



Neelsville Middle School and the Watkins Mill Cluster Language Policy



Philosophy

Our philosophy is that all teachers are language teachers. Language is the driving force that connects all the IB disciplines. Effective language learning is a natural precursor to global understanding and awareness. Our goal is for all students to achieve proficiency in English, the language of instruction (LOI), as well as in a second language, French or Spanish.

Language Profile

The English Language Development (ELD) program provides high-quality English language development instruction aligned to grade-level content standards in English Language Arts. These courses focus on helping students develop the academic language proficiency needed to be able to learn content knowledge, skills, and processes and effectively use language to communicate proficiently in mainstream courses. Potential Emergent Multilingual Learners (EML) are evaluated both orally and in writing to determine if they need to be placed in ELD classes or can be placed in mainstream classes. Students in ELD classes move fluidly through the classes based on their rate of progress, not the number of years in the program. ELD classes are taught in math and social studies as well as specifically in the English language, with support from both a content area instructor and an ELD teacher. As students progress through the ELD continuum, they are increasingly placed in the language of instruction classes until they “graduate” to a full LOI schedule. EML students receive classroom and testing accommodations to help them as language learners; bilingual dictionaries and extended testing and assignment time are the most common ones. Professional development is provided for staff to learn instructional strategies to use in assisting EML students in their classes. Additionally, many of our diploma and career program candidates list a language other than English as their first language, often speaking a heritage language at home. Because of our location adjacent to Washington, DC, many of these students maintain studies in their home language and culture outside of the normal school day. We also welcome and accommodate students who matriculate to Watkins Mill HS from the language immersion programs at nearby elementary and middle schools.

Language A Instruction

English is the primary language of instruction (LOI) at the Watkins Mill Cluster Schools (WMCS). In the MYP, Diploma and Career Program, English A1 (literature and language and literature) is offered as an HL (higher level) course. In addition to English language instruction, reading and writing are supported across the content areas, as the responsibility of all teachers is to improve students’ ability to communicate both orally and in writing.

Second Language Acquisition

The goal of the Montgomery County Public Schools’ world language program is to educate students in a language and culture in order to make them knowledgeable and active members of a global society. Students learn to use world languages for meaningful communication in both spoken and written forms. The world language program emphasizes language as it is used in real-life situations that students are most likely to encounter. Through world language study,

students develop sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic heritage of other groups, understand their influence on U.S. culture, and become prepared to participate in a society characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity. Students often complete one or more years of a second language, Spanish or French, before entering Watkins Mill HS in Grade 9. At Watkins Mill High School we offer French and Spanish classes for all grade levels. Students are assessed to determine their placement in advanced Language B classes. Placements are then reviewed by the students and parents.

Native speakers of Spanish have uniquely designed curricula for three levels of Spanish for Spanish speakers. These focus on giving these students the written component of their native language instruction since most of them have often been exposed to the language only in its spoken form.

Students are also given the opportunity to complete the Avant 4S Stamp Test which measures language proficiency on a scale of 1-9. The scale is matched to the ACTFL scale of proficiency. Students who achieve an intermediate /high level in all four modalities (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) earn the Seal of Biliteracy. Students who receive an IB score of 5 on an HL Language B exam or a score of 6 on an IB Language B SL exam are also awarded the Seal of Biliteracy.

CP students complete their fifty hours of language development using an online platform called Duo Lingo. Students select a language they have never studied before. They document their language study both on Duo Lingo and through the completion of a Language Development Portfolio.

Mother Tongue Support

Watkins Mill HS and the WMCS supports and respects the mother tongue and culture of all students. Culture is celebrated through many avenues: International Night, Spanish Honor Society, French Honor Society, Hispanic helping Organization, Latin Dance Team, and various cultural events throughout the school year to name a few examples. Our Media Center subscribes to foreign language publications and continues to expand its collection by adding foreign language reading materials. Additionally, Watkins Mill HS and Montgomery County Public Schools make parent communications and promotional materials available in many native languages.

This policy will be implemented in the following manner:

It will be posted on the school IB web page so that stakeholders may view it at any time

It will be included in the IB Manual which is distributed to students and parents at the time of enrollment in the program.

The policy will be made available to all IB students through their TOK or PPS class.

This policy will be reviewed and revised each school year by the school leadership team in consultation with members of the World Language and ESOL staff; student and parent voices will be used in this process.