**Our Mission**

M.D. Bennie Public School is a diverse and inclusive community that works together to develop a nurturing, compassionate and accepting

environment for all.

Through rigorous and differentiated learning experiences, our students are inspired to develop a natural curiosity and

a lifelong love of learning.

We prepare our globally minded students to be creators

and innovators who share their voice and take

action to make positive contributions

to their ever-changing world.

**Language Policy**

**Who We Are:**

We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history, culture and language while remaining committed to moving forward respectfully with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Greater Essex County District School Board, 2016). We would like to respectfully acknowledge that the land on which our school is situated is the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation, members of the Anishinabek Nation also known as the Three Fires Confederacy.

As stated in our mission, MD Bennie a diverse learning community with approximately 20% of our students born outside of Canada, originating from about 16 different countries. Nearly 30% of our students have a mother tongue other than English, our language of instruction. Some of our students are proficient in more than three languages. In addition, a few of our students are non-verbal and they communicate using assistive technologies and/or personalized core boards. Our diverse cultural and linguistic community of learners is situated at the heart of our language policy, which describes our action statements that support, honour and promote language learning.

It is a truism that language is a fundamental element of identity and culture (Ontario Language Curriculum, 2006, p.4). “As students read and reflect, they develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others and the world around them” (2006, p.4). Our students learn “to value the power of language and to use it responsibly” (2006, p. 3). We believe it is through language that relationships are built and thus it has the power to overcome challenges and bring our community closer together while building a better, more peaceful world (Learning and Teaching, 2018, p. 84).

**Our Beliefs about Language:**

At MD Bennie, “We are all teachers of language” (Chris Frost, 2020). Since language is central to students’ intellectual, social and emotional growth, it is inherent of all of our roles as educators (Ontario Language Curriculum, 2006, p.3). It is the basis for thinking, communicating and learning (Ontario Language Curriculum, 2006, p. 3). We recognize that “each of a student’s languages may be developed to different levels and within different contexts depending on their social and academic experiences” (Learning and Teaching, 2018, p. 84). A range of language learning strategies and approaches are afforded to our students to help them make meaning of the world around them.

With a focus on nurturing our multilingual community, we believe our students’ cultural and linguistic identity will be supported. Through understanding our students’ language strengths and growth areas, by offering second language learning, and by providing rich language opportunities across all subject areas, we believe our students will become productive, literate citizens “who share their voice and take action to make positive contributions to their ever-changing world” (as stated in our mission).

**Language Rich Opportunities Across All Subject Areas**

All teachers provide rich opportunities for our students to develop their listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and representing abilities. For example, in language our students become authors, readers, debaters or graphic designers. Additionally, in mathematics, for example, our students become data collectors and analyzers, coders and financial analysts. Furthermore, in science, for example, they explore the role of scientist as they observe, conduct experiments, and interpret results. Through an inquiry approach we are driven to provide provocations and listen to student voice to incite wonder, curiosity and a love of learning, both inside and outside our programme of inquiry. Strategies such as STEM (Science Technology, Mathematics and Engineering) learning and robotics are used across content areas and are frequently offered within our units of inquiry.

A balanced literacy approach combined with our assessment practices supports our students through modelled, shared, guided and independent instruction. This approach allows us to meet our students at their zone of proximal literacy development to best help them grow and develop in social, emotional and intellectual ways.

**Students Language Strengths and Areas for Growth**

A. English Language Learners

When families who are new to Canada arrive at our school, they are welcomed and registered. With the families’ permissions, we share their registration information with our Board’s Newcomer Welcome Centre. Their children are assessed for their current level of English language proficiency at the centre or at our school. Recommendations are made for a language pathway which will best support each student’s language learning. Depending on their level, some students will receive half time support within a self-contained English as a Second Language (ESL)Program while others will be integrated full time in their homeroom classroom with their peers. We have a full time ESL teacher who currently teaches 20 English Language Learners (ELLs) from Grades 3 to 8 within two half time programs. Additionally, we have an itinerant ESL coach, who supports teachers in programming for our integrated ELL students. Settlement Workers and Support Services are offered to our families to help transition to our school and interpret where needed.

All teachers whether ESL or homeroom, use the STEPS continuum to observe and document conversations, observations and work products to track student linguistic strengths and areas for growth. Modifications and/or accommodations are used by all teachers to best support each student’s learning journey. We are aware that “students learning additional languages are simultaneously processing more than one language and this extra work on the brain is tiring” (Learning and Teaching, 2018, p. 92). Furthermore, “there is an enormous amount of cultural information to be absorbed … including unfamiliar patterns of social interaction”. We carefully consider this information as we plan for our ELLs, taking into account their social, emotional and intellectual strengths and areas for growth.

1. Learners with Special Education Needs

Through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), ten of our students have been identified and placed in a fully self-contained special education room that provides alternative, personalized and precise academic programming to support their strengths and areas for growth. Please refer to our inclusion policy for more information about the IPRC process. Often these students have connections with outside community agencies for support with speech and language needs. They also have access to our Board’s speech and language pathologist to support their expressive and receptive language development. Within this self -contained class, there are two students who have been identified as deaf and hard of hearing who receive Board level support through the Deaf and Hard of Hearing itinerant and have an FM system.

