

Rice Elementary Language Policy

Statement of Philosophy:

The community of Rice Elementary School understands that language is the cohesive element in a global society. Language provides the structure learners need to look beyond their own community and explore communities across the world. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are thinking processes that allow us to be lifelong learners. By exploring language, students gain insight into their own lives and the lives of others.

At Rice Elementary we believe that:

1. Language is fundamental to learning and permeates the Primary Years Programme.
 - The learning process concurrently involves learning language (as students listen to and use language with others in their everyday lives), learning about language (as students try to understand how language works), and learning through language (as students use language as a tool to think about, or reflect on a theme, concept or issue).
2. Language consists of the interrelated strands of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting.
 - listen and respond to a range of texts and to the ideas and opinions of others, improve fluency and accuracy when speaking
 - ask and answer questions; relate and retell; persuade; talk about needs, feelings, ideas or opinions; contribute to discussions in a range of formal and informal situations
 - recognize their oral language needs to be appropriate to the audience and to the purpose
 - communicate orally in more than one language
 - read and write for enjoyment, instruction and information
 - recognize and appreciate the variety of literary styles, genres and structures; poetry, plays and stories; creative, informative, instructional, persuasive and reflective text
 - understand and apply a variety of structures, strategies and literary techniques (spelling, grammar, prediction, plot, character, punctuation, voice)
 - understand, critically analyze and communicate information and ideas through a variety of visual media
 - make informed choices in their personal viewing experiences
 - use appropriate technology for effective presentation and representation
3. Language is the most important medium for communication and inquiry.

- Whenever possible, language should be taught through the context of the units of inquiry. The teacher plans language instruction that supports students' inquiries and the sharing of their learning.
 - Through meaningful interactions, we communicate with and understand others, the world and ourselves to develop multicultural awareness.
4. Language is fundamental to learning and is developed across all curricular areas therefore; all teachers are teachers of language.
 5. The school community is a resource to foster language learning. The development of mother tongue is crucial for maintaining cultural identity.
 6. The acquisition of more than one language enriches personal growth and facilitates international understanding.
 - Students will become better able to understand other people's points of view, ways of life, and contributions to the world and extend these learning experiences to multilingual communities at home and around the world.
 - Students will reinforce and further their knowledge of other curricular areas through the language classroom.
 - Students will examine cultures and analyze similarities and differences through language perspectives other than their own.
 - Students will develop effective listening and communication skills beyond their mother language in order to participate effectively in a global community.
 7. Students must be immersed in an environment which enriches their language development.
 - Students are surrounded by language and are given many varied opportunities to learn to communicate effectively with an audience, to listen to others, and to respond appropriately.
 8. The IB Learner Profile is integral to teaching and learning language because it represents the qualities of effective learners and internationally minded students. The learner profile, together with the five essential elements of the programme (knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action) informs planning, teaching and assessing in language.

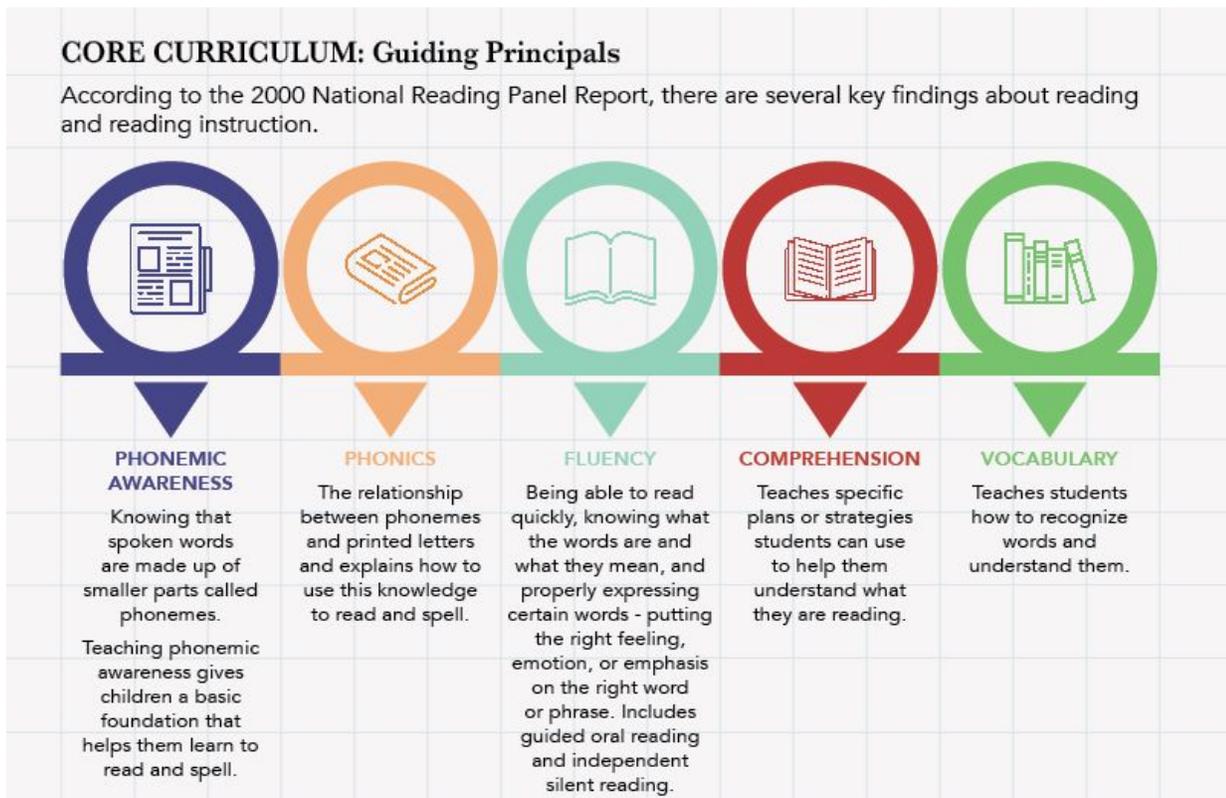
Adapted from IB PYP Making the PYP Happen 2009

