



The Lawrence School

Language Policy

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Key Definitions

Accountable Talk– Accountable talk refers to the type of talk that moves learning forward. Wolf, Crossen and Resnick (2006) describe three aspects of accountable talk: accountability to the learning community, accountability to accurate knowledge, and accountability to rigorous thinking.

Additional Language– Any languages which are not languages of instruction in a school.

Approaches to Learning Skills– Approaches to learning (ATL) are grounded in the belief that learning how to learn is fundamental to a student’s education. Five categories of interrelated skills and associated sub-skills support students of all ages to become self-regulated learners. These categories are: Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Social Skills, Self-Management Skills, and Research Skills (*Principles into Practice ibo.org*, 2021)

Differentiate Instruction– Differentiation means tailoring instruction to meet individual needs. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping makes this a successful approach to instruction (Tomlinson, 2000).

Exhibition– In the final year of the IB program, students participate in a culminating project known as the Exhibition. Students are required to engage in a collaborative transdisciplinary inquiry process that involves them in identifying, investigating and offering solutions to real-life issues or problems.

Extracurricular– not falling within the scope of a regular curriculum

Formative Assessment– Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessments help teachers identify concepts that students are struggling to understand, skills they are having difficulty acquiring, or learning standards they have not yet achieved so that adjustments can be made to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support. (Edglossary.org, 2014)

Inquiry-based– Inquiry-based learning is a learning and teaching approach that emphasizes students’ questions, ideas and observations. Instructors actively encourage students to share their thoughts and to respectfully challenge, test and redefine ideas. With inquiry-based learning, instructors and students share responsibility for learning.

International Baccalaureate (IB)– A global network of schools, educators, students and parents whose mission is “to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who can help create a better world through intercultural understanding and respect.”

Language of Instruction– The language in which an IB World School delivers IB programmes and courses to its student population (ibo.org, 2021)

Makerspace—a place in which people with shared interests, especially in computing or technology, can gather to work on projects while sharing ideas, equipment, and knowledge.

Media Literacy—Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy (Center for Media Literacy, 2021).

Mother Tongue—primary home language

Programme of Inquiry—A collaboratively-developed framework for inquiry, with the purpose of allowing students to explore six universal themes of knowledge, which forms the core of a school's curriculum. Those themes are: Who We Are, Where We Are In Place and Time, How the World Works, How We Express Ourselves, How We Organize Ourselves and Sharing the Planet.

Rubric—A rubric is typically an evaluation tool or set of guidelines used to promote the consistent application of learning expectations, learning objectives, or learning standards in the classroom, or to measure their attainment against a consistent set of criteria (edglossary.com, 2014)

Running Records—A running record captures both how well a student reads (the number of words they read correctly) and their reading behaviors (what they say and do as they read). Essentially, students who are learning the fundamentals are assessed more often than students who are working on fluency and higher-order comprehension.

Science of Reading—a collection of research, over time, from multiple fields of study using methods that confirm and disconfirm theories on how children best learn to read. The main components are: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. (improvingliteracy.org, 2024)

Summative Assessment—Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year (edglossary.com, 2013)

Transdisciplinary—Broad knowledge, skills, and understanding that transcend the boundaries of traditional subject areas and yet can be applied to learning within any of them. An example would be a study of pattern, structure, change, etc.

Lawrence School Language Philosophy

The development of language is fundamental to that need to communicate; it supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. Language permeates the world in which we live; it is socially constructed and dependent on the number and nature of our social interactions and relationships. (Making the PYP Happen, 68)

At The Lawrence School, we believe:

- All teachers are teachers of language;
- Students must be immersed in a language-rich environment;
- There are to be high expectations for all learners to support their academic growth;
- Teachers are to collaborate to support the needs of each individual student; and
- Students' **mother tongue** should be supported.

At The Lawrence School, we believe children learn best when they:

- Have multiple opportunities to speak, read, write, listen, and think critically;
- Are surrounded by literacy opportunities at home and in school;
- Have parents and teachers working collaboratively; and
- Are engaged in meaningful and relevant work.

Lawrence School Language Profile [Profile Data](#)

The majority of secondary languages spoken at Lawrence School are Spanish, Portuguese, and Bengala. Other languages spoken in our school include Swahili, Khmer, Mayalama, Loas, Mandarin, Patois, Creole/Haitian, Sinhala, Russian, Croatian, Albanian, Tamial, Twi, Telugu, Nepali, Kannada, Gujarati, Hindi, Persian, Polish, and Arabic. These spoken languages range from grades K-5.

Current Language Teaching Practices

Spelling protocol- K-5 uses HMH Into Reading program resources for spelling instruction.

Citations/reference: see [Academic Honesty Policy](#) for grade level expectations.

Written response formats/rubrics - Assessed K-5 using HMH Into Reading program resources.

