



Language Policy

2012-2013

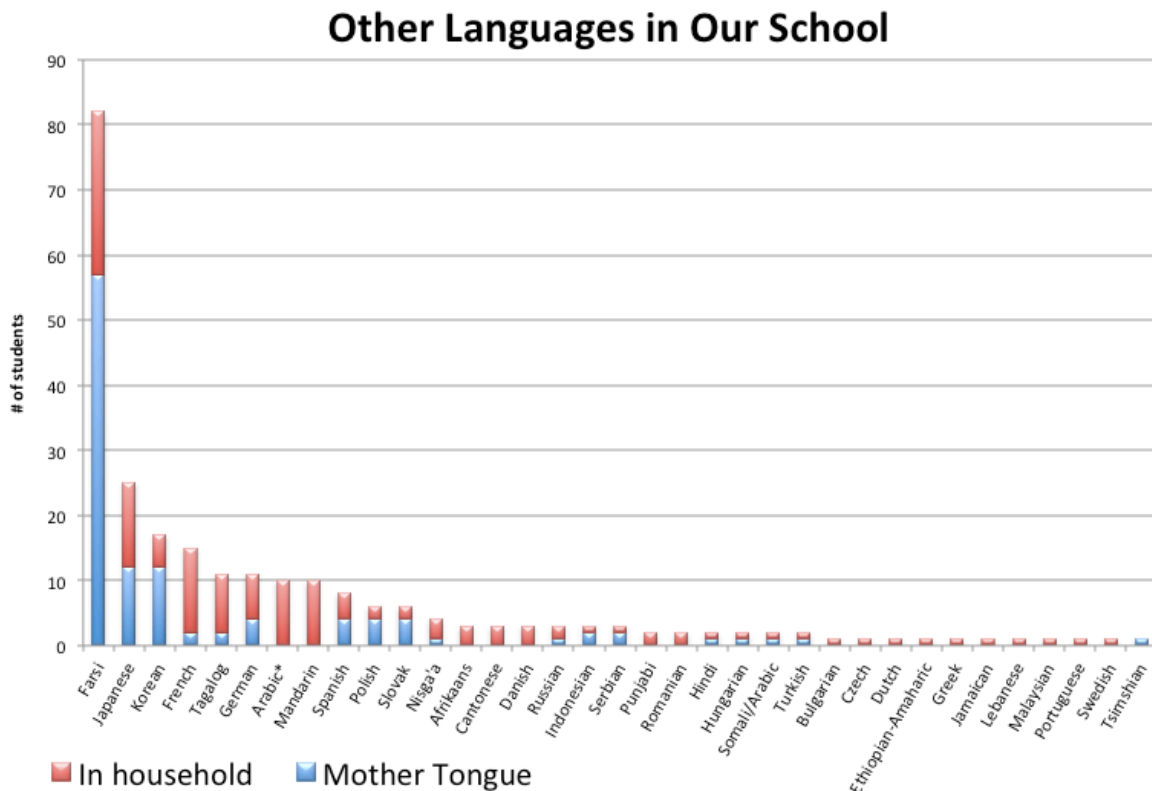


Capilano's language policy has been written collaboratively with input from teachers, Grade K-7 students, support staff, and parents. The language philosophy is a reflection of the perspectives of all stakeholders of the Capilano school community and is reflective of current pedagogy and beliefs about language learning. It is also representative of the current demographics of the language learners of our school community. It is upon this input that the language policy has been built.

The policy is dynamic and ever changing. It will be reviewed at the beginning of each school year by the entire teaching staff, support staff, and representatives of the school community (parents and students) and adjusted to reflect changes in the pedagogy, beliefs, and language needs of the learners. The policy will be made available to all members of the Capilano school community (posted to school's website and published in the parent and staff handbooks). Opportunities for feedback/input will be provided through an annual survey and committee meetings. The IB coordinator, IB steering committee, and school administration will finalize changes to the policy.

