



# Language Policy

version 2 (Feb 2014) <sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Based on IB "Guidelines for developing a school language policy", "Making the PYP happen: a curriculum framework for international primary education" and MYP: From principles into practice (pre-publication)" and "Language and learning in the IB programmes"



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## Purpose

The purpose of the school's language policy is to provide a focus for the language curriculum and the learning, development and appreciation of language within the school. It aims to foster and encourage the values of the IB as well as the relationship between the various communities that have been brought together by and through the school.

## Philosophy

*A language policy is an action statement...It is concerned less with where the students in a school are going, and more with how they are going to get there.*

Language Policy in Schools, Corson (1999)  
taken from Guidelines for developing a school language policy

- **What is Language?** At IST we believe language is the key to social interaction, communication, understanding and learning. We believe that students need to explore the system(s) of language(s), and the impact written or spoken language can have, in depth, in order to be able to use them confidently.
- **Why is language important?** We feel that knowledge of language is essential in becoming a confident communicator, inquirer and a successful learner. Language is the basis for mutual understanding and is crucial for success across the whole curriculum because it empowers the learner and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking. Language is the main tool for constructing meaning and acquiring knowledge.

At IST we believe that language is integral to identity. As part of a global and local community we use language to exchange information, ideas, attitudes and feelings. Respect for others grows with understanding what is important to them. In the social context we believe oral language is especially relevant. We are aware that oral messages consist of verbal and non-verbal elements which can be equally powerful. The understanding of the second language learner is supported by using non-verbal elements like body language, facial expressions and props.

Language provides a vehicle for inquiry. Learners listen, talk, read and write their way to negotiate new meanings and understand new concepts. As the demands of learners understanding increases so should their development of language to aid the understanding. We teach language to understand others and to be understood.

Language is important to personal development, cultural identity and inter-cultural understanding. The values of diversity, international-mindedness and inter-cultural awareness are fostered through language. In our school we are aware that language mirrors its culture and has its own characteristics and expressions which need exploring to be better understood by second language learners.

At IST we are aware that improving and expanding one's knowledge of language enables us to enjoy a wide variety of literature, in both 'traditional' format, as well as electronic resources and internet interfaces. Language is an important tool in making social connections, sharing opinions, attitudes and feelings with other people.

Finally, we feel the mother tongue provides the intellectual framework for developing an understanding of other languages.



### *Beliefs and Values*

The International School Telemark fully supports the beliefs of the IB, that language development is key to all learning and that:

- All teachers and administrators are language teachers and are responsible for the implementation of this language policy.
- Proficiency in the mother tongue will lead to a greater understanding at the conceptual level.
- Students' language development needs to be monitored and supported in order to ensure inclusion within the programme.
- The development of the host language (Norwegian) is essential.
- The development of the language of instruction (English) is essential.
- Language is a tool for developing international-mindedness through communication.
- Language is multi-faceted and includes reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

Language should not be viewed as a stand-alone subject. Students not only learn a language, but they learn about a language and they learn through a language. This learning helps develop communication, thinking and understanding skills and helps the students make sense of their community. And as with the Programme of Inquiry, it is important to view the acquisition of language in contextual terms rather than a fixed set of steps and levels to progress through.

With current research highlighting the importance of mother-tongue language, teachers and administrators at the school all have an important role to play in celebrating the variety of mother-tongues found within the IST community. We are a portal through which members of our community can forge links with others to further develop their mother-tongue language and are exposed to new languages and cultures, further encouraging international-mindedness.



### *Language and learning in the IB*

Adapted from “Language and Learning in IB programmes” p.16-18, (Aug 2012)

Both PYP and MYP students may have varied and often complex language histories and consequent multilingual profiles. Many schools will have a population of students who are learning in a language other than their mother-tongue.

All IB teachers have a responsibility to address the language needs of their students in the language of instruction.

At IST we understand that students arriving in The International School may require extra support. In an effort to facilitate language development, students' language needs will be assessed on entry to the school, and teaching and resources will be planned accordingly.

**Primary Years Programme (PYP):** At IST, as in other IB World Schools offering the PYP, all students have the opportunity to learn more than one language from at least the age of 7.

