

# IST LANGUAGE POLICY

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## MISSION

Our mission is to provide students with a comprehensive and balanced education, in an environment that supports both inquiry and international mindedness. We aim to inspire our students and provide them with the language skills that will enable them to fulfill their potential as critical thinkers and responsible global citizens.

## IB LEARNER PROFILE

The core of International Baccalaureate programs is the IB Learner Profile and the International School of Tallinn celebrates the promotion of these student attributes:

- Inquirer – To use language to acquire information and to make sense of the world around them.
- Thinker – To be able to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and succinctly.
- Communicator – Receives and expresses ideas in more than one language including the language of mathematical symbols
- Risk taker – To be able to read, write or speak in situations where they may not feel totally confident.
- Knowledgeable - To acquire the vocabulary and understanding to facilitate and consolidate learning.
- Principled – To be aware that language is powerful and that it can have a profound effect, thus it must be used responsibly.
- Caring – To be caring and careful in their use of language and are aware of how the use of language can affect others.
- Open-minded – To respect differences and similarities between languages, dialects, and personal communication skills.
- Balanced – To express themselves orally as well as in writing and find a balance between listening and speaking in communicating with others.
- Reflective – To reflect on their language usage and development and consciously work at improving their language proficiency.

IST in support of the IB Learner Profile and our IB curriculum, also supports the aims and goals of the International Baccalaureate Mission.

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

## **LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AT IST**

English is the official language of instruction at IST, and the English language is integrated into our curriculum, across all subjects. We also provide the opportunity to learn additional languages, either inside or outside of the core curriculum.

We acknowledge that our students come from a range of language backgrounds, and we appreciate that many of our students speak English as a second language. The fact that IST students have varying degrees of English-language proficiency, both spoken and written proficiency is built into our curriculum.

- Language learning, both in English and other languages, is of primary importance to the school's overall mission.
- Every subject teacher is considered to be a language teacher; therefore, they are responsible for the language development of students, and this responsibility is further reinforced in our collaborative planning practices.
- Both our teaching and curriculum accommodate the diversity of student language and education needs, including those for students learning in a language(s) other than their mother tongue.
- Our school develops and implements policies and procedures that support our language-learning programme(s).
- • Our school develops and implements a language policy that is consistent with the IB philosophy.

## **PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING**

At all levels, across all grades and subjects, our programmes of inquiry shall drive language acquisition and language application/utilization via the inquiry process.

While English is the language of instruction, English is further promoted as the spoken language across campus and at school-sponsored events. However, as a matter of principle, IST believes that language should be used as a means of inclusion. Thus, our language policy further allows for students to inquire in their mother tongue and to utilize their foreign language skills as a means towards understanding, inclusion, and multilingualism (see Section E, Additional Languages, below).

Besides the English-language immersion naturally provided within our campus environment, English language learning takes place in the following forms across the school:

- Language instruction is implemented across the curriculum.
- The official language of instruction across the school is English, facilitating the acquisition of subject-related vocabulary in English in every subject.

- Offer focused English language tuition in our compulsory Language and Literature classes.
- Language teaching through harmonized syllabi, ensuring the acquisition of general language competencies in English (and additional foreign languages).
- Studies in an elective Foreign Language B, Estonian as a Second Language and, where possible, a student's Mother Tongue are further integrated into the school's comprehensive language-learning mission (see Section E, Additional Languages, below).
- All curricular events and projects will serve as a showcase not only for the school's English-language learning, but also encourages use of skills and talents in all languages spoken by the IST's students.

In the event further support is needed to ensure the academic well-being of ESL (English as a Second Language) students, the school is committed to providing:

- Additional ESL instruction by a qualified instructor either during school hours or after school.
- Professional Development for English Language teachers.
- ESL Teacher collaboration and planning with subject teachers.
- Continued monitoring of English language skills performance.
- Budgetary commitments for additional ESL resources.

As to teaching strategies, IST works closely with teachers across the curriculum and stresses the following principles so that all teachers can contribute to language development:

- Language skills and content taught in all our classes should be transferable across subject areas.
- English classes will be aligned to IST English language standards, IB standards, and school Language Policy.
- IST teachers will work to accommodate every ESL student to reach their potential.
- English Language support will be provided to ESL students and integrated into classes as per the language needs of the learners.
- IST's English and Foreign Language teachers will plan lessons for individual student language needs in collaboration with homeroom and subject teachers in accordance with the principles of the IB.
- IST's English and Foreign Language teachers will implement proven instructional methods of teacher modeling and pedagogical scaffolding.
- Language Assessment will be explicit, varied, authentic, and made known to students.
- Students' progress will be tracked, monitored, and reported.

