

International Community School

Language Policy

Philosophy

Language is the medium through which all communication and learning transpires. Language acquisition is a lifelong process and is an extension of culture, belief systems, expression, attitude, and identity. The International Community School (ICS) strongly believes that all language has value, and all languages of the world are equally important. We deeply value the diversity of the home languages spoken by our students, and we recognize that they contribute to students' academic and cultural growth.

At ICS, we believe in creating an environment that embraces, celebrates, and nurtures students' language, culture, and the communities of which they are a part. We encourage students to continue developing proficiency in their home language as well as in the additional languages of French and Spanish. The integration of various world languages at ICS breaks down barriers and allows students to connect their previous knowledge to current academic learning.

Purpose

The purpose of the ICS Language Program is to:

- ensure that students reach proficiency in the acquisition of Standard English;
- support the development of literacy skills and conventions of English;
- promote intercultural awareness by celebrating and valuing the cultures of the school and global community;
- encourage enjoyment and appreciation of language learning; and
- develop knowledge and understanding of another language (French and Spanish).

Language Profile

In the 2015-2016 school year, ICS had a population of 429 students from kindergarten to fifth grade. Approximately 50% of the students have a mother tongue other than English. Other languages spoken at the school include Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chin, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Hakka, Hindi, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Kunama, Kurdish, Nepali, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Telugu, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Language of Instruction

The primary language of instruction at ICS is English.

ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages)

When students register at the ICS, they complete a Home Language Survey. All students whose parents have indicated on the survey that a language other than English is spoken at home or by the student must take an English language proficiency test to determine eligibility for the ESOL program. These students are given the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), which assesses language proficiency in four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Students scoring below a 5.0 are entitled to receive English language assistance without further assessment. At this point, notification of ESOL services is sent home for parent approval, and the student is identified as an English Learner (EL) and is placed in an ESOL class. Approximately 35% of the student population at the ICS receives ESOL services

At the ICS, students are pulled out of their classroom during the scheduled Language period to receive ESOL services. EL students receive small group language instruction in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In collaboration with mainstream teachers, ESOL teachers also provide support in academic content and vocabulary, primarily in the area of English Language Arts while also using cross-curricular resources. In order to make content comprehensible to students, both mainstream and ESOL teachers employ best practices and various strategies for teaching ELs.

EL students receive instructional and testing accommodations, as determined by the Testing Participation Committee that are used in the mainstream classroom as well as during standardized tests.

In order to measure progress, ELs are assessed annually (January/February) using the ACCESS test. The ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) for English Language Learners test assesses students' English language proficiency in the four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

When students have achieved the necessary criteria on the ACCESS (5.0 or above) as well as the state assessment of reading comprehension, they are ready to exit language support services. If a student's score is a borderline score (approaching 5.0), that student may be eligible to exit through a Language Assessment Conference, which is a meeting with the ESOL teacher, other teachers of record, and administrators to discuss the EL's progress.

Students who meet the exit criteria become English Learner Monitored (EL-M). They are monitored in their regular classroom for a period of two years in order to assure that students are receiving ongoing support as they continue to work toward grade-level academic language performance and that they are adapting academically, socially, and psychologically in the regular classroom. Approximately 10% of the student population at the ICS is being monitored. Students who are native speakers choose to take either French or Spanish in order to learn a second language.

Mother Tongue

At ICS we acknowledge the importance of a student's mother tongue in promoting personal identity, international mindedness, intercultural awareness and respect, and maintaining cultural heritage among all students. ICS supports the development, maintenance and enrichment of the mother tongue by encouraging families to continue speaking, reading, and writing their native language at home. We recognize that a student's mother tongue is important in the development and sustainability of their heritage and personal identification. Therefore, students are able to share their own language and cultural experiences in class, and during assembly programs/pep rallies.

A home language survey is completed by all parents during the enrolment process to determine the languages spoken of all students. There are many resources housed in the school's library and classrooms that enhance and support the students' use of their mother tongue. ICS has access to a translation service through Dekalb County. Classroom assignments, projects, programs, assemblies are all a part of the repertoire of activities that students are introduced to and exposed to as they extend their use of the mother tongue. In their instruction of the language, they share their cultural experiences and their mother tongue to support students, teachers and parents in their acquisition of a second language. Administrators at ICS support staff, students and parents by providing a structured environment where learning can take place. Leadership holds teachers accountable for ensuring that students are exposed to the curriculum and standards and that they are receiving language every day and, that lessons are meaningful. Students are assessed to determine their proficiency in acquiring a new language.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Effective implementation of the Language Policy requires the cooperation of all stakeholders of the school community. The Teacher Learning Committee does an overview to gather more information about the effectiveness of the Language program and how best to support it.

Role of Administration

- Make provision for students to learn a language (English, French, or Spanish)
- Ensure that policies and procedures regarding the language acquisition are developed and implemented and are regularly reviewed.
- Place importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages.
- Provide a variety of professional development opportunities to enable teachers to be effective instructors of students with a range of language proficiencies, supporting mother tongue and host country language learning.
 - Promote an embedded professional development model enabling collaboration concerning curriculum, instructional techniques, and assessment and student progress
 - Observe teachers and provide constructive feedback on their delivery of instruction.
 - Allocate funding and resources to support language development, and provide time for collaboration.
 - Promote communication with parents concerning students' language development and provide translators when requested and available.
 - Produce key publications in the most common mother tongue other than English.
 - Keep the whole school community informed of the policy process and how they can make contributions.

Role of teachers

- Incorporate the teaching and learning of language into the programme of inquiry.
- Develop the skill of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and media literacy.
- Use language as a major means of communicating.

- Address the students' individual needs, with the range of language proficiencies, and where necessary, develop individualized programs and expectations.
- Place students in appropriate language instructional settings based on assessment data.
- Conduct formative and summative assessment of students' academic and language accomplishments and needs.
- Communicate clearly with parents regarding students' accomplishments and needs as they progress across the grades.
- Provide field trip opportunities and in school experiences will enhance the PYP units of inquiry and embrace the language and culture of the mother tongue.
- Promote inquiry based authentic language learning.

All stakeholders

- Recognize that learning language internationalism and multicultural understanding.
- Understand that language development at ICS is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders.

Review of the ICS Language Policy

The language policy of ICS will be reviewed by staff, school administration, IBPYP Coordinator, ESOL teacher, Classroom teachers , School Counselors, and the Media Specialist. When discussing or reviewing the language policy, references should be made to the assessment policy, and the special educational needs policy.