



ICS Policy & Practice Language Instruction



Introduction

The purpose of the Language Policy is to define our beliefs about language acquisition and instruction and the responsibilities of our school community that coincide with those beliefs. Language is an essential tool for communicating, teaching and learning, therefore all teachers at The International Community School of Addis Ababa (ICS) are language teachers. At ICS, English is the language of instruction in the Primary Years Programme (PYP); English is the language of instruction in the Middle School (MS) and the Diploma Programme, where English, Spanish and French are subjects available as Language and Literature and Language Acquisition choices. All students are expected to learn language; to learn through language and to learn about language.

Our beliefs about language:

- All students will benefit from teachers who engage in continuing professional development in the fields of language teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Children will value our host country language through exposure to Amharic in elementary and middle school classes.
- The promotion of lifelong reading and writing is key to developing the academic and personal talents and intellects of each student.
- It is important to offer a variety of world language programs.
- Language is best acquired in a positive environment that provides opportunities for students to be engaged in meaningful learning experiences.
- Language development and learning are most effective with a supportive school/parent relationship.

Foundational Principles

Vision

We strive to be Our Best with Africa and Our world

Mission

We nurture the talents, character and intellect of all learners, challenging them to be a positive influence and empowering them to excel in their world.

ICS Learner Profile

The ICS Learner Profile is the core and foundation of what we teach at ICS. We believe that these traits will help our students develop into compassionate, engaged and active global citizens.

PRINCIPLED: We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

CARING: We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

THINKERS: We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

OPEN-MINDED: We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

KNOWLEDGEABLE: We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

COURAGEOUS: We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

INQUIRERS: We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

BALANCED: We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives – intellectual, physical, and emotional – to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE: We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

COMMUNICATORS: We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

*The ICS Learner Profile is based on the IB Learner Profile, International Baccalaureate Organization 2013

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This Policy & Practice document represents our Policy and high level details of our Practice. The ICS Language Handbook provides details of implementation and execution of this policy and practices.

This Policy & Practice was reviewed in 2017-18. This will be routinely reviewed every 3 years by the Executive Director of Learning and the Schoolwide Leadership Team. Next review 2020-21.

Language Profile

ICS is an International School with a diverse population and language needs.

- English is the language of instruction in PYP with students having the option for learning Amharic and French. The language of instruction in Middle school is English, with Spanish and French taught as individual subjects. The DP language instruction is English, with Spanish, French, and Amharic taught as individual subjects. Students in DP have the option of learning their mother tongue through self-taught literature.
- There is a coherent and consistent approach towards the development of language throughout the school.
- Consistency is expected throughout the PYP, MS and DP in Procedure: Expectations, Differentiation and Assessment.
- Language is taught through relevant and realistic contexts in all subjects through all programs.
- English Additional Language (EAL) support classes are provided.
- Diversity of the student/staff body is celebrated through recognition of the mother tongue.
- Through the After School Activities program (ASA), the school offers additional support for the development of languages.
- Clear expectations are provided in the whole school language policy.
- An understanding that all language learning is of value is evident throughout the whole school.
- English, the language of our host country, and the mother tongue of the majority of our students, is promoted through language learning and through its culture and values.

Language Admissions Policy

ICS accepts students with a variety of language backgrounds. Our aim is to be responsibly inclusive and we accept students that we are equipped to help succeed in our academic program.

The ICS Admissions Policy states: The International Community School of Addis Ababa (ICS) serves the educational needs of the international community in Addis Ababa. ICS accepts students who can be successful in the regular academic program.

ICS does not discriminate on the basis of religion, ethnic or national origin or gender in its admissions and educational policies.

Admission is based upon completed application forms, previous school records and results from previous or current academic testing as required by ICS staff to determine:

- the potential of the applicant to benefit from the educational services available
- the capacity of the school to meet the educational needs of the applicant and,
- the ability of the school to meet the behavioral or emotional needs of the applicant

From early years to grade 6 we have no requirement for English proficiency. In grades 7-10, increasing English proficiency is required for admissions. Special admissions conditions could be placed on a student to gain English proficiency.

