

ist International
School of Tallinn

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.

1 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.

2 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. To preserve this delicate balance, we actively promote a culture of linguistic diversity where all languages are valued equally. This approach fosters a truly inclusive learning atmosphere, encouraging every student to both share and broaden their linguistic and cultural perspectives

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
- 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.

3 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. At IST, we provide opportunities for students to explore and discover connections within languages through inquiry. Not to just acquire information but to challenge ideas, reflect on perspectives and construct new understanding. 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 through an inquiry model.
- 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.
- Multiculturalism is at the core of our teaching and a bridge to cultural understanding.
- Language learning at IST is seen as a lifelong journey that extends beyond the classroom. We encourage our students to see themselves as global communicators who continuously seek opportunities to enhance their language skills and cultural understanding, whether through travel, literature, art, or digital media
- Embracing Diversity in Education at IST represents our steadfast commitment to creating an educational environment that respects and nurtures linguistic diversity.
- At IST we strive to extend language learning beyond our school walls, engaging with the local community and global partners to provide authentic language and cultural experiences. This engagement allows our students to apply their language skills in real-world contexts, deepening their understanding and appreciation of the languages they study.
- The learning of additional languages is likewise beneficial to cognitive development and will help students to become better communicators in an international environment.
- Effective communication in the official language of English plays a pivotal role in nurturing the social fabric of the community, serving as a vital conduit that fosters connection and inclusivity among its members. By ensuring proficient communication in the official language of English, individuals can bridge linguistic barriers, thereby promoting understanding, collaboration, and solidarity within the community. This cohesive linguistic environment not only enhances social cohesion but also facilitates the exchange of ideas, cultures, and experiences, contributing to the overall well-being and vitality of the community.

4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IST continuously offers professional development opportunities to all teaching staff, focusing on fostering international mindedness and the significance of languages within the curriculum. This professional development encompasses a variety of formats including IB Workshops, seminars, ECIS, CEESA training, and collaborative planning sessions that cover differentiation, planning, assessment and technology integration. Additionally, we bring in experts to equip our staff with innovative teaching and learning strategies. These training sessions serve as valuable platforms for staff to exchange best practices and devise methods to make the curriculum inclusive and accessible to every student. These training sessions constitute a continuous reflective process designed to assist staff members, and their insights are documented within an impact journal.

5 LANGUAGE PROFILE AT IST

IST is an English-language school that welcomes and embraces linguistic diversity. Across all subjects, we implement language support based on an individual programme catering to each student's knowledge and skills. We are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment.

6 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.

6.1 PYP

Students may be admitted to PYP grades at IST (up to and including grade 5). Intensive English language support will be provided within homeroom classes with focused phonic based learning for ESL students. In addition we run a simultaneous English immersion class (ESL) where students will have the opportunity to study language skills at differentiated levels.

6.2 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. Students entering into MYP need to take an English entrance exam to establish current academic ability and knowledge level of English language skills. Additionally, we offer a concurrent English as a Second Language (ESL) immersion class up to and including MYP 4, enabling students to develop their language skills at varying levels tailored to their needs. A confidential recommendation or reference provided by the student's previous school, completed by the school with the student's academic and non academic performance. IST's MYP Coordinator, in consultation with IST 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 online

6.3 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 *of a minimum of B2 entering DP 1*.

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

- Confidential recommendation/reference completed by the students former school from someone who is knowledgeable of the student academic level.
- English entrance exam to establish current academic ability and knowledge level of English from a recognized standardized test.
- Language Acquisition entrance exam to establish current academic ability and knowledge level of the students choice of their foreign language B from a recognized standardized test.
- IST's DP Coordinator, in consultation with IST 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 online.

7 LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PYP

7.1 Language of Instruction-English

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 by 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.

7.2 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.

8 LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE MYP

8.1 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 Primary Years. 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.

8.2 Language Acquisition in MYP

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. 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, we use differentiation strategies within the groups to tailor as per the needs of the learners.

8.3 Progression in MYP

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 5.
3. Any changes in the language of choice prior to a student reaching phase 5 will be reviewed by the IB coordinator (MYP) and the respective language teachers.

8.4 Language Support in the MYP

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.

9 LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE DP

9.1 Language and Literature

In a multilingual environment, we prioritize inclusivity for students from diverse language backgrounds. We recognize and respect each learner's identity and independence. Since many students at IST speak the language of instruction as a second language, it's crucial to assess their proficiency upon application to make sure they are at a B2 level. Any level lower than B2 will hinder students from meeting IB requirements and accessing the curriculum effectively.