The Language of Instruction:

English is the language of instruction at Rice Elementary. An effective language arts curriculum involves a collaboration of learners, including students, teachers, parents, administrators and the community at large, who are active participants in the learning process. The language arts program is based on the premise that literacy is the foundation for all learning. It embraces the philosophy that students naturally use language to communicate and to learn and that an effective language arts program integrates reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and presenting into all language instruction.

Belief Statements K-5:

- Literacy is power.
- Integrated literacy instruction is relevant and meaningful.
- Success occurs for children when instruction is developmentally appropriate and when a variety of learning styles and rates are addressed.
- The language arts are inter-related and key to all content areas.
- Daily reading and writing are done for a variety of purposes.
- Assessments are formative and summative.
- Parents, teachers, and children are partners in literacy learning.
- Teachers use a developmental continuum of the Lucy Calkins writing model to help students improve their written language.



Reaching All Learners:

According to a statement released by the Minnesota Department of Education and embraced by Rice Elementary, "Literacy is the cornerstone of all learning. In each subject area, the ability to read and produce written material is the highest importance. Supporting the development of capable readers at every level is our goal as educators, parents and as a community." With this philosophy, the state of

Minnesota passed legislation that seeks to have all of Minnesota's children reading well by third grade. The bill requires local school Districts to adhere to certain expectations, including the following.

At Rice Elementary School:

- all students are provided reading instruction that is scientifically based
- parents are notified of student progress at least annually for all students and schools must give parents of students not reading at or above grade level (in K-3) timely information. This timely information includes reading assessments administered; services available and strategies parents can use at home to support their child(ren)
- students not reading at or above grade level are given intervention using evidence-based practices to accelerate their growth toward grade level expectations
- assessment methods and data points used to determine grade level proficiency are reported to the Minnesota Department of Education annually
- sufficient training is provided for all licensed staff to improve reading instruction

High Potential:

Rice Elementary recognizes the unique potential of these students. Rice Elementary is committed to providing enrichment activities, equal access, and opportunities to accelerate learning for all students. The earliest form of enrichment comes in the form of early admission to kindergarten. Following the district guidelines Rice has developed a comprehensive process to ensure early admission is the best options for a child. Based on achievement data and teacher input, students who would benefit from additional enrichment are provided this during What I Need (WIN) and/or time with a gifted specialist. In addition, a variety of enrichment activities both in and outside the school day are offered to students. Academic acceleration is another option available to students who may need to be challenged either in a single subject or grade level. Decisions for acceleration are made using a wide range of data by an acceleration committee, including the student's principal, teacher(s) and the gifted specialist. Information and input is also gathered from the student and parent(s)/guardian(s). Decisions on acceleration are made on an individual basis. Acceleration is an effective intervention for certain students and the following factors are analyzed using the Iowa Acceleration Scale.

