



IST LANGUAGE POLICY

Updated: 2021

Statement of Belief

“The International Baccalaureate is committed to supporting multilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness, and is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.” [IB Language Policy; 2014]

“A culture of language learning is foundational to a PYP learning community. Language has the power to bring the learning community closer together and overcome boundaries. It excites and invites communication in many ways, supporting and strengthening relationships and the building of international-mindedness. Language learning is located in both local and global communities. Students are able to flourish in an interconnected, mobile global community using technologies to communicate and sustain relationships. At the same time, they are rooted in local communities through cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills.” [Principles Into Practice; 2020]

We believe that our students benefit greatly from becoming multilingual and see this not only as a benefit leading to a richer life, but as a fundamental right and we hope to support and encourage our community of learners (adult and child) to use their abilities as a resource in our learning community. To this end, our students will gain from instruction in languages in addition to English beginning at JPK (age 3) with Spanish instruction, and continuing in grades K-4 with Spanish and Mandarin. Hopefully these language skills will be strengthened as they continue into the Middle Years Program at IST.

We believe that language is transdisciplinary in nature - all teachers are language teachers. Language and communication create the cohesiveness and understanding across cultures that we need in our changing world. Language and cultural understanding develop best through shared experiences and interactions. We respect and honor how language reflects the individual and a culture's beliefs, attitudes and perspective, and are committed to creating the opportunity to help our students find their voice in our society.

Language and successful communication are vital for the success of all students. This includes the ability to express oneself through a variety of formats, and languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts, as well as those of world languages.

As a transdisciplinary school, language is essential to the construction of meaning by making connections between all of our units of inquiry and individual subject areas. All elements of the PYP connect through this lens... from the attributes of the Learner Profile and the Approaches to Learning, to the connections to the Mission Statements of both the IBO and IST. We recognize and support language development of all students through the expectation and understanding that all of our teachers work together to make sure that language is developed through integrated learning and meaningful contexts.

LANGUAGE AND THE PROGRAM OF INQUIRY

Language is integral throughout the IST Program of Inquiry, as it is a major conduit through which children communicate their learning; and therefore, rightly possesses a high profile within teachers' UOI. Oral, visual and written language are all present within planning, to account for a range of learning styles and preferences and language needs; and they also link with the IB approaches to learning – thinking skills, communication skills, social skills, self-management skills and research skills - and key concept questioning. Connections are made to our IST world languages of Spanish and Mandarin as well, and each of our language specialists are involved in planning and directly connect activities to most of the Units of Inquiry.

Children are exposed to language types through specialist lessons in: Music, Art, PE, STEM, Mandarin and Spanish.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

IST Staff members work to create an environment which values and enriches the language learning of all students, through the implementation of a structured curriculum, multilingual staff and varied resources. The library contains a world language section, which is available to students to read in school or at home. We greatly value the resources of our community with regard to multilingual capabilities and use this resource to support our students. It is an area we will focus on for continued growth.

The IST community recognizes that all students have an individual language profile based on their own family and culture. In addition to English as the mother tongue at IST, we support development of their home and family language and their cultural beliefs which shape their identity. Our staff is mindful to recognize those children who have language needs and abilities, including those who are ESL. We are privileged to have a large number of students with dual language skills, who speak additional, mother tongue languages at home; and we also possess a very multilingual staff body. Students explore both Mandarin and Spanish through the PYP and in the middle school program.

PARENT SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE HOME CONNECTIONS?

Parents are encouraged to assist with language development at home through supporting their children with their homework assignments, reading time and implementing teacher suggestions, such as those included in the weekly newsletters. Parents are encouraged to read with students on a daily basis, enter into discussions about what has been read, assist with inquiry-guided homework research and encourage communication of all types.

We embrace the diversity of our IST families, and are committed to highlighting the rich cultural heritage we have within our staff, students and their families, and our larger school community. IST has staff members that are fluent in additional languages other than English. Students and their families are encouraged to participate in our 'Culture Club', whereby they present to the school body during assemblies and in lessons, elements of their culture and heritage from their country of origin. Such rich exchanges are invaluable to developing an internationally minded school.

LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

In IST classrooms, we support and encourage language development in a variety of ways. Our literacy work is further enhanced by 'Writers' Workshop' lessons, spelling lists and activities, instructional vocabulary, and

a range of reading materials, including 2 reading book schemes, class unit libraries and our whole school library resources.

Learning is differentiated and individualized throughout the school, to accommodate all types of student needs and learning styles. Children are provided with appropriate reading materials, using Reading A to Z resources, as well as the school library books. Student progress is monitored in order to continue their progression through these schemes. Children also learn through grade level appropriate spelling groups and patterns. Our written work is planned around each unit of inquiry, with writing used to focus on meaning and understanding of a concept, as well as addressing technical and genre skills through our 'Writers' Workshop' program. Students are encouraged to use language as a means of self-expression, be it written or verbal; all of which should be relevant, engaging and challenging.

INTERNATIONAL MINDEDNESS

To be internationally minded is to embody the Learner Profile. IB learners strive to be: Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced, and Reflective.

In essence, an internationally minded student is aware of, curious about, is open minded to, reflective of their own, and cares about different cultures (multiculturalism). In addition, the student has the courage to act in order to make the world a better place. Being internationally minded is also not only being aware of the differences but also the commonalities amongst humans.

Teachers are encouraged to look for relevant global issues to augment local issues and seek out resources, which will provide a deeper depth of inquiry among their students. Our library is stocked with multi-cultural and globally diverse resources, many in a variety of world languages in addition to English. In addition, children are able to access different resources using our school laptops and IT technologies.

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REVIEWING THE POLICY

The PYP coordinator will ensure that the language policy is reviewed by all staff at the beginning of each school year to reflect the current needs of the community. The policy will be shared with our community via the IST website.