

# **Higher Learning Academy**

## **-Language Philosophy, Policies, and Essential Agreements-**

### **School Context**

Higher Learning Academy (HLA) serves students in kindergarten through 8th grade. HLA is an independent charter public school that challenges students with a rigorous, college preparatory, international-minded curriculum that encourages students to embody the values and skills promoted by the IB learner profile. We offer Spanish instruction as a world language to help promote cultural development and global citizenship. We place importance on language learning including native language, host country language and other languages. Our school community and parents place an important emphasis on the belief that students should have the opportunity to maintain and continually develop their native language while developing a strong understanding of American Standard English as the host country language.

### **School Demographics**

Enrolment: November 2021 - 493 students

Nationalities: Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino,

Predominant populations: 42% Hispanic/Latino; 23% African American; 15% Asian, 10% White;

EL students: 30%

Immigrants: <1%

### **Philosophy:**

At HLA we believe that language is a part of culture and should be practiced in order to preserve one's cultural heritage.

At HLA we believe that learning multiple languages helps students develop awareness of other cultures and a strong sense of international mindedness.

At HLA we believe that language is learned through opportunities for interaction that will build a student's skill and confidence.

At HLA we believe that learning a language beyond one's native language helps develop open-mindedness towards diversity and understanding of others.

At HLA we believe all teachers are language teachers and are trained as such.

At HLA we believe the native language of all stakeholders should be respected, maintained, and its use encouraged.



### **Policy:**

Learning a second language and mastering a native language are both processes that take practice and time. Since learning a language is an ongoing process we have policies in place to promote successful practice for all students.

At HLA, core instruction is delivered in American Standard English and is aligned with the California State Standards focusing on the areas of: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. All teachers take part in active collaboration to ensure all educational practices will promote inquiry and be to the highest standards. We strongly believe that language is interdisciplinary and crosses all instructional areas. We support all students to ensure they have access to academic content, whether the student is an English Language Learner or a native English speaker. We provide daily push-in paraprofessional support for non-English speaking scholars in Language and Literature and Mathematics courses. *Other courses are considered on an as-needed basis with approval from the head of schools.*

At HLA, parent involvement is part of our culture and we highly encourage parent participation. We believe parents are a driving force behind their student's education, and having their involvement only improves this process. At HLA we understand and respect that the vast majority of our non-English speaking families speak Spanish; however, we also have Russian, Hmong and Punjabi speaking families. Out of respect for this potential language barrier, we will provide translated materials and have staff available who can translate during school events. It is our hope that by providing these language supports all families will feel they have equal access to involvement in their student's educational experience. Parents are able to have input into their student's language progression and academic success.

### **Additional Language(s):**

At HLA, all K - 8th grade students receive instruction in Spanish during instructional hours.

### **Home Language Support:**

At HLA, our philosophy includes a high level of respect for a student's home language. We believe a student's home language should be respected and preserved. We incorporate our students' home language by allowing students to use online services like google translator or accessing the web in their own language. We are also working on building a class library that will include fiction and nonfiction books in students' home language. The school also works to facilitate a strong acquisition of a second language. Upon enrollment, students whose families report speaking another language at home will be assessed to determine language proficiency. Students are then provided with any necessary support, including push-in support and pull-out English Language Development (ELD) support, to ensure they can succeed alongside their peers.

HLA will provide communication (both written and spoken through our staff translators) between the school and home in English, Spanish, Russian, Hmong and Punjabi to ensure equal access to all materials.



### **Essential Agreements:**

- HLA will provide instructional CCSS-aligned units of inquiry in American Standard English with Spanish support when needed.
- HLA will provide Spanish Language instruction for K-8th grade students during instructional hours.
- HLA will provide Rosetta Stone access for students who need additional English or Russian language learning support.
- HLA's class library will contain books in different languages.
- HLA's PYP teachers will provide subject specific reference materials in the classroom library for all students to use as needed.
- HLA will provide access to online and in-person intervention services.

### **Policy Development:**

The development of HLA's Language Policy included input from many stakeholders including the school leadership team, PYP teachers/staff and parents. The original policy was drafted by using our sister school's (Gateway International School) policy and HLA PYP's policy as a starting point. These documents were revised and updated to fit the needs of HLA's PYP program. The final draft of the language policy was reviewed by the Leadership Team, a group of PYP teachers, parents and an MYP teacher in order to ensure continuity with our PYP program.

### **Implementation Plan and Timeline:**

This policy is currently being implemented in all grades. Any changes or updates will be made at the end of each year as a part of the staff review process and implemented at the start of the new school year.

### **Accountabilities:**

HLA's Language Policy will be reviewed and updated by all stakeholders frequently. The Leadership Team will review and suggest updates during the staff review. Parents will review the policy once a year at our SSC (School Site Council Meeting) with the IB Coordinators and Leadership Team. And finally, the HLA staff will review the policy at the beginning of each academic year as a refresher and will update the policy at the end of every academic year as they are reflecting on it's effectiveness and preparing for the next academic year.

