

Alpine Elementary Language Policy

Updated Spring 2015

Purpose

Language learning at Alpine Elementary is multi-faceted. It involves:

- a) English as a vehicle for teaching purposeful inquiry,
- b) Second-language instruction (Spanish and ESL/ELA), and
- c) Mother tongue language support.

This Language Policy outlines the programs that are in place to provide second-language support (Spanish and English Language Learning/ ELL), and mother-tongue language support.

Philosophy

We believe that language:

- occurs in all subject areas and in every aspect of our school community;
- is used as a tool to communicate needs, feelings, ideas and experiences;
- is used to understand our world;
- is essential for development of the whole child; and
- changes over time.

Strand	Receptive—receiving and constructing meaning	Expressive—creating and sharing meaning
Oral language	Listening	Speaking
Visual language	Viewing	Presenting
Written language	Reading	Writing

Figure 1 Receptive and expressive aspects of language strands

Scope and Sequence

The underpinning of Alpine Elementary School's Language Policy is IB Standard B1, which includes Practices 20 and 23: The school is organized to provide support for second-language teaching, mother-tongue language support, and a language (Spanish) in addition to the language of instruction (English) from the age of seven.

Alpine Elementary follows the IBO's [Language Scope and Sequence](#) (copy in Alpine Elementary Library) and [Colorado Academic Standards: World Languages](#) documents.

Instruction

The Language of Instruction at Alpine Elementary is English. The second language taught at Alpine is Spanish. Students whose mother tongue is other than English are served through English Language Learner classes, as well as by mother-tongue resources held in our library. Language is a part of all areas of the curriculum.

Direct instruction of language occurs during reading, writing, Spanish and English language classes.

Classroom

Strategies for honoring the students whose mother tongue is other than English include the following:

- Honor the child as an expert in his language.
- Students teach peers some words or phrases in their mother tongue.
- Invite parents into the classroom to teach mini-lessons.

English Language Development (ELD/ELL)

Students who qualify for ELD classes are pulled out during the day by a licensed ELD teacher and/or supported for writing conference instruction if they have reached "pre-monitor" status. The time spent with the students is predetermined by their abilities and is adjusted during the school year. ELL students take a state assessment each year and strategies used for working with them include the following:

- Support unit of inquiry through visuals (on-line and in print) at beginning of unit
- Teach ELL using Literature (see Avenues curriculum)
- Teach concepts before words.

Spanish Instruction

Spanish is offered as an additional language of study in grades 1 through 5. Our goal in teaching Spanish is to promote an appreciation for languages, to reinforce the understanding that people use languages other than English to communicate, and to empower students to continue their study of Spanish as students transition to middle school. Lessons are structured to provide children with an enjoyable introduction to the language and culture. Children learn the basic language necessary for simple day-to-day communications. Many games,

songs, and creative activities are incorporated. For native speakers, classes are differentiated to help develop reading and writing skills.

Mother-tongue Support

It is the philosophy at Alpine Elementary that a student's mother tongue be supported and nurtured. To this end,

- All staff encourages the use of mother tongue as a means of expression
- When possible, literature from the school is sent home in another language to meet the needs of parents in our community
- Translators are provided at conferences and parent information sessions
- The library collection is updated each year to contain books in the mother tongue languages spoken in our school and community
- Students whose mother tongue language is Spanish attend a differentiated Spanish class to help them develop their language skills

Communicating the policy and future review processes

The Language Policy is communicated to staff members through collaborative dialog and is housed on a shared folder in our computer system. The policy is communicated to Alpine families and community members in presentations about our school, through newsletters and brochures, and is available on our school website.

School community members reviewed the Language Policy as a part of the self-evaluation process, and plan to formally review it every five years. Adjustments to services provided and opportunities offered will occur annually in accordance with the tenets of the policy.

Language Practices

Our school district has adopted several curriculums that are used in these subject areas:

Reading:

Rigby "Literacy By Design"

Writing:

Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Primary Writing

Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Intermediate Writing

6 Traits of Writing

What will students be expected to learn?

Staff members at Alpine Elementary have created a detailed guide that shows what content listed in the "Primary Years Programme Language Scope and Sequence" will be taught and therefore learned by our students. Any standards that are listed under the "not addressed" portion of the standards have been specifically addressed by each grade level. The expectation is that all international standards will be met in each grade level at Alpine Elementary.

Language Inquiry

The primary mode of instruction in language at Alpine Elementary is through Inquiry.

How will students learn language?

From "Primary Years Programme Language Scope and Sequence"

What is a PYP Language Classroom like?

Language is the medium of inquiry. In an inquiry based PYP classroom, everyone appreciates both the aesthetic and functional uses of language.

The PYP language classroom is a place where language is clearly in evidence in all its forms. There is a busy hum of discussion. The observer is tempted by the inviting book corner which is well stocked with reference books, picture books, story books, poetry books, students' self-made books and books in a variety of languages. Displays include a wide variety of print including students' writing, author of the month, questions, information and artifacts from the current unit of inquiry, posters, charts, calendars, memoranda and instructions. The listening center is freely accessible, with a range of high-quality fiction and non-fiction audio cassettes.. The clearly labeled writing center has a variety of materials and equipment- a word processor and printer, different types of paper, envelopes, blank forms, card, bookbinding tape and ready-made blank books.