As stated in “Language and Learning in IB programmes”...language is involved in all learning that goes on in a PYP classroom and it is considered an essential vehicle for inquiry and the construction of meaning. It empowers the learner and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking. Students' needs are best served when they have opportunities to engage in learning within meaningful contexts, rather than being presented with the learning of language as an incremental series of skills to be acquired. In an inquiry-based classroom, teachers and students enjoy using language, appreciating its functionality and aesthetics. Wherever possible, language should be taught through the relevant, authentic context of the units of inquiry. Regardless of whether language is being taught within or outside the programme of inquiry, it is believed that purposeful inquiry is the way in which students learn best.

In the “knowledge” area of the PYP, language is the most significant connecting element across the school's curriculum, both within and outside its transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. When teachers plan learning experiences that enable students to develop language within meaningful and enjoyable contexts, students are able to make connections, apply their learning, and transfer their conceptual understanding to new situations. This progressive conceptual development, together with an enjoyment of the process, provides the foundation for lifelong learning.

Language learning is recognized as a developmental process where there are opportunities for students to build on prior knowledge and skills in order to help them progress to the next phase of language development. The PYP Language scope and sequence (February 2009) acknowledges that learning language is a complex, developmental process. It is intended to inform and support all teachers, as all teachers are teachers of language. It presents a set of developmental continuums that are designed as diagnostic tools to assist teachers in planning language-learning experiences for students, and in monitoring students' development throughout the PYP. The continuums can be used to support learning in the language(s) of instruction and any other language learning that is going on in the school.

Effective language teaching and learning are social acts, dependent on relationships with others, with context, with the environment, with the world, and with the self. Such learning is relevant, engaging, challenging and significant. Exposure to and experience with languages, with all their richness and diversity, creates an inquisitiveness about life and learning, and a confidence about creating new social interactions.



Language provides a vehicle for learners to engage with the world and, in an IB World School, for students to relate to, and accept, responsibility for the mission of the IB to “help to create a better and more peaceful world”.

**Middle Years Programme (MYP):** “The MYP is guided by the three fundamental concepts of:

- holistic learning
- intercultural awareness
- communication.

Students are encouraged to consider issues from multiple perspectives so as to learn about their own and others’ social, national and ethnic cultures and to develop international-mindedness. In all MYP subject groups, communication is both an objective and an assessment criterion. Students are required to learn at least two languages, and are encouraged to learn more.

- **MYP Language A:** The power of language experienced through the study of quality literature enables students to become highly proficient in their understanding, use and appreciation of their language(s) A. The course is academically rigorous; it equips students with linguistic, analytical and communicative skills that can also be used in an interdisciplinary manner across all other subject groups. It builds on experiences in language learning that students have gained during their time in the PYP. Knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills will have been developed through transdisciplinary units of inquiry or independent language inquiry. Students continuing on to the DP will have a grounding in at least one language A that will enable them to undertake the DP course options with an inquiring, reflective approach to the study of language and literature. If students have become proficient in two (or more) languages A in the MYP, they may be aiming for a bilingual diploma at the end of their studies.
- **MYP Language B:** The MYP requires schools to provide sustained language learning in at least one language B over the whole course of the programme. The two overarching aims of language B in the MYP are to encourage students to gain competence as critical, competent communicators over the five years of study. For these aims to be realized, the language B objectives enable students to become multi-literate and thus able to understand and use print-based and digital, spoken, written and visual texts. An understanding of the interplay of the spoken, written and visual modes is important.

MYP language B builds on experiences in language learning that students have gained during their time in the IB Primary Years Programme. Knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills will have been developed through transdisciplinary units of inquiry or independent language inquiry. Students continuing on to the DP will have grounding in at least one language B that will enable them to undertake the DP courses with an inquiring, reflective approach to language learning. The MYP subject guides for languages A and B provide the framework for teaching and learning in these subjects. To assist in achieving these broader goals, teachers and students are provided with clear aims and objectives for MYP languages A and B, as well as details of final assessment requirements. Teachers must use these subject guides and the document MYP: From principles into practice when implementing their language courses in school. Further information on the requirements for the study of languages in the MYP can be found in the MYP Coordinator’s handbook (updated annually).

- **Main languages offered in the curriculum:** English is the main language of instruction of the school. Students are actively encouraged to speak English in classes for which English is the medium of instruction, and to gradually reduce the reliance they have on other languages for communicating, expressing ideas, and



processing information when learning in English. Through a planned immersion environment, students are subject to sheltered and differentiated instruction at an age appropriate level. Students with limited English are supported and their instruction is scaffolded as they become independent in an English language environment. Many aspects of the environment, including classroom walls and teaching resources, are intended to provide a rich, varied and stimulating language environment.