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English as an Additional Language at ICS

Purpose: To provide a meaningful, relevant, and professional intervention program to English Language Learners (ELL) that meets their specific and individual needs, while treating their culture and primary language with respect and dignity. It is an ICS goal to provide support to ELL primarily at the classroom level and recognize when identified students need more targeted and intensive services as their data, progress, and needs demand. The ultimate goal of the EAL program is to move the ELL as quickly as possible towards Language Proficiency and finally towards Grade Level & Academic Proficiency. English Language Proficiency is measured by WIDA

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) as well as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS) are essential to our English Language Learners (ELL) and will be supported in every classroom. Units at all divisions will include appropriate academic vocabulary that support the mastery of the IB Command Terms. Units at all divisions will include specific language objectives that will help scaffold success for students learning English.

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) program provides students the opportunity to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language. While learning English, EAL students will develop respect and appreciation towards language, culture, and global diversity. English language learners will acquire content and academic language skills that they need in order to be successful independent learners in the mainstream classroom.

As an EAL program we value:

- additive bilingualism;
- heterogeneous grouping;
- sheltered instruction when content and language are taught simultaneously;
- linguistic, academic, and cultural development.

We believe that EAL students learn best when they:

- are exposed to high linguistic and academic expectations;
- have explicit language teaching;
- read, write and communicate orally in English.

ICS's EAL program is designed to support the development of English language learners. EAL specialists support English language learners as well as assist classroom teachers with differentiation of their programs. The EAL program at ICS is primarily designed to develop student's English proficiency within the context of the regular curriculum.

EAL Student Placement

Every student at ICS has unique language abilities and prior learning experiences. Decisions regarding English language support from the EAL Department, are based on each individual student's needs.

Once a student is placed in the EAL program, they are closely monitored to determine their progress and on-going educational needs. Teachers monitor the student's progress and EAL level, through a series of on-going assessments and observations.

EAL Program Exiting

Students are deemed ready to leave the EAL program once they are at an English language level which enables them to independently participate within each of their classes. The EAL Department will use a number of different criteria in order to determine this.

Mother Tongue Language Support

The ICS community is plurilingual; many languages co-exist within it, and while the language of instruction is English, all languages are valued. We have no fewer than 45 mother tongue languages within our community and almost half of our students speak a language other than English at home.

While the language of instruction at ICS is English, we know that a student's primary language can often be a gateway to learning; therefore, ICS strives to help students practice and maintain their primary languages.

ICS believes that language development in more than one language is essential to international understanding, lifelong learning and personal growth. Therefore, mother tongue language maintenance and development are vital to the development of the identity and communication skills of each student.

A well-balanced program based on maintaining, reinforcing and developing existing skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and interacting) should be at the center of the program. Fun activities and inquiry-based projects have to be integrated into the program in order to motivate students.

Our Mother Tongue Maintenance Program is coordinated by the Elementary World Language Department and run by parent volunteers who serve as facilitators. The program is designed for students of all ages to practice and maintain their primary language through a variety of activities and assignments. It is open to all students. Professional learning activities are planned and implemented for the facilitators at least twice per year.

World Language at ICS

ICS supports the IB Language Policy which states, “The International Baccalaureate is committed to supporting multilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international mindedness.”

ICS World Language Program at ICS aims to ensure language acquisition and support Mother Tongue Maintenance languages.

We believe that:

- Multilingualism is an advantage; we recognize it as a societal norm and reject any conception of it as either remedial or extraordinary.
- Language development in more than one language is essential to international understanding, lifelong learning, and personal growth.
- Learning and language are inextricably bound; therefore, all teachers are language teachers and are responsible for teaching or supporting English language skills in the context of their subject area.
- Mother tongue language maintenance and development are vital to the development of the identity and communication skills of each student.

ICS makes decisions regarding World Language course offerings based on the needs of our student population.