Extracurricular learning opportunities- Language Club- offered periodically,

celebration opportunities, explicit instruction on valuing differences and how to have a conversation respectfully when asking about different languages and foods.

Resource purchases: School and classroom library bilingual texts, texts in languages represented by our population, realia for language learning, etc. A portion of both the Lawrence School budget and IB budget will be dedicated to purchasing resources to support language learning. The district purchased Google translator for slides to translate content to multiple languages. The school added Toddle AI to our Toddle platform to be able to message families in 31 languages. Rockalingua was purchased to support development of our Spanish curriculum K-5.

Before proceeding to the Language Policy development, our committee met to look for areas of mismatch, contradictions, omissions in practice, ambiguities, and other issues. (See Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy pg. 3)

Further Considerations

How to:

- promote **inquiry-based** authentic language learning;
- focus on the **transdisciplinary** nature of language learning;
- incorporate the teaching and learning of language into the **Programme of Inquiry**;
- Develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and **media literacy**;
- Interrelate the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and media literacy;
- Provide for the teaching of **additional languages**;
- Promote consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of all languages;
- Embed presentation opportunities before Grade 5 **Exhibition**;
- Develop a continuum of language skills over grade levels in the areas of public speaking, attentive listening, **Accountable Talk**, conversation skills for partner and group work, using evidence to support claims and written responses to texts.

The Language of Instruction -

English is the **language of instruction** at The Lawrence School, and Spanish is our **additional language**. Students from Kindergarten to Grade 5 receive instruction with Spanish as an additional language.

Literacy instruction follows a **Science of Reading** model using a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. Our **transdisciplinary** units integrate content from Science, Social Studies, and specialist areas and address the Common Core State Standards for ELA. We use a variety of materials provided by the district but also supplement with materials informed by our collaborative planning process, which take student interest, needs, and

culture into account. When appropriate, primary sources and documents are As we begin each unit of inquiry, we assess students' prior knowledge of academic content and skills, along with conceptual knowledge and **approaches to learning** skills. Within our **Programme of Inquiry**, there is also direct instruction through short modeled lessons, independent practice in a variety of contexts, explicit instruction in literacy skills, and embedded technology skill development. Students develop their literacy skills during math instruction as they interact with math literature and nonfiction texts, and develop their math practices through oral and written responses.

Students have a variety of transdisciplinary opportunities within and outside of the school day to develop their communication and social skills. These include participation in the arts, after school clubs, presentations, summer academy, field trips, guest speakers, and development of visual literacy skills throughout the disciplines.

Students develop their writing skills throughout our transdisciplinary units and have opportunities to showcase their work through in-school presentations such as; writing pieces linked to exemplar texts, open-ended responses (some choice, some content-driven pieces), science journals, written self- and peer-feedback, and math responses. They also have the opportunity to share their work with authentic audiences during our Global Showcase of Learning event, and learning experiences created for our Units of Inquiry.

Assessment of language skills is comprehensive, ongoing and used to form small groups, provide interventions, and allow for flexible groupings throughout our units of inquiry. Our students have opportunities to demonstrate their understanding through their individual and collaborative work, responses to text, technology platforms such as Footsteps to Brilliance, Lexia, and iReady, Amira, literacy assessments, and unit **formative and summative assessments**.

Language Support- SRBI and Speech support

From the SRBI Elementary Handbook, Middletown Public Schools-2016

A Brief Overview of SRBI

Scientifically Research-Based Instruction (SRBI) is a systems approach that emphasizes instruction for all students. It is composed of research-based instruction and interventions for students who are experiencing academic, social/emotional, or behavioral challenges. SRBI emphasizes the implementation of standards-based, core curriculum, with comprehensive research-based teaching and learning practices, maintenance of a positive and a safe school climate, and an all-inclusive system of behavioral supports. SRBI promotes quality instruction and intervention opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities, at all tiers.

With these practices, there is the belief in collective responsibility, accountability, and the power of achievement. Although there are important individual differences among students, all students are capable of continued learning and progress.

The SRBI framework emphasizes multiple assessment tools to identify students that may be performing below course of grade level expectations; for example, **running records**, teacher observations, and district assessments. SRBI allows educators to identify high priority learning objectives, **differentiate instruction**, design responsive interventions, and monitor student progress toward proficiency. While language arts and mathematics are the primary foci for the initiative, SRBI serves as a cross curricular tool, which also incorporates behavioral interventions at all tiers.

SRBI is a three tiered instructional framework that is designed to support all students from preschool through grade twelve. The tiers reflect delivering quality instruction, equitably research-based, differentiated responsive strategies with target students using benchmark data; scientifically-based supplemental instruction in small, flexible, homogeneous grouping; and providing specific intensive intervention in Tier III.

