STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ELEMENTARY ESL PROGRAM

GOALS:

The goals of the elementary ESL Program are: (1) to provide English Language Learners (ELLs) with an instructional language communication program in English that will enable them to participate fully in their educational experience in our schools and in their personal and social lives in our community; (2) to deliver an appropriate curriculum in a positive learning environment; and (3) to ensure equitable assessment of the academic achievement of all ELLs.

Objectives.

1. To develop basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency in English.
2. To develop language proficiency in the speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing from a whole language approach.
3. To develop an understanding of the process of intercultural communication and competence in intercultural interactions.
4. To provide ELLs with the opportunity to share their language and culture with their peers in the grade level classroom.
5. To encourage participation in the full range of instructional activities in the mainstream curriculum and in extra curricular activities in the school.

Theoretical Basis of the Program

The ESL instructional program at the elementary level is based on a communicative approach to language and incorporates the language acquisition theories of Krashen’s Natural Approach, Swain’s Output Hypothesis, Long’s Interactional Hypothesis, Peinemann’s Learnability/Teachability Hypothesis, and Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development Theory (Richard-Amato, 2003). This theoretical approach supports the natural acquisition of language with selective instructional, learning activities. Underlying our philosophy of language acquisition is the concept of the “creative construction” process through which language learners progress as they acquire the phonological, syntactic, and semantic structures of a language. As learners are exposed to comprehensible input in the form of spoken or written language, they gradually reconstruct language rules that enable them to organize the linguistic input and create a new language system. The learners engage in a continual process of hypotheses testing as they experiment creatively with the new language during interaction with the social and physical environment. Through this continuous, systematic, creative construction, the learner acquires a new language.

There are four major factors that facilitate the language acquisition process: (1) an atmosphere in which the learner feels secure, safe, and free to experiment with language;
(2) an instructional program that provides meaningful language input as a springboard for the creative construction process; (3) comprehensible language input in the form of genuine communication that presents language structures through meaningful social interactions; (4) a content based curriculum that is appropriate to the language levels of the learners and developed to facilitate the acquisition of cognitive academic language skills.

It is through this natural process of language acquisition that our ESL Program strives to promote the acquisition of language under the direction of a teacher-model who creates an effective classroom that facilitates social interaction and guided instruction.


**Program Description**

The elementary ESL Program is delivered by four teachers. Students in grades K-5 spend from 60-90 minutes in a “pull-out” ESL class and are grouped according to age. Language instruction is content-related and is based on a whole language approach to the development of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A variety of interactive learning experiences encourages the acquisition of English in meaningful contexts. The ESL Program supplements, but does not replace, the integrated language arts/social studies program of the mainstream classroom. Therefore, the ELL should participate fully in mainstream classroom learning activities with modifications. It is important that ELLs be included in all educational experiences to maximize language learning opportunities and provide equal educational opportunities.

**ENTRY and EXIT ASSESSMENT**

Student eligibility for enrollment in the ESL Program follows the process outlined in the English As a Second Language Resource Guide. The Home Language Survey indicates a language influence other than English. The ESL teacher reviews student records and information to determine if the further service is needed. The ESL teacher interviews the student and assesses language proficiency via any of the following assessment tools: Carrow Screening Test for Auditory Comprehension of (English) Language, Northwestern Syntax Test (adapted), the Big E Language Development Program Assessment, Amazing English Assessments, Informal Reading Inventory, Writing Sample. Results of the interview/assessment process determine the language proficiency and appropriate placement.

A student transitions out of the ELS Program when the student has developed the basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency that are necessary to function successfully within the instructional groups in the mainstream classroom. This proficiency level must be demonstrated in both the ESL classroom and the grade level classroom and jointly observed by the classroom teacher
and the ESL teacher. Curriculum based assessment, teacher observation, and student self-report are used to verify the decision to transition students.

**Progress Reports.**

Student progress is recorded on the ESL Progress Report. This report accompanies the regular classroom progress report which is completed by the classroom teacher. These reports are sent to parents three times a year.

**Parent Conferences/Communication**

ESL teachers communicate with parents on a regular basis. Parent conferences are held twice a year in the fall and spring. The ESL teacher is responsible for attending these conferences with the classroom teacher or arranging a separate conference in the event of schedule conflict. Communication with parents is an essential component in the success of language learning. We strive to maintain constant and successful communication with parents.

**Extra-curricular programs**

Students enrolled in grades 3-5 are eligible to participate in a full range of extra-curricular activities, such as the intramural sports program, choir, and orchestra. ELLs are encouraged to participate in these programs. Special transportation needs are often met to enable their participation.