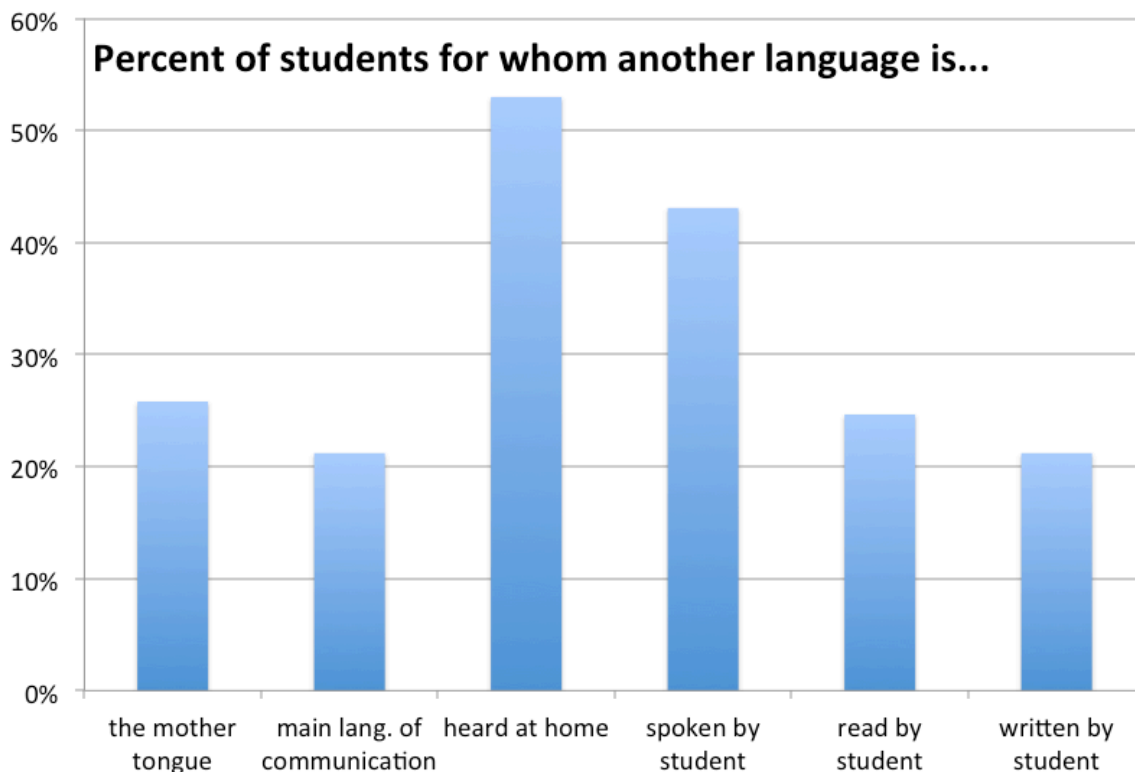
The Capilano Elementary Language Profile

Capilano Elementary is located in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and therefore the predominant language used at the school and surrounding community is English. However, there is still a rich diversity of languages in the school community. In 2012-2013, 78 students had an ESL designation (17% of the 454 students registered). The teaching staff conducted a census (18 of 20 divisions participating) of the students in the fall of 2012 to find out the role of languages in their lives. From this census, 246 students identified 35 languages as being either mother tongue or a language they are



exposed to in their daily lives. As shown in the graph *Other Languages in Our School*, Farsi was by far the most strongly represented, followed by Japanese, Korean, and French.

With 57% of our students indicating they are exposed to another language at home (26% mother tongue), it is clear that our students bring a rich diversity of language experience. Significant portions of our student body communicate, read and write in languages other than English at home. This creates both a need to support students and a resource to enrich our school.



Capilano benefits from a motivated parent community that is supportive of many aspects of school life, including language instruction. When the school conducted a survey of the parents (2010) the most common comments about the benefits of learning a second language were:

- Allows for communication with people from other countries; Allows for connections and relationships to be made with people of other cultures
- Could be a benefit in the future (career-wise) - Since the work world is increasingly globally competitive, important to have a second language to open up opportunities
- Enriches understanding of mother tongue (ex: understanding of grammatical structures)
- Fosters appreciation for the cultural diversity in our world
- Greater respect for, understanding of, and knowledge about other cultures
- Acquisition of a second language/learning a second language early has benefit with respect to brain development

Philosophy

We make meaning of our world through language. Through language, students gain a greater understanding and development of global citizenship, and they acquire a more concrete understanding of the attributes of the IB Learner Profile.

