

## Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy IB Language Policy

### Immersion Education Philosophy

Immersion education seeks to capitalize on the natural development of language structures and functions in the brain. The recent explosion of brain research provides theoretical basis for this innovative classroom instruction. Recognizing children's innate ability to derive meaning from their environment, immersion education seeks to replicate this learning in a structured classroom environment. Children gain a second language through their engagement in meaningful learning experiences in content areas (reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science). In an immersion program, students are surrounded by the target language, with initial emphasis on receptive language (listening, reading, and comprehension). Expressive language skills (speaking and writing) emerge later. Just as when a small child learns to speak in words before sentences, children in the early grades of an immersion program acquire vocabulary and sight words before the more complex grammar structures.

### **Advantages of Second-Language Acquisition:**

- Enhance listening skills
- Develop higher-level / critical-thinking abilities
- Communicate more effectively
- Communicate to a broader audience
- Heighten awareness of self and others
- Gain insights into other cultures
- Increase flexibility and adaptability in all situations
- Build intuitive acuity
- Strengthen creativity and analytical thinking
- Connect to the global community

### **Dual Language Immersion**

Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy implements a half-day language immersion program for all students in grades Pre-K3 through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. After 2nd grade, students continue to take Spanish as a regular course. In the immersion program, approximately 50% of instruction is provided in Spanish, with students learning in a Spanish only class for half of the day and an English class for the other half. Literacy instruction, along with other core subject instruction is provided simultaneously in the Spanish and English classes. Research has proven that early exposure to a second language is very beneficial to mastery of a child's native language. Research has also determined that the best time to learn a second language is prior to age twelve.

Students who learn a second language at an early age benefit from having an expanded world view, greater intercultural appreciation, and the ability to learn additional languages more easily and a competitive edge as global citizens.

### **Support of Mother Tongue**

MMBDA has the special responsibility to recognize and support language development to ensure that all students are provided with the environment and the necessary language support to enable them to participate fully in the academic program and in the social life of MMBDA, as well as to develop as an individual. All faculty at MMBDA are considered teachers of language. Language learning plays a major role where the language(s) of instruction may not be the student's first language. 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, for the language, literature and culture of their home country. It is strong predictor of their long-term academic achievement, including acquisition of other languages. Respect for differences between languages and between dialects should be promoted.

At MMBDA, support of mother tongue is evident in a variety of ways. For Early Childhood grades through second grade, there is half-day immersion in the Spanish language setting where full instruction is provided in Spanish for all content areas. Additionally in the classroom setting, the prominent mother tongue language of Spanish is addressed by labeling various classroom signage and posters as well as in the dominant language, English.

The MMBDA Library has included a growing section of children's books translated from English to Spanish as well as the inclusion of some prominent Spanish language literature, novels, and stories.

The MMBDA website utilizes Google Translator so that parents can translate the school webpage into the mother tongue and be able to read about the school's hallmark programs, learn about submission deadlines and deliverables, as well as keeping abreast of the school calendar and upcoming events. Parent communication such as newsletters, progress reports, and report cards are translated in to Spanish where necessary.

MMBDA would additionally represent other mother-tongue languages both in the classroom and through parent communications as necessary based on enrollment shifts and changes so that all students were represented in the classroom setting as well as in the larger school community.

### **English as a Second Language Support**

For English language learners, MMBDA has incorporated a full time Spanish Language Coordinator to help provide related support services to students requiring ESL accommodations. Additionally, the Spanish Coordinator will facilitate inclusion instruction in

Brookland Campus  
Grades Pre-K3 through 8  
1404 Jackson St. NE  
Washington, DC 20017  
t: 202.459.4710  
f: 202.318.7588

16<sup>th</sup> St. Campus  
Grades Pre-K3 through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
5413 16<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20011  
t: 202.506.3620  
f: 202.506.3598

the least restrictive environment. Finally, remedial after school instructional services are provided to students requiring additional academic support.

### **Latin at MMBDA (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

Studying a foreign language completes a student's formal education and extends opportunities for personal and social growth. The ability to communicate in a language other than one's own native language affords the learner opportunities to develop a foundation for intellectual growth.

Learning classical languages involves the same skills as learning a modern language while students gain content knowledge of the works of Greek and Roman philosophers, poets, historians. Latin also provides exposure to some of the greatest authors and figures of classical civilizations including Virgil, Cicero, Tacitus, and Julius Caesar. As students study Latin culture and language, it helps gain understandings of ancient cultures and the relationship those cultures have on American government and society.

Recent reading research has supported the morphological approach to vocabulary development in elementary and middle school. In linguistics, this practice of identifying and analyzing the parts of words in a given language is helpful in its acquisition. Approximately 70 percent of the English vocabulary and 90% of the Spanish vocabulary are based in Latin. Latin aids students in developing proficiency in English. Latin builds vocabulary and writing ability.

Latin students learn the mechanics and structure of language: how words function in a sentence, how they relate to each other, how they are emphasized. It strengthens reading comprehension. It encourages attention to details and organization. This prepares students for studying other languages including French, Spanish, and even German, Russian, and Arabic; and provides a richer understanding to the scientific and mathematical concepts and terms they will interact with in Mathematics and the Sciences.

### Review of Language Policy

In efforts to show continual growth and better ensure that the needs of our students are met at an optimal level. Our Language Policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis during the summer months and updated on a need be basis by the Language Policy Committee. All updates will be made public to all stake holders including students, parents, faculty and staff, and the community via our Parent and Teacher Handbooks as well as our website.

\*MMBDA acknowledges the usage of the International Baccalaureate document “*Making The PYP Happen*” in the creation of this Language Policy.