

# Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School Language Policy

---

## *Introduction*

*Background information for the Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School (Stokes School) Language Policy.*

The Stokes School Language Policy has as its foundation two mutually reinforcing imperatives.

### *Stokes School Mission Statement (relevant portions in bolded text)*

**The Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School prepares 350 culturally diverse pre-school and elementary school students** in the District of Columbia to be leaders, scholars and responsible citizens who are committed to social justice. **We teach children to think, speak, read, write and learn in two languages: English and French or English and Spanish.** With a dual focus on academic excellence and community service, the Stokes School accomplishes its mission by creating an environment of achievement, respect and non-violence.

*from: International Baccalaureate Organization – Primary Years Programme (IBO – PYP) Programme Standards and Practices*

Standard A.7a. The school makes provision for students to learn a language, in addition to the language of instruction, at least from the age of seven. Schools with two languages of instruction are not required to offer an additional language.

Standard A.7.b. The school supports mother tongue and host country language learning.

Standard B1.5.a. The school has developed and implements a language policy that is consistent with IB expectations.

This document states the policy required by IBO – PYP Standard B1.5.a in pursuit of Standards A.7.a and A.7.b as guided by the school mission. It outlines the philosophy and practice of language instruction at Stokes School and the support Stokes School gives to scholars in the acquisition of the languages of instruction and in the continued use of their mother tongues.

### *Stokes School Working Language*

The working language for Stokes School is English.

### *Stokes School Languages of Instruction*

The languages of instruction for Stokes School are English, French, and Spanish.

# Stokes School Language Policy

---

## *Stokes School Language Philosophy*

### *Basic Premises of Stokes School Language Philosophy*

- Scholars matriculating through Stokes School are culturally diverse (Stokes School Mission Statement).
- Stokes School teaches children to think, speak, read, write and learn in two languages: English and French or English and Spanish (Stokes School Mission Statement).
- The Stokes School intends an environment of respect (Stokes School Mission Statement) and of appreciation for culture (IB Learner Profile).
- The Stokes School dual-immersion model (see description on page 4 of this document) includes at least fifty percent of the scholars' school week in only French or only Spanish and the remainder in English.
- The Stokes School community of learners, reflective of its cultural diversity, is linguistically diverse (results of annual Home Language Surveys).
- Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum (Making the PYP Happen, 69).
- All teachers are engaged in the community of learners (Making the PYP Happen, 56).
- Parents are engaged in the community of learners (Making the PYP Happen, 56).
- Language and language proficiency are assets that benefit learners regardless of the particular language in which a scholar or their family is proficient.
- Mission and philosophy must guide; practice adapts to the needs of the community.

### *Statement of Stokes School Language Philosophy*

The Stokes School focuses the efforts of all teachers as language teachers to create a community of learners that celebrates cultural diversity and human commonality. Stokes School encourages inquiry both into the many cultures of our own school community and many others from around our world by teaching scholars to think, speak, read, write, and learn in at least two of the world's most commonly used languages. Stokes School further encourages that inquiry by the active participation of families and others in the community of learners. Stokes School actively celebrates the diversity of the Francophone, Hispanophone and Anglophone world communities and also encourages the continued enrichment of other mother tongues in the school community because of the benefit of language proficiency, in itself, to learners.

### *Stokes School Language Profile*

Stokes School has a population of 352 scholars. In School Year 2017 – 2018, families reported that at least 94 scholars speak a language other than English in the home. These scholars speak from among many languages in their homes, including Spanish, French, Amharic, Wolof, Ethiopian, Arabic, Esan, German, Igbo, Italian, Oromo, Persian, and Yoruba.

All Stokes School teachers use language to prepare scholars to demonstrate academic independence; to be knowledgeable; to communicate with a range of audiences according to the demands of a task and

# Stokes School Language Policy

---

the norms of a discipline of study; to comprehend and critique concepts presented to them by others; to base the presentation of their thinking in evidence and to evaluate evidence presented to them by others, and; to use language themselves as a means to discover, learn about and appreciate other perspectives and cultures.

## *Stokes School Support for Mother Tongue Languages*

- Stokes School and classroom newsletters and all other written school-to-parent communications are available in English, French, and Spanish, the most commonly used languages at Stokes School.
- Translation services are offered for families for all whole school community meetings and for all parent-teacher conferences.
- Stokes School library has materials available for scholars and families in English, French, and Spanish.
- Stokes School administration coordinates access for scholars to the DC OneCard, a Washington, DC unified identification card that serves as a DC Public Library System card.
- The DC Public Library System has a range of resources in many languages available to DC residents with a DC OneCard.
- Stokes School provides parents with internet access to DC Public Schools information in French, Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Amharic.
- Stokes School annually celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month and Francophonie Month to showcase language, customs, foods and artifacts from across the Hispanophone and Francophone world.
- Stokes School works with parents to create labels for classroom objects in English, the Target Language and Mother Tongue languages.