Language learning that includes an additional language, along with honouring and supporting mother tongue, develops international understanding, global awareness and citizenship. We feel this reinforces cultural identity and develops a greater sense of community.

All members of the Capilano community play an active role in language development.

Language Instruction and Learning

Role of Language in the Curriculum

Language learning is viewed as a critical component in the construction of meaning, responsible for creating a framework for the development of conceptual understanding and critical thinking. As a result, language learning is the major connecting element across the curriculum in a transdisciplinary approach to instruction and learning. Language is also viewed as the vehicle for inquiry, and is therefore a central component in all units of inquiry. Language learning grows through authentic language activities, in meaningful contexts, in relation to transdisciplinary learning. Language is seen as an avenue for enjoyment and creativity, as well as learning.

Role of Language in Inquiry

Strong language skills are essential for inquiry and collaboration. Strong reading skills, including basic phonetic awareness as well as broader reading strategies, are needed to conduct research. Visual and media literacies allow students to access information from many additional sources, including charts, images, and media. Focused talk between students, with both strong speaking and listening skills, deepens thinking, builds on student generated ideas, and enables meaning making. Students need to be able to communicate thinking effectively both verbally and non-verbally to share the results of their inquiries.

At Capilano, language instruction must explicitly teach all these interconnected skills, from reading and writing to listening and speaking, to enable our students to inquire into their world and express and share their learning. To assist with this, Capilano teachers use a common language, based on the essential elements of the PYP program, to ensure continuity of language instruction year over year.

Instructional Strategies

A variety of instructional strategies and opportunities are employed to integrate listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and representing in all areas of the curriculum. Language is modeled, taught, and practiced, daily, in a variety of contexts throughout all areas of instruction. Through scaffolding and within the *Zone of Proximal Development* (Vygotsky), students' learning needs are met, acknowledging the variety of developmental stages and individualized rates of language learning.

The focus is on a balanced program of instruction and learning: Students engage in listening, talking, viewing, reading, representing, and writing as they negotiate new learning experiences to build understanding of concepts. Opportunities to listen to and receive ideas and information is balanced with opportunities to express ideas orally; Learners view and interpret other people's work and create presentations to be viewed; Students read, discuss, and respond to various genres of literature, non-fiction, and visual texts; Learners write for various purposes and audiences to express thoughts, ideas, opinions, and knowledge and to further develop their understandings. Multi-media and technology (ICT) is an important component in language learning and is incorporated into instruction in all grades.

Differentiation of Instruction

Language instruction is responsive to the needs of the students, with the recognition that all students need effective modeling and daily opportunities to process and use language in a variety of forms to be successful in school and life. Capilano teachers separate language ability from cognitive ability and recognize that not all students have the same background knowledge and skills. Effective formative assessment and flexible language instruction leads to an inclusive and differentiated learning environment. Instruction provides opportunities for students to express their learning, ideas, information, and feelings critically, creatively, and articulately, through various modes and mediums to incorporate the needs of all learners.

Provincial Requirements and District Support

Capilano's scope and sequence of language instruction is determined and written by the BC Ministry of Education (Language Arts Integrated Resource Package http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp_ela.htm). This comprehensive document provides Provincial Learning Outcomes (PLOs) at each grade level that reflect current practice and pedagogy, based on current research. Use of locally developed documents further defines and supports instruction (*Reading 44*, *Writing 44* and yearly *Focus on Literacy* District in-service for teachers).

