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The American School of Antananarivo Language Policy

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ASA's Guiding Statements

Vision

Your best self for a better world

Mission

We are an inclusive and caring community that embraces diversity. We nurture inquiry, integrity and innovation to prepare for future challenges.

Values

- Creativity: we imagine, innovate and create in order to express ourselves and solve problems
- Open-mindedness: we engage with new ideas, appreciate multiple perspectives and care about others
- Inquiry: our curiosity and questions drive our learning
- Passion: we are enthusiastic about and find joy in what we do; we view setbacks as opportunities for reflection and growth
- Balance: we create harmony between our responsibilities and participate in activities that bring us fulfillment and emotional and physical health.

Policy Purpose

This policy explains ASA's beliefs about Language, and aims to result in consistent practice, common understanding and terminology.

ASA is an International Baccalaureate (IB) world school, and is committed to the development of students according to the IB Learner Profile:

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable
- Thinkers
- Communicators
- Principled
- Open-minded
- Caring
- Risk-takers
- Balanced
- Reflective

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Language Philosophy

At the American School of Antananarivo, we believe that language is central to teaching and learning. Our vision is for our students to be successful, productive, and positive members of their local and global communities. Language is not only a means of cultural expression, but also a tool allowing all members of our school to enhance open-mindedness and citizenship at a national and international level. We believe that the maintenance and development of the mother tongue as well as the acquisition of more than one language are key to cognitive growth and cultural identity. Language is at the core of all areas of our curriculum and the interconnectedness of all members of our school community.

We believe that:

- in order to attain their full potential, all students need strong language skills
- in order to be connected with their own cultural identity and heritage, all students have the right to develop their mother tongue
- learning more than one language helps students to become world citizens, respectful of others and adaptable to diversity
- additive bilingualism has many advantages for the student, socially, psychologically and cognitively
- all teachers are teachers of language

Language of Instruction

The Language of Instruction (LOI) at ASA is English: throughout the school, all subjects, except Malagasy A and Language Acquisition/Language B are taught through the medium of English. While we are an American School, we recognise that there is no one international English. Teachers and students at ASA come from different countries and speak and write a number of different Englishes. Students will hear different accents and dialects, and a part of their learning experience in the LOI will be to appreciate and differentiate between the varieties of English worldwide. We also recognize the changing nature of English, both oral and written, which means that our LOI is dynamic, not static.

We believe that:

- the LOI is more than merely a tool of instruction; it is important for reflection, metacognition and social interaction
- our LOI gives students a point of entry into the global community in which we live, and provides a myriad of opportunities for students beyond the classroom and beyond their time at school
- learners learn both the content of their subjects and the language itself through the medium of language, both written and oral
- students for whom the LOI is not their best language may require, and should be provided with additional support

As a school we believe that all teachers are teachers of language. Teaching the LOI is not the sole preserve of the English department. All teachers are therefore:

- responsible for helping learners in the LOI, in written and oral form

- responsible for teaching both the language and the written and oral genres specific to their subject
- responsible for ensuring that they model good language use in the classroom

English (LOI) in the Elementary School

In the Primary Years Programme, LOI development takes place in authentic contexts, both within and outside of the Programme of Inquiry. The LOI is a powerful tool to engage learners and is used by students when negotiating new meanings and understanding new concepts. In the Elementary School, we are committed to a guided inquiry approach to LOI development. LOI is integrated into all subjects; however, stand-alone lessons also occur. The classrooms are language rich environments, with a lot of print and a wide variety of literature available. The curriculum provided builds on students' prior knowledge and understanding as we use developmental continuums to plan for teaching and learning in language. We aim to provide differentiated learning engagements to ensure all students are successful.

ASA uses the American Common Core curriculum for its Kindergarten-Grade 5 classes, within the PYP framework.