## *Stokes School Support for the Languages of Instruction*

### *Support for All Scholars in Language Acquisition*

All teachers are language teachers. Stokes School teachers all make use of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and have specific language objectives for each lesson in reading, writing, listening and speaking in the language of instruction, English, French, or Spanish, for which each teacher is responsible.

Teachers encourage scholar use of literacy strategies from the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) across the curriculum.

The Stokes School provides opportunities and instruction for all scholars to read text from a range of genres and at an appropriate level of complexity for grade level over extended periods of time to build a foundation of cultural and literary references and of content knowledge, and to develop habits of sustained and critical reading.

# Stokes School Language Policy

---

## *Stokes School Support for the Languages of Instruction Support for All Scholars in Language Acquisition (cont.)*

The Stokes School provides opportunities and instruction for all scholars to produce text in a range of genres and at an appropriate level of complexity for grade level over extended periods of time to demonstrate understanding of content knowledge, to communicate and support their own opinions or to respond analytically to the opinions of others, and to share real or imagined experiences with a range of audiences.

The Stokes School encourages reading for enjoyment and makes available reading materials across a range of genres and a range of reading levels in each of the languages of instruction.

Teachers plan for differentiation in language instruction to reach and challenge all scholars, including referral for support for those reading below grade level in English.

Support for scholars reading below grade level in English includes the use of Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention system.

Teachers assess scholar speaking, writing, reading and listening skills formally and informally in the classroom.

Informal assessments for English, French and Spanish that teachers use in the classroom include anecdotal records, observations, book group conversations, and Words Their Way, among others.

To inform their teaching in French or Spanish, teachers make use of data from GB+ or La Sistema de Evaluation de la Lectura, respectively, and the Standards Based Measurements of Proficiency (STAMP). Additionally, scholars participate in the STAMP 4SE assessment as second and fifth graders so that we can measure progress in French and Spanish language development.

To inform their teaching in English, teachers make use of data from the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems (BAS-1 & BAS-2), Words Their Way Inventory, On Demand Writing Assessments from TCRWP, and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career assessments for English.

Stokes School recognizes that, though Spanish and French are the two most common mother tongues after English in the school community, most scholars (more than sixty-four percent) speak English either primarily or solely outside of school. To support strong foundations in Target Language (French or Spanish) and to properly differentiate language instruction, Stokes School:

- Operates Pre-Kindergarten years as a ninety percent immersion program with two adult target language native-speakers as instructional staff in each classroom, two English resource people as instructional staff for the four classrooms, French and English as the languages of instruction for visual arts classes and, English as the language of instruction for music classes;
- Operates Kindergarten and First Grade years as fifty percent immersion programs one adult target language native-speaker as instructional staff in each classroom, one English speaker as

# Stokes School Language Policy

---

## *Stokes School Support for the Languages of Instruction*

### *Support for All Scholars in Language Acquisition (cont.)*

instructional staff for each classroom, French and English as the languages of instruction for visual arts classes, Spanish and French as the languages of instruction for Library classes and, English as the language of instruction for music, physical education, and health classes, and;

- Operates Second through Fifth Grade years as fifty percent immersion programs with two days per week with two adult target language native-speakers as instructional staff in each classroom, two days per week with two English speakers as instructional staff for each classroom, and a pre-determined alternating Friday, French and English as the languages of instruction for visual arts classes, Spanish and French as the languages of instruction for Library classes and, English as the language of instruction for music, physical education, and health classes.

### *Support for Scholars with Limited English Proficiency*

Our English Language Learner (ELL) scholars (ELLs) receive support starting with the Home Language Surveys (HLS) that parents complete to provide information related to the language used at home and the language the child uses to communicate. This HLS helps the ELL team to determine the language minority group, which needs to be screened to determine their proficiency in English. Scholars who are already in the program are assessed with the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) for ELLs each spring to determine their level of proficiency in English.

Once we have identified scholars whose proficiency in English is in development, the ELL program at Stokes provides a series of steps to address these scholars' needs in learning English.

