

Multilingual Learner (ML) Program Description at Academia Cesar Chavez 2018-2019

Description

Our Multilingual Learner (ML) Program at Academia Cesar Chavez, formerly known as the English Language (EL) Program, is designed to support our scholars to excel in English in and out of school. Using a mixture of language development strategies, our main focus is on developing strong foundational skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the English language for our multilingual community.

The perspective of ACC is that our scholars are often times multilingual, and they bring with them an incredible wealth of knowledge. This knowledge comes in the form of linguistic depth, social and cultural experiences, and a higher value placed on community. We place much emphasis on these gifts and incorporate them into our classrooms with objectives rooted in academic language. Our ultimate goal is to guide our scholars to be lifelong multilingual members of the community.

Because the vast majority of our children have an intimate connection with Spanish, as often it is their primary language, our youngest scholars (Pre-K/K/1) have the opportunity to strengthen their Spanish language skills in our Dual Immersion Program. This creates a strong basis in which more intense English instruction is added starting in Grade 2. From Grades 3 and beyond, all of our scholars continue strengthening their academic Spanish while building a greater foundation of social and academic English skills.

Specific examples of how we accelerate English language learning are:

- Developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as well as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)
- Building foundational literacy skills in scholars' native language that will readily transfer to building literacy in English
- Using instruction in students' first language to teach grade-level content (bilingual instruction)
- Training teachers in the development of specific instructional strategies for our scholars' linguistic needs: the use of GLAD strategies, culturally relevant pedagogy, co-teaching best practices, and specific EL/ML language training

Entering the Program

Criteria for entrance into the ML Program includes information from home language questionnaires and results from either the ACCESS for ELLs test or the WIDA Online Screener, which is given in the absence of an ACCESS score. Scholars who were serviced in the ML Program at Academia Cesar Chavez in the previous academic year will continue to be serviced until formally exited from the program.

Program Components

Scholars receive daily English language support within their classroom and/or in a guided small group. The focus of their unique instruction is on deepening the comprehension and production of academic language. Collaboration between ML and content teachers is a key component to the success of our scholars. Working together to create and execute daily or weekly content and language objectives is central to addressing the academic needs of our school.

We also have begun to incorporate defined co-teaching models between ML and content teachers. The ML teachers work hand-in-hand with classroom or content teachers in order to maximize instruction, yielding the most benefits to our scholars.

Regular Instruction Program

During regular instructional programs, methods beneficial to all – especially MLs – are used by all teachers to help support language development. ACC uses methods and strategies such as the use of realia (real objects and materials), manipulatives (drawings, graphs, maps), visuals (illustrations, photos, videos), graphic organizers (matrices, Venn diagrams, webs), and engaging interactions for all in the classroom (cooperation and collaboration). We believe that the implementation of these strategies will have a direct positive effect on the achievement of our ML scholars in the content classes. The instructional goal is to meet grade appropriate academic achievement standards, using content and language objectives.

Exit Procedures

Students remain in the ML program until they reach proficiency in academic English. While it generally takes only 2-3 years to become *socially* proficient in English, it normally takes between 5-7 or more years for MLs to become *academically* proficient, depending on individual circumstances. In following the mandate set by the State of Minnesota, an ML may exit our program if they pass the ACCESS test requirements. They are then monitored by ML teachers for four years after successfully exiting the program. Parents may remove their child from the program at any time by sending a written request to the school.

Special Education

For students with disabilities requiring a language instruction educational program, their ML status must be included in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Newcomers

Scholars that are new to the United States with limited English proficiency require unique support. Incorporated into their support is:

- Strong focus on social and emotional learning, creating strong relationships
- Explicit instruction in order to develop BICS and CALP
- Small group times structured with other newcomers
- Numerous opportunities to communicate with other native speakers, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening

We take all of our newcomers' needs into consideration when we work with our scholars, and we provide quality instruction for them at ACC.