

# **Woodmoor Elementary Language Policy, 2020 - 2021**

## **I. Language Profile**

The student body at Woodmoor Elementary School represents 19 countries, and students speak over 12 languages and dialects. Instruction is delivered in English.

## **II. Beliefs about Language**

The staff at Woodmoor Elementary believes that language is fundamental to the success of all student learning. As a learning community, we aim to cultivate students' ability to express themselves thoughtfully and effectively through verbal and non-verbal communication. We believe that language instruction should occur daily and should be developmentally appropriate and responsive to students' individual needs.

To be active participants, who engage with and respond to the world around them, learners must develop skills in many facets of language. Acquired through interaction and reading, receptive language is necessary to engage with another person, take another's point of view, and understand complex texts. Expressive language skills allow learners to interact with others successfully and to share their thoughts and ideas. We believe that language should be acquired through authentic, meaningful contexts in which students learn the purpose of language, learn about language, and learn through language.

## **III. Classroom Instruction**

As students' language development takes place over multiple opportunities and settings, in subject-specific and transdisciplinary contexts, all teachers are teachers of language. Classroom instruction specifically addresses language development and supports students' acquisition of language skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and media literacy.

When planning units of inquiry and instruction, teachers incorporate strategies to activate students' prior knowledge and build background, instructors scaffold students' understanding and language development to access their prior knowledge.

Across units of inquiry and individual lessons, teachers identify opportunities to co-construct shared meanings and record and share information to map the development of new language and understanding. Learning engagements and assignments provide students with multiple modes to acquire and practice language skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and media literacy. Learners apply literacy and language skills across subject areas and concepts to construct deeper understandings.

In all grade-levels, students receive daily Guided Reading instruction based on the Fountas and Pinnell reading levels to address specific literacy skills and address individual student needs. In Kindergarten through second grade, students receive systematic phonics instructions through the Open Court phonics program to build foundational reading skills. Beyond second grade, students who demonstrate phonics skills deficits receive differentiated phonics support to meet their individual needs. Teachers and staff regularly model appropriate language demonstrating the conventions and mechanics of the English language.

#### **IV. Mother Tongue Development**

The students at Woodmoor Elementary represent many different cultures. While our language of instruction is English, we recognize the importance of supporting and celebrating a child's mother tongue. As a part of after school enrichment, Woodmoor Elementary offers both a French and a Spanish club, with some sessions specifically held for heritage speakers. These clubs support mother-tongue development for our students from Spanish speaking and Francophonie countries or households. These clubs also introduce our students to different languages and to celebrate the culture of various French and Spanish speaking nations.

#### **V. Supporting ELL Students**

Students who enter Woodmoor Elementary with limited English proficiency are assessed through the Baltimore County Public School's Office of World Languages. Based on this assessment, students may receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in our building. Our ESOL teacher leads this instructional time, and students work to continue building academic skills with an emphasis on the acquisition of the English language.

Students who receive ESOL services receive additional English language instruction outside of the classroom. English language instruction focuses on speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The frequency and duration of ESOL services are determined by the students' scores on the assessment conducted by the Office of World Languages and subsequent WIDA testing collected in January of each year. Scores on the previous year's WIDA determines a student's eligibility for the subsequent year's ESOL status. Parent permission is required to receive ESOL services, and parents can opt-out of services at any time.

Whenever possible, the ESOL curriculum parallels what is happening in the classroom, and the ESOL teacher collaborates with grade-level teachers to ensure continuity of instruction. The ESOL teacher provides specific feedback about student growth through progress reports at the end of the second and fourth quarters. Students with limited English skills typically receive instruction outside of the classroom whereas students with more developed skills may receive services in their general education classroom. All English Language Learners are eligible for accommodations in the classroom and on state testing if necessary, as determined by WIDA scores.

## **VI. Additional Language Instruction**

Spanish is an additional language at Woodmoor Elementary. Students from Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade attend a 50-minute Spanish class once a week. Morning announcements and school-wide presentations allow for additional learning, as Spanish words and phrases, along with information about Hispanic culture, are shared throughout the year. Students are encouraged to engage with the Spanish language beyond their formal Spanish class by interacting with bilingual labels and materials around the school building or by accessing Spanish texts in the library.

## **VII. Language in the Classroom**

The staff at Woodmoor Elementary places importance on the development of social language. Each homeroom class engages in community circles each morning to begin their day; during these circles, students focus on social skills such as greeting one other, making eye contact, speaking, listening, and interacting. When conflicts arise throughout the school day, staff support students through the process of calming down and addressing concerns in a respectful manner that works toward a solution between students. Additionally, Woodmoor staff work toward

using “teacher language,” through the Responsive Classroom program, to build a rapport with students by using respectful and clear language that encourages student agency.

Additionally, the use of diverse language is encouraged throughout the year in many ways. During community circles, teachers encourage students to greet one another in another language to recognize and celebrate linguistic diversity and heritage. An important Woodmoor event is our World Cultures Day. During World Cultures Day, students are encouraged to wear clothing that represents their heritage. Community members and embassy representatives prepare cultural and language activities to present; students spend the day recognizing and celebrating diverse cultures to become more internationally minded.

## **VIII. Reviewing and Communicating**

This policy was created with collaboration from all members of the Woodmoor Elementary Community. It was shared with parents and community stakeholders through the Magnet Advisory Council to solicit feedback. We understand that student needs are ever-changing and we recognize that our language policy must be revisited and revised. Our language policy will be revisited for revisions at the beginning of each school year. Throughout the year, the policy will be revisited as necessary.