The steps for support are as follows:

1. Identification
2. Sharing ELL data with teachers (number of ELL scholars per grade/class, proficiency levels in each domain and overall score, can do descriptors for grouping and instruction, and determine ELL services for scholars)
3. Pull out/push in ELL services
4. Contacting parents of ELLs to involve them in their children's education
5. Use of multiple ELL resources (websites, reading programs, literacy games and activities, etc.) to support scholars during push-in and pull-out models.
6. ELL parent meetings to engage and provide tools to support from home.

# Stokes School Language Policy

---

## *Stokes School Support for the Languages of Instruction Support for Scholars with Limited English Proficiency (cont.)*

The ELLs at Stokes School are taught the same District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) standards as all other scholars, so all teachers are held accountable for making certain that these standards are achieved by the ELLs. This fact tells us the importance of providing the entire staff with appropriate trainings, like SIOP, which is our main component to support the ELL Program at Stokes. Teachers are required to use SIOP to provide instruction that meets not only content, but also language needs of our ELL scholars. New teachers are trained on the SIOP Model during summer professional development. Since content-based-sheltered structure is the program model used for teaching English to ELL scholars at Stokes School, the English teachers place emphasis on the development of the cognitive-academic skills needed to succeed in sheltered English and mainstream content area-instruction. Scholars at Stokes are taught Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies and writing across genres based on topics related to the Unit of Inquiry through its Central Idea, Key Concepts or Attitudes in both English and either French or Spanish. Due to the high language needs that are obviously found in each classroom, it is crucial that every single lesson is designed not only to meet content objectives, but also language objectives.

Interventions intended to support access to the curriculum include Leveled Literacy Intervention (Fountas and Pinnell), Words Their Way, the Reader's and Writer's workshop curriculum implemented in ELA and the Investigations curriculum implemented in Math. These programs support classroom teachers to accommodate ELL scholars' needs and scaffold for independence with individual support and opportunities for scholars to develop their oral skills.

The SIOP, with its eight components, is the model that provides the English teachers with strategies, ideas, and effective practices needed to help our scholars succeed not only in becoming proficient in English, but also in meeting the academic goals established for each content area.

We monitor scholars who score 5.0 or higher on the ACCESS test administered in the spring by providing services for a period of two years. During these two years the "Monitoring Service Team" (MST), formed by the English classroom teacher, an ELL Specialist, and the ELL Coordinator, monitors the scholars' progress and provides services when needed.

We also encourage our parents of English Language Learners to be part of the education of their children. Parents' meetings are held to cover different topics, such as, the ELL Program, "ELL information", "How to help your child to succeed in the school", "Homework", "Physical, sociological and academic development of our scholars at different ages," "Reading tips," etc. Meetings are held in English or Spanish with simultaneous translation into either English or Spanish and there are also materials available in Spanish and in English about the meetings held for parents to take home and continue discussing with their children.

# Stokes School Language Policy

---

## *Support for Scholars with Limited Target Language Proficiency*

As proficiency in the Target Language is as important to a Stokes Scholar's academic progress and social connection as proficiency in the English Language, Stokes School continues to strengthen its formal support for scholars with limited target language proficiency. While Stokes School builds the resource bases for learners of Spanish or French as a second language, it reserves this space in the policy document for further detail.

## *Ongoing Review of the Stokes School Language Policy*

This policy will be formally reviewed regularly on a semiannual basis – one week prior to the start of the Summer Professional Development Institute and one week prior to the Mid-Year Teacher In-Service held in March – and informally as needed throughout the year. The formal review team will include no fewer than one senior Spanish Language teacher, one senior French Language teacher, one senior English Language Teacher, one senior Specials teacher, the Coordinator of Specialized Support (or the Coordinator's designee), the ELL Coordinator (or the Coordinator's designee), the Literacy Coach (or the Coach's designee), the IB Coordinator (or the Coordinator's designee), the Directors of Teaching and Learning (or the Directors' designees), the Executive Director (or the Director's designee) and the PTA Presidents (or the Presidents' designees). The formal review team monitors the implementation of the policy and will maintain or revise the policy in response to scholar achievement data in the area of language acquisition as measured by assessments named in the Stokes Language Policy, and in response to feedback from scholars, parents and teachers as measured in annual Community Surveys of those constituencies.

## *Access to the Stokes School Language Policy*

This policy is freely available to the Stokes School Community. The Language Policy is published on the Stokes School website ([ewstokes.org](http://ewstokes.org)), and is available in printed form at request from a member of the Stokes School Community. This English language document is the working document. Translations into French and Spanish are available on the Stokes School website and printed at community request to inform discussion and to encourage comments and recommendations to the Stokes School Language Policy Formal Review Team.