English (LOI) in the Secondary School

In the Secondary School students are immersed in a rich English-medium environment where all teachers see themselves as language teachers. As would be expected, they also have a dedicated English class for one full credit in each year of Middle School and High School. This class develops the linguistic skill of the students via a range of authentic learning experiences, and a focus on formative assessment that encourages students to recognise, and aid, their own development.

Through this linguistic study, students are exposed to an array of text types. Whether they be literary works or informational texts, students develop their understanding through a variety of methods. Written responses, class discussion and dramatic interpretations are some of the routes taken in accessing and developing the students' understanding. Consequently, a strong culture of differentiated learning encourages all students to become more independent learners. Collaboration between teachers is encouraged to seek an integrated approach to learning, at a level appropriate to each student.

ASA uses the American Common Core curriculum for its Grade 6 – 12 classes, and offers select AP courses for Grade 11 & 12 students. In the 2018 -2019 academic year, the ASA plans to begin offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. We are seeking to offer English at two levels:

- Language & Literature SL (150 hours)
- Language & Literature HL (240 hours)

The language A: language and literature course aims to develop skills of textual analysis and the understanding that texts, both literary and non-literary, can relate to culturally determined reading practices, and to encourage students to question the meaning generated by language and texts. (http://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/recognition/1_langlitl.pdf).

English for Academic Purposes

At ASA we recognize that a major task for all teachers at the Secondary level is the teaching of English for academic purposes. Many of our students do not have English as their Mother Tongue. To facilitate learning for all students, but especially second language learners, teachers are encouraged to use the following methods:

- allowing students to read material in their best language, where appropriate, to facilitate the grasp of concepts
- using visual materials alongside oral instruction to help understanding
- using actions alongside oral instructions
- reinforcing oral instructions (especially homework tasks) with written instructions
- teaching language specific to the subject, including the appropriate register
- actively using the metalanguage
- teaching the written conventions of the subject, e.g. Science Lab reports
- giving student-centred activities which allow students to explore ideas and concepts through talk in a non-threatening environment
- structuring tasks and scaffolding lessons and assignments so as to maximize every student's opportunity for success
- Differentiating assessment tasks where appropriate, and allowing students choice in how they present their learning
- encouraging analysis of the language in which textbooks are written in order to identify language being used as a tool of power or discrimination
- using language for reflection

English Language Learners (ELL)

In order that all students gain equal access to the curriculum, as well as have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of school life, ASA will provide English language learning (ELL) support throughout the school for students whose first language is not English.

ASA will ensure that the objectives of the ELL Program are met by:

- Teaching the basic skills for effective listening, speaking, reading and writing in English
- Providing necessary accommodations, particularly in terms of assessment, to allow an ELL student to succeed at his/her level
- Modifying the skills, content and/or assessment of regular classes to make them more accessible to ELL students
- Helping students to understand cultural differences and adapt to the culture and expectations of an American international school
- Supporting students in transition from ELL classes to mainstream classes
- Assisting students to become socially integrated.
- ELL teachers working alongside the mainstream subject teacher to make accommodations and/or modifications for the ELL student.

English Language Learner (ELL) support in the Elementary School

ELL support in the PYP consists of pull-out and in-class models.

ELL pullout classes are intended for new-to-English students who have yet to develop initial English skills. These classes provide support with the learning of social and academic vocabulary, grammar and writing of sentence structures, developing the necessary background knowledge for accessing the classroom curriculum and use of oral language in order for the student to be able to successfully participate in the mainstream classroom environment and access the curriculum. The ELL pull-out group provides a safe environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and experimenting with their English language skills. As students' language skills progress, the class emphasis integrates more classroom context in order to support learning in all subject areas through an inquiry-based approach. When students have reached a standard of competence that allows them to participate actively in their homeroom classrooms, they are exited from the pullout programme.

ELL pullout classes will generally take place during French or Malagasy classes.

The purpose of in-class support is to provide both classroom teachers and English language learners with support and guidance within the classroom environment. ELL teachers collaborate with homeroom teachers by providing support, modifying activities, making decisions regarding strategies, methods of instruction and assessments, and working with ELL students in small groups as needed.