## **LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY**

Our approach to language at IST is central to our identity as an international school. We believe that language is central to all learning. Moreover, we appreciate that language is used to construct meaning and deepen our understanding of the world. Thus, we strive to ensure that every class, every grade, and every subject taught within our school maintains the same centrality of language learning and promotes a diverse range of communication and language-based inquiry.

- All our teachers are, fundamentally, teachers of the language conventions and vocabulary of their subject area.
- Language is best learned in a sincere and hands-on context.
- Different languages may be used in different contexts and an understanding of how to match our language choices to any given situation is essential to success in the world.
- Maintaining and developing a student's mother tongue reinforces both academic success and cognitive development (see Section E, Additional Languages, below).

The learning of additional languages is likewise beneficial to cognitive development and will help students to become better communicators in an international environment.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

IST provides on-going professional development for all teaching staff. On-going professional development addresses the concept of international mindedness and the role languages have in the curriculum. Additionally, this training provides rich opportunities for staff to share best practices and to develop strategies to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students.

## **LANGUAGE PROFILE AT IST**

IST is an English-language school. The school, however, accepts both native English speakers and non-native English speakers. Across all subjects, we implement language tuition based on an individual programme catering to each student's knowledge and skills (including learning difficulties and/or special talents)

## ADMISSION POLICY

At IST we welcome students from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students with limited English language skills are accepted and supported through our ESL programme. IST will carry out Language Tests for first and second language to determine the child's language level. The main purpose of the entrance test is to determine their levels of proficiency in the language and this in turn will help the school determine the type and degree of support students will require if they fall within the English Language Learners category. Students with limited English-language proficiency are offered additional support at every level. Progress in English language ability is expected for entry into DP.

## PYP

Students may be admitted to PYP grades at IST (up to and including grade 5) regardless of the level of the student's proficiency in English. Intensive English language support will be provided within homeroom classes with focused phonic based learning for ESL students.

## MYP

### Grades 6-10

In middle school, MYP 1 - MYP 5 (grades 6-10), students must have sufficient competency in English in order to benefit from our academic programs. For this reason, reading, speaking, and writing proficiency must be demonstrated prior to admission. Where the student's first language is not English, they must also demonstrate that they are proficient in their mother tongue at their grade level. Students entering into MYP need to give an English entrance exam to establish current academic ability and knowledge level of English language skills.

## DP

### Grades 11-12

Our high school academic program, DP 1 and DP 2 (for grades 11-12) caters to students who are planning to go to college or university, which means that students should have academic English proficiency commensurate with the grade level for which they are applying at IST.

The admissions procedures for students wishing to enter DP grades involve the submission of the following documentation:

- Report written by the existing English teacher of the applying student.

- Confidential recommendation completed by the tutor or principal or someone on faculty highly knowledgeable of the student and report cards.
- Entrance exam to establish current academic ability and knowledge level of English in the four language skills.

## Admissions Testing for MYP/DP

Admission test is taken to ascertain the level of English proficiency of the applicant, this will be administered at school (either at IST or at the existing school overseas). Should the applicant be receiving ESL support already, the student will likely be expected to take an IST admissions test. This test will involve components of reading and listening comprehension, writing and speaking production. IST's MYP/DP Coordinator, in consultation with IST English teachers, will draw an assessment based on the test taken and make a recommendation for an admissions decision. Interviews with the applicant may also be requested, either face-to-face or by Skype.

## ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES

### Estonian Language and Culture

Estonian as an additional/foreign language is taught at the International School of Tallinn starting from pre-school. In the first stage of study (PYP), ending in MYP 5 (grade 10) Estonian is taught twice a week in each class.

Our compulsory Estonian language tuition is represented by the following core requirements:

- Estonian language tuition will be provided across all proficiency and grade levels.
- Estonian language skills and content taught in all our classes should be transferable across subject areas.
- Estonian language and culture will be integrated both inside and outside the classroom (field trips to Estonian cultural spaces; joint events with students from Estonian international schools; taking part in Estonian arts and culture events).

Estonian language and culture tuition will comprise at least 35 lessons of every academic year, across all grades. Said tuition may additionally take the form of participation in Estonian hobby groups or training outside the school's curriculum. Where appropriate, the school may consider participation in Estonian cultural events/groups, as well as any Estonian language study undertaken independently by a student, as representing part of the school's compulsory programme.