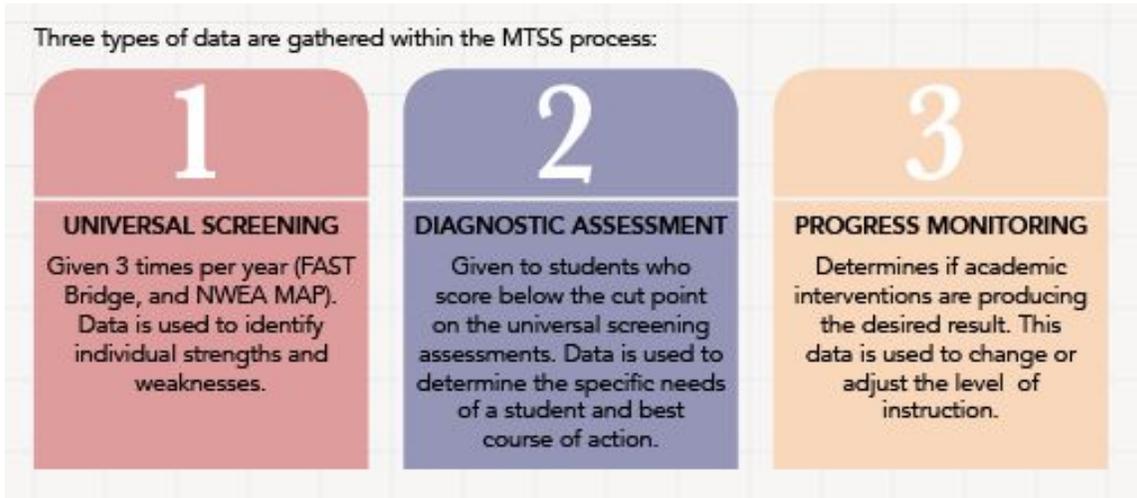
These factors include:

1. Ability—a student's general cognitive potential compared to others
2. Aptitude—a student's problem solving and critical thinking abilities
3. Achievement—a student's learning within specific content area(s)
4. Additional factors—other factors that can impact the success of acceleration

Once it is determined that acceleration is the best option for a student, an Accelerated Learning Plan is created for the student that includes details of the plan such as who is responsible, timeline for implementation, transition plan, monitoring plan and communication/logistical considerations. This plan is then signed off on by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student. Rice Elementary is committed to academic achievement and excellence, which include 21st century skills and knowledge and will continue to strive to provide programming that meets the needs of all learners.

Assessment:

We believe that assessment is integral to instruction.

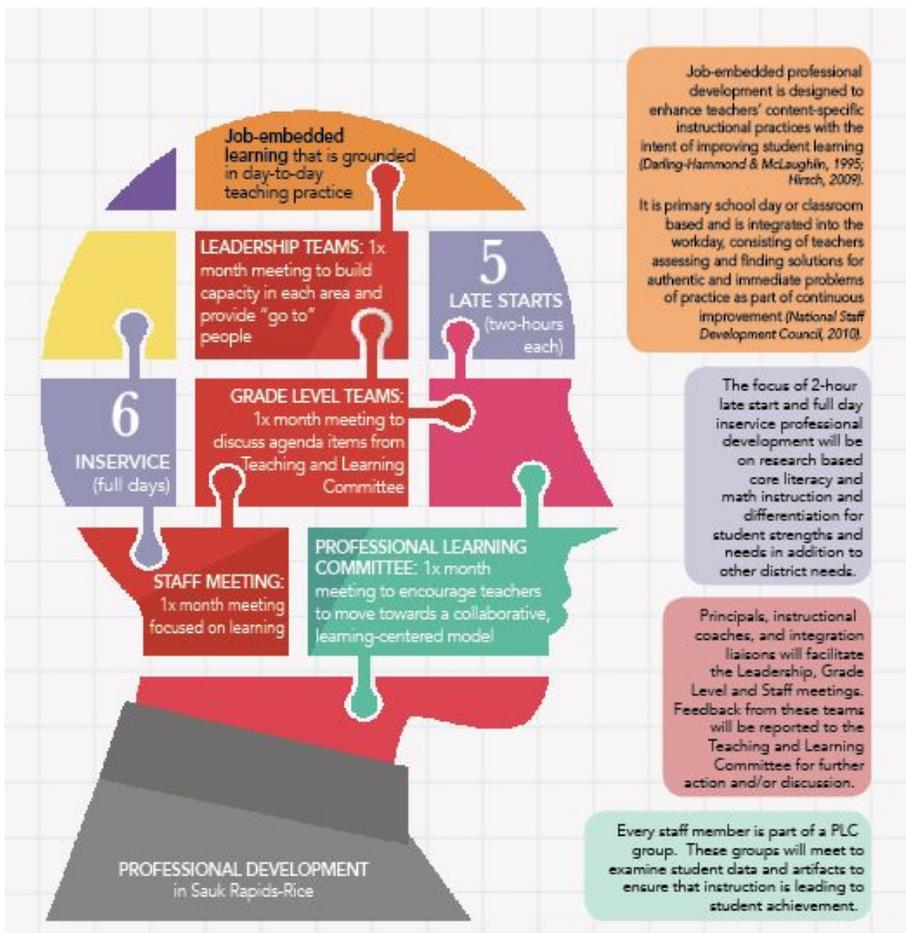


*MTSS: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Professional Development:

The staff at Rice Elementary recognizes the importance of establishing a professional learning community of learners who work collectively to guarantee academic excellence and the development of principled young people who become active, inquiring and compassionate life-long learners.