Testing and Placement of ELL Students in the Elementary School

New students whose mother-tongue is not English are identified through the admissions process. All new students who speak a language besides or in addition to English at home and who have no or limited English language schooling, will be given an English language proficiency test either at the time of admission or at the start of the school year. New students' English proficiency level is tested by the ELL department using a standardised language proficiency test (WIDA).

Reporting and Assessment of ELL Students in the PYP

ELL students receive a teacher comment and an ATL grade in the semester report. The semester report does not include an academic grade. The student's English proficiency level is tested at the end of second semester each school year by the ELL department using a standardised language proficiency test (WIDA).

Exit Criteria for ELL Students in the PYP

ELL students are exited from the ELL program based on a number of factors, including a student's English proficiency level in terms of both academic and social language skills based on standardized tests, reading levels according to standardized benchmarks, the ability to successfully access the classroom curriculum and any other relevant factors. The final decision for exiting a student from the ELL program is taken in collaboration with a student's classroom teachers and other relevant members of the education team.

Before students exit the program, there may be a period of monitoring where ELL teachers continue to collaborate with the classroom teachers to monitor the individual student's progress.

ELL in the Secondary School

Testing and Placement of ELL Students in the Secondary School

As discussed in the Elementary School section of this document, new students with ELL needs are identified through the admissions process. A standardised diagnostic test (WIDA) may be given at this stage, or at the beginning of the school year. Students in grades 6-8 who are identified as requiring ELL support will receive pullout classes, in place of an additional language (French or Malagasy).

ASA has a rigorous High School programme. We are a candidate school for the IB Diploma Programme, and offer AP classes in grades 11 and 12. It is difficult for a student entering High School (grade 9 up) with very little English to succeed in these intensive programmes since the LOI is English. While we endeavour to accept all students, we cannot accept students for whom the challenge will be too great. If, in the judgement of the English and ELL teachers, a student would be unable to access the curriculum, regardless of ELL support offered, our advice would be to remain in the student's native educational system. Students who need limited ELL support will be accepted, and receive personalised support as required. This may take the form of pullout classes.

Reporting and Assessment of EAL Students in the Secondary School

At the end of a grading period, ELL students in grades 6-8 who are not able to access the curriculum sufficiently for teachers to realistically and fairly assess their progress, will not receive an academic grade. They will receive short comments documenting their efforts and participation in the learning process, and an Approaches to Learning grade.

Exit Criteria for ELL Students in Secondary School

Through consultation with the ELL Department and some or all of: relevant subject teachers, the Secondary Principal, the Diploma Programme Co-ordinator, decisions will be made about changes in the level of ELL support needed for individual students throughout the school year. WIDA testing will be used - to determine placement or if a student is ready to exit ELL - as necessary.

Students who have been officially involved in the ELL programme will continue to be monitored and will be encouraged to continue to seek support and assistance through the ELL Department as needed.

Additional (Foreign) Languages

The aim of the ASA Language Acquisition programme is to help the students to gain competence in a language (or languages) other than their mother tongue/s or English, with the long-term goal of multilingualism. At ASA we believe that additional language learning contributes in an enjoyable, active and productive way to the holistic development of the student by improving personal skills and fostering an attitude of openness, respect and understanding in

a complex and multicultural world. All students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 take both French and Malagasy (unless they are in pullout ELL classes). Students in High School require two Language credits and .5 Malagasy credit to graduate. Spanish is offered as an additional language at the high school level.

The overarching aim of teaching and learning languages is to enable students to become critical and competent communicators. At ASA we aim for students to:

- develop a respect for, and understanding of, diverse linguistic and cultural heritages
- develop communication skills for a variety of audiences and purposes
- develop multi-literacy skills through the use of a range of learning tools in the various modes of communication
- develop an appreciation of a variety of literary and non-literary texts, and critical and creative techniques for comprehension and construction of meaning
- recognize and use language as a vehicle of thought, reflection, self-expression and learning in other subjects
- understand the nature of language and the process of language learning, which comprises the integration of linguistic, cultural and social components
- be aware of and understand the perspectives of people from own and other cultures, leading to involvement and action in their own and other communities
- foster curiosity, inquiry and a lifelong interest in, and enjoyment of, language learning.

