



Language Policy

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I. SCHOOL VISION, MISSION, AND PHILOSOPHY

A. VISION AND MISSION OF THE ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOOD CHARTER SCHOOL

Our vision is to be a dynamic learning community where students become life-long learners, develop self-knowledge, and are challenged to excel.

The mission of the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (ANCS) is to use the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools (Appendix B) to:

- BUILD an empowered and inclusive community of students, parents, and educators
- CHALLENGE each student to take an active role as an informed citizen in a global society
- ENGAGE the whole child - intellectually, social-emotionally, and physically
- HELP all students to know themselves and to be known well by their community
- COLLABORATE with the larger community to advocate for student-centered schools.

At ANCS, our Guiding Principles describe how we are to behave as members of the ANCS school family. We have an individual and collective responsibility to:

- Come to school and every class prepared to learn and do our best
- Respect each other, our surroundings, and ourselves
- Take responsibility for our actions and learning
- Resolve conflicts in a peaceful, thoughtful, and meaningful way
- Celebrate our individual and collective successes.

Additionally, the learners within our school community seek to embody the attributes of the IB MYP Learner Profile.

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable
- Thinkers
- Communicators
- Principled
- Open-Minded
- Caring
- Risk-Takers
- Balanced
- Reflective

II. PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY ON LANGUAGE

A. PURPOSE OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY

This Language Policy is designed to ensure transparency, fairness, and equity in our practice and within our school community. This policy is a working document that provides an overview of the beliefs and practices of the members of our school family as they relate to the language development of our students as they work to fulfill the mission of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme and Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School.

B. PHILOSOPHY ON LANGUAGE

We believe that all learning is rooted in meaningful interactions that are fostered through effective communication. This requires use of a common language that encompasses academics and school culture. We value the many ways in which individuals express themselves and we understand that language development is key to equity and access. Therefore, we work toward a language model that is inclusive and evolving, honoring cultural identities while cultivating common language throughout our school family.

III. DEFINITIONS

ELL: English Language Learners.

ESOL: English to Speakers of Other Languages.

GEORGIA MILESTONES: a comprehensive summative assessment that measures the mastery of state adopted content standards. Students in grades 6 and 7 take the ELA and Math assessments while students in grade 8 take ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Scores on these assessments are used as promotion criteria.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: the language used by the teacher to teach.

LANGUAGE PROFILE: a picture of a student's language learning history.

LEXILE: an educational tool that measures the readability of texts and the reading level of readers so that readers can be matched with books at an appropriate level.

MOTHER TONGUE: the language someone has grown up speaking.

NWEA MAP: Measures of Academic Progress. An adaptive test that provides information about what a student knows and is ready to learn in the areas of math and reading. It is nationally normed and provides information about growth over time.

IV. SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROFILE DEVELOPMENT

A. ACADEMIC HISTORY

As students enter sixth grade, or when they first matriculate at ANCS, information is gathered about their course history and results in both the Language of Instruction as well as additional languages taught at the school. This information is used for initial placement in classes as well as beginning any interventions deemed necessary.

B. LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English is the language of instruction at Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School.

C. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

In grades 6-8 at ANCS, students take year-long courses in Spanish. They will progress through the Phases as outlined in the Language Acquisition Subject Guide based on their skill acquisition on the rubrics. Additionally, a Heritage Speakers class is offered to students for whose language proficiency it is deemed appropriate to begin in a Phase above Phase 3.

D. GATHERING INFORMATION FROM STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

In order to meet our mission of knowing each student well, we gather information from the families of each student as they arrive at our campus regarding their language learning history, including both the language of instruction as well as Language Acquisition (Spanish). Additionally, students take the NWEA MAP test during the fall to look for strengths and areas of growth in knowledge and understanding of both reading and mathematics.

The information above as well as additional information is used to develop a comprehensive language profile of each student that includes:

- Languages first spoken
- Languages used at home to communicate with family
- Manner in which English was first learned
- Academic History
- Modes of Communication
 - Spoken language preferences in social settings
 - Spoken language preferences in academic settings
 - Reading language preferences
 - Written language preferences
- Preferred language of communication of the family both when speaking and when written.

V. LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

A. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT ACROSS ALL SUBJECT AREAS

In the Language & Literature courses, students develop the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Through the development of those skills, students explore various genres of texts and work to grasp various styles of writing. In addition to this instruction, students continue to develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in the other subject areas. Teachers in all subject areas support students to develop knowledge and understanding of disciplinary vocabulary and writing for additional purposes such as lab reports and research papers. The goal of writing across each of the subject areas is for students to develop the skills necessary to communicate effectively both in a generalized setting as well as for specific, academic purposes.

B. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS NOT PROFICIENT IN THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

For students who are not yet proficient in the language of instruction, we provide several supports. Within the classroom, teachers differentiate reading levels of texts so that learners can access information. Additionally, visual supports are provided to allow for students to make connections. As gaps in language development are determined, we offer an intervention period, known as Power30, where students with significant needs in language development receive targeted interventions. This is a 30-minute class that occurs 4 times weekly. Additionally, all students engage in Sustained Silent Reading for 10 minutes, four times weekly, to improve reading fluency. Students not proficient in the language of instruction are provided with time and instruction to further develop their language skills in the area of reading, writing, and speaking. For students with larger gaps that are impacting the progress of their learning, ANCS offers ESOL support for those students who qualify. We employ an ESOL instructor who joins the students in some of their classes to provide additional support for students and to help teachers notice and provide additional areas of support in their instruction.

C. ASSESSMENT PRACTICES RELATED TO LANGUAGE

Students are assessed using the MYP assessment criteria. Assessments are designed such that, to the extent possible, proficiency in language does not impact outcomes in other subject areas.

D. PREFERRED BIBLIOGRAPHIC STYLES

Students at the middle campus are instructed on and asked to use the MLA formatting style. In addition, an ANCS Style Guide is being developed to provide additional instruction on formatting and bibliographic expectations to encourage full academic integrity.

VI. INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

A. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION INSTRUCTION

The Language Acquisition course offered at the middle campus is Spanish. Students in grades 6-8 take year-long courses. Students are instructed by both native and non-native speakers. Within the Spanish class students are provided a range of language and cultural learning opportunities. Teachers strive to provide the students with learning that provides a broad experience from many of the Spanish speaking countries and regions. Students who speak Spanish as part of their heritage or have proficiency upon entering 6th grade are offered the opportunity to place into a Heritage Speakers class in which the language of instruction is Spanish.

B. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION ASSESSMENT

Students are assessed using the four assessment criteria of the Language Acquisition subject area.

C. PROGRESSION THROUGH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PHASES

As students enter grade 6, they are placed in Phase 1 of Spanish. If a student is determined to be particularly proficient in Spanish, they have the opportunity to move to Phase 2 at the end of the first semester. Students who earn a grade of 3 or higher at the end of 6th grade are moved to Phase 2 for 7th grade, while students earning a 2 or below remain in Phase 1. At the end of 7th grade, students earning a 3 or higher are moved to Phase 3 for 8th grade while those earning a 2 or lower remain in their current phase. Students who complete Phase 3 with a 3 or higher are offered the opportunity to receive high school credit for their Spanish work so they can enter into more challenging courses in 9th grade. A Heritage Speakers class is also offered to students who demonstrate proficiency at a level of Phase 4 or 5.

VII. COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

A. AFFIRMING IDENTITY AND BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

ANCS believes in the power that comes from students learning with and from classmates of different backgrounds. Therefore, we encourage each student to explore their identity and teach our students to not just tolerate but to embrace differences. Students are encouraged to share aspects of their culture with their peers both during class settings and as they interact with their peers socially. Students have used opportunities to speak or perform during our all school morning meetings and have utilized time during advisory to share their culture and family experience with their peers and teachers. We believe that this encouragement to share their experiences and the exploration of identity not only builds self-esteem, but also builds an appreciation for differences.

B. SUPPORT FOR MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

In order to provide support for families who do not speak and/or read in the language of instruction we offer several supports to ease the communication and ensure that an inclusive relationship is built between home and school. As families complete enrollment paperwork, they provide information regarding mother tongue. If we have a faculty member on staff who speaks that language, we will place the student in that faculty member's advisory. Since the advisor is the primary point of contact for the family and the goal of advisory is to build community with the students and families of the advisory members, this enables the advisor to bridge any language barriers there might be and to help families feel supported in the school-home relationship.

As a part of advisory, student-led conferences are held twice a year. For families whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction, students are invited to conduct their conference in their mother tongue and we also offer the opportunity to have translators present to ensure families feel comfortable and able to communicate their celebrations and concerns.

Our school website is able to be viewed in both English and Spanish with the click of a single button. ManageBac, our curriculum planning and grading software, can be viewed in several different languages. Additionally, when generating reports (4 times per year), we translate the narrative portion of reports into the family's mother tongue prior to sending home.

