



Joel C. Harris Middle School

Language Policy

Philosophy

Joel C. Harris Middle School recognizes that the acquisition of language is a dynamic, life-long process permeating all learning, fostering intellectual growth, and promoting the development of personal and international understanding. We view all teachers as teachers of language, all parents as essential contributors to the language learning process, and all students as language learners.

Furthermore, we believe that enabling students to speak a second language provides an opportunity for students' personal growth while also enhancing first language development and promoting an enhanced worldview. Being able to communicate in another language allows students to better understand other cultures and their own roles in a global society. To ensure that students have ample instruction in a second language, each student enrolls in a Language B course in grades 6, 7, and 8. Additionally, the school community fosters language learning by valuing students' mother tongue fluency and cultural identities.

We further understand that the most favorable environment for language learning is a positive and encouraging one in which students have the opportunity to engage in authentic learning experiences. Language instruction at Joel C. Harris Middle School addresses multiple learning styles and promotes individual growth.

School's Language Profile

Joel C. Harris Middle School students come to us from the following language backgrounds:

- English-only background students with no Language B proficiency
- English-only background students with limited Language B proficiency from home, PYP, or other elementary programs
- English background students with significant Language B proficiency from home, PYP, or other elementary programs
- Bilingual students who have acquired two languages simultaneously at home and at school
- Bilingual students who have acquired two languages, the parents' native language at home and English at school
- Non-English-speaking students with limited Language A proficiency who are acquiring English as a second language

Language A

Language A is limited to English as the language of instruction of the school, since students must meet English language requirements provided by the state standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or TEKS). However, Language A courses support both the TEKS and the aims and objectives of the IB MYP. For assessment

purposes, the district grading policy is implemented.

To ensure that Joel C. Harris Middle School students become lifelong communicators, teachers at Joel C. Harris Academy will employ a wide variety of literacy practices, including, but not limited to,---

Reading

- Reading will take place across the curriculum. *The Springboard program is in place for all grade six, seven, and eight Language Arts classes.*
- A reading-level assessment, *MAP(Measure of Academic Progress)*, will be administered to all students at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.
- A variety of reading strategies will be used to meet the needs of all learners; struggling readers will be provided with assistance and support, such as differentiated instruction, *instructional support*, Read 180, and tutoring, to increase their reading skills and levels.
- Students will be exposed to a variety of texts, including, but not limited to, mathematical proofs, primary/secondary documents, magazine and newspaper articles, poetry, drama, short stories, and novels.

Writing

- Writing will take place across the curriculum.
- Students' writing skills and abilities will be enhanced and encouraged through varied, authentic, and challenging writing opportunities.

Students will be taught the writing process (planning, outlining, drafting, editing, proofreading, and publishing)

- Teachers will provide instruction in and model the correct usage of written and oral language conventions, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.
- Student work (artifacts) will be displayed to showcase their achievements.

Speaking

- Teachers will model correct language usage in conversation, while being sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to enhance their speaking skills through strategies, such as classroom discussions, oral presentations, speeches, debates, recitations, dramatic readings, and song.
- Teachers will plan activities that expose students to conventions of oral language and assist them in responding appropriately to a range of contexts and audiences.

Language B

The importance of students becoming linguistically and culturally proficient in a second language (Language B) is recognized and supported by the school structure. Therefore,

all students will receive instruction in a second language. *Spanish is currently being taught as our only additional language. In the future, other languages may be included to cover the needs of our student population.* In realizing that not every student will reach the same level of language proficiency at the same time, a continuum of Language B courses is offered that meet both the developing academic and social needs of all learners: Spanish 6, Spanish 7, and Spanish 8.

Mother Tongue Support

We acknowledge the importance of a student's Mother Tongue in promoting personal identity and maintaining cultural heritage. We offer campus support through English Language Learners (ELL) Saturday sessions, and we commit to working with San Antonio ISD's Office of Bilingual Education to assist limited English proficient students with the support they need to be competent in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.

Joel C. Harris Middle School is legally bound by the national and state requirements for ELL students. Upon entrance into the San Antonio Independent School District, all students complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) to determine the language of proficiency. In response to the results of the HLS, students complete a language assessment to determine the level of proficiency. A Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) classifies each student according to the language in which the student possesses primary proficiency. If test results indicate the student needs assistance in development of the host school language, the student has the opportunity to participate in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) regularly reviews the decision to change a student's educational language placement.

Other Support Services

- Response to Intervention (RTI) meetings can be called whenever a student is in need of additional support.
- Advanced students receive support via the gifted education and pre-AP programs; additionally, the school has Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classes in Years 2 and 3 to promote college readiness.
- The school librarian works closely with students and teachers to ensure that any curricular and support materials that are needed for the development of language are available.
- A district Implementation Specialist, who works with individual teachers and groups on effective literacy strategies, is assigned to the school.
- Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans have support from the monitoring teacher, the counselor, and district personnel, such as psychologists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists, to help them be successful in the inclusive classroom, including the Language Acquisition classroom.

Our Language Policy will be reviewed annually, or as needed, with input from the school community and the Site Council.