

Bear Valley International School Language Policy

Language Philosophy:

At Bear Valley International School (BVIS), we believe that language is foundational to all learning; therefore, all teachers are language teachers and all students are language learners. BVIS teachers participate in a school-wide shared literacy initiative to ensure they are supporting students' English language skills as well as their mother tongue. Furthermore, students speak, read, and write in all disciplines according to the appropriate expectations of each subject.

BVIS students may come to middle school speaking multiple languages, and the language of the home is not always the language of the school. We aim to nurture the mother tongue and help students maintain their cultural identity through Language Acquisition courses (offered in Spanish) and culturally responsive instruction. Through the exploration of language, students become stronger communicators in our multilingual world and gain an appreciation of diversity and international-mindedness.

Support for mother tongues:

When enrolling in Denver Public Schools (DPS), all students complete a Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ), which identifies the primary language spoken at home, the language most often spoken by the student, and the language the student first acquired. As the mother tongue of BVIS is English, the majority of students speak English.

The majority of our English Language Learners (ELLs) speak Spanish as their first language. Therefore, BVIS provides a Spanish Language Arts course to support their mother tongue. In this course, students explore thematic units centered on identity and culture; the texts they read are in Spanish.

In order to encourage bilingual students, students who need support with language take English Language Development (ELD). They are often paired up with students who share the same mother tongue so that they can support each other with developing new skills while continuing to provide opportunities to use their home language.

Support for students who are not yet proficient in the language of instruction:

English Language Development (ELD): All students who identify a mother tongue other than English on their HLQ are placed in an ELD course. Denver Public Schools requires that ELLs have a minimum of 45 minutes daily dedicated to ELD*. In ELD courses, students receive targeted instruction in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Language and Literature Overview:

- Language and Literature courses fulfill the requirements of the district and state; these courses are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, which focus on the following strands:
 - reading: literature
 - reading: informational text
 - writing

- speaking and listening
- language
- Students receive explicit vocabulary instruction and practice using new words in the context of the texts they are reading.
- Teachers use texts from a variety of cultures and historical time periods, including one world literature unit.
- Students who need significant support in phonics, fluency, oral reading and comprehension receive extra support either through a literacy skills course or a modified Language & Literature course.

Shared Literacy Overview:

Language and Literature, Individuals and Societies, and science teachers comprise the BVIS shared literacy team, which was formed to support our students in reading, writing, and vocabulary. The team meets weekly to analyze student work around literacy standards, norm on literacy instruction, create reading and writing tasks, and share strategies for supporting students with IEPs and ELLs.

Silent Sustained Reading

BVIS has a partnership with The Carmel Hill Education Fund to further support our students' language development through reading. Carmel Hill's mission is to foster students' love of reading and provide educators with the means to improve students' reading abilities. Through this partnership, Carmel Hill provides BVIS with classroom libraries containing a variety of reading levels, and we provide students with 30 minutes a day of Silent Sustained Reading (SSR).

*At BVIS, ELD is scheduled during one block of students integrated arts. Because of this district requirement, ELLs will not meet the requirement for 50 hours in all subject areas.

The IB committee, Building Leadership Team, and Parent Action Committee will regularly review and revise all MYP policies as needed. Communication of any changes will be presented to all stakeholders.

Committee Members

Katie Vandiver, MYP coordinator; Sonia Williams, Assistant Principal; Chelsea Geier, ELD teacher; Caitlin Weaver, ELD teacher; Tess Crissey, Language Acquisition teacher

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