C. LEARNING OF HOST COUNTRY/REGIONAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The host country language is the language of instruction at ANCS. The Language & Literature subject area provides instruction of this language and it is then developed through all of the subject areas. Teachers model the appropriate use of this language through everyday use and instruct both disciplinary and conversational language.

D. LIBRARY

We employ a full-time librarian to staff our library. The library is open to students every day for 30 minutes before school begins and during class time throughout the day when given permission by a teacher. Our library includes many books written in Spanish as well as a few in French. Additionally, the librarian offers books being read in classes on audiobooks to further support students with language learning struggles. Books in our library use inclusive language and cover a range of topics.

E. MULTI-LINGUAL STAFF

ANCS employs several staff members who are bi- and multi-lingual. Approximately 50% of our staff have at least an emergent level capacity in a second language, with 11% of our staff capable or proficient in Spanish. Additional languages spoken include: Hebrew, Urdu, Hindi, Pasto, Arabic, Sindhi, Balochi, Farsi, Punjabi, Chinese, French, and German.

VIII. CONTINUED EDUCATION FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

A. DIVERSITY AND EQUITY WORK

ANCS is affiliated with the National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools, a collection of schools with racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse student populations with the following shared beliefs:

- Diverse schools provide greater opportunities for students to learn from one another.
- Diversity is a cost-effective method of boosting student achievement.
- Diverse schools promote the celebration and understanding of other cultures and viewpoints.
- Diverse schools invigorate and strengthen urban neighborhoods by bringing community members together.
- Charter schools can and should contribute to solving the historic challenge of integrating our public school system.
- Achieving diversity often requires deliberate efforts through recruitment, admissions policies and school design.
- Diverse charter schools promote equality by ensuring that students from different backgrounds have the same high quality educational opportunities.

As a result of this affiliation, faculty and staff participate frequently in diversity and equity work that works to recognize barriers to equity and removing those through discussion and professional development.

Part of our work as an inclusive school is to ensure that community members have common language to discuss matters of importance. As such, we have developed common definitions of terms to foster a common foundational understanding from which to work.

B. ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

We encourage faculty and staff to celebrate and highlight language diversity in all classes, as well as develop their own proficiency in language acquisition.

IX. PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW OF LANGUAGE POLICY

This Language Policy was created by the MYP Steering Committee in 2019 with improvements made based on input from the full faculty and staff. This policy will be reviewed annually to make additional improvements and will also be referenced during the planning of each unit of study. Students and families will be provided with this policy at the beginning of each school year so that it can be reviewed as often as necessary to ensure that the practices outlined in this policy are observed.

Standard: Culture through policy implementation(0301)

Schools develop, implement, communicate and review effective policies that help to create a school culture in which IB philosophy can thrive.

Culture Practice 4: The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews a language policy that helps to foster intercultural understanding through communicating in a variety of ways in more than one language (0301-04)

- Culture 4.1: The school implements and reviews a language policy that is aligned with IB language policy guidelines. (0301-04-0100)
- Culture 4.2: The school describes in its language policy the way that the school recognizes multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource for learning. (0301-04-0200)
- Culture 4.3: The school identifies in its language policy a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development. (0301-04-0300)
- Culture 4.4: The school clearly describes in its language policy the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community and what constitutes good practice within the school context. (0301-04-0400)

Reviewed and updated September 2022 by full faculty and staff.

Reviewed and updated September 2023 by IB Coordinator and parent community.

X. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS 10 COMMON PRINCIPLES

Learning to use one's mind well

The school should focus on helping young people to use their minds well. Schools should not be “comprehensive” if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s central intellectual purpose.

Less is more: depth over coverage

The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program’s design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by “subjects” as conventionally defined. The aphorism “less is more” should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

Goals apply to all students

The school’s goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

Personalization

Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students’ and teachers’ time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

Student-as-worker/Teacher-as-coach

The governing practical of the school should be “student-as-worker”, rather than the more familiar metaphor of “teacher as deliverer of instructional services.” Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

Demonstration of mastery

Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner’s strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation: an “Exhibition.” As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school’s program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of “credits earned” by “time spent” in class.

A tone of decency and trust

The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation, of trust, and of decency (fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school’s particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Families should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

Commitment to the entire school

The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and demonstrate a sense of commitment to the entire school.

Resources dedicated to teaching and learning

Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include student loads that promote personalization, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided to students in many schools.

Democracy and equity

The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.