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.

9.2 Language Acquisition in DP

At the International School of Tallinn (IST), our Diploma Program (DP) language acquisition courses are designed to cater to a broad spectrum of linguistic backgrounds and learning goals, ensuring every student has the opportunity to enhance their language skills and cultural understanding. Our DP language acquisition framework comprises two main pathways: Language ab initio and Language B, each offering unique learning experiences tailored to students' needs and aspirations.

9.3 Language ab initio Courses

Designed for students who are beginning their journey with a new language, our Language ab initio courses provide an immersive and supportive learning environment. These courses, available at the standard level, focus on developing basic communication skills, cultural awareness, and a foundational understanding of the language. Through a variety of engaging teaching methods, including interactive activities, multimedia resources, and cultural projects, students are encouraged to develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Our goal is for students to emerge with the confidence and ability to use the language

in simple, real-life situations, fostering a lifelong interest in language learning and intercultural communication.

9.4 Language B Courses

IST offers Language B courses for students aiming to broaden their linguistic and cultural knowledge in a language they have previously studied. These courses are available in French B and Spanish B at both Standard Level (SL) and Higher Level (HL), as well as Spanish Ab Initio for absolute beginners. The distinction between SL and HL is designed to accommodate varying degrees of language proficiency and learning goals:

- Standard Level (SL) courses focus on enhancing students' ability to communicate in a range of everyday situations, developing a good range of language skills across listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Higher Level (HL) courses delve deeper, requiring students to engage with more complex texts and express themselves more precisely and fluently in a variety of contexts. HL students also explore the literature and cultural aspects of the language more extensively.

IST is committed to expanding our language offerings based on student interest and demand. We are open to introducing additional languages in the future, aiming to provide our students with a rich and diverse linguistic education that prepares them for global citizenship.

9.5 Progression in DP

Personalized Support for Language Learning: Recognizing the unique language learning journey of each student, IST provides personalized support to help every learner achieve their full potential. Our dedicated faculty employs a variety of teaching strategies to cater to different learning styles and levels of proficiency. Feedback and assessment are tailored to individual progress, ensuring students are continuously motivated and challenged.

Cultural Understanding and Expression: In our Language B courses, we emphasize not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural understanding. Students explore the traditions, literature, and societal issues of the cultures where the language is spoken, enriching their learning experience and fostering a deeper appreciation for global diversity.

As IST continues to grow, we remain committed to enhancing our language acquisition programs, exploring new languages to offer, and finding innovative ways to support our students in their pursuit of multilingualism and intercultural competence.

10 ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES PYP/MYP

10.1 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 learning is represented by the following core requirements:

- Estonian language learning 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).

Every academic year, students receive instruction in Estonian language and culture across all grade levels. This education may also involve participation in Estonian hobby groups or activities outside the standard school curriculum. When appropriate, the school might consider a student's engagement in Estonian cultural events/groups or independent Estonian language study as part of the mandatory school program.

11 MOTHER TONGUE SUPPORT PYP/MYP/DP

IST recognizes the value of a student's mother tongue, and we try to support the development of any students' native language. 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 projects that embrace multiculturalism
- Further development of the school library and media center for resources.

While we embrace multiculturalism and support for mother tongues, our school's official language is English, and we expect students to communicate in our instruction language to foster an inclusive environment. Non-compliance with our language policy may lead to interventions, and in extreme cases, a review of enrollment, as specified in our admission and exclusion policy.(Refer 6.1.2.6 in Admission and exclusion policy)

English is the official language of instruction at our school. However, some flexibility may be granted to students at the discretion of teachers and management, taking into account the specific needs and circumstances of our diverse student body and their stages in learning.

12 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).

13 PYP/ MYP LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR SEN STUDENTS

The Individual Educational Learning Plan (IEP) is intended for students with special educational needs and those who are 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.

14 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.
- To use the official language of the school when inside the school premises.

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.
- 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.
- Identify students who are not developing the requisite language skills 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.
- To use the official language of the school and model effective communication

Parents

- Be made aware of the IST Language Policy.
- Encourage and support the use of the IST language of instruction at home.
- Encourage their child to maintain and develop their mother tongue in their free time
- 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. .
- To encourage using the official language of the school and model effective communication.

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.

15 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 and Exclusion Policy

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

....to our Assessment Policy

Language proficiency of the student is tested 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.

16 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.

17 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*

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