



NOTRE DAME



Notre Dame Preparatory School & Marist Academy School Language Policy

School Language Philosophy

Language is fundamental to learning, thinking and communicating, and permeates the whole curriculum and school mission statement. As language is essential to all areas of study, all staff members further language development from the perspective of their discipline. We believe that the study of language, including a second language, informs and encourages our students to live our mission statement and become Christian people, upright citizens, and academic scholars. Further, we believe that language is a necessary foundation in becoming an internationally-minded life-long learner. As a school community we respect and encourage all languages within our population and provide resources for continuing development of written, oral, and visual communication skills.

Practices of the Language Policy:

Primary Language of Instruction

Notre Dame Preparatory and Marist Academy offer all courses, with the exception of Language Acquisition (Spanish and Mandarin Chinese), in English. Development and correct usage of the English language is promoted in all areas of the school including classrooms, public speaking, forensics, debate, athletics, and in various student clubs.

Language Acquisition Courses

Notre Dame Preparatory and Notre Dame Marist Academy provide two Language Acquisition choices. Spanish and Mandarin Chinese are offered to students at all grade levels. In sixth grade, students are given the opportunity to take a semester of each language to see which language they would prefer to continue studying. After sixth grade, students are expected to continue with the language of their choice through their senior year. Language Acquisition classes meet every day of the school year at Notre Dame. In Language Acquisition courses, students learn and explore vocabulary, verb tenses, grammatical structures, and cultural elements in a variety of contexts. Students work to improve their listening, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural-awareness skills so as to become fluent by the end of their high school career. Language Acquisition teachers offer many opportunities within their classrooms and outside of the regular school day to practice and apply what is learned in the Language Acquisition courses. We encourage students to use Language Acquisition within the community through organizations, churches, cultural events, and other activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

The entire faculty and staff of Notre Dame Preparatory and Notre Dame Marist Academy strive to develop language (both English and chosen second language) and promote communication skills from the time of entrance until graduation. The faculty at Notre Dame is directly involved with each student, nurturing their talents and fostering increasingly sophisticated skills and modes of communication.

The administration and admissions directors carefully evaluate the ability of each incoming student during the application process through a personal interview and written statement. A student language profile is completed by each family at the time of enrollment; it is immediately returned so the information can be reviewed by the administrator who oversees the levels and sequences of courses for each student. Based on this needs assessment, the student may participate in further evaluation by the counseling department, or may be immediately referred to teachers for intervention or assistance. Once the ELL (English Language Learners) learners have been identified, staff may work with them individually, and/or may pair the students with peer tutors for explanations and/or homework assistance. A special freshman seminar may be scheduled for select students whose admissions testing and past school records indicate a need for language and study skills assistance. Middle school students can obtain personal assistance with teachers in study halls. This extra attention may be needed due to a student having a mother tongue other than English, who may be struggling in English, or simply due to gaps in the students' previous academic experiences. Notre Dame has resources in select/ some available in identified mother tongue languages in our school community for students (and their families) in the Media Center. The school also can recommend community organizations, churches, language schools, and other resources, or recommend that parents contact their home school district for additional services.

In the high school, the counseling department will immediately meet with any student determined to have language-related needs, and will continue to monitor them (and all students) at the annual interview with each student in the school. During that process, resources may be identified and procedures recommended to support a student with any needs in either the language of instruction or the second language. Counselors particularly assist with the college application process, where a mother tongue other than English may present both special challenges and opportunities.

Each academic department fosters language development from a unique perspective, while at the same time working together to offer consistency, for example, requiring the use of the MLA style in all written class work. Every discipline requires written work and research projects throughout the year. Opportunities are given for students to perform orally and to experience and produce language in a variety of settings. Every discipline requires the acquisition of pertinent vocabulary so that students can be credible participants in communication regarding the subject

area in other contexts and situations. All teachers are committed to enhancing language skills as the strongest cross-curricular link within the school and across the divisions of the school.

Role of the Administration

The administration of Notre Dame will ensure that effective and best practices are used in language instruction. In doing so, the administration provides professional development opportunities for curriculum development, assessment, and International Baccalaureate training for teachers. Additionally, administrators promote communication with parents regarding the progression of language development and also provide assistance when needed.

Language Support and Media Center

Notre Dame provides a variety of Language Acquisition and mother-tongue language resources. These resources include information on community groups and organizations that offer language schools, private tutoring, and cultural support, and tutoring provided by National Honor Society students. Other resources include books, dictionaries, DVD's, videos, Internet and subscription-based databases and an eBook collection. "Informe!" is a database in Spanish that is a collection of Hispanic magazines in full text. The databases that we subscribe to allow the text to be translated into over 30 different languages. Our eBook collection also offers resources in a variety of languages. Web-based resources and information are widely available through general search methods. In short, our resources are primarily electronic, other we still have some print resources. These resources are "housed" (accessible and linked) on the media center's website. Language Acquisition teachers also offer various types of media within their classrooms specifically for speakers of Spanish or Mandarin Chinese.

Every year, the student language profile is updated to ensure that there are adequate resources for incoming students who have a mother tongue language new to our school. These resources are updated and available to all students and families. Parents are encouraged to use any and all resources available to them through the school's Media Center.

Mother Tongue and Parent Support

Mother tongue is a term used to describe the primary language and culture practiced in the home. As a school, we support the continual learning and acquisition of mother tongue languages and cultures. When we support these students, it increases cultural and language awareness within the whole school community and helps the students develop their identities.

For students of a mother tongue other than English, appropriate accommodations are made to help in the learning of English in the mainstreamed classroom. Within each classroom, teachers provide several activities and assessments that reach all learning styles. Teachers use many forms of oral, visual, and tactile aids to help students understand relevant concepts. Students will also receive additional assistance from their teachers and the counseling department as needed. Peer tutoring is also available through the school to assist these students.

All students are welcomed and encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities whatever their mother tongue language. This helps students to develop their socially and physically in a safe and open-minded environment. Participating in extracurricular activities outside the classroom helps students become more balanced individuals. Assistance in these activities comes from the club moderators, athletic coaches, and peers.

Parents are continually kept informed of their child's progress. All teachers use an online grading program where parents can monitor academic grades. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and the spring. Also, teachers, administrators, counselors, and all staff members can be easily reached via email or telephone for additional information and assistance.