How does a PYP language classroom work?

Students are engrossed in books at tables in the book corner or quiet area. They move purposefully from one area to another as the task demands, switching from individual study to group activities, seeking advice and comments from peers and the teacher as needed. Writing is a significant activity in classes of all ages. Younger students are involved in independent writing, annotating pictures, making and writing books, and writing and sending letters. Older students work at various stages of the writing process: drafting, revising and editing imaginative stories, expressive poetry, science reports, personal journals, and reading responses. The teacher uses a range of strategies, including individual, group and whole-class instruction. He or she may work with a group to brainstorm pre-writing ideas, provide individual support for a reluctant writer, assist with individual editing, gather specific students for a group conferencing session, advise on an appropriate reference source, or collect the class for a summarizing session. The teacher models appropriate attitudes: speaking and listening respectfully, referring to reference sources, enthusiastically sharing ideas about a favorite novel, posing questions on the current unit of inquiry, skillfully guiding students' lines of questioning, encouraging divergent thinking, sensitively assessing the learning needs of individuals and providing appropriate learning support. Literature is an integral part of the curriculum. A series of books can be read as an author study, host country fairy tales could be part of a social studies unit, a biography might be the introduction to a science investigation, early years' counting stories can be reinforcement for mathematics development, and a comparison of illustration techniques may encourage acquisition of

art skills. Books are not only enjoyed, they are also discussed and analyzed, created, compared and contrasted.

Why is a PYP language classroom the way it is?

Languages are a key factor in the development of international understanding and, as such, have a major role in a PYP classroom. Many students will be familiar with two or more languages and will have learned these interdependently. The PYP classroom values and supports the mother tongue and the language of instruction and provides access to other languages. Therefore the PYP classroom is flexible enough to cater for a wider than usual range of language and literacy development. There are many variables in students' backgrounds and experiences. It is likely that, even in a single age group, there will be enormous diversity in language and literacy development. Some students may be working in their second or third language, but the fundamental objectives of responsible, competent and confident communication are common to all.

How is language connected?

Language is a complex web of connections transcending the artificial separations of schedules and disciplines. The language strands (listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting) are taught and learned simultaneously. Language is seen as involving learning language itself, learning about language and learning through language, and is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Therefore the focus is not only on language for its own sake, but also on the language of science, history, mathematics and other disciplines. The PYP learning environment extends beyond the classroom with close connections to the school library/media centre for research, quiet reading and story sessions, to other classrooms for paired reading activities, shared bookmaking and interviews, and to the wider community for theatre visits and community library visits. The teacher plans in collaboration with other classroom teachers and specialists. ELL, mother tongue and foreign language teachers play a particularly important role in reinforcing, supporting and extending the classroom work. Language is a major connection between home and school. In the PYP classroom cooperative activities optimize development of all the languages. Mother tongue development is actively encouraged and supported: bilingual dictionaries are available in the classroom, letters are often translated before being sent home, books are available in several languages for project work and mother tongue classes are sometimes part of the course of work. There are also connections with the wider community. The host country's language and literature receive special status, helping everyone to appreciate the culture of the host country. The PYP language classroom is connected to the broader world through technology. The goals for literacy are to research and communicate through printed media and global electronic networks. Examples of activities include exchanging poetry with a live poets' group, collecting first-hand information for a unit on water from peers in different countries or connecting directly by satellite to access a vast range of multimedia resources.

Instruction in Reading at Alpine for students includes:

Universal, Effective, Core Instruction including:

Every child is in a reading group. There is differentiated instruction in the classroom. Every child/classroom participates in take-home reading program with consequences (+/-) and teacher-follow-up/parent support. Accommodation or curriculum modification—not intervention—is needed from the regular education teacher for students to be successful. Adequate instructional time is provided with any child who is not proficient; they are in a 30 min. reading group every day with their homeroom teacher. Multiple measures of assessment and a body of evidence are collected. This requires at a minimum 3 times a year—beginning, middle, and end of year assessments coupled with formal and informal assessments in the classroom. Approximately 80% of students can access this level of instruction with success. The teacher conferences with parents at least twice a year and maintains contact with parents for additional conferences with students of concern. The teacher converses informally with prior teachers and checks the cumulative folder within days of first assessment window for students of concern. Groupings include whole group, partners, small group, individual, flexible, interest-based, and are determined by need. Materials include: fiction/nonfiction, technical, and a variety of genres/difficulty/purposes.