## **MOTHER TONGUE SUPPORT**

IST recognizes the value of a student's mother tongue, and we try to support the development of any students' native language. Classroom libraries are created and filled with books of different languages to support mother tongues and celebrate cultural diversity. Research has shown that a solid understanding of a student's mother tongue directly corresponds to their acquisition of a new language as well as success in other subjects. Not only is such support in keeping with IB philosophy, IST also believes that it bolsters the student's cultural identity and adds to the overall learning community within our school.

As IST keeps growing, we will continue implementing programmes, resources, and opportunities that allow students to develop their mother tongue. The efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- After school instruction opportunities.
- Additional hiring and class electives as numbers/demand allows.
- Community outreach with social and civic groups.
- Further development of the school library and media center for resources.

## **LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PYP**

At IST, the teaching of language builds upon the previous experience, needs and interests of the learners. Teaching and learning in PYP 1-5 is based on the Language Scope and Sequence documents. Within the framework of the IB, students are provided with the opportunities to:

- reflect on their learning and self-assess.
- use language within meaningful contexts and across curricula.
- reflect on language through comparisons with other foreign languages.

Teaching staff ensures optimal teaching and learning through:

- presenting language through meaningful authentic contexts
- integrating language in other subject areas
- encouraging students to reflect on language and develop language awareness (including but not limited to form and audience)
- recognizing and respecting the different ways in which students express themselves
- supporting the development of positive attitudes towards improving communication skills and providing a wide range of opportunities to do so.
- fostering mother tongue

- using a wide range of teaching and assessment strategies within a balanced language program that includes listening, viewing, speaking, reading, and writing
- providing challenges to students which allow opportunities for them to reach their full potential
- acknowledging differences in developmental stages, learning styles, as well as, previous language experiences.

## **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Starting in Grade 1, IST provides for and requires the teaching of a “Foreign Language” course of study, currently we offer French, Russian, German, and Spanish (Grade 1 to 5). Other languages may also be considered as the school develops and so long as there are at least five interested students in any year group.

## **LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE MYP/DP**

### **Language and Literature**

When multilingualism becomes the norm, we strive to be open and inclusive for students with different language backgrounds. That is why we affirm each learner’s identity and autonomy. Often, IST language of instruction is a second language for many of the students. When students apply at IST, it is important to assess and evaluate their competence in the language of instruction. Some of the students might apply to the school while being complete beginners, while others might be orally ‘fluent’ but lack academic skills in the language of instruction. Any kind of situation will lead students to struggle in accessing the curriculum, especially meeting the strict IB requirements.

IST suggests fostering English, the language of instruction, as Language A, as well as learning any other foreign language as Language B. By meeting the language needs of our students and celebrating linguistic equity, we establish the teaching of well-rounded, academic English Language skills in the Language and Literature subject group (Language A), relying on the professionalism of our teachers and language differentiation.

At the IST, we offer English Language and Literature. These courses build on the four strands of language learning (listening and speaking, reading, writing and viewing and presenting) that students have learned in the PYP. The subject is offered as an integrated course which fosters creative and critical thinking. By exploring the

literature of other cultures, we are encouraging our students to develop open-mindedness as they learn to appreciate literary works not only from their own area of the world, but also from other parts of the world.

## Language Acquisition in MYP/DP

At IST we are very much aware of the fact that our students are living in an increasingly interconnected world in which knowing how to communicate in multiple languages can lead to the opening of many doors. We therefore make it a priority to ensure that every student develops proficiency in at least two languages. Research has shown that learning other languages brings numerous benefits such as building multitasking skills, improving decision-making skills and boosting brain development.

It is the requirement that all the student's study at least two languages, one from the language and literature course and one from the Language acquisition course. IST is still an emerging educational institution among the world IB schools, that is why launching the English Language Acquisition as well as supporting development of mother tongue strongly depends on the number of students enrolled.

In the MYP students are taught within six phases depending on their competencies. However, the phases do not correspond to age groups or MYP years. Students might be grouped with a Phase 2 and 3 depending on the student's ability to comprehend, read, write and speak the target language. At IST, it is essential to consider a reasonable differentiation and manageable combination of proficiencies in one class.

In DP, the courses are categorized as following:

- Language ab initio courses are for beginners or for those who have not learned a specific language before. The ab initio courses are available only at standard level.
- In Language B, the courses are intended for students to broaden their knowledge and experience in a foreign language. They may be studied at either standard or higher level.

## Progression in MYP/DP

1. Formative and Summative assessment records measure the three assessment levels—emergent, capable and proficient—to assess students.
2. MYP students are allowed to change the Language acquisition course once they have graduated phase 4.
3. Any changes in the language of choice prior to a student reaching phase 4 will be reviewed by the IB coordinator (MYP) and the respective language teachers.

