

Huffman Language Policy

Statement of Belief

At Huffman Elementary, language is fundamental to the success of student learning. Meaningful learning includes the ability to communicate through all modalities, including speaking, reading, and artistic expression; this also includes communication through different languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts. Language is essential to the construction of meaning and connects all curriculum elements and supports the PYP mission of the school. Literacy instruction is integrated into all units of inquiry by using balanced literacy, authentic assessment, and differentiated instruction that meets the needs of each learner with the aim of building lifelong readers and writers. Through student-centered inquiry, teachers facilitate opportunities to use language in many different formats, including debate, play, and elements of the Humanities, as well as the traditional teaching of language both embedded in the units of inquiry and as stand-alone subjects. Huffman understands that every teacher is a language teacher and must work collaboratively to ensure that all languages are honored, developed, and supported through integrated learning experiences in meaningful contexts.

Identification of Language Needs

As required by federal and state guidelines, all students enrolled in a Texas school must complete a Home Language Survey indicating the language most often spoken in the home, as well as additional languages spoken. For any student who is not from a home in which English is the listed primary language, testing must occur to determine level of ability in English. This information determines whether the student is classified as an English second language learner, and informs the school of the primary language. Any student who is determined to officially be “ESL” is placed with a teacher who is certified in ESL instruction through the State of Texas Board of Education; all Huffman teachers are ESL certified. Students who are not fluent in English are also given a yearly assessment, the TELPAS, an online state test which determines their progress in the acquisition of the English language. Students who test at the highest level of competency are placed in monitored status to make sure that they continue to progress in their abilities. Although Huffman does not offer bilingual classes to students, it does have the option to use Spanish instructional materials and Spanish versions of required state tests.

The campus utilizes a state-required LPAC (Language Proficiency Assessment Committee). The LPAC includes an assistant principal/principal, teacher representative, a parent representative, and others members as appropriate. The purpose of the LPAC is to ensure proper placement of ESL students and to monitor ongoing progress toward language proficiency.

Support for Language Learners

The classroom environment is rich in print and literature to equip students with the tools they need to become lifelong readers, writers and communicators. Teachers act as facilitators who model writing, reading strategies, and listening skills.

Huffman scholars are encouraged to preserve their cultural identity through the use of their mother tongue at home and school. Students are also encouraged to share and celebrate their culture and language within their classroom and school learning communities through presentations related to program of inquiry units and a variety of other formal and informal opportunities. The library houses a collection of books in multiple languages that support mother tongue development. Parents of learners whose mother tongue is a language other than English are provided with the resources and information necessary to be involved in their child's academic endeavors.

All teachers are certified ESL and trained to support student development and success using best practices and strategies. Teachers are well informed of their students language needs and range of abilities.

Language in the Classroom

Huffman teachers strive to promote a language-rich classroom through various literacy activities such as guided reading, read alouds, writer's workshop, content writing, classroom libraries, visuals, interactive word walls and opportunities for students to use language during presentations and collaboration.

Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individually assessed in their reading ability using data from achievement tests and running records to help target specific learner needs. They participate in Comprehension Toolkit strategies, word meaning, word studies and writing strategies to support learning at their level and beyond. Reading and Tech Buddies across grade levels allows older students to support younger students. Technical writing, as well as self-expression, is encouraged by providing frequent opportunities for written and oral reflection. The focus of the learning is for the experience to be meaningful, engaging and challenging to each student.

Language and the Program of Inquiry

Language is integrated throughout the Program of Inquiry. Higher level thinking, key concept questions, and extended research all lend themselves to development of a strong vocabulary and language presence within the planners. Oral, visual, and written language are all present within planner activities. Literature selections both in read-alouds and guided reading are chosen to build an understanding of the concepts within the planners.

There are monthly rotations of integrated specials throughout all PYP grades. This would include the language of visual art, music, Spanish, and PE (movement) co-teaching with classroom teachers to incorporate their specific areas of knowledge and encourage connections with the POI planners.

Language is promoted throughout the building by connecting PSPE content with the program of inquiry. For example, PSPE teachers support development of common language by connecting to the themes, central ideas, lines of inquiry and key concepts in their daily practices.

Additional Language

Huffman is fortunate in that the majority of students at Huffman are bilingual (Spanish and English). The inclusion of Chinese Mandarin provides some students a second language, but many a third. Each student in PK-5 attends a weekly class in which students undertake cross-disciplinary learning experiences in music, art, literature, and socialization skills. This schedule allows learners to build vocabulary and knowledge according to age and increment as they become more familiar with the language. Meaningful Mandarin instruction helps learners develop their oral, written, and visual communication skills. Learners develop their skills in depth by becoming inquirers, communicators, and risk-takers. Students also learn about the culture of Mandarin speaking countries, which helps develop a sense of internationalism.

Language Resources

Our goal is to increase language resources by developing an extensive literacy library of leveled books that support the IB Learner Profile, unit planners, and the many native tongues of our learning community. The Huffman library currently has an array of fiction and nonfiction books, a Maker Space to encourage collaboration, and an ever-expanding collection of books that represent the native tongues of our diverse learners. In addition, each student has a tablet that provides access to a wide variety of online resources that supports student learning and research.