

McGraw Mission: *Fostering Internationally-minded, life-long learners who all thrive in and positively shape our global community.*

McGraw Elementary Language Policy



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Language Philosophy

As an internationally-minded learning community, McGraw Elementary ensures access for and engagement among all students - in consideration of and response to their unique language profiles and their strengths and needs related to language development - so that they can develop and express the attributes of the IB Learner Profile. In the process, we empower confident, open-minded learners and communicators who all thrive in and positively shape our global community.

We believe that...

- language teaching and learning encompasses all modes of expression (oral, written, visual representation, signs and symbols) and reception (reading, listening and viewing).
- **all** teachers are, in practice, teachers of language as they facilitate development of students' communication skills.
- language enables children to inquire across subject areas about themselves, others and their world, contributing to the development of international mindedness.
- multilingualism brings valuable perspectives and diversity into the classroom.
- honoring multilingualism promotes stronger connections between our school, home and the larger community.

"Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about."

Benjamin Whorf

Our Students

The students at McGraw come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds and use various languages at home and at school as they develop skill in applying multiliteracies to their learning. While the vast majority of our students and their families are fluent in English, we also have students from several families who speak Spanish or other languages at home. We also have the distinction of housing the center-based Deaf and Hard of Hearing program for elementary students in Poudre School District.

Main Language of Instruction

All students at McGraw are instructed in American English, using the following techniques that support their language acquisition.

The development of American English is fostered through:

- Guided Reading
- Language instruction across all subject areas
- Inquiry-based learning
- Differentiation of content, learning process and learning products

- Opportunities for frequent student reflection
- Use of formal and informal assessment data to drive instruction
- Peer-to-peer and student-to-teacher talk

Our school English Language Development (ELD) specialist and instructional paraprofessionals provide support in classrooms and in small groups to students who are at various levels of fluency in their English language development, including students whose native/home language is not English. The school ELD specialist also provides teachers with strategies and resources to address the language profiles of English language learners in their classroom. These students' English language development is regularly assessed. Appropriate support/instruction is provided based on the results of these assessments to allow English language learners to access learning taking place through the IB program as fully as possible.

Additional Languages Of Instruction

- **Spanish**
All classes in grades K-5 at McGraw receive at least weekly Spanish instruction during a 45-minute lesson in the Spanish classroom. The study of Spanish provides students with an opportunity to develop cultural awareness and, in turn, understand the importance of learning an additional language. By being exposed to an additional language at a young age, students are able to “get the ear and lose the fear”.
- **Sign Language**
Many teachers incorporate Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE) into their daily instruction. Classrooms that have a state-authorized educational sign language interpreter receive direct and indirect instruction in Conceptually Accurate Signed English and/or American Sign Language (ASL). This practice encourages peer to peer social interaction and multisensory learning. Classroom interpreters provide access to learning taking place through the IB program as fully as possible for students identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Home Language Development and Support

McGraw students are encouraged to preserve their cultural identity through the use of their mother tongue (native language) at home and school. The home language of students is recognized as both a right and a resource to leverage learning in all content areas. Students and their families are encouraged to share their culture and language within their classroom and school learning communities through presentations related to the program of inquiry units, our annual International Evening, and a variety of other formal and informal opportunities.

The school media center houses a collection of books in multiple languages that support home language development. Families of students whose home language is a language other than English are provided with the resources and information necessary to be involved in their child's academic endeavors. Family liaisons (who are fluent in either Spanish, Arabic or Mandarin) and translation services are provided by Poudre School District to facilitate communication between teachers/staff and the families of students whose home language is not English.

Assessing Language Learning

District, school and state-mandated language assessments (CMAS, MAP, STAR, STAR Early Literacy, DIBELS, ACCESS, W-APT and CogAT)* are used by teachers, parents and students to assess individual and school-wide progress related to language learning. Teachers also utilize a variety of informal language assessments in their own classrooms on a daily basis. These assessment tools are used to inform language teaching and learning practices within the school.

The school looks at individual student growth compared to state reading and writing standards. The school's site improvement plan, required by the state of Colorado, contains goals and strategies teachers use to address the language learning needs of students. This plan is revised annually based on the most current data from state and district testing.

Feedback on students' language development is given to students and parents through a variety of means, including but not limited to: trimester progress reports; language assessment reports sent home to parents; verbal communication between teachers, students and parents; at parent-teacher conferences; and the contents of student portfolios shared during student-led conferences.

Legislation and Requirements

The following details local, state and federal legislation and requirements related to student language language support and development at McGraw. McGraw staff receive ongoing professional development in and comply with the guidelines and processes outlined in the links below.