French in the Elementary School

In Elementary School, French teachers teach mixed grade French classes. We combine grades (K/1, 2/3, 4/5) and then divide the students into two levels (beginners/intermediate and advanced). Students are grouped based on their ability, but teachers always need to differentiate. Furthermore, teachers participate in collaborative planning and ensure that skills and knowledge being developed in the French classes are relevant across disciplines and units of inquiry. This allows students to develop language skills in meaningful learning contexts and gives language teachers the opportunity to contribute new, intercultural perspectives that recognise the transdisciplinary nature of learning.

At each level, students work on their communication and literacy skills as well as understanding the French language and culture and how they compare to the students' own native languages and cultures. The instruction is well scaffolded, using role plays, songs, textbook, online articles, French novels, movies, Francophone cultures celebrations, field trips and other authentic experiences to help students develop their linguistic skills.

French in the Secondary School

Students in grades 6-8 are also combined according to level, and there are separate classes for French A (advanced/native) and French B students. This continues into High School, where students are currently combined grades 9-12 (the number of classes is dependent on enrollment). ASA students can currently take the AP French exam, and as of 2018-19 we plan to offer IB DP French A Language and Literature, and French B, at both standard and higher levels.

In Secondary School, the French programme is designed to provide students with the necessary skills and intercultural competence to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the French language is spoken. At the IBDP level, Language B is intended for students with prior learning/experience of the language. Standard and Higher Level will be differentiated by the difference in teaching hours allocated, by the depth of syllabus coverage, the study of Literature at HL, the level of difficulty, the demands of assessment and the assessment criteria.

French A Language and Literature is not classed as an Additional Language, as students are required to be at native or very advanced level to take this class. French A is for students whose home language is French, or who have for another reason reached a high level of proficiency in French. Students who take French A for the IBDP will receive a Bilingual IB Diploma.

A student may not choose to study his or her mother-tongue, home language or near-native language as a Language B.

Tutored Additional Languages

Students who wish to continue with a Language B or Language ab initio (beginner level) not offered by the school may do so at the discretion of the Secondary Principal, and if relevant, the AP or Diploma Coordinator. These lessons will be taught by an external tutor, paid by the parents. For success in the IBDP, a minimum of two lessons per week is required for Language B SL and Language ab initio while a minimum of three lessons per week is required for Language B HL.

Students need to be active and highly motivated to make a success of such a course of study and we would recommend, where at all possible, they choose one of the language courses offered by the school as learning in a group and being taught by trained and experienced teachers is more effective.

Malagasy

ASA recognises the need to support and encourage the learning of Malagasy, the language of our host country. For our Malagasy students, it is important that they be able to study the language and literature of their mother tongue, to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage. For our non-Malagasy students we aim at enhancing their language development and cultural understanding, for practical use and integration within and outside of the school community.

In Grades K-8, all students take Malagasy. In Elementary School students are grouped by grade level, and the programme differentiated to meet the learning needs of all students. In Secondary school, Malagasy is offered at both A and B levels. A .5 credit of Malagasy is required to graduate.

Spanish

The Spanish B programme begins in High School. The Spanish department believes that the purpose of learning Spanish is to communicate with people who speak it and to understand their cultures. Using the current research on how students learn languages the focus is on

interpersonal and interpretive communication, cultural practices and perspectives, cross-cultural connections, language and cultural comparisons, and helping students see how to use Spanish beyond the classroom, in their communities, and in the world. The levels of Spanish B offered in any given year vary depending on the needs of students. Levels that can be offered are: Spanish 1 for beginners, Spanish 2 for intermediate Spanish, and Spanish 3 for more advanced Spanish.

