

**Handley School**  
**Program for Creative and Academically Talented**  
**IB PYP Language Policy**  
**2009**

**Philosophy**

The ultimate goal for all English language arts learners is personal, social, occupational, and civic literacy. Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Therefore, the focus is not only on language for its own sake, but also on its application across the subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. At Handley, English language arts curriculum, instruction, and assessment reflect the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting. The English language arts are not perceived as individual content areas, but as one unified subject in which each of the five areas supports the others and enhances thinking and learning. The integration of knowledge, skills, and strategies of the English language arts enables students to solve problems and think critically and creatively in all subject areas.

**Language of Instruction**

English is the language of instruction at Handley School and is the major connecting element across the curriculum. The focus of language is its application across the subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry (POI). Language provides a vehicle for inquiry. The programme of inquiry provides an authentic context for learners to develop and use language. Wherever possible, language is taught through the relevant, authentic context of the units of inquiry. Students need to be empowered to comprehend language through listening, reading and viewing, and to express themselves with increasing confidence through speaking, writing, and presenting. The Michigan Curriculum Framework English language arts scope and sequence as well as the PYP Language scope and sequence document identify the major expectations considered essential in language learning. These expectations are arranged into three main strands: oral communication, written communication, and visual communication. These communication strands are organized into sub-strands that include listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting. Many activities are done at each grade level to develop competencies in each of these areas.

Literature is an integral part of the curriculum. By learning language as well as learning about and through language, an appreciation of the richness of language and a love of literature is nurtured. Books are carefully selected to reinforce the units of inquiry and the development of reading skills, as well as to reflect various cultural aspects. Students learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts. Books are read for enjoyment and can also be discussed, analyzed, compared and contrasted. Students learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts; to think critically about what they read; and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in the text.

Language learning at Handley extends beyond the classroom walls, and has close connections to the media center. Teachers and students both use the media center/library on a daily basis.

Writing across the curriculum is a significant activity at all grade levels. The writing process involves creating an environment where students can acquire the skills necessary to produce written products for a variety of purposes. The written product can be informative, persuasive, poetic, or in the form of a story or dialogue. When learning to write, students are encouraged to focus at first on meaning rather than accuracy, and to enjoy the writing process. The six traits of writing are a focus in writing development.

Commercially available resources for teaching language are carefully evaluated to ensure that they meet the requirements of the curriculum. Handley School uses the following schemes/programs to implement its English language program.

- Phonics programs-
  - K-Alpha puppets, Modern Curriculum Press Phonics Book A;
  - 1<sup>st</sup>-Open Court, Modern Curriculum Press Phonics Book B
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>—Modern Curriculum Press Phonics Book C
- Reading program for 1-3—Houghton Mifflin and trade books
- Reading program for 4-5—Literature based reading program
- Spelling program-varies according the Grade Level Content Expectations for The Michigan Curriculum Framework
- Writing and grammar development K-5—*The Write Source*

### **Mother Tongue Support**

Mother tongue is the language that is most strongly linked to the culture that an individual identifies with as their culture of origin and is often the language used in the home. Research has shown that development of mother-tongue language is crucial for cognitive development and in maintaining cultural identity. It also has the potential to increase intercultural awareness and understanding, and enables students to remain in touch with and maintain esteem for the language, literature and culture of their home country. Handley strives to develop its library resources for mother tongue support such as: picture dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, literature in various languages, as well as translations of literature from various languages.

Handley encourages parents to arrange mother tongue classes outside of school.

Additionally, parents are invited in on a regular basis to share their language and culture in classroom presentations.

### **Additional Languages**

Acquisition of more than one language enriches personal growth and helps facilitate international understanding. Another language is offered at Handley in addition to the language of instruction. Instruction in Spanish begins at Kindergarten and continues through fifth grade for thirty minutes once a week. In our library, we have 250 English/Spanish non-fiction books, and 50 fiction books. In addition, students in third-fifth grade have access to the bilingual edition of Scholastic News in Spanish class as well as the library.

### **Language Profile**

When students enter Handley, parents are asked to complete a Language Profile form to establish each student's language background. These results are communicated to the student's teacher so that books in that particular language can be secured from the media center and placed in the classroom. The student's family will be offered opportunities to share the student's culture sometime during the school year.

### **Language Assessment**

*The Michigan Literacy Progress Profile* provides a means for ensuring that all children become independent readers and writers by the end of third grade. Oral language, comprehension, writing, and oral reading are assessed on a regular schedule, at the end of each marking period, with results used to inform instruction. These results are given to the principal who keeps a record of them. DRA, Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) and Flynt-Cooter are used to assess oral reading and comprehension in Kindergarten, first, second and third grades. Listening and speaking are also assessed with checklists and rubrics.

English Language Learners are required to take the ELPA (English Language Proficiency Assessment).

Students in third, fourth, and fifth grades must take the MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) every October.

Writing samples are kept in portfolios that are passed on with the students to the next grade level.

### **Professional Development**

The main responsibility for the professional language development of staff members lies with each individual. The PYP coordinator's responsibility is to ensure that staff is made aware of professional development opportunities, and evaluate and acquire suitable professional development resources. A variety of resources provide teachers with current research and best practices in language learning. Teacher university work, staff book studies, online resources, and District sponsored workshops are a few of the ways that Handley staff members keep themselves informed and up to date.

### **Resources**

*Making The PYP Happen, A curriculum framework for international education*, IBO, January 2007

*PYP Language Scope and Sequence*, IBO, Feb., 2009

*IB Guidelines for developing a school language policy*, IBO, 2006

*PYP Coordinator Handbook 07/08*, IBO, 2007

*PYP Pedagogical leadership in a PYP school*, IBO, July 2007

*PYP Learning additional languages in the primary years; A review of research*, IBO, January, 2002

*Developing a Transdisciplinary Program of Inquiry*, IBO,

*Michigan Literacy Progress Profile*, Michigan Department of Education, 2001

**Handley School's Language Policy Committee**

The following people formed the Language Policy Committee:

Amy Winter—Kindergarten

Nicole Hazen—Spanish, K-5

Mary Calliari—ELA District Coordinator

Anne Tapp—Professor, Education Department, Saginaw Valley State University

Kathy Couillard—IB PYP Coordinator

Beverly Bowman--Principal