards, which teach students the language of mathematics, language arts, science, social studies and general classroom language. Speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are directly taught in all content areas.

ESL students are assessed each year beginning in kindergarten using the WIDA assessment, which assigns a level of proficiency of 1-6 to each student after completion.

District-wide parent outreach events are designed to inform parents about the ESL program and encourage community outreach. Events include a K-12 informational ESL family evening and a K-5 community outreach event at the Royal Oak Public Library.

World Language Instruction

The Royal Oak School District offers Spanish as a world language in its elementary schools. At Helen Keller, this program both supports and extends the IB units. Students also learn about the cultures of people in Spanish speaking countries.