

Annapolis High School  
IB MYP / Diploma/ Career -related Programme Language Policy

### Philosophy

The ability to effectively communicate influences how learners construct knowledge and contributes to their cognitive academic growth and personal/interpersonal development. The greater a student's fluency in the language of learning, the greater the likelihood that they will experience success in school. Acquiring a new language encourages students to understand culture as it relates to a group's practice, beliefs, products, and perspectives. It is important that our students respect the dignity of other cultural groups and understand how that respect can be demonstrated within their school, city, country, and beyond. To that end, all members of the Annapolis High School staff are language teachers.

Every learner within every classroom must feel accepted and safe – safe to express themselves, to participate in discussions and to practice developing language skills, even if their current skills differ from those of their peers. It is the responsibility of each Annapolis HS instructor to establish a classroom culture where every student contributes to their own and to their peers' abilities to learn.

We also recognize that skills in discussion, reading and writing contribute to deeper learning, retention of knowledge and stronger global awareness. To build our collective skills as teachers of language we will collaborate in interdisciplinary grade-level teams and vertical content specific teams to better recognize the language needs of our learners and to build our own professional abilities to meet those needs, whether that professional development can be addressed by accessing the collective abilities of our school staff or seeking the support of experts beyond our school site.

To ensure that our philosophy is enacted it is the intent of the Annapolis community to honestly monitor current conditions and take action to move toward the reality we intend to create.

### Language Profile

Annapolis, Maryland, with an approximate population of 40,000 is home to the US Naval Academy and near Fort Meade and approximately 30 miles away from Washington DC and Baltimore. Anne Arundel County Public Schools is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the state and operates 110 schools serving this urban and suburban community where military transfers contribute to a transient student population and deployments create temporary single parent homes.

Annapolis High School offers the MYP/ Diploma and Career-related Programme, Performing and Visual Arts magnet, and NJROTC/JROTC. It serves 2,100 students in grades 9 through 12 of which 54% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Annapolis's instructional staff includes 15 teachers who are native speakers in Spanish and more than half the staff of 61 is moderately comfortable speaking a language other than English. The school has a dedicated ESOL department with 15 teachers to provide services the 33% of the student population who are ESL.

Language Acquisition instruction in French, Italian, Chinese and Spanish is offered to all students.

The primary language of instruction at Annapolis is English. Eighty-six percent of current 10<sup>th</sup> grade students scored proficient or better on the PAARC state exams in reading in the spring of 2018. School-based assessments administered in 2018 indicated that many students struggle to effectively convey their thinking in writing or content-related class discussions. When examining this data along with walk-through observations, an interdisciplinary, multi-grade team of teachers reported that approaches to learning in communication, collaboration, and self-management are often not included in the planning for or delivery of instruction in all subject areas. This realization contributes to our recognition that ALL teachers are language teachers.

Teacher comments in grade-level meetings highlight a need for differentiation to meet the language learning needs of students whose abilities vary markedly from their class peers. With 20% students identified as ESL according to district guidelines and a special education population of 10%, both mainstreamed, at times, into the same classes, the need for differentiated instruction to meet students' developing language needs is clear. The differences in teacher abilities to meet these learning needs is evident from instructional rounds (focused observations) and must become an emphasis for future professional development.

## Literacy

### Close Reading in All Subject Groups

All teachers are trained to utilize close reading and close writing strategies to support the development of content knowledge and conceptual understanding within their specific discipline. These strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Modeling of masterful reading of texts (print and non-print) at a complexity level appropriate for students' grade.
- Multiple opportunities for students to reread, utilize marginalia, question the text, and uncover layers of meaning leading to deeper comprehension.
- Use of context clues, word parts, and figurative language to determine word meaning and author intent.
- Participation in discourse in pairs, small groups and whole class to deepen understanding.
- Opportunities for students to reflect upon their own thinking in the context of processing the thinking of others.
- Frequent opportunities for students to express their thinking in writing in response to both text dependent and inquiry questions citing text evidence to support their reasoning.
- Skill development in the delivery and receipt of feedback from peers or instructor.
- Focus on progress rather than grades.

### Use of Measurable Daily Objectives and Performances of Understanding

Providing, in student-friendly terms, a purpose for every lesson, measurable daily objectives let students know the why, what, how, and how well of every lesson's purpose. Aligned to content standards and a trajectory informed by learner needs, learning targets guide instruction and learning within daily lessons.

A formal performance of understanding within each lesson lets students know how well they are doing on this lesson's target, informs teachers about each student's progress, and provides for

immediate feedback to learners prior to the close of a lesson, thereby informing learners and teachers of appropriate next steps.