Speech Support

Our SPL (Speech and Language Pathologists) support our students who get referred for speech and language services through their IEPs (Individualized Education Program). Their objective is to help improve how a student is performing in the classroom in the areas of communication, language, and reading. Their focus is on a child's ability to understand and use language.

SLPs work with students in a variety of settings (either one-on-one or in small groups). They serve as part of a team with the student's special education teacher, and classroom teacher to support the student.

Library Media Program-

In accordance with the American Association of School Librarians, the mission of the Lawrence School Library Media Program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. The school librarian empowers students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, ethical users of information, and creative makers. The library media program also supports the school's larger goals of development and maintenance of students' **mother tongue**, inclusion and equity of access to the IB program for all learners, and promoting the school's additional language. During scheduled class time with the school librarian students will:

- Read from a variety of sources and formats for different purposes;
- Engage in different stages of the inquiry process including formulating questions, locating print and digital resources to answer questions, and organizing and sharing new understandings;
- Use the design thinking process to solve problems in the **makerspace**;
- Use technology and information in a responsible and ethical way; and
- Participate in book exchange, primarily driven by student choice for their own interest and enjoyment.

In order to meet these goals, the school librarian in consultation with staff, students, families, and other community members will:

- Stay informed of current trends in literature and library media practice and technology;
- Demonstrate knowledge of students' **mother tongues** and countries of origin;
- Maintain and extend the library collection in accordance with the school's needs, including materials to support students' **mother tongues** and reflective of their countries of origin;
- Perform collection analysis to identify areas of need and order materials accordingly;
- Engage students in enjoying literature and learning, including materials that support international-mindedness and cultural awareness;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the school's **Programme of Inquiry** and student information needs within that program;
- Integrate the library media program with the overall school program when possible;
- Collaborate with teachers and students in the lesson design and instruction.

Library Media Center-

The Lawrence School Library Media Center holds about 8,000 titles, as well as a small but growing digital collection. Selection of materials is based on student interest, favorable reviews from professional publications, and relevance to the curriculum. The collection has been developed with an emphasis on supporting diversity and inclusion

so that students may see themselves reflected in the collection as well as to develop empathy towards the experiences of others. In addition, there has been an effort to expand the number of titles that support social and emotional learning. The library media center also includes a makerspace containing robots, building materials, craft supplies, 3D printers, and recyclables. The library media center extends beyond the physical space to include the Follett Destiny library catalog, PebbleGo, PebbleGo Next, and World Almanac for Kids, and BrainPop which can be accessed through the library's website at <http://lawlib.weebly.com/>. The library media center currently is used as the classroom for the library media program and occasionally used for small group work, testing, and makerspace activities planned collaboratively with classroom teachers.

Additional Language Program-

Lawrence School offers Spanish as an **Additional Language** program, as part of our internationally-minded curriculum. The students receive second language instruction for 45 minutes once a week.

During these lessons, the focus is to:

- Develop language skills in the four areas of language acquisition (listening, speaking, reading, and writing);
- Identify similarities and differences between their native language and the Spanish language;
- Promote exposure to cultural characteristics and products from the Spanish speaking communities through **inquiry based** learning;
- Make connections between disciplines and subjects through language learning;
- Utilize technology to explore Spanish language and enhance language skills;
- Explore authentic materials and make connections with daily life activities through second language learning.

The students deepen their understanding of languages and make cultural connections, as well as learning to embrace and respect other cultures. The goal of the program is to provide an early exposure opportunity for all students in the early stages of life, which promotes more optimal language acquisition. This is a great advantage for our students, as we are preparing them to become internationally-minded, well prepared and academically competitive members of society. Our program is aligned with the Connecticut Standards for World Languages and the ACTFL language standards as well.

Many different strategies are utilized in the Spanish program to promote language learning; such as, authentic songs and videos, games, physical and digital cards, realia, skits, worksheets, projects, and presentations. Technology will be utilized to assist language acquisition by assigning activities and practice to be completed using their school issued chromebooks or tablets. The strategy of TPR (total physical response) is

used to support students with acquiring a new language. When possible, families and other important figures in the students' life will be involved in the language acquisition process as well as the cultural awareness activities and events.

Finally, the world language teacher will be in constant contact and collaboration with all regular classroom teachers to find opportunities to include bilingual content in and out of the classroom. Examples include, labeling rooms and classroom supplies, providing bilingual materials, and immersing Spanish words and concepts in the regular classroom. The leadership team will support the Spanish teacher with building a professional network of collaborators within and outside the IB community. This includes inter school visits, IB professional development, and opportunities to attend in-state conferences.

