



Prince George's County Public Schools International Baccalaureate (IB) Language Policy

Introduction

Language learning is essential to building students' cognitive skills, ability to construct knowledge, and develop socially and personally. With over 135,000 students and nearly 19,000 employees, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) offers a wealth of linguistic diversity. This diversity permits the development of genuine international mindedness and intercultural understanding. PGCPS students speak over 160 different languages at home with English and Spanish being the primary languages of our community accounting for 96% of the district's population.

The school district strives to facilitate a culture of language learning. Our educators understand that students who are multilingual reap a myriad of benefits, including increased cognitive function, greater creativity and problem-solving skills, and a more perceptive understanding of the world and their place within it. As such, PGCPS commits to language learning with the offering of dual language and immersion programs starting at the primary years and expanding the world languages course offerings at the secondary level. There are currently twelve languages studied at the high school level throughout the district which include:

- French
- Spanish
- Latin
- German
- Italian
- Russian
- Japanese
- Chinese
- Arabic
- American Sign Language
- Portuguese
- Korean

As a commitment to language development and intercultural understanding, all PGCPS students are required to take two full years of a world language and pass with academic success prior to receiving their high school diploma.

Philosophy of Language Learning in PGCPS IB World Schools

In PGCPS IB World Schools, it is understood that:

- All teachers are language teachers;
- We are communicators by nature, and language is fundamental to this instinctive need;
- Our mother languages are the roots of our identities and cultures;
- Mastery of a language is an open door to additional knowledge;
- Valuing all languages in the community demonstrates open-mindedness;
- Language acquisition is a lifelong, ongoing process;
- All stakeholders have a part to play;
- Language learning promotes international-mindedness and intercultural awareness; and
- All languages must be valued.



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Primary Language of Instruction

- English is the primary language of instruction, and each member of the learning community will demand and demonstrate excellence in written and oral language. Teachers will assume the primary responsibility for modeling and holding students accountable for using language effectively, as well as a consistent approach to content, organization, style and language mechanics. All teachers are language and literacy teachers.
- Students will demonstrate oral and written proficiency in American Standard English in order to meet the demands of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Maryland School Assessments (MSA), High School Assessment (HSA), the PGCPs curriculum, and the MYP assessment criteria.

Language Acquisition

Through an IB education, school communities strive to leverage language learning to build a better and more peaceful world. Proficiency in a world language, along with an understanding of diverse perspectives, will help IB students become active, thoughtful participants in an increasingly globalized community.

Elementary and Middle School

PGCPs IB World Schools at the elementary and middle school levels provide students with access to a second language of either French or Spanish starting in kindergarten to support the development of international-mindedness. The district has made a commitment to the IB World Schools to ensure adequate staffing, resources, and commitment to the acquisition of a second language. These language acquisition courses are guided by the IB PYP and MYP objectives and assessment criteria as well as the PGCPs curriculum, and the National Standards of Foreign Language Education based in the 5 C's: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. School communities including teachers and heads of schools are expected to promote language learning as a means to building understanding and appreciation of cultures. Due to the early integration of language learning, all students at our IB World Schools have the ability to earn high school credits, complete phases one and two of language acquisition courses, and become proficient in a second language upon the completion of eighth grade. Exceptions are made for students under special circumstances to include but not limited to the Special Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students adhering to the policies and procedures outlined in the IB Inclusion Policy or the students Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Elementary and middle school students enrolled in a French Immersion School receive most instruction in French. The French language is the main language of instruction from kindergarten through fifth grade for all subjects. English, which is the mother tongue of most students enrolled, is introduced in second grade as a second language and is taught for a minimum of 45 minutes each day. In middle school, students are introduced to a third world language, Italian. Thus, students participating in the French Immersion program have significant knowledge of three languages prior to entering high school.

