

Albert Einstein Academies Charter Elementary School



Language Policy 2015-2016

Teaching our children today to advance our shared humanity tomorrow

What is the Purpose of the Language Policy?

- Achieve a common understanding of our aims and objectives for language learning and teaching
- Surpass the standards of the IB Primary Years Program
- Explain how to meet the diverse needs of our students in their language acquisition
- Create a working document that will help guide current and new staff in their practices
- Convey the Albert Einstein Academy Charter Elementary School (AEACES) language philosophy and program to parents
- Create a common language and understanding of the language programs offered at AEACES
- Communicate how the mission of AEACES is intertwined with language acquisition

Language Philosophy

At AEACES, all teachers are teachers of language and all students are language learners. Each student has his or her own linguistic background which makes unique contributions to our learning community as a whole; recognizing this is crucial for defining the cognitive development of a student and maintaining his or her cultural identity. At AEACES, we make a commitment to our students and parents to provide a learning community that promotes and supports language development in a multilingual environment, fostering international-mindedness, while encouraging and supporting a community of communicators. At AEACES, we use language as a tool to help learners interpret the world around them. Language is fundamental to learning, thinking, and communicating and plays a central role in the curriculum. To create a unique, multilingual learning environment and to foster global awareness and understanding, we introduce a second language in the primary grades via a dual immersion setting. We do so by bringing minority* language speakers (German speakers) and majority* language speakers (English speakers) together to learn from and with each other in an integrated setting. Each student thus becomes a teacher and a learner.

* The minority language is the language other than the one spoken by the majority of people in the given regional or national context. The majority language is the language spoken by the majority of people in the given regional or national context.

AEACES also offers a non-immersion foreign language pathway (FLP) for students who enter the school in 3rd – 5th grade without German language skills. This pathway was designed to: a) permit new students to be enrolled in an upper elementary grade level without prior German language background, b) allow existing students who are less successful in the immersion pathway to have most of the benefits of our school without the challenges of our immersion program.

Research Supporting AEACES Language Philosophy

The results of many recent studies suggest that multilingualism positively affects both intellectual and linguistic progress. These studies have reported that bilingual children exhibit a greater sensitivity to linguistic meanings and are more flexible in their thinking than are monolingual children. (*Cummins and Swain, 1986; Hakuta and Diaz, 1985; Ricciardelli, 1989*). Bilingual children generally perform better on tasks that call for creativity and problem solving. (*Margarita Calderon, Designing Bilingual Programs, 2003*). In addition, multilingualism offers many socio-cultural and economic benefits. Individuals who speak, read, and understand more than one language can communicate with more people, read more literature and can adapt well to a wide range of cultural backgrounds. (*Sandy Cutshall for Educational Leadership, Volume 4, 2005*). They are able to respect the values, customs and ways of viewing the world of speakers of other languages and their communities. (*Margarita Calderon, Designing Bilingual Programs, 2003*). Learning to communicate in a variety of ways in more than one language is fundamental to the development of intercultural understanding. (What is an IB Education?, 2013)

School Profile

Primary Years Program K-5

Dual-Immersion German and English in Kindergarten - Fifth Grade

In a dual-immersion classroom at AEACES half of all instruction is given in English, the other half in German. This enables students to participate in learning, while gaining confidence in a new language. Students are given the opportunity to engage with the core curriculum while developing proficiency in the new language.

Practices: Dual Immersion Program

- The minority and majority language are both used as the vehicle of instruction. In grades Kindergarten through fifth, 50% of instruction is delivered in the minority language (German) and 50 % in the majority language (English).
- Subject content is taught in both languages with a rotating model of one week English immersion, one week German immersion.
- Language is seen as a trans-disciplinary element throughout the curriculum.

- Teachers of English and German will have native or near-native language skills in the language they teach.
- There is consistent collaboration between teaching team partners to assure transfer of knowledge from one week to the next and to assure full curriculum coverage.
- English and German language teams meet regularly to discuss and plan for instruction in subjects taught in both languages. This may include visiting each other's classrooms to observe students in the other language and to familiarize themselves with teacher's classroom environment and teaching style.
- Grade-level teaching teams meet regularly to discuss grade-level specific subjects, e.g. literacy development across languages.
- To reinforce the continuity of second language learning, students participate in a Language Exchange in which they receive limited German instruction in the English, and vice versa.
- Differentiated instruction methods are used in both languages to address the different language levels.
- There is a clear language distinction in classroom environments between English and German class to create a supportive language acquisition environment.
- The classroom environment is rich in print with labels, visuals, explanations, teacher and student writing, etc.
- Oral language practice is an important part of the language learning process and students are provided with multiple opportunities for listening and speaking (e.g. during community circle times, presentations of learning, etc.)
- Teachers approach language instruction through a balanced literacy model, including: speaking, reading and writing.
- Cultural celebrations and events are organized to foster not only in-class, but school-wide language exposure, with an emphasis on supporting the German language.
- Teachers of both immersion languages will have, or acquire, a basic understanding of the other immersion language to better support students and align language arts curriculum where possible.
- Curriculum across all language instruction is aligned with Common Core and/or IB Language standards. Where possible, German curriculum incorporates elements of the Standards of the European Framework of Foreign Language Teaching .

Foreign Language Pathway (FLP), 3rd-5th grade:

Students in the Foreign Language Pathway classes will receive the same instruction as students in our immersion classes with respect to IB, but will mainly do so through the majority language (English). In addition, they will receive German as additional language instruction, which includes four, fifty minute lessons per week.

Practices: Foreign Language Pathway (FLP)

- German language instruction is targeted to students' skill levels in a differentiated instruction model.
- Instruction focuses on exploring culture and building language skills through speaking, reading, writing and visual interpretation activities.
- Students also learn through German songs, games, and role plays as well as through individual and group projects.

Assessment:

The purpose of assessment in language acquisition is to determine students' strengths and growth areas, guide meaningful instruction, improve student learning, and inform stakeholders.

- Students are given the opportunity to creatively demonstrate their language knowledge via a variety of mediums: oral presentations, exhibitions, performances, and multimedia presentations in both languages.
- Multiple standard measures to assess student language proficiency are used in grades K-5
- At the end of 5th grade all immersion students participate in the German language diploma A2 level, while most FLP students participate in the German language diploma A1 level, which assesses their German language proficiency and cultural understanding.

Student Support:

To support German language learners, AEACES provides a variety of programs and resources.

- German tutoring program during school hours
- German through Music program
- German intern teacher program to support German immersion and FLP teachers in the classroom
- After school German classes
- German summer school
- Teacher websites
- German resource website with resources for students and families.
- The library media center contains books in many of our students' mother tongues, including books that explore culture and language. Students have access to a wide variety of media in the minority and majority language, as well as mother tongue: books, audio books, magazines, movies, , music, and online resources.

To support English Language Learners, AEACES provides the following resources:

- Before school support for kinder Spanish speakers, provided by a Learning Center staff member
- Mystery Reader opportunities, in which visiting parents may read aloud in their mother tongue
- Poetry Month celebrations, where families are encouraged to come in, speak about their country of origin, and read words from a poem in their native tongue

- Bilingual, English/Spanish Parent University on providing reading support at home
- Translators for conferences, SST, and IEP meetings

Staff Support:

To support German language teachers, AEACES has developed ongoing structures and systems.

- German intern teacher program support differentiated instruction.
- German music teacher supports vocabulary development through songs.
- Teachers participate in professional development related to majority and minority language teaching.
- German Team Meetings.
- Collaboration about Language Continuum with Middle and High school language teachers with respect to language curriculum, assessing and preparation for language exams.