Instruction can include, when needed:

Strategic, Targeted Instruction including:

The staff collaborates with colleagues at the grade level, above the grade level, and below the grade level to provide a 'menu' of interventions for students at one grade level. These interventions provide for least restrictive to moderate interventions in phonemic awareness, decoding, comprehension, fluency, and concepts of the alphabet. Provide for additional intervention (double dosing) in addition to the 30 min. intervention being done by the homeroom teacher. Kuhn research: 30 min. per day per year behind. There is collaboration between specialists and general education as a team. We provide rapid response to data—more than 3 times a year—with progress monitor 1-2 times a month to monitor effectiveness of the intervention and document on-going data collection. Placement is short-term, flexible, and high intensity small group instruction. Interventions and the instructional materials follow specific skills, concepts, and programming. 15% of the students can access this level of instruction with success. Implement the ILP and develop student, teacher, and parent partnerships. Investigate options for additional support such as homework club, tutorials before/after school, volunteers in the classroom, etc.

Intensive Instruction including:

There is an assessment-based placement, which is long term. These further assessments have been conducted by the team at the school. Interventions are high intensity and there is the highest level of need. The small group includes individual to 2-3 students in a group. 5% of the students access this level of instruction. Implement Individual Literacy Plan. Interventions at the previous levels have been attempted, monitored, and evaluated. Staff use one-on-one additional support such as mentor, senior citizen, 1-1 study buddy, etc.

Assessment in Language

Assessment of literacy skills is crucial to ongoing, relevant, challenging, engaging and significant learning. It provides instructors with the knowledge needed to move each child along the language continuum towards fluency in all aspects of literacy.

Assessment in literacy also allows for differentiated instruction for those students who are beyond the typical grade level expectations. It allows instructors to know who will need extra interventions and re-teaching in order to gain fluency.

Alpine Elementary has developed a pyramid of interventions that will help students who are struggling in reading by providing alternate programs than those used for general instruction in the classroom:

Assessments Used at Alpine Elementary

Reading

PALS K

PALS 1-3

DIBELS

Rigby Benchmark Assessments

PARCC

SRI

Galileo

IReady

Writing

Grade level chosen writing rubrics ie: Six Traits Writing Rubric

CSAP

Galileo

English Language Learners

ACCESS

Second Language

In process

From "Primary Years Programme Language Scope and Sequence"

How will we know what students have learned?

Language must be integrated into all areas of the curriculum. While the communication strands of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting can be observed separately, they are also interrelated and interactive. This is of particular relevance for PYP schools, where every teacher is a language teacher. Language is considered from the point of view of homeroom teachers, teachers of the language of instruction (often EAL), teachers of other languages (often the host-country language) and teachers of mother tongue languages. The specific expectations apply to each student in every language taught, although the means and pace of teaching vary in different contexts.

Language does much more than promote cognitive growth. Mother tongue language development is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and emotional stability. The acquisition of more than one language enriches personal growth and helps facilitate international understanding. PYP schools have a special responsibility to recognize and support each and every aspect of language development.

Literacy Instruction Outside of the Homeroom Classroom

Literacy Support

A literacy support teacher provides support in reading the language of instruction to grades k-5. An intervention model is used to provide extra reading help to students who are struggling at their current reading level. The literacy support specialist also helps to conduct assessments of students in grades k-5 in order to determine proficiencies.

English Language Support

An English Language teacher is on staff half time to support students whose mother tongue is not English. The teacher provides instruction in proper grammar and vocabulary as well as provides support for understanding in the units of inquiry and other content areas. Students qualify for this support through the state assessment of English Language ability, CELA.

Gifted and Talented Education

A gifted and talented teacher provides support for students who qualify for giftedness in language abilities. Gifted and Talented classes provide in-depth enrichment in general language instruction as well as enrichment and extension of units of inquiry. This service is provided for grade 3-5. Students in grade k-2 who are high ability learners are supported by this teacher through enrichment activities given to classroom teachers to extend units of inquiry and general classroom work.

Specialists- Art, Music and Physical Education

Whenever possible, language skills are used and taught in the specialized subject areas offered at Alpine Elementary. Specialist teachers attend trainings regarding language with classroom teachers as to have a shared body of knowledge.

Special Education

The Special Education program at Alpine Elementary provides language support for those students who qualify for special education services. Students who have specific language goals in the Individualized Education Plans receive support from the special education teacher in meeting these objectives. Special education staff work with classroom teacher to modify assessments and instruction in units of inquiry as well as stand alone classroom work.

Speech Therapy

Students who need extra support and have an Individualized Education Plan regarding speech language attend session with a speech therapist in order to meet their verbal needs. The speech therapist works closely with classroom teachers to help identify students in need and to support needs seen in the classroom setting.

Library/Media Support

Alpine Elementary's media center is equipped with a full time specialist that assists students in research and library skills. Open library time is available for all students in order to conduct inquiries and research projects. Each classroom has a specified library time where they can check out books. The media specialist also manages a teacher professional development library as well as unit of inquiry resources.

Resources

Alpine Elementary allots a large portion of its instructional budget to books that can be used in language instruction. These books are in multiple languages and a balance of reference, non-fiction and fiction.

Additionally, Alpine elementary has leveled book collection that has over 5 copies each of 689 books for specific targeted instruction at each student's level.

Some facts about our collection:

Approximately 10,300 books total

4,600 non-fiction books

3, 125 fiction books

325 reference books

300 foreign language books (14 different languages)

Documents Referenced

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