*The Language Policy is reviewed and revised annually by PGCPs and the individual IB World Schools.
Date of Last Review: March 2021*



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High School

Students matriculating from middle school into an IB high school often continue in their same language of study but have the opportunity to take an additional world language. PGCPs IB high schools currently offer IB Language Acquisition courses in the following languages: Spanish, French, Russian, and Chinese/Mandarin. PGCPs administrative procedures state that students who access a world language starting in middle school must be offered the ability to continue that same language in high school for language fluency and continuity. Therefore, most IB students accessing Spanish or French in middle school are enrolled in Higher Level (HL) or Standard Level (SL) language acquisition classes. Students who choose to take a new foreign language or who do not have middle school world language credits often enroll in Ab Initio language acquisition courses. No matter the level, instructors strive to speak the target language 90% or more of the time in all language acquisition courses. Each of these options (SL, HL, and Ab Initio) meets the Group 2 requirement for the IB Diploma.

PGCPs students also have the opportunity to work toward the Maryland Seal of Biliteracy, an award that recognizes a student's high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in one or more languages other than English. Each year, PGCPs students are rewarded this commendation in celebration of their linguistic achievements.

Regardless of the target language in which students enroll, all languages within the student's school and across the district are taught using a communicative, proficiency-oriented approach aligned to the Maryland State Department of Education Standards for World Languages and modeled after those of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. All three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) are equally stressed in language acquisition courses.

Language and Literature

Language and Literature in the IB World Schools is taught in English. English is the primary language of instruction in our IB World Schools; Maya Angelou French Immersion is the exception. In the Primary Years Programme and the Middle Years Programme, the PGCPs Reading/English Language Arts (RELA) Curriculum, developed using Common Core and Maryland State Standards, serves as the basis for instruction. Teachers develop and deliver Units of Inquiry (PYP) and Unit Plans (MYP) based on the IB Subject Guides and the RELA Curricular Standards.

In all four years of high school, students study both Language and Literature, and in the Diploma Programme, students engage in either the two-year Literature course or the Language and Literature course, depending on the courses offered. Students have choices in reading selections (including works in translation and multi-cultural works) and ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, media literacy and analysis through all levels of Language and Literature study.



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Mother Tongue Support

IB Language policy stresses these points regarding support of a student's mother tongue:

- Language learning includes the development of home and family languages, languages of the school, additional languages and literacy;
- Language is a means of affirming and expressing cultural identity and developing international-mindedness;
- Multilingualism benefits learners and the learning community in a variety of ways;
- Schools provide students with multiple, authentic opportunities to learn language, learn about language and learn through language; and
- The student language portrait is a tool that captures a learner's complex language profile.

Mother Tongue Supports:

- Accessing individual and group tutoring provided by ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) staff;
- Accessing counseling about social, academic or other concerns from the school system's International School Counseling Office;
- Providing access to digital tools and text that support the mother tongue language development, and
- Offering school sponsored clubs and language honor societies in order to provide opportunities that support students in their mother tongue.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program

The Prince George's County Public Schools ESOL/Title III program is designed to provide appropriate, effective English language instruction and to facilitate cultural awareness for ELLs, Grades K–12, as required by both federal and state regulations. ESOL courses and support are offered, as needed, at every level of schooling based on student assessment scores in conjunction with WIDA standards.

As Prince George's County continues to grow more diverse culturally, it also is becoming more diverse linguistically. In 2019, just over 20% of PGCPs' student population qualified as English Language Learners (ELL) (up from 15% in 2015). IB schools work in partnership with the ESOL Office in PGCPs to prepare ELL students to effectively use English language skills and academic strategies to participate confidently and successfully as productive citizens in the school community and beyond. Students who enter the PGCPs school system and who are, through a language proficiency test, determined to be in sufficient need of specialized English instruction receive language support from a certified teacher who has extensive knowledge of second language acquisition.

To facilitate communication with ESOL students and their families, PGCPs offers Language Link, a service via phone that provides real-time translation between school staff and students' families who speak twenty-one different languages. In addition, district policies, letters, and memorandums are translated in several languages to further open communication with our community.

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School-Specific Profile of Language Learners

Each IB World School in Prince George's County has a unique approach to its language efforts. Schools vary in terms of student demographics, language courses offered, and other schoolwide characteristics. You can see school-specific language learner profiles below.