Role of Specialist Teachers

Capilano teachers believe that all teachers are teachers of language. At Capilano, single-subject (Music, Library) and specialist teachers, English as a Second Language (ESL) and the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC), play a particularly important role in reinforcing, supporting, and extending the classroom language learning. Those specialists work collaboratively with all other teachers to explicitly connect their language instruction to classroom-based learning. Students who receive assistance from ESL and LAC specialists are supported through small group (grade groupings) and in-class support. The music specialist extends language learning through singing, movement and dance, drama, reading music and playing instruments, most often connecting to classes' current units of inquiry. The librarian works collaboratively with all teachers and students in all grades, locating resources and engaging in team-teaching.

Second Language Learning

The working language of the school is English and the majority of students have English as their mother tongue. As per the Ministry of Education's mandate, all students

in British Columbia must take a second language as part of the required curriculum starting in Grade 5, unless they are eligible for an exemption that must be documented in the student's Individual Education Plan (see assessment policy for more details). In North Vancouver, and in much of Canada, the second language chosen by the school board is French and is ministry-authorized with a specific scope and sequence and Provincial Learning Outcomes. As a result, at Capilano, English is the language of instruction and French is the second language being taught.

At Capilano we have a French language specialist teaching grades K – 7, and we have adjusted allotments of non-instructional time accordingly. Oral and written French language instruction is also integrated when possible into daily learning and units of inquiry in all grades, Kindergarten to grade seven. Instruction is supported by additional French language learning resources and literature in our library.

English as a Second Language and Mother Tongue Support

Any student entering the school system or coming into the district that lists their mother tongue as a language other than English is screened for ESL instruction, as required by North Vancouver School District Policy. The need for additional English Language Learning support is determined by an English Language assessment, carried out by our ESL specialist teacher. (See assessment policy for more information).

By identifying language populations we are able to provide individualized support for English language learning, as well as support for mother tongue languages through the purchase of resources, access to translators, settlement workers and reaching out to our multi – lingual community for support. Teachers and staff use assessment information to seek out appropriate supports for the students in their classrooms. This creates a culture of respect and inclusion by acknowledging and integrating represented languages into instruction. Capilano teachers make efforts to attend to the language needs of individual learners, through the use of adapted materials, peer translators, and resources in the student's mother tongue when accessible, to ensure students, regardless of level of understanding of the host country language (English), are engaged in learning and are provided with opportunities to communicate their thinking and understandings.

We, as a community, have made a commitment to our students and our learning community to continually add to our collection of multi-lingual resources, including bilingual books in over 15 languages. Acquisition of learning resources in students' mother tongue is ongoing, as it is recognized that development of mother tongue language is important not only for cognitive development, but also for cultural identity as it relates to self- esteem. Capilano also recognizes the importance of encouraging and helping students to pursue their inquiries in their mother tongue.

Assessment

Language will be assessed based on our assessment policy.

Professional Development

Our staff is encouraged to pursue on-going professional development in language instruction by attending IBO PYP workshops, school district in-service and in-house professional development lead by administrators, the IB coordinator, school district

literacy specialists, and teacher leaders. Learning about language instruction is further enhanced through regular collaboration with colleagues.

Resources

Capilano students and staff have access to a broad variety of print resources housed in the school library, novel study collections, and in individual classrooms. Parenting resources are also included in the school library collection. Acquisition of multi-lingual, multi-media, and culturally/globally diverse literature has become, and will continue to be a priority for resource purchasing. Our school board is aware of our need to expand these resources and have committed financial support to meet these needs. French language classroom literature resources are needed and will be purchased over the next year. Decisions on resource purchases are based on curricular and instructional needs as well as student interest. All members of the teaching staff are involved in resource purchase decisions, with current emphasis on resource needs relating to unit of inquiry instruction.

Staff Essential Agreements – Language Policy

- The annual review of the language policy will be collaborative, involving all staff members, and parent and student representatives
- The Language policy will be reviewed in September of each school year and adjusted to reflect the needs of the student population and instructional beliefs and practices relating to language learning
- The language policy will reflect best practice as established in current research
- The policy will be made available to all staff students and parents (on school website, in parent and staff handbook).
- The policy will be adhered to by all staff members and reflected in their practice.
- The compilation of data/feedback from surveys of the Capilano parents (mother tongue and beliefs about language learning and instruction) will be incorporated into the policy