ICS offers instruction in three languages:

- French in elementary, middle and high school
- Spanish in middle and high school
- Amharic in high school

Language Pathways

Grade Level	Language 1	Language 2	Self-Taught	
EY3/4				
EY5	French	Amharic		
1	French	Amharic		
2	French	Amharic		
3	French	Amharic		
4	French	Amharic		
5	French	Amharic		
6	French	Spanish		
7	French	Spanish		
8	French	Spanish		
9	French	Spanish	As selected by student	Note: Amharic is offered as a first language in Grades 9-12. It is not included in the World Languages Department but rather as part of the English Department, or Group 1.
10	French	Spanish	As selected by student	
11	French	Spanish	IBDP School-Supported	
12	French	Spanish	Self-Taught Language A Courses	

Whole School Language Learning at ICS

	PYP	MS	DP
We use all studied languages as a medium of inquiry, providing opportunities to challenge first language speakers and to develop second language speakers.	✓	✓	
The ongoing language development of students is the responsibility of all teachers, parents and students.	✓	✓	✓
We understand that we have a diverse student body with diverse needs and that differentiation within our classes is crucial for success for all students.	✓	✓	✓
We teach language through meaningful contexts and concepts.	✓	✓	✓
We provide for language support beyond the classroom (EAL, and Learning Support).	✓	✓	✓
We strive to participate in as much professional development as possible.	✓	✓	✓
We give ongoing feedback on students' progress in all languages of instruction.	✓	✓	✓
We provide academic counseling as students and families make choices in their language pathways at ICS.	✓	✓	✓
We maintain language portfolios for each student including scores in assessments, student writing samples and teacher recommendations to inform our consistent placement procedures for language classes and academic counseling.	✓	✓	✓

Language in ES /PYP

At the elementary school students EY5-G5 can opt into Amharic language class. All EY5-G5 students attend French as a regular single subject class. ICS uses the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) standards in the World Language Program. ICS also has “Can-Do” descriptors for the elementary grade levels in French.

We believe that:

- Learning engagements should be challenging, relevant, meaningful and engaging
- A variety of strategies are employed to meet the varying needs of students
- Oral (listening & speaking), Visual (viewing and presenting) and Written Language (reading and writing) are integrated within the UOI where possible and also taught as stand-alone skills
- Collaborative Language planning is essential
- All languages are valued and ICS strives to make every student proficient in two languages and familiar with the host country language.
- A Language profile is kept to track students throughout their time in the PYP, especially in reading and writing development.

Language in MS

At the middle school we expose students to English language taught through a language arts curriculum and offer two world languages of French or Spanish as individual subjects. The ELA curriculum is based on the Common Core standards. The WL curriculum is based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Standards

We believe that:

- There is consistency in how ELA and WL are taught no matter what the language of instruction.
- Integrated learning across the curriculum is linked by the Global Contexts and Approaches to Learning.
- A Language profile is kept to track students throughout their time in the MS, especially in reading and writing development.
- Assessment in language learning is standardized through subject team examination of student work and development of exemplars for criteria levels and language learning phases (A, B, C & D).
- The choice of language pathways is supported through academic counseling.

World Language in HS / IB

Since the ICS program culminates in the IB Diploma Program, curriculum frameworks and standards are aligned to the teaching and learning objectives for Language B and Language A. For more information on what ICS currently offers in each grade and what standards we are using, please see our High School Course Guide.

Languages offered in the Diploma Programme are: English Language and Literature HL and SL, Amharic Literature HL and SL, School Supported Self-Taught Language A SL, French and Spanish B HL and SL and French and Spanish ab initio.

IB Diploma Language A – Self Taught

Students may choose to undertake their Group 1 IB Diploma subject as self-taught. The school supports these students through academic counseling and the development of international resources in the library. The school also helps to connect students with tutors in the community to help guide their studies.

References

- PYP: Student language portraits, International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018
- Diploma programme: From principles into practice, International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015.
- Language and learning in IB programmes, International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014