

# Front Street School Language Policy & Philosophy



(Formulated in 2019)

## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this language policy is to explicitly outline Front Street School's pedagogical beliefs, values, and goals for language teaching and learning. This policy will serve as a dynamic and flexible statement of action that describes in detail our practices for achieving and evaluating those goals.

## **II. PHILOSOPHY**

*"Many languages, one voice."*

At Front Street School (FSS), we believe in the power of language to unite individuals in our quest to become knowledgeable, caring, and internationally-minded lifelong learners. Through exchanging our unique perspectives and experiences within and around our learning community, we will make connections to build an environment of intercultural understanding and respect. The diversity and variety of our individual strengths will be communicated through language and combined in action in order to meet the goals and achieve the vision shared by members of the FSS learning community.

## **III. PROFILE**

Front Street School is an elementary school hosting approximately 475 students in grade levels 1-5. FSS is located in the town of Hempstead, NY, within a predominately Black and Hispanic community. At the time of writing approximately 52% of our community speaks English, 42% speak Spanish, 3% French, 2% French Creole, and the remaining 1% African or other Indo-European languages. Mother tongues of our community are therefore predominately English and Spanish. All the administrative and teaching staff speak English fluently, several of whom share Spanish as a mother tongue.

At FSS, all teachers are language teachers. We are committed to ensuring that our students become multilingual, and therefore offer instruction in an additional language to all students over the age of seven. Due to our large Hispanic presence, FSS offers one bilingual class at every grade level in addition to bilingual services for students in monolingual classes from two certified ENL instructors. All students are exposed to daily language and literacy instruction through structured inquiry experiences supported by a PYP concept-driven curriculum.

## IV. PYP PRACTICES

At Front Street School we are committed to upholding the following practices of the Primary Years Programme:

1. The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language, and other languages **(IB Standard A, Practice 7)**.
2. Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students **(IB Standard C1, Practice 8)**.
3. Teaching and Learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue **(IB Standard C3, Practice 7)**.
4. Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students **(IB Standard C3, Practice 8)**.
5. Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme **(IB Standard C4, Practice 1)**.

### Language Learning

English Language instruction at FSS is intentionally embedded within all subject areas and taught both explicitly and implicitly within and outside of the school's transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. All classroom teachers have a daily three-hour transdisciplinary block that includes learning in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, social studies and science. Literacy is also infused into math inquiry blocks along with specialty subject areas such as art, music, physical education, and media. Teachers consistently use students' prior experience and current understandings in order to design meaningful, relevant, inquiry-based learning experiences. Students are also exposed to grade appropriate and culturally relevant literature intentionally selected to encourage text-to-self connections and conceptual understanding. Students in grades one and two learn foundational skills for reading and spelling the English language through a systematic program called Foundations. This program emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics-word study, high frequency word study, fluency, vocabulary, handwriting, and spelling.

### Mother Tongue

At FSS, students are encouraged to use their mother tongue language both within and outside of the classroom. In bilingual classes students are allowed to speak, access materials, and complete assignments in their mother tongue. Literature in the mother tongue Spanish language is made available in classroom libraries as well as the media center.

During Hispanic Heritage month the school engages in projects and activities that promote cultural awareness and that celebrate the cultural identities of the students, staff, and members of the surrounding learning community. Parents are involved in helping students inquire into their cultural backgrounds and invited to contribute to and attend the culminating school celebration.

### English as a New Language

Students in bilingual classes receive 360 minutes of instruction in their home language each week. For the remaining time they are immersed in the English language within a safe, caring environment where they feel supported as they learn their new language. Classroom teachers use scaffolding techniques to include ENL students into the units of inquiry. The culture of these students is recognized and valued throughout the year and connected with the units of inquiry where appropriate.

At FSS we use a co-teaching model where our ENL teachers push-in to the classrooms of the students they service. These teachers work collaboratively with the classroom teachers to plan, facilitate, and assess inquiry-based learning experiences.

### Dual Language

FSS offers a dual language program involving two classes in grade one. We employ a side-by-side model in which students in each class alternate daily between receiving full-day instruction in English from the monolingual teacher on one day and full-day instruction in Spanish from the bilingual teacher on the next.

### Other Languages

FSS offers a Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program to provide additional language instruction for students in monolingual classes grades 3-5. These students receive instruction in Spanish for a period of 35 minutes once every week.

## **Collaborative Planning**

At FSS, we understand that all teachers are responsible for developing language among the students. As such, all teachers work collaboratively to plan and reflect on units of inquiry and create inquiry-based learning experiences that align with PYP standards and expectations. Designated collaborative planning time is built into the regular schedule of all instructional staff with contributions from all special area teachers. In this way, we are able provide a comprehensive transdisciplinary curriculum to students on all grade levels.

## **Addressing Students' Diverse Language Needs**

All student language needs are determined through initial and ongoing assessments throughout the year. This data is used to drive instruction within the classroom and provide students with differentiated learning experiences that target their individual deficits. Teachers differentiate instruction in different ways, including, but not limited to flexible grouping, tiered reading assignments, student choice boards, small group instruction, level of questioning and tasks, and the use of alternate resources.