- **Norwegian:** Norwegian is taught to all students from the First grade. Where possible, the teaching of Norwegian is tied to the units of inquiry. Norwegian is often used in social situations by the students and to aid comprehension in other areas of the curriculum where necessary. Teachers with specialised knowledge of Norwegian play a vital role in the language and conceptual development of all students. The importance of Norwegian as the host country language and as the mother-tongue of a large number of the students, is a significant factor in the overall character of the school. Extra support is provided for those students who request or require it.
- **Spanish:** is taught through the MYP as a Language B subject. It is introduced to the Year 7 students in MYP. It is taught in the target language and new students may delay starting Spanish if they have limited competence in English and Norwegian. There is differentiation within the class to allow for a variety of levels of fluency.
- **English Language Support:** It is important the school clearly differentiates between SEN and Language support to provide appropriate resources to facilitate students in the school.

The school offers a limited amount of in-class or withdrawal EAL support. The school acknowledges that most students in the school need some degree of English support, and therefore teachers should adjust their methods of presenting information and organise tasks and resources in mainstream classes accordingly. All teachers in classes where English is the medium of instruction are seen as EAL teachers, and are expected to provide sheltered and differentiated instruction in order to make content and concepts comprehensible for EAL students.

Students identified by the school as having particular language needs will receive additional support to develop their language skills. This will be facilitated by a language specialist, and the nature of this support will depend upon the individual language needs of the student. Internationally recognised assessment tools will be used by the SEN/ESL co-ordinator to benchmark students and to identify their level and needs.

- **Norwegian Language Support:** As the host country language, Norwegian language plays a prominent part in daily school life. Most students in the school speak Norwegian to some degree, although some students do arrive with little or no Norwegian. Wherever possible, these students are included in mainstream Norwegian classes. They should be given differentiated work and in-class support, and in some cases the school facilitates one-on-one tuition by a specialist teacher.
- **Other languages:** The school obtains information about a student's language profile when they join the school and keeps track of the range of languages that are represented amongst the student population. Other languages, such as Russian, are offered as an extra-curricular option, and where possible, parents are involved on a voluntary basis. The school would like to offer mother-tongue language classes to students after school, although this would have to be run on a volunteer basis.
- **Mother-Tongue Support:** It is widely recognised that the development of a child's mother-tongue has a strong association with the development of additional languages. It is important that mother-tongue



acquisition is monitored and supported through parental co-operation. Students who benefit from mother-tongue support will have a greater opportunity to develop their general language skills.

In the event that the mother-tongue in question is not one of the languages currently being catered for at IST, the school is required to help families facilitate its provision. In some cases, where possible, mother-tongue languages may be supported during classtime.

**The school aims to provide support for students and families through:**

- Provision of reading material appropriate for the stage the child is at (on-line or in the library).
- IB Resources related to the Learner Profile and Essential Elements in the mother-tongue, where possible.
- Additional vocabulary for new units provided for in the mother-tongue, where possible.
- Visual and graphic material to aid learning for mainstream subjects.
- The development and introduction of a mother-tongue workshop at the start of each school year.
- Information on support structures and organisations within our local community.
- After school language clubs.





### *Responsibilities*

The taught language curriculum	Deputy Principal (Curriculum), PYP/MYP Coordinators, Literacy Coordinator, class teachers
Identification for EAL support	Class/English teachers, SEN Coordinator
Identification for NSL support	Norwegian teachers, SEN Coordinator
Identification and testing of special needs relating to language	SEN Coordinator, class teachers
Profiling of new admissions	SEN Coordinator, Deputy Principal (Curriculum), PYP/MYP Coordinators
Development of mother tongue provision	Deputy Principal (Curriculum), PYP/MYP Coordinators
Review of schoolwide language policy	Deputy Principal (Curriculum), PYP/MYP Coordinators, Literacy Coordinator, staff



### *Supporting documents*

The following documents are to be read and referred to in conjunction with this language policy:

- “Guidelines for developing a school language policy”, IBO (April 2008)
- “Making the PYP happen: a curriculum framework for international primary education”, IBO (December 2009)
- “MYP: From principles into practice (pre-publication)”, IBO (March 2014)
- “Language and learning in the IB programmes”, IBO (August 2012)
- MYP Subject guides: “Language and literature guide” (pre-publication), IBO (Feb 2014); “Language acquisition guide (pre-publication)”, IBO (February 2014)
- PYP “Language Scope and Sequence”, IBO (February 2009)