

Wellwood International's Language Policy

I. School Mission and Vision

Vision: Empowering inquiring minds to change the world.

Mission: Wellwood International strives to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring students in an engaging, rigorous and multi-cultural environment to instill inter-cultural understanding and respect.

II. Language Profile and Magnet and Zone Admissions

Our student population is comprised of students who enter through a lottery run by the Magnet Programs Office as well as students who live within our Baltimore County Public Schools attendance boundary. Each year, twenty-four students who live outside of our zoned attendance boundary are offered a seat in our Kindergarten class through Magnet Programs in the Baltimore County Office of Educational Options. All magnet seat admissions are offered through a random lottery. Students in grades one and two can be admitted through the lottery process each year if space is available. Decisions for first and second grade students are made by the Wellwood administrators.

The student body at Wellwood International School represents fifty-five countries and students speak over fifty languages and dialects. Instruction is delivered in English.

III. Beliefs about Language

The staff at Wellwood International recognize and emphasize the importance of supporting the many facets of language for all of our students. Language can take the form of verbal, nonverbal and written communication, which are all instrumental in supporting our students' ability to interact with and respond to the world around them. Students should have the knowledge necessary to apply literacy and language skills to varying concepts to build deeper understandings. Students need multiple opportunities to practice and then apply language skills at a level that is developmentally appropriate and responsive.

We believe that students should be immersed in all forms of language through authentic and meaningful contexts. Students must engage in opportunities to apply language skills in real-world scenarios to build the skills necessary to be active and efficient communicators. Our classrooms are print rich where students have access to resources such as word walls and visual aids to support acquisition and application of language.

The development of social language is important for all students. Students engage in community circles in each classroom which foster a sense of belonging and provide an authentic opportunity for students to communicate and share ideas. When misunderstandings or conflicts arise, students are given the time and space necessary to calm down before working through the problem. Staff support students in conducting restorative conversations to address concerns and come to mutually agreeable solutions.

IV. Classroom Instruction

Classroom instruction specifically addresses language development and supports students' acquisition of language skills. Students at all grade levels engage in Guided Reading based on Fountas and Pinnell reading levels to target specific reading skills and address individual student needs. Students in Kindergarten through third grade receive systematic phonics instructions through the Wonders reading program to build foundational reading skills. Additionally, students beyond third grade who demonstrate deficits in phonics skills receive differentiated phonics support to meet their individual student needs. Teachers and staff regularly model appropriate language demonstrating the conventions and mechanics of the English language.

V. Mother Tongue Development

The students at Wellwood International represent many different cultures and we believe it is our responsibility to foster appreciation and acceptance of other cultures while also building a students' capacity for English. We value our cultural and linguistic diversity and intentionally provide students opportunities to engage with and discuss elements of diversity. Teachers purposefully identify students who can serve as ambassadors to new Wellwood students to support students as they transition to a new school, and in many instances, a new country.

The staff at Wellwood International believe that children should be provided encouragement and the opportunity to preserve their mother tongue. The Wellwood library has books written in various languages and the library media specialist encourages students to access these texts. Teachers encourage families to maintain and practice their mother tongues at home with their children. Additionally, students are encouraged to participate in our independent reading program with books written in their mother tongue. While we understand that our language of instruction is English, we recognize the importance of sustaining and celebrating a child's mother tongue.

VI. Supporting ELL Students

Students who enter Wellwood International with limited English proficiency are assessed through the Baltimore County Public School's Office of World Languages. Based on this assessment students may receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in our building. This instructional time is led by our ESOL teacher and students work to continue building academic skills with an emphasis on acquisition of the English language.

Students who receive ESOL services receive additional English language instruction outside of the classroom. This English language instruction focuses on speaking, listening, reading and writing. The frequency and duration of ESOL services is determined by the students' score on the assessment conducted by the Office of World Languages and subsequent WIDA testing collected in January of each year. Typically services are delivered one hour a week in two, thirty minutes sessions. Scores on previous year's WIDA determines eligibility for subsequent year's ESOL status. Parent permission is required to receive ESOL services and parents can opt-out of services at any time.

Whenever possible the ESOL curriculum parallels what is happening in the classroom and the ESOL teacher collaborates with grade level teachers to ensure continuity of instruction. The ESOL teacher provides specific feedback about student growth through progress reports at the end of the second and fourth quarters. Students with limited English skills typically receive instruction outside of the classroom whereas students with more developed skills may receive services inside of his or her general education classroom. All English Language Learners are eligible for accommodations in the classroom and on state testing if necessary as determined by WIDA scores.

VII. Additional Language Instruction

Students in grades 2 through 5 engage in French language instruction once a week during a special area class. Students work with a French teacher to develop conversational French language and build an understanding and appreciation of francophone cultures around the world.

VIII. Language in the Classroom

The use of diverse language is encouraged throughout the year in many ways. Wellwood International School TV, WIS-TV, highlights a French announcement each week on French Fridays. Facts about French culture and language are shared as well as common phrases and language applications. Wellwood's PTA sponsors Fête Française, an evening event for families to celebrate a part of French culture. Wellwood teachers work with the PTA to facilitate activities throughout the evening. Each homeroom class engages in community circles each morning to begin their day. During these community circles teachers encourage students to greet one another in

another language to recognize and celebrate linguistic diversity and heritage. An important Wellwood tradition is our annual Diversity Day held each spring. During Diversity Day students are encouraged to wear clothing from their native countries and the entire school gathers for our Wellwood Parade of Nations to show how many countries our students represent. Parent volunteers prepare cultural and language activities to present with classes and students spend the day recognizing and celebrating diverse cultures.

VIV. Reviewing and Communicating

This policy was created with collaboration from all members of the Wellwood International Community. It was shared with parents and community stakeholders through the PTA to solicit feedback. We understand that student needs are ever changing and we recognize that our language policy must be revisited and revised. Our language policy will be revisited for revisions at the beginning of each school year. Throughout the year the policy will be revisited as necessary.