- a. Exceptional organizational reasons (# of students) economics/demand, etc may also be justified in changing a students language choice

## Language Support in the MYP/DP

If necessary, IST, in cooperation with a parent or legal representative, will consider arranging intensive courses of English language support for reducing the child's language deficiency. ESL support is provided to the learners based on the needs of the learners.

## Assessment Policy for Languages in MYP/DP

In the MYP and DP the assessment of languages is criterion-related and we adhere to the School Assessment Policy and the assessment guidelines and requirements prescribed by the IB (see IST Assessment Policy).

## MYP/DP Student Language Learn Support for SEN Student

The Student Learning Support Plan is intended for students with special educational needs and those who are really struggling in a particular area(s) of the curriculum and who are in need of individualized and specialized support. The plan addresses specific language learning areas of a particular subject, which might be skills, knowledge or conceptual understanding that a student is having problems mastering.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### Students

- Be made aware of the IST Language Policy.
- Take a proactive role in language learning.
- Show enthusiasm for seeking out a wide range of language opportunities.
- Make good use of IST resources and seek assistance from teachers and administration when it is needed.
- Do their best to acquire and develop additional languages where appropriate.
- Undertake learning the Estonian language and seek out opportunities for engaging in Estonian culture.

### Teachers

- Be aware of the IST Language Policy.
- Make students aware of the IST language policy.
- Teach language skills and language acquisition in the official language of instruction

- Model effective communication, across all subjects.
- Assist students in seeking out appropriate language resources.
- Differentiate across a diverse spectrum of English language proficiency when planning, teaching and assessing student work.
- Provide appropriate and timely feedback about language development to the students and their parents.
- Refer students who are not developing the requisite language skills to the Administration and assist in arranging for additional support.
- Provide teaching strategies that will accommodate differing levels of language proficiency.
- Vary the types and levels of language assessments they use in accordance with the language (and special needs) demographics of their classes.

### **Parents**

- Be made aware of the IST Language Policy.
- Encourage and support the use of the IST language of instruction at home.
- Likewise encourage their child to maintain and develop their mother tongue.
- Promote literacy within the home, provide a range of appropriate texts for students.
- Monitor student progress and communicate any concerns, in the first instance, through the homeroom teacher.

### **Administration**

- Provide adequate resources and staffing for the school's language programs, including supplementary ESL support from qualified ESL teachers.
- Ensure consistency in the delivery of language of instruction, assessment, and reporting, across all sections of the school.
- Instigate a regular review of the Language Policy and update accordingly.
- Ensure that teachers are supported with opportunities for TOEFL skills development.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER IST POLICIES**

IST believes in collaboration and the entire staff devotes extra effort towards the academic rigor of the curriculum followed at school. As a lay down protocol, school policies are reviewed on a regular basis. During their review cycle, school ensures that all policies work in tandem and the updates if needed are implemented with immediate effect. IST policies are tailored to the needs of our school community.

### ....to our Admission Policy

Language proficiency of the student is judged at the time of admissions and accordingly support is provided. For more details refer to the Admission policy.

### ....to our Assessment Policy

Language proficiency of the student is judged at the time of admissions. Both Assessment approaches - Assessment for learning & Assessment of learning - are applied rigorously through different formative and summative assessments for Language & Literature and Language Acquisition subjects in the school.

### ...to our Academic Integrity Policy

IST Academic Integrity policy states that we use MLA (Modern Language Association) Style across all subjects and grade levels. Teachers will consistently teach how to cite using MLA.

### ...to our SEN/ Inclusive Policy

As IST is inclusive every student gets an opportunity to study and learn different languages and enjoy diverse backgrounds with diverse needs.

## **POLICY REVIEW PROCESS**

The Language Policy will be reviewed once a year by the IST community once a year. In addition, the implementation of the Language Policy in all classrooms at the IST will be reviewed by the Programme Coordinators, Language Coordinator and the Special Education Coordinator as part of the teacher observation process.

## REFERENCES

Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Program: Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy.

International Baccalaureate, UK April 2008

ASI International School, India

Anton Bruckner international School,

- Document: IST Curriculum General\*
- Document: Language and Learning in IB programmes
- Document: K-6 English Module, Board of Studies NSW\*ds

APJ International School, India

A note on the process of this document

This policy must be developed as a working document through the following: Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy, Published April 2008; a document provided by the IBO.

### **Policy Review**

Created April 2018

Previous Revision: January 2021

Latest Revision: October 2022