

Westchester Academy for International Studies

Language Policy

MISSION, BELIEFS, & AIMS

MISSION

The mission of Westchester Academy for International Studies is to provide a challenging and varied curriculum in which all students can succeed. The curriculum will develop an international awareness (consciousness), including a focus on international relations and international problem solving, to create a love of learning and emphasize good citizenship.

The WAIS mission statement is the foundation for our language policy. As language forms the basis for all learning, this policy is critical for helping the school to achieve its mission. The language policy aspires to fulfill each aspect of the mission statement as follows:

BELIEFS AND AIMS

We aim to nurture an appreciation of the richness and diversity of language. Language does much more than promote cognitive growth; it is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and emotional stability. The acquisition of more than one language and maintenance of the home language enrich personal growth and help facilitate international understanding. As language, by its very nature, is integrated into all areas of the curriculum, every teacher within the school is considered a language teacher.

At WAIS, we aim to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination in at least two languages. Language development in more than one language enriches personal growth, provides cognitive advantages and is essential to the development of international mindedness. We strive to address the particular challenges of those students who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue by providing an integrated, well-implemented English Learner (EL) programs at all school sections. We endeavor to integrate students' cultural and linguistic heritage throughout the curriculum.

I. LANGUAGE PROFILE AND ADMISSIONS POLICIES

WAIS LANGUAGE PROFILE

Approximately 60% of our student body speak more than one language. They have over 30 different mother tongues and come from approximately 40 different countries. Our administrative and teaching staff represents 13 different countries,

speak one or more of 18 languages, and represent 31 different cultures.

II. LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES OVERVIEW

A. ASSESSMENT

While language acquisition follows distinct stages, students' rate of acquisition varies greatly from individual to individual. Therefore, language teachers assess all language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) regularly differentiating through scaffolding or extension as required by the district ELPS. Formative and summative assessments in the classroom provide information on language growth. Language teachers regularly standardize students' work to ensure a fair application of assessment criteria. Standardized tests and external examinations in the Middle and Upper schools also provide evidence of language acquisition levels.

Students who are identified as requiring additional support in English to access the curriculum will be placed in the appropriate English language acquisition program and assessed regularly to monitor progress. A student may be exited from the EL program when the student can participate fully in the regular educational program and has met the TELPAS and district requirements. When evaluating a student's possible exit, an LPAC team consisting of the EL teacher, a classroom teacher, and a leadership team member, and a parent representative will use information from several sources including district guidelines to make the determination to exit the student from the program. Parents will be informed about the decision before the transfer takes place. After the student exits from the EL program, the EL teachers at the student's level will closely monitor the student's academic progress for two years.

B. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As it is an expectation for all teachers to be language teachers, on-going training focused on integrated language instruction will be offered throughout the year. The school is committed to providing embedded professional development for language learning across the curriculum.

All teachers at WAIS are required to complete the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System training on an annual basis. TELPAS ratings reflect the ability of students to understand and use English during content area instruction. Therefore, teachers who have ELs in content area classes are integral to the assessment. The training offers professional development for

teachers and promotes increased instructional support for students. TELPAS training helps teachers understand and use the PLD component of the ELPS. Training more rather than fewer teachers also helps WAIS ensure that they can effectively meet TELPAS rating needs in the spring of the year should there be unforeseen changes in student schedules or teaching assignments.

Other professional development opportunities that focus on differentiated instruction include, but are not limited to: curriculum review and assessment moderation, staff meetings, and off-site workshops and conferences.

III. LANGUAGE AND MOTHER TONGUE PROGRAMMES

All students study a Language A, Language & Literature, in the IB Programmes, which in some cases is the continued study of the students' mother tongue. The language of instruction at WAIS is English, which is the language of the host country. English courses at WAIS are academically rigorous; they equip students with linguistic, analytical and communicative skills that can also be used in an interdisciplinary manner across all other subject groups. The district scope and sequence along with the TEKS have been aligned with the MYP Language and Literature Aims and Objectives from the MYP Language and Literature Subject Guide.

WAIS offers Spanish, German and English as Language A (Literature Programs AP and IB levels) in grades 11 and 12. WAIS believes that developing a child's mother tongue can accelerate the rate of English language acquisition, support achievement in all subject areas, increase self-esteem, and enhance intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.

A. ENGLISH

In each level of the school, students study English language and literature. When students begin the IB Programmes, they study English as their language A.

B. SPANISH

Native Spanish speakers receive language instruction in their mother tongue as early as 6th grade. Native Spanish speakers in the IB Programmes study Spanish at the Language A level. Other students who have reached native language proficiency in Spanish may also study Spanish at the Language A level in the IB Programmes. Language A Spanish students can earn a Spanish Bilingual IB Diploma or IB Career-related Diploma.

C. GERMAN

Native German speakers receive language instruction in their mother tongue at the Upper School level. Native German speakers study German at the language A level in the IB programmes in order to earn a Bilingual IB Diploma or IB Career-related Diploma.

D. OTHER MOTHER TONGUES

Mother tongue development opportunities are offered for students on a regular basis from Grade 6 through to Grade 12.