Multilingual Learners

Lawrence School has the most culturally and linguistically diverse student population of all eight elementary schools in Middletown. Currently, ML (Multilingual Learner) students are immigrants or first generation Americans from twelve different countries: Albania, Mexico, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Honduras, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Turkey, Ghana, Kenya, Cambodia, Puerto Rico, Uzbekistan, and Morocco. Students at Lawrence School speak more than twelve different languages, with some students speaking three languages! Currently, the largest number of students speak Brazilian Portuguese, or Spanish. Lawrence School's current ML student population is small (16), but their positive impact on the school's goal to develop global-mindedness in its students is significant. Lawrence MLs model for their peers in a concrete way that they also can be successful language learners who can navigate between different languages and cultures. MLs help the entire Lawrence IB community to expand their mindsets about the world beyond geographic, cultural, or linguistic limitations.

At Lawrence School the guiding principles of the IB programme - with its attention to the teaching of the components of the Learner Profile has helped support the special social-emotional as well as academic needs of all ML students. Lawrence IB classroom instruction provides opportunities for the ML to share their culture and language with peers in a supportive setting whereby authentic cultural exchanges are made possible. In turn, MLs and their families feel more welcome, validated, and involved, which enriches the school.

Lawrence School is committed to:

- Assessing students with LAS Links assessment for initial placement in the ML program;

- Assess students annually with the LAS Links assessment yearly. Parents are notified about their child's progress and are encouraged to ask questions about their results;
- Validating each ML child and their family with respect to their language, culture, and ethnicity, because bilingualism and biculturalism are assets rather than deficits;
- High academic expectations for all MLs. ML students are given the same district wide assessments as their monolingual peers. This helps inform how the student is doing as compared to their peers;
- Providing Specialized Language Instruction and Support for students in the English Language in all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as well as helping with acculturation until students achieve proficiency. ML Teachers are guided by the CELF Language Standards when planning their instruction as well as grade level IB units and grade level content. Teachers use ML strategies and adapt instruction based on the students' language proficiency. A wide variety of materials and formats are implemented to make lessons comprehensible and interesting;
- Providing Support for classroom teachers with ML students. Classroom teachers can consult and collaborate with the ML teacher and each other about ML students and best practices. Students are either pulled out of their classroom for small group ML instruction based on their language proficiency and grade level, or provided push-in support within the classroom; and
- Honoring the Mother Tongue and encouraging ML families to share their linguistic and cultural traditions. To this end, Lawrence School will be planning events with ML students as international ambassadors. Students and interested family members will have various opportunities to work with their ML teacher to put together presentations about the treasures of their country of origin. Afterwards, students will share their knowledge with their peers and/or Lawrence School families.

In addition, Lawrence School understands that honoring the mother tongue of its ML students is an important component of being an I.B. School. To that end, ML parents will be given the opportunity to learn more about the benefits and challenges of preserving their child's bilingualism. Parents will come away with an understanding of the importance of fostering their child's bi-cultural development in the 21st century. The ML teacher will facilitate planned events to support this endeavor. In addition, Lawrence School will purchase literature in various languages to represent the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of its diverse multilingual students and families.

In order to gather information to develop our school language profile, the committee compiled data from our ML (English as a Second Language) teacher, student and parent interviews, our Language Survey given to our parents during Parent/Teacher conferences in spring 2020, and information gathered from teachers. Our surveys were

available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Lawrence will update our Language Survey this year to gather data to include on our Toddle platform for our student language profiles. This will support our school in many ways, including making effective use of funds for resource purchases.

Ongoing Professional/Staff Development for Language

Lawrence School is committed to:

- Providing ongoing professional development in best practices for language instruction (HMH Into Reading PD, iReady, ongoing IB training and workshops)
- Utilizing our Language PLC (professional learning committee) to identify areas of excellence and opportunities for growth in our professional development
- Continuing to build our resource bank for improved communication with our families and students (interpreters, publications/notices in multiple languages, etc.)
- Building relationships with partner organizations and individuals focused on supporting language learning (ex. Dr. Speciale Trinity College, The Language Friendly Schools, etc.)
- Modeling best practice of supporting language development during staff professional development

Ongoing reflection and amendments to our policy

Lawrence School is committed to:

- Reviewing/Revising our Language Policy yearly together as a staff during our professional development time; and
- Seeking parent feedback and input yearly through our School Governance Council and our greater community.
- Our next review will take place in April and May of 2025.

Final thoughts:

All teachers at The Lawrence School are teachers of language. As stated in Making the PYP Happen on page 70, “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, to relate to, and accept, responsibility for the mission of the IB to “help to create a better and more peaceful world”.

Works Cited

International Baccalaureate Organization, Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy, Peterson House, Malthouse Avenue, Cardiff Gate Cardiff, Wales GB CF23 8GL. 2008

International Baccalaureate Organization, Making the PYP Happen, Geneva, Switzerland.2009

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CREC Academy of International Studies Elementary School- Language Policy

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