

Annunciation Catholic School - Language Policy

This language policy describes our perspective on language, what we believe is important, and how these ideas influence our teaching of language. Three aspects of language and learning development are part of the process of constructing meaning: learning language, learning through language and learning about language.

The purpose of this language policy is guide our community to:

- maximize student learning and understanding
- provide a framework that promotes consistency throughout the school.
- assist teachers in their planning, presenting and evaluating teaching.
- provide parents with information about our values and our practices of language development
- guide professional development and ongoing learning
- ensure that our practices provide inclusion and equity of access to all learners
- support ongoing development of the mother tongue

Our Perspective on Language Instruction

At Annunciation, we want students to understand that language is the way we communicate our thoughts, feelings, perspectives and beliefs. Our commitment to language instruction is evident in a print rich environment and the time and effort invested in differentiating language instruction. For the purpose of this language policy we define language instruction as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is our perspective that language instruction should be incorporated in all grade levels and departments of our school and nurtured by each member of our learning community. Language learning is the basis for gaining understanding in all content areas. As a result, language takes several forms; art teaches a visual language, music teaches the language of sound, and physical education teaches the language of movement. Spanish is taught as a second language. Annunciation is a school of avid readers, creative writers, artists, and enthusiastic learners.

What is the purpose of language in education?

The purpose of language in education at Annunciation is to develop students who communicate effectively in a variety of ways. Language is used to show what you know but also to express what you do not know through questioning and wonderings. Language is the foundation for all learning and understanding; through it, students are able to communicate their ideas and gain new perspectives.

The primary language of instruction at Annunciation is English. The scope and sequence of specific language skills is dictated by the Minnesota State Standards (Common Core State Standards for ELA) and is consistent with the International Baccalaureate language scope and sequence. Additionally, we strive to use language to

- to promote inquiry and reflection.

- to support the learner profile and attitudes.
- to encourage age appropriate social discourse

Additional Language: Annunciation students in kindergarten through eighth grade receive instruction in Spanish as a second language. Research supports that language acquisition occurs best at an early age, and it is an integral part of being an internationally-minded school.

Principles and Practices of Teaching Language

Annunciation staff works collaboratively to promote student language learning by:

- Using a research based, standards driven, and balanced literacy approach to instruction
- Modelling proficient language practice through reading aloud, reflecting on reading, as well as speaking clearly and listening with respect.
- Asking students to demonstrate their language skills in guided and independent practice. A gradual release model of teaching is used for writing instruction.

The Practices used at Annunciation to Teach and Develop Language

Speaking - We teach a broad range of speaking skills including:

- Communicating with clarity and proper volume
- Speaking fluently
- Expressing opinions and participating in discussions
- Discuss feelings, thoughts and opinions in small/large groups
- Presenting evidence
- Persuading others
- Agreeing/disagreeing/partially agreeing
- Asking purposeful questions
- Teaching respectful responses
- Engaging effectively in collaborative discussions
- Expressing opinions and participating in discussion

The strategies we use to teach speaking skills including:

- Responsive Classroom skills: sounds, looks, feels like
- Sharing at Morning Meetings and class discussions
- Partner reading
- Practicing sounds during Foundations (phonics instruction)
- Reader's Theatre
- Presentations
- Sharing, book reports, strategies
- Interviews
- Storytelling

- Talk like a...(mathematician, scientist, etc.)

Listening - We teach a broad range of listening skills including:

- Listen to respond vs. listening until it's my turn
- Developing listening comprehension skills
- Focusing attention
- Productive discussions and staying on topic
- Making others feel heard and valued

The strategies we use to teach listening skills include:

- Morning Meeting and in class discussions
- Buddy Reading
- Recording facts and taking notes
- Being an interested audience for assemblies, class presentations
- Participation in Reader's Workshop mini-lessons, guided reading groups, and large group
- Math Talks
- One speaker at a time (no interruptions)
- Sustaining attention

Reading - We teach a broad range of reading skills including:

- Pleasure
- Knowledge acquisition
- Fluency and comprehension
- Reading for different purposes
- Decoding words and text

The strategies we use to teach reading skills include:

- Foundations (Phonics instruction)
- Lucy Calkins; Reader's and Writer's Workshop
- Guided reading, large group discussions
- Journaling
- Reading for meaning across curriculum in all subject areas

Writing - We teach a broad range of writing skills including:

- Clear, opinionated, writing
- Academic language
- Writing for a specific audience
- Grammar skills
- Research/Report writing
- Genres of written expression: Narrative, Summative, Descriptive, Persuasive

- Conventions of print appropriate to grade level expectations
- Drawing information from informational texts
- Spelling

The strategies we use to teach writing skills include:

- Direct instruction of foundational skills
- Writers workshop - Daily writing in all subject areas
- 6 traits
- Modeling with literature examples
- Study of figurative language to enhance writing
- Grammar - parts of speech, sentence structure
- Editing
- Writing in response to
- Math in written form

Language B – Spanish

Our community supports and fosters the development of additional language learning by:

- Students in kindergarten through fifth grade receive Spanish instruction twice a week.
- Use of Spanish language in the lunch line and throughout the school
- Weekly prayer in Spanish
- Classrooms and school areas are labeled in Spanish
- Teachers acknowledge second language in their daily use of the vocabulary
- Learning about Spanish speaking countries
- Partnering with schools in Spanish speaking countries

Support of Mother Tongue

The student body of Annunciation Elementary School is represented by 100% native English speakers. Approximately 1% of our students have an immediate family member for whom Spanish is their mother tongue. Three students have a family member who regularly speaks either Russian or Tagalog, in addition to English, as a home language.

At this time, Annunciation does not have any students for whom English is not their native language. If, in the future we have students with such needs, the following practices and strategies will be utilized

- Encouraging students to speak their mother tongue language
- Encouraging parents and families to speak their mother tongue language

- Activating prior knowledge during instruction
- Encouraging paired discussions (speaking and writing)
- Honoring and supporting the mother tongue by making connections
- Offering library resources – variety of languages
- Offering translations in Seesaw for student portfolios and school/teacher communications

Students in need of more significant support will be referred to the Minneapolis Public Schools to be evaluated for service.

“Language is involved in all learning and is an essential vehicle for inquiry and the construction of meaning. It provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking.” MTPYPH

- Policy approved by K-8 staff and administration, Nov. 2016
- Updated September 2017