

# **Buckland Mills Elementary School Language Policy**

## **School Language Policy:**

Buckland Mills Elementary recognizes that language is an/the integral foundation for learning. We rely on parents, teachers, students and our learning community to share with us their rich cultural background and knowledge. We know that it is through our life experiences and our ability to communicate those experiences to others that we grow as a community of life-long learners. We communicate through seeing, listening, speaking, hearing, reading, and writing. All teachers become language teachers and are central to effective communication in the classroom. We are working hard to incorporate our second world language into our daily routine. We utilize print-rich resources such as books and posters to build background knowledge, connect prior learning and encourage new inquiry in students. This policy will be shared with our entire learning community through their student's classroom guidelines and will be available on our website.

## **Languages of Instruction:**

Our primary language of instruction is English. English is taught in all subject areas of the curriculum. Students begin to learn a second world language in Kindergarten. Presently, students receive Spanish world language instruction 45 minutes per week.

## **Mother Tongue and Cultural Support:**

Buckland Mills Elementary School is a community rich in diversity. We have thirty different languages represented in our school. The top two languages spoken other than English are: Spanish and Arabic. The majority of students whose mother tongue is a language other than English are not literate in that language.

Our school has media resources that support mother tongue languages including, French, Spanish, Korean and Chinese. We will continue to expand our Language Sections in the library to include more second language learner books with money we raise from the fall and spring book fair. Staff is utilized as language translators to help communicate between the school and parents in one of our five major languages: Urdu, Arabic, Spanish, Korean and Vietnamese.

## **Inclusion Practices:**

Buckland Mills has several teaching programs in place to serve our various language learners. Using tiered intervention students are pulled out to work one-on-one or in a small group setting to address their specific learning needs in reading and writing. Our teams focus on best practices and co-teaching to keep all students in their classrooms for all content areas.

Buckland Mills follows a collaborative inclusion and pull out based model. Classroom teachers co-plan and co-teach with Reading specialists, English Language Learner specialists, Special Education specialists and Gifted Education specialists. Push in/pull out services are provided for students who have been identified as needing extra assistance and students who have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Students are also given push in/pull out instruction if they qualify for ELL services.

Students in the Gifted Program are pulled out for additional instruction per the county and state regulations. Students who qualify for gifted instruction require a collaborative working relationship between their classroom teacher and the gifted teacher. The gifted program works closely with the students, teachers, and parents to differentiate for these students' language needs. The gifted education teacher discusses student needs regularly with the classroom teachers and with the parents through a Differentiated Services Report (DSP) that is written and shared once in the fall and once in the spring.

Other programs and practices utilized by our school to meet the needs of our learners are: Reading Recovery, Tiered Supports, Benchmark Literacy, Leveled Literacy Intervention, reading buddies, Literature Circles, Daily 5, Word Study, DSA, Dolch word lists, Raz-Kids, WIDA Access for ELL's, DRA's/QRI's, formal and informal observations, anecdotal records, dual language books, student interviews, parent-teacher meetings, blended math, as well as applicable technology.

### **Identification of Language Needs of Learners:**

In grades K-3 all students are given a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS). These assessments are given in the fall, at the mid-year mark and at the end of the school year. DRA's and writing samples are placed in each child's literacy folder throughout the year and then are passed on to the students' next teacher for the following academic year. ELL students are screened prior to entering school and are assessed again in mid- winter when they are given the WIDA (World Class Instructional Design and Assessment) test. This test assesses students' abilities to read, write, listen and speak at their current ELL level.

Teachers use all assessment information to determine differentiated instruction for students. Teachers meet bi-weekly in collaborative teams to strategically plan lesson for differentiation, learning engagement, and mastery of standards which include opportunities for inquiry. Cooperative learning is designed to support the development of 21st century skills in conjunction with the Virginia State Standards of Learning (SOLS). Reading groups are flexible and allow for student movement throughout the year if need be. Teachers also meet with students individually to discuss their writing and to administer reading quick checks.

Assessments are shared with parents through parent-teacher conferences; student incorporated conferences as well as email and letter correspondence.

**Language Practices that reflect our beliefs:**

- Guided Reading groups implemented K-5.
- Gradual release model for instruction
- Reading Recovery
- PALS Assessment & Full-time PALS tutor
- Reading Buddies
- Classroom libraries (books for students above, on, and below grade level) to meet the needs of all learners.
- Informal/Formal Observations
- Anecdotal records
- Weekly communication with parents via email.
- Tiered supports and collaborative planning
- Professional Vertical Teams
- Roar to Success Academic/Behavior goal setting and progress monitoring by students
- Morning Announcements that incorporate our adopted Language- Spanish
- Classroom Webpages
- Word walls in every classroom
- PYP posters in every classroom
- Classrooms that have examples of print-rich resources, labels, signs, books, teacher and student writing, projects, libraries...
- ELL Program
- Gifted Program

**Inquiry Based Instruction:**

Students at Buckland Mills Elementary participate in open-ended, guided, and teacher directed inquiry lessons. To facilitate student inquiry, we utilize the following practices at our school:

- Encourage student led questions to guide inquiry
- Students and teachers work in collaborative groups
- We Think, Pair, Share and other Visible Thinking Routines
- We discuss and debate topics
- We make inferences about what we are learning about
- We challenge what we already know and refine our learning
- We take field trips to expand to our knowledge

- We use “I wonder” statements to share what we are thinking about

### **Buckland Mills Library and Computer Labs:**

The Library and Computer Labs at Buckland Mills are invaluable resources for students and teachers in language acquisition. Books on every subject and every reading level are available to students for checkout and research purposes. Teachers have access to a book room containing leveled books organized by levels and by fiction/non-fiction to help teachers develop all literacy/language skills.

The Computer Labs helps meet students’ language needs by giving them a way to organize and communicate their thoughts. Our Instructional Technology coach works with classroom teachers to show students how to use audio and visual components combined with text to create products that reflect real world application using technology. Students with limited language proficiency are able to communicate what they have learned through pictures and other visual representations to make them successful.

### **Professional Development:**

Every year our teachers participate in IBPYP professional development by attending off site workshops or by shared best practices at staff meetings. Other trainings that teachers attend throughout the year are content specific and designed to grow our expertise in strategies to support students’ needs. Our teachers also participate in professional book clubs using a book chosen by our leadership team to address one of the PYP elements. Every teacher on staff is assigned to Professional Staff communities to discuss the needs of our students. Many teachers at Buckland Mills have gone on to receive higher education degrees as well as National Board certification. We truly are a community of life-long learners.