Our professional development plan:



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMITTEE (PLC'S)

- Work collaboratively on problems that focus on student learning
- Feel a collective responsibility for the growth and learning of all teachers and students in the school
- Understand that no individual has all the answers but that each has important knowledge to contribute
- Focus on jointly creating new knowledge and see their own and their students' learning as an ongoing process
- Work in cohorts of colleagues and with groups of students whom they get to know well over time
- Have structured time to observe and reflect on each others' work and serve as critical friends in support of each other
- Commit to shared norms, with shared responsibility for growth in learning of all teachers and students in the school
- Build understanding of each others' styles and techniques so they can learn from one another and complement each others' work
- Value open and regular communications that are the foundation of trust, shared goals and professional norms among teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The purpose of instructional coaches is to help to close the achievement gap and accelerate learning for all students by building teacher capacity through implementation of effective instructional practices (Casey, 2008). Instructional coaches:

- Increase the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction
- Support the implementation of effective instruction strategies including differentiation and interventions
- Promote the implementation of state standards through adopted curricula
- Facilitate conversations using data to drive instructional decisions
- Engage in continuous learning
- Engage teachers in reflective thinking while looking at their own instructional practices critically and analytically
- Design and facilitate effective professional learning opportunities based on grade level, school or district goals
- Identify resources to enhance classroom instruction and student achievement
- Support and communicate school and district initiatives with the school community

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- The Sauk Rapids Rice Integration Program is also able to provide staff with opportunities (newsletters, speakers, etc.) each month to learn about a variety of cultures, which helps teachers meet the needs of students with diverse backgrounds. This is done to increase cultural competencies of staff, students, and community in order to be full partners in the global marketplace.
- Finally, Sauk Rapids Rice Public Schools continues to provide staff development dollars, which teachers can apply for, to attend out of district trainings. Each request is reviewed by a staff development committee at each level to ensure the request fits within what is already being done in the district, and is both relevant and data-driven.

Mother Tongue Support:

Curriculum and instruction at Rice Elementary are structured to meet the needs of English-language learners. Depending on their level of English acquisition and their grade placement, English-language learners need varying degrees of additional support in areas such as oral language, English phonology, vocabulary, background information, and the academic language of school.

In addition, we believe that mother tongue language is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and emotional stability. It is our responsibility to recognize and support each and every aspect of language development and provide opportunities for individual students, parents and families to share their heritage with us. Our library media specialist has purchased resources to support other languages

being spoken in the home. These resources can be checked out by students to help reinforce their mother tongue and culture. These resources are also available for teachers and staff to check out.

The district has a K-12 grade ELL Specialist who provides professional development to schools, teams and individuals. This specialist models in classrooms and provides instructional coaching for teachers. They also provide services to students as appropriate for meeting their individual needs.

There is an explicit recognition that language acquisition takes place across the content areas and therefore collaboration among educators is required to enhance and excel the learning experiences of English language learners.

Content area teachers and ELL teachers work together to understand and leverage the language and literacy practices used across content areas.

The School's Additional Language:

Spanish is the second language of instruction at Rice Elementary. We have a part time Spanish teacher. Students in kindergarten through 5th grade receive 40 minutes of direct instruction once a week. Whenever possible, the approaches to language teaching connect with the IB PYP Units of Inquiry and are integrated with other disciplines in the curriculum.

Students acquire language through a focus on meaning rather than grammar. Various strategies are used such as: songs, dances, rhymes, games, and the lessons that draw on all five aspects of the National Standards: Connection, Culture, Communication, Comparisons and Communities.

Policy Review:

The following process will be followed to ensure Rice's language policy remains a working document:

- Annually, through collaborative reflective practices, grade level teams review the language policy, as well as all documents referred to in policy, to ensure accuracy and sustainability
- Policy is updated by the IB Coordinator, based upon the feedback of the staff
- Grade level and subject level teams work together throughout the school year to ensure the policy is implemented with fidelity
- Updated language policy is uploaded to the Rice website for community members to access