Mother Tongue Maintenance and Development

We believe that competence and confidence in the mother tongue are crucial for academic success, for self-identity, for the maintenance of cultural identity and for emotional stability. In addition, we believe that Mother Tongue competence aids learning of the LOI and additional languages. We are committed to supporting families as far as possible in developing and maintaining the mother tongue of students throughout the school.

As a school we subscribe to a model of Additive Bilingualism, in which students acquire a second language without it having a negative effect on development of the mother tongue. Ideally students will become highly proficient in both languages. Bilingual students tend to experience a higher rate of academic success than monolingual students

We believe that Mother Tongue Support:

- helps achieve additive bilingualism
- facilitates the learning of the LOI and additional languages
- helps increase intercultural awareness and understanding, for both the student and his/her peers
- enables students to remain in touch with their culture
- makes it possible for students to re-adjust to their home community and/or education system, should they return.

We recommend that the aim of all mother tongue instruction should be to achieve balanced bilingualism which, summarised, covers the following:

- conversational fluency
- well-developed listening skills
- reading comprehension & critical literacy
- writing skills & academic language

Mother Tongue Practices

ASA will:

- actively help and support parents who are seeking mother tongue instruction for their child
- bring together individuals wishing to study a particular language to make a language group
- provide a room for mother tongue instruction to individuals or groups of students
- ensure that the Library resources represent the languages and cultures of the whole school community
- assist in the identification of distance-learning programmes

Students are encouraged to converse in their mother tongue at home, as well as to share learning and communicate using their mother tongue during appropriate school events (e.g MS Inspiration, school conferences and the PYP exhibition).

All mother tongue instruction will take place outside the normal school day. Exceptions may be made for High School students, on a case by case basis. Payment for the lessons is the responsibility of the parent.

Mother Tongue in the IB Diploma

The main means of assisting with mother tongue maintenance in the Diploma Programme is through the Self-Taught option: Self-Taught Language A: Literature

At ASA, all students will take English Language A, but students do have the option of taking a second Language A in their mother tongue, as a self-taught language. This is one way of receiving an IB Bilingual Diploma. (Please note that currently, unfortunately, Malagasy is not an IB Language). The self-taught option is only available as a Literature A SL option - therefore, DP students following the self-taught option will be studying their language through an analysis of literature.

If a student wishes to take this option, an appointment should be made with the DP Coordinator. In consultation with other teachers, the DP Coordinator will assess whether a self-taught language is the best option for that individual student. Students need to be active and highly motivated to make a success of such a course of study, and are required to find a tutor outside school. A meeting for students and parents will be held, to ensure that everyone is aware of the requirements of the course.

Glossary of Terms

Advanced Placement (AP): a program in the United States and Canada created by the College Board which offers college-level curricula and examinations to high school students.

ASA: the American School of Antananarivo

Bilingual IB Diploma: At ASA DP students can qualify for a Bilingual Diploma if they offer a Language A other than English for examination in their DP.

Bilingualism: Competence in two languages

ELL: English Language Learners

IB: International Baccalaureate

IBDP: International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

Language A/Language and Literature: A language course taught to students who can speak, read and write a particular language at or near to a native speaker's level.

Language B/Language Acquisition language: A language taught as an additional or foreign language.

Language Ab Initio: A course offered in the DP to students who have little or no previous competence in the language or experience of learning the language.

Language of Instruction (LOI): The language of academic communication at the school.

Mother tongue: a student's first (and usually strongest) language, used at native speaker's level.

Multilingualism: Competence in two or more languages

Native speaker: A person who has spoken a specified language since earliest childhood, as opposed to a person who has learned it as a second or subsequent language later in life.

Near-native speaker: Non-native speaker with the highest level of proficiency

PYP: International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme

Self-taught Language A: A school-supported, self-taught course that allows a student to study their mother tongue language for the IBDP.

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