



# Mighty Preparatory Language Policy

## **Mighty Preparatory Language Beliefs**

Mighty Preparatory believes that all scholars are language learners and that our teachers are language instructors. Language development is a continuous practice. It is not only spoken, but it is also written. Teachers will endeavor to inspire a love of language learning in scholars in order to enable them to reach their highest potential. The majority of our scholar base is of Latin American descent and each scholar has his or her own background and unique contributions. Recognizing and supporting scholars' mother tongue is crucial to their growth and to their perception of identity. We also believe that in order to be college-ready, responsible citizens, our scholars' skills in English must be honed, and an understanding and respect for our world and its peoples is further developed through the acquisition of a secondary language in addition to the mother tongue. Here at Mighty we are committed to the promotion and support of language diversity.

## **Language and the Mighty Preparatory Mission Statement**

The Mission of Mighty Preparatory is “to create and sustain public schools of excellence that empower each student to reach his or her highest potential in college and the global marketplace and which inspire a life-long love of learning, achievement, and service in order to positively change the world”.

## **Mighty Preparatory Language Profile**

- ❖ A majority of our scholars identify as Hispanic. Most are fluent in English, though some need additional assistance, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. The goal of this ESL program is to assist scholars in becoming fluent in all aspects of English – speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

- ❖ The other common language spoken at home is English. Uplift Mighty Primary has less than 1% of scholars who speak a language other than Spanish or English at home.

## **Language Programs at Mighty Preparatory**

The primary language of teaching and learning at Mighty Preparatory is English. This arises from the current importance of the English language in the global marketplace and the fact that as a public school in the state of Texas we are required to offer English language instruction. We also believe in the vital importance of the acquisition of at least one secondary language. Both English language instruction and secondary language instruction are detailed below.

### **English Language Instruction**

Scholars receive instruction in English grammar, writing, and literature throughout their years at Mighty. The language of instruction of all subjects other than the additional language (Spanish) is English. Scholars needing additional help in English due to a lack of fluency are eligible for ESL services from an ESL-certified teacher, or if their difficulty arises from learning or physical differences, they may receive additional support. At Mighty Primary, we have one full-time ESL interventionist. All scholars, regardless of the reason for their need of additional assistance in English, may receive additional support through in class support, small group support, and after school tutorials. Furthermore, all of our teachers are required to be ESL certified in order to ensure the proper level of support for our scholars' English language acquisition. Our scholars who receive special services also receive their instruction in English, and in both their English and Spanish classes they receive the modifications and accommodations outlined in their Individual Education Plans.

### **Accepted Protocols**

#### *Spelling and Vocabulary*

- ❖ Common American spelling protocols such as Webster's are acceptable.

- ❖ Academic strategies are in place for all scholars to augment vocabulary – including word walls, flash cards, pictures/visual representations, and other ways of non-linguistic representations.
- ❖ We recently adopted the Lucy Caulkins Writer’s Workshop curriculum for writing. We use components of this curriculum to help teach the parts of speech, how to diagram a sentence, and how to write a strong narrative and expository piece.

### *Citation*

- ❖ Citation of sources in research work is expected. The concept is introduced in Primary Years, with growing emphasis as scholar’s progress through the continuum from Middle through Upper school. The accepted convention for citation at Mighty Preparatory is Modern Language Association (MLA).

## **Additional Language Instruction**

Starting in kindergarten, scholars are instructed in the Spanish language at least once a week. Scholars continue in Spanish at a minimum through 12th grade year.

Philosophically, Mighty Preparatory would like to offer a wider variety of secondary languages to foster skills in a global community, however enrollment and funding constraints make this difficult. We place importance upon Spanish in order to offer a high quality program of instruction notwithstanding the need for refining the majority of our scholars’ fluency in mother tongue. Concurrently, we believe that our non-native Spanish speakers need to be competitive with bilingual language expertise. In this way, we foster scholars’ understanding of colloquial and academic language.

## **Language Learning Philosophy of the Mighty Preparatory Additional Language Teacher (Spanish)**

We believe that scholars should be immersed in the target language as early as possible. We aim to instruct in Spanish and clarify as necessary in English in the classroom. Some of the challenges are that we have advanced speakers who can read and write in Spanish; scholars who speak fluently, but cannot read nor write in the language; and some scholars who are not native speakers at all. Our intent to teach in the target language proves to be the fastest and most effective way to help them improve in ALL four skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Our course objectives are based upon the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as well as the “Standards for Foreign Language Learning” as defined by the American Council of Teaching of Foreign Languages:

1. **Communication:** The scholars communicate using all four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing.
2. **Connections:** The scholars use the language to make connections with other subject areas and to acquire information.
3. **Cultures:** The scholars gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures
4. **Comparisons:** The scholars develop insight into the nature of language and culture by comparing their own language and culture to another.
5. **Communities:** The scholars use the language beyond the classroom for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

## **Curriculum**

Our English and secondary language curriculum is formulated by Mighty Preparatory and our parent organization, Uplift Education. This curriculum incorporates required state standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), STAAR, International Baccalaureate standards, and the best practices and standards of other respected bodies. All faculty members are considered language learners/instructors and as part of our instructional rigor, we include ELPS Language Objectives for daily instructional delivery.

## **Enrichment of Mother Tongue**

Though the primary language of instruction and communication at Mighty Preparatory is English, we believe that mother tongue and heritage languages are important to a scholar’s identity. We endeavor to foster this through encouraging scholars to be aware of their culture and to share it with others. We believe this not only helps scholars to develop their own cultural identity but also broadens all of our horizons and moves us towards being more aware members of the world community. Parents may share books in mother tongue languages with the school and we will add these to our library resources. In accordance with both research and best practice, we encourage our parents and scholars to continue to speak in their mother tongue at home. This strengthens the individual’s language skills and instills a sense of confidence and cultural pride, while enabling our school community to celebrate its differences. All of our communications to parents during in-person meetings in particular are in mother tongue, provided by translators. Our written communications to parents are in English and Spanish.

Mighty Preparatory organizes activities with the goal of the encouragement of culture and cultural awareness, such as the annual Fine Arts Festival, Hispanic Heritage events, and Black History Month.

We are conscious that more can be done to enrich mother tongue and secondary language experiences, and we continue to investigate ways to improve our programs in these areas and internationalism in general. We also strive to have our parents become more involved in the appreciation and use of languages other than English through volunteering at the school. At the same time, we, at Mighty Preparatory, believe we have made significant strides towards our goal of fostering self-identity, responsible citizenship, cultural sensitivity, and international awareness amongst our school community.