

Language Development Across the Content Areas
Policy Narrative/Literature Review
Draft

Introduction

Language unlocks every content area door” is a statement that substantiates the primacy of reading, speaking, and writing in the curriculum of our education institutions. Expressive and receptive language skills and higher order thinking are among several key traits associated with academic and life success. Enhancing language development is a matter of special concern to public school educators. It is even of greater concern to educators who work in poor urban school districts where a disproportionate number of students come to school with unearned disadvantages. Such disadvantages are largely due to poverty and the historical factors that have limited the education of caste groups and assigned the children of the poor to spaces deprived of life’s necessities. Under such circumstances, children learn a first language that is different from the academic language in classrooms. This distinction becomes more challenging as students move up in grade levels and across various content in the school curriculum. The skill-based curriculum and instruction reflected in this policy must be implemented across classrooms and schools if we are to put students on a trajectory for success.

Traditional systems of education have failed these children and their families despite the evidence that poor children can thrive and achieve. The achievement of low-income children has been documented when school leaders create the policies, goals, administrative procedures, and instructional methodologies to build their capacity to navigate academic content. Additionally, building relationships with parents and other community stakeholders provides the web of support that reinforce what student learn in schools and classrooms. The scope of this policy is to institutionalize best administrative, instructional, and parenting practices across all content areas to provide students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to achieve in school and in life.

Learning is mediated through oral and written response to text as well as rigorous discourse characterized by interesting and meaningful content. Providing teachers with the resources, support, and freedom to teach creatively and effectively using research-based principles and findings is additive. Developing instrumentation and protocols to monitor, evaluate, and provide constructive feedback provides the helpful mechanism for continuous improvement. Language development across the curriculum provides the volume of reading, writing, speaking, and thinking that is likely to improve student achievement as measured by criterion and standardized assessments. By necessity, we must establish instruction across all content areas emphasizing word knowledge, comprehension of written and oral text, critical thinking, and the skill to communicate what one has learned as the core of our instructional programming. This effort is broad in scope and requires a role for all education stakeholders, parents, building staff, and central office leadership, to provide the resources, instructional methodologies, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback protocols for continuous improvement. It

also requires that students assume more responsibility for their learning as they grow and develop.