

Language Policy

Language is crucial in promoting the development of personal and cultural identity and international understanding. As language is the key to all learning, across all disciplines, all teachers at ZIS are teachers of language. Language learning encompasses learning language itself, learning through language and learning about language.

The purpose of this policy is to provide students, faculty, and parents with:

- a common and clear approach to the teaching of language
- an understanding of how and why we teach languages at ZIS
- an understanding of our approach to mother tongue language teaching and support
- support and focus with our planning, teaching and assessment
- guidance in budgeting and decision making.

Principles

Language is fundamental to learning and underpins and permeates the entire curriculum

- all children are language learners
- all teachers are language teachers
- language learning best takes place in a meaningful context
- language is a defining factor of one's personal culture and identity
- having security in a language nurtures self esteem
- the learning of languages promotes the development of international mindedness
- language learning is developmental
- a proficient level of literacy in the mother tongue language facilitates the transfer of skills to other languages

Goals

ZIS Teachers:

- foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination in more than one language
- provide an appropriate language and learning program in order to allow all students to access their curriculum in a supportive environment
- understand the language-teaching process as language and learning are inextricably linked
- value the students' language and literacy backgrounds as the foundation for additional language acquisition and development.

- participate in relevant professional development in the areas of linguistic and cultural awareness
- encourage students to utilize, explore and showcase their mother tongue

So that students will:

- develop an appreciation of the richness of language
- value, maintain, and use languages including their mother-tongue
- understand that language is a tool for thought, creativity, reflection, learning and self-expression
- comprehend aspects of their own culture and develop awareness of others

In practice:

- while we value multilingualism, English is the primary medium of instruction, and teachers work collaboratively to provide a program of English language learning for all students to address their academic needs
- we encourage opportunities for students to develop their academic language skills and conceptual understanding in their mother tongue and for parents to be involved in the language profile and development of their children
- all teachers are language teachers, independent of their core specialty area, and are responsible for addressing and meeting the needs of all students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- we strongly encourage parents to support the development of their children's mother tongue
- all staff members are sensitive to the needs of students learning in a language other than their mother tongue

Admissions

ZIS accepts beginners to the English language up to the beginning of Grade 7. These students are supported through our EAL program and may access Mother Tongue programs as available. Prospective students for Grade 7 and above, who have not attended a school where English is the primary language of instruction for a period of three consecutive years, will take language proficiency tests before they are admitted.

Students are expected to be at a C1 level in English before entering Grade 11. Proficiency is defined using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

World Languages

German: Swiss education policy requires our students to study standard German until the end of Grade 9. This language receives special emphasis within our curriculum. However, this level of provision will not match that offered within a system where German is the language of instruction. Students are placed into appropriate classes based on their level of German proficiency.

French and Spanish: From Grade 6, students have the opportunity to study French and/ or Spanish as an additional language.

English as an Additional Language (EAL): English is not the mother tongue or first language for more than 50 per cent of ZIS students. The primary purpose of the EAL program is to provide support for these students to develop their proficiency in English. This enables them to participate more fully in the academic and social life of the school.

Therefore, language skills and strategies are integrated with the content area and subject matter whenever possible. The EAL program addresses individualized needs and learning styles through small group instruction, in scheduled classes, in class support, and consultation with mainstream teachers.

Students new to English may be exempt from the Cantonal requirement to learn German for a period of time.

Students who have identified learning difficulties are exempt from studying an additional language if the Student Support Team believes that this is in the best interest of the child. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

Mother Tongue Language (MTL) After School Programs

ZIS recognizes the importance of supporting the continued development of the students' mother tongue. While ZIS' resources limit its ability to fund mother tongue language (MTL) studies, the school commits to providing support in accordance with the following:

- MTL in any one division must comprise a minimum of 6 students in order to qualify. ZIS will support a maximum of two same language MTL groups per division;
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- MTL groups must follow a curriculum which is recognized by their government or educational authority, which develops writing, reading, and speaking abilities, and which is delivered by a qualified instructor;
- MTL do not earn ZIS credit units;
- ZIS will provide the use of its facilities (incl. copying) at no charge to MTL groups as defined above;
- At its discretion, ZIS may participate in the instructional costs.
- A maximum of 10 non-ZIS students for any given MTL across all divisions;
- A minimum of 50% of students in any individual teaching group / class must be ZIS students.

International Baccalaureate Languages A1 (IBLA) Policy

- ZIS will contribute up to CHF 2,000 per school year towards the cost of engaging a tutor for students enrolled in self-taught IB Language A1 courses.
- ZIS reserves the right to establish an overall budget ceiling for supporting MTL groups or self-taught IB Language A1 courses in any one year.

Appendix

The Common European Framework (CEFR): The CEFR describes what a learner is supposed to be able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing at each level.

Required for acceptance into:	Level achieved	Description
Grade 7, January entrance	A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. — Can introduce self and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. — Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
Grade 8	A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). — Can communicate about simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. — Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
Grade 9	B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered at home, school, leisure, etc. — Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. — Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. — Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Grade 10	B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including discussions in regard to academic study. — Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. — Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Grade 11 and Grade12	C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. — Can express self fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. — Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. — Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.