### Unit Planning

Unit planning, especially within collaborative settings, provides teachers with an opportunity to consider how they may include strategies for building language and communication skills in all learners in all subject groups. When planning with peers who teach the same subject, teachers are able to share successful experiences and, when needed, ask for support in addressing specific language needs they've identified in some learners. Guidance in identifying differentiation strategies for struggling learners or those requiring more challenging experiences is provided by special education and gifted resource specialists. Collaborative teams also provide one another support in the development of assessment and the use of criterion-related assessment tools designed to clarify for students how they are progressing in areas related to language and what their next steps can be as they strive to improve.

### Grade Level Interdisciplinary Collaborative Planning

Discussions between teachers who share the same students helps to identify specific language learning needs for students as seen from multiple perspectives. Meetings help teachers to identify common cross-curricular connections for possible interdisciplinary collaborations. The most common connections made thus far connect literature units to world geography or history and science coursework. Teachers' selections of texts often have a global connection, allowing students to explore through literature cultures beyond their own.

### Language Acquisition

Language Acquisition instruction is offered in Italian, Chinese, French or Spanish to all Annapolis students. In grade 9, students will decide which language to pursue for their required 2-year language acquisition study. For students who will continue their education in the Diploma Program or Career-related Programme are required to continue their language study for grades 11 and 12.

### Support Services

The following school-based services are offered to support both teachers and students:

- Response to Intervention
  - Students who are struggling in reading, math, science and social studies are identified early through teachers' use of formative assessments and daily performances of understanding. In addition to the support provided by each classroom teacher to these students, trained specialists are available to aid teachers and/or additional instruction to students. These specialists provide support in reading, math, instructional planning and delivery, differentiation, special education resources and strategies, media literacy and research skills.
- Instructional Rounds
  - All instructional staff members are encouraged to participate in Instructional Rounds. This process allows teachers to observe peers whose instructional practices provide exceptional support to students in development of language skills or to identify practices which impede student progress in language skills. Instructional Rounds includes a non-judgmental evaluation of observation data

and a collaborative reflective discussion of effective instructional strategies which should be shared and promoted, as well as honest, frank discussions addressing identified areas requiring improvement. While the observations provide data, the strength of Instructional Rounds is found in the collegial discourse which raises the professionalism of the entire staff. Our abilities to meet students' language needs is a shared journey.

- Media Services
  - Annapolis's librarian works closely with teachers, students, parents and school administration to make sure that curricular and support materials are available to support the development of language. Significant efforts have been taken to provide materials supporting school literacy efforts, the study of world cultures and resources to support students whose mother tongue is not English as well as students beginning their study of Chinese, French and Spanish.

The following district services support student learning a new language, including those new to speaking English:

- Anne Arundel County Public School ESOL and World Classical Languages (WCL)
  - The purpose of the WCL and English as a Second Language programs in AACPS is to ensure that students exceed local, state, and national standards for foreign language and English as a second language. AACPS provides an opportunity for all students to become fluent in more than one language, with the understanding that: all students are capable of learning an additional language; the best time for a child to begin to learn a second or third language is before age 10; longer sequences of instruction lead to higher levels of language proficiency; children who study another language have an openness to and appreciation of other cultures; the 21st-century interdependence of national and world communities will require educated people to develop communication skills in other languages.
- ESL Screening
  - The WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test is used as an English language proficiency "screener" test for incoming students who may be designated as English language learners. It assists educators with programmatic placement decisions such as identification and placement of ELLs. The W-APT is one component of WIDA's comprehensive assessment system.

## Review and Distribution of the Policy

### Policy Review

- An IB Policy steering committee consisting of teachers, specialists, administrators, parents, students, and community members will review drafts of this policy and other policies and provide suggestions for any improvements or alterations.
- Each of the literacy practices outlined here will need ongoing development and assessment to provide improvement for teachers and thus for students. Professional learning opportunities will be provided to support Annapolis staff in these efforts.

- Connections to the Assessment Policy and Inclusion/Special Education Needs Policy will assist in monitoring progress in language development for all student populations.

#### Communication of Policy

- The completed Language Policy will be shared with the entire faculty in a formal meeting and will remain on the school's shared drive for staff to access as needed. Additionally, copies of the policy will also be available on the school's website.

#### Provision for Growth/Improvement

- As all of Annapolis's 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> students participate in the Middle Years Programme now, adaptations to meet student learning needs may be required in the following areas:
  - development of a process for identifying and meeting the needs of bilingual students
  - professional development to assist teachers in meeting the needs of ESL learners
  - recognizing that every student will not meet the same level of language proficiency at the same time, a continuum of Language Acquisition courses/schedules may need to be developed to meet the developing academic and social needs of new language learners in order for each student to achieve his or her personal best.