[Colorado State Standards and Curriculum Support in Reading, Writing and Communication](#)

[Colorado State Standards and Curriculum Support in World Languages](#)

[English Language Development Identification and Services in Poudre School District](#)

Rights and Responsibilities of Members of the School Community

Stakeholder groups in our learning community take the following actions to put our philosophy and beliefs about language learning into practice.

Leadership:

- Allocate funding, staffing and resources to support language of instruction, additional language instruction, and mother tongue support at the school.
- Champion the importance of the development of multilingualism and the use of multiliteracies among students and staff.
- Communicate with families and guardians about the various forms of language learning and language instruction taking place at our school.

Teachers/Staff:

- Develop and apply an understanding of each student's language portfolio and language assessment data to plan and differentiate instruction based on their unique strengths and needs.
- Learn/speak some Spanish and Sign Language to help students practice and develop those languages in the general classroom.
- Whenever possible, provide parent communication in parents' home language.
- Recognize and appreciate all languages spoken throughout the school.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for students to utilize their home language(s) in the classroom and throughout the school.
- Post visual resources in different languages.

Students:

- Develop an understanding of their unique student language portfolio and multiliteracies and apply these to support their learning.
- Demonstrate self-efficacy and agency by using their home language(s) in the classroom and throughout the school.
- Appreciate and express curiosity in languages that are spoken by their peers.
- Use digital resources that provide language translation.

Families and Guardians: Support student development of language(s) spoken at home, the language of instruction and additional languages taught at the school.

Resources

Utilization and development of the following human, natural, built and virtual resources support implementation of McGraw's language policy.

The school principal and building coordinator work together to find professional development opportunities for staff to further their knowledge of best practices for guiding students' language learning and developing student language profiles, including district and IB workshops, collaboration with other schools, membership in professional organizations, book studies and the sharing of best practices through professional learning communities.

Building funds and grants are allocated for purchase of language learning and teaching materials for classrooms, leveled reading libraries, and the school library. There is an annual building library budget managed by the school media specialist, with input from staff, parents and students.

The state of Colorado and Poudre School District provides schools with language learning standards, curriculum, materials and common required assessments. The building PYP coordinator provides staff with the PYP Standards and Practices related to language teaching and learning. The coordinator receives information about updates to program standards and practices via the My IB portal and direct communications from IB. The coordinator shares access to the My IB Portal with staff so they can directly access PYP documentation related to language practices.

The school Spanish, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Literacy and English Language Development (ELD) teachers participate in staff meetings, team planning meetings, and collaborative workdays. They are actively involved in developing the school language policy and language learning practices at the school.

Policy Review, Development and Communication

McGraw's language policy is a living document that will be revisited by our staff annually. Formal review and revision of the policy will take place at least once during each 5-year IB program evaluation cycle or more frequently as needed. As changes are made to any of McGraw's other IB policies (academic integrity, access, assessment, and inclusion) those changes will be articulated across policies and, where appropriate, reflected within the language policy.

When changes to the language policy are proposed, the input of staff (including classroom teachers, specialist teachers and support staff), parents and community members (through our School Accountability Committee and Parent IB Ambassadors) and students (through our student leadership team and our IB Student Ambassadors)

will be requested and considered during the revision process. Policy review and revision work will be led by the members of the McGraw IB Leadership Team.

Our staff can access the language policy through a shared Google Drive folder. The language policy will be shared with families and our community via our school website and articles in the school newsletter which reference components of the policy. School administrators and instructional staff are knowledgeable about the language policy and able to discuss the contents of the policy with parents.

Definitions of Terms

Commonly-administered language assessments:

ACCESS: *Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (used to determine English Proficiency levels)*

CMAS: *Colorado Measures of Academic Success*

CogAT: *Cognitive Abilities Test (used to help determine qualification for Gifted and Talented programming)*

DIBELS: *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*

MAP: *Measures of Academic Progress*

STAR: *Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading*

WIDA Access Screener and WIDA Kindergarten Screener: *Assessments used to assess level of English language proficiency for students whose home language is not English.*

Multilingualism: The knowledge of two or more languages at any stage of acquisition or proficiency.

Multiliteracies: The ability to read, interpret and create oral, print, digital and multimedia texts using multiple modes of expression.

Student Language Profile: A collection of information concerning the language background and experiences of a student.

References

Language and Learning in IB Programmes. International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014.

Learning in a Language other than Mother Tongue in IB programmes. International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008.

The Primary Years Program: From Principles into Practice. International Baccalaureate Organization. Accessed August 9, 2022