### **Guided Reading**

Classroom teachers provide daily guided reading instruction in 15-20-minute increments to small groups determined by student need. Students in the high group receive a minimum of guided reading instruction twice a week, the medium group receives instruction three times a week, the low group a minimum of four times, and the extremely low group a minimum of five. Instruction within these groups are differentiated for student ability and interest.

### **Technology**

FSS enhances language learning through online computer programs and databases. The media specialist works to instruct students on how to maneuver online research databases and educational programs related to their grade's current unit of inquiry. Most classrooms are equipped with projection devices that allow teachers to incorporate the use of multimedia within their lessons. Six computers are available in each classroom in order to assist student inquiry and research. ENL students have access to individual electronic tablets.

### ***iReady***

iReady is an interactive online learning environment designed to assess students and provide individualized instruction based on students' needs. FSS uses the iReady reading program as an instructional tool with which to engage students with challenging and high-quality texts while simultaneously building their vocabulary acquisition. iReady is used daily by students in all grade levels. This program benefits ENL students especially by helping to expand their background knowledge, which is crucial to vocabulary development. By working with phonemic awareness, phonics, and then reading words in context, students become more familiar with challenging words. Teachers use the diagnostic assessments and data provided by the program to drive reading instruction within the classroom and to plan for any necessary response to intervention strategies.

### Academic Intervention Services

FSS offers academic intervention services in reading to students who fall within RTI tiers two and three. Students identified as not making adequate progress in the classroom receive additional individualized small group instruction from one of two AIS specialists depending on student grade level.

### Instructional Support Team

A team of specialists are available to provide a range of specialist support to students with individualized learning plans (IEPs). This team includes the school principal, psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, speech and language specialist, and ENL teachers.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Language learning takes place in all disciplines and is modeled daily by all instructional staff through the language of instruction and by developing an understanding of the PYP essential elements (transdisciplinary themes, learner profile attributes, key concepts, attitudes, and action) within and surrounding the school community. FSS places an emphasis on developing an appreciation and love of reading throughout the learning environment by scheduling “Drop Everything and Read” (DEAR) time within the daily instructional schedule. Each day after lunch all students and staff read independently for a period of 15-minutes before transitioning into the afternoon inquiry block.

The school also promotes reading by participating in a school wide reading initiative modeled after the 100 Book Challenge program, which measures and celebrates the time students spend reading. Students record their reading on reading logs where each line represents 15 minutes of reading, or one “step.” One completed reading log is worth 20 steps, which equates to four hours of reading. Teachers and parents work together to take on the role of the students’ “reading coaches” at school and at home. Coaches monitor the time students spend reading independently and recognize their work by signing their reading log. All students are expected to read for a minimum of 11 steps (2 hours and 45 minutes) each week, and school wide reading goals are shared and promoted throughout the learning community. There are school wide assemblies at every 100-step mark to acknowledge and celebrate students who are meeting their reading goals.

## Language Strands

Students at FSS will experience instruction in each of the three PYP language strands – oral language, visual language, and written language. Teachers will support both receptive and expressive aspects of the language strands by providing students with opportunities to receive and construct meaning (the receptive aspect), as well as to create and share meaning (the expressive aspect). Examples of such experiences include but are not limited to:

- Student visual displays and oral presentations
- 4-square essay writing in all disciplines
- Narrative, Informative, and Opinion writing
- Research projects and reports
- Guided reading
- Author studies
- Daily Read-Alouds of grade-level mentor texts
- Independent reading and individual student conferences
- Spelling, grammar, phonics, and vocabulary instruction
- Schoolwide word and figurative language phrase of the week

Teachers employ the learning continuums for oral language, visual language, and written language from the PYP Language Scope and Sequence in order to design and assess language learning experiences.

In order to ensure that students at FSS receive language instruction of the highest quality, all instructional staff members receive ongoing professional development that promotes best pedagogical practices in teaching and language learning. The language policy is revisited and revised by members of the learning community once every year in order to ensure that it adequately reflects FSS's most current school practices and philosophy.

## **V. POLICIES**

### **Assessment policies that relate directly to language, teaching, and learning:**

New York State standardized testing – students in Grades 3-5 take the yearly New York State ELA exam.

NWEA – students are testing in reading and math using this adaptive assessment three times a year: fall, winter, and spring.

NYSESLAT - an annual New York State assessment of the English language proficiency of all English Language Learners.

Fountas and Pinnell reading levels – teachers use the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments to determine students' independent and instructional reading levels four times throughout the year (September, December, March, June).

IReady- students take an adaptive diagnostic assessment at the beginning of each year, which provides teachers with actionable insight into student needs. These results also set a personalized learning path for each student, ensuring that they're working on instruction that meets their unique learning needs as they use the program throughout the year.

Genre-specific rubrics for writing – students design and use rubrics as a tool to monitor, assess, and reflect on their own writing abilities.