IV. ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

A. EL SUPPORT CLASSES

English Learners who are unable to fully access the academic curriculum delivered in English receive specialized instruction in English language acquisition from qualified staff on a regular basis. English Learner strategies are used in classes by all staff. In the IB Programmes, students receive additional individualized or small group English and academic support scheduled as appropriate.

B. IN-CLASS SUPPORT

EL students may also receive support in their grade level and subject areas classes from qualified staff. In the IB Programmes, EL staff provide in-class support for individuals and societies, science, and mathematics classes whenever possible.

V. LANGUAGE B AND OTHER LANGUAGES

Studying a second language is a requirement for all students in Grades 6 to 10. French, Spanish, German and Italian are offered as language acquisition in Grades 6 to 10, and as IB Diploma language B Higher Level and Standard Level.

A. FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN, AND SPANISH

While a student's previous knowledge or exposure to the target language is ascertained through assessments, French, German, Italian and Spanish classes consist of mixed ability levels and teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the various language acquisition levels in each class and are expected to cater to the needs of beginners. Students entering French, Italian, German or Spanish classes as beginners will be assessed with appropriate criteria for reporting purposes. Mother tongue French, Italian, German and Spanish speaking students may study their mother tongue or study another language.

B. AB INITIO

In the IB Programmes, students may study French, Italian, German or Spanish at the beginning level if they don't have an exposure to the language previously. WAIS also admits English Learners at the ab initio level from Grade 11 to 12 if a mother tongue is not supported via the current language offerings.

VI. SUPPORT SERVICES

A. LANGUAGE AND LEARNING AND THE LIBRARY AND MEDIA CENTERS

Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information literate individual is able to:

- determine the extent of information needed;
- access the needed information effectively and efficiently;
- evaluate information and sources critically.

The role of the WAIS library is to promote and facilitate information literacy across all curricula to faculty, staff and students at WAIS. The library has databases that contain professional material, scholarly articles, newspapers and magazines in many languages. Sessions are offered to faculty, staff and students on information literacy, MLA and APA formatting for source citations, and research skills. Sessions may be requested with the school librarian.

B. LEARNING SUPPORT

When a student has been identified with additional learning needs including language difficulties or gifted and talented abilities, intervention and support are provided through the Student Teacher Assistance Team (STAT), 504, Special Education, or the Gifted and Talented Program, in line with the referral process. These departments work with teachers to help them meet the needs of students identified with special language learning needs. The classroom support may be formalized through an Individual Education Plan and may involve short- and long-term interventions. If the identified student speaks another language other than English as their primary language, teachers work to provide the best service for the individual child.

C. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Students that have a grade point average of 90 or more can apply to be part of the following Honor societies: French, German, Italian, or Spanish.

(See the Inclusion Policy for more information on identification procedures and service model.)

VII. PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

A. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are an integral part of our community of learners and provide tremendous support for language learning at WAIS. The school uses multiple methods to communicate to parents the critical importance of maintaining academic proficiency in the mother tongue. Parents at times donate mother tongue materials to the Language Program. The Parent Teacher Association has organized mother tongue language support with a contact person for many of the mother tongues represented at WAIS. Parents can volunteer in the classroom to provide support for all students. Other parents and staff translate documents and interpret during meetings.

B. LANGUAGE PROVISION FOR THE WAIS COMMUNITY

Spanish classes for staff are offered by SBISD. English lessons are also offered for employees working within the school including cafeteria and cleaning services personnel.

C. PUBLISHED MATERIALS

Students, parents and staff members at WAIS originate from different countries and educational systems. To maintain consistency in published materials, American English spelling will be used for our formal written documentation. However, teachers and students may use their native country's spelling and punctuation for all other work provided it is employed consistently throughout the document.

VIII. COMMUNICATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY TO THE WAIS COMMUNITY

The language policy will be introduced to the WAIS community through multiple pathways including staff meetings, PTA meetings, grade level meetings and Director's News and Notes. The policy will also be featured on the WAIS intranet. New staff will be familiarized with the document during orientation.

NOTE: REVIEW PROCESS

The language policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the curriculum review cycle and as part of the whole school improvement plan.

The Leadership team will review the implementation of the policy in classrooms and throughout the school on a regular basis as part of the appraisal process.

REFERENCES

Developing academic literacy in IB programmes, International Baccalaureate Organization, August 2014.

Guidelines for Developing a School Policy. International Baccalaureate Organization, April 2008

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Texas Education Agency [TELPAS Resources]. (2012, March 22). Retrieved May 25, 2012, from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/ell/telpas/>

Westchester Academy for International Studies [School Profile]. (2017). Retrieved May 25, 2018, from <https://cms.springbranchisd.com/Portals/29/campusdocs/WAIS-Profile-Sheet-2018.pdf?ver=2017-11-06-142101-703>

Glossary

APA = American Psychological Association

ELL = English Learner

ELPS = English Language Proficiency Standards

IB = International Baccalaureate

IBDP = International Baccalaureate Diploma Program

IBMYP = International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program

LPAC= Language Proficiency Assessment Committee

MLA = Modern Language Association

PLD = Proficiency Language Development

PD = Professional Development

PTA = Parent Teacher Association

SBISD = Spring Branch Independent School District

TEA = Texas Education Agency

TEKS = Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

TELPAS = Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System