**Multilingual Learning and Student Identify**

When families walk into our lobby, they are greeted with many artifacts that show our value, appreciation and respect for our diverse cultures and languages. Our learning council created our “Celebrating our Diversity to Increase our Understanding” map board and ‘welcome’ display that shows welcome in our seven most prominently spoken languages. Moreover, our mission is translated into these languages. Classroom Language Agreements, language portraits, translanguaging opportunities and mother tongue classes are four practices we currently use to cultivate our multilingual community and enhance student identity.

1. Classroom Language Agreements:

We collaborate with each other and with our students to deepen our communities understanding about the role and value of language (Learning and Teaching, 2018, p.88). As a collective, we establish the conditions to support all language learners. Co-constructing and posting classroom language agreements with our students articulates the purpose of language, the importance of all languages and eases any misconceptions that students may hold (Student Language Agreements, 2018).

1. Language Portraits:

Language portraits allow us to get to know the whole child. “When working with all students, but perhaps most urgently with English language learners with limited prior schooling, we need to take an asset stance – to build on the vast funds of knowledge and unique insights that these students have as a result of their life experiences” (English Literacy Development, 2014, p.3). Our students are encouraged to create language portraits as a way to share and record their language background, experiences and goals (Language Rich Learning Communities Nano Workshop, 2020). These portraits help to inform our teaching as well as activities that we offer outside of instructional time.

1. Translanguaging Opportunities:

“Translanguaging is a process in which students draw on known languages, naturally and flexibly, combining their elements to meet communicative and social needs” (Translanguaging 2018, p. 1). We not only respect and honour our students’ first languages but we value it as a way to support new language acquisition. We welcome and encourage our students to bring their language and culture to school with them and in turn provide varied opportunities for them to use it and share it (English Literacy Development, 2014, p. 5). These experiences help them to construct meaning and make connections between the languages as well as help to preserve their cultural and linguistic identity (Translanguaging, 2018). We endeavour to partner our students with peers who speak the same first language so that they can discuss new learning, share their thinking and/or ask questions. Classroom language agreements, as mentioned above, lay out the conditions for translanguaging.

1. Mother Tongue Supports:

Mother Tongue refers to the language that a person has grown up speaking. It is inherent in culture and identity. As mentioned above, we have our mission and the word ‘welcome’ translated in our most prominent mother tongue languages. We have incorporated language sharing and learning into our school culture. Our book purchasing focus is to acquire books for our library that mirror our community. It is our hope that as our students read them, they may see their culture reflected back to them. In addition, as we read these books, we will learn more community to enhance their open-mindedness. We seek opportunities to celebrate culture and language in authentic and meaningful ways.

Our Board offers International Language classes which reflect the variety of languages represented in our community. These complimentary 25 week classes take place on Saturday mornings at a neighbouring school.

**Second Language Learning**

The second language that our school offers is French. Our students begin learning this second language in Grade 2. In Grades 2 and 3, our students have a minimum of 50 minutes of French instruction per week. The focus of this instruction is on oral language as we know having a solid foundation in oral language helps learners become successful readers, writers and communicators. The PYP’s language scope and sequence is used to guide our instruction and assessment practices. We integrate French learning into our arts curriculum. In Grades 4 through 6, our students receive 200 minutes of Core French instruction per week. This instruction focuses on all the strands of language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. We use the Ontario French as a Second Language Curriculum for our Grades 4 to 6 instruction.

**Our Commitments**

These commitments will help our school continue to develop our multilingual learning community. Through collaborating with our colleagues across grade level and subject areas and partnering with our students and their families, we are refining our practices to enhance our language learning practices and beliefs. As our learning community grows together so in turn does our language policy. It is changed and adapted to reflect and extend who we are.

**Bennie Bulldog teachers** are committed to:

* Using consistent language learning and teaching practices
* Fostering inquiry
* Offering STEM and robotics
* Planning literacy opportunities inside and outside of our units of inquiry
* Striving for transdisciplinary learning that consistently incorporates language learning
* Understanding, documenting and reflecting on the STEPS continuum
* Modifying and/or accommodating our ELLs programs based on their current strengths and areas for growth
* Communicating with our ESL coach to support reporting and programming
* Creating classroom language agreements
* Communicating student’s strengths and areas of growth to families

**Bennie Bulldog students** are committed to:

* Sharing their language backgrounds, experiences and goals
* Creating language portraits: celebrating who they are as language learners by sharing and recording their language background, experiences, and goals
* Co-constructing classroom language agreements with their classroom community to establish the purpose and importance of language
* Engaging in self-reflection and goal setting to take ownership for their learning in relation to listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing
* Being open minded to sharing, listening, and learning about other languages and cultures
* Supporting their peers’ language learning by acting as learning resources for each other
* Striving to do their best to show their most accurate strengths and growth areas
* Sharing their learning with their families

**Bennie Bulldog** **families** are committed to:

* Communicating their children’s learning backgrounds, experiences and goals with the school team
* Supporting their children’s literacy development in their first language
* Supporting their children’s additional language learning
* Connecting with the teacher to discuss, understand and support learning progress and areas for growth

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