

Henry Foss High School

International Baccalaureate



Career-Related Programme (*candidate*)
Diploma Programme
Middle Years Programme

Language Policy

Introduction

Our Mission Statement: Henry Foss High School develops every student to be inquiring, knowledgeable, and reflective through intercultural understanding and respect.

Our Vision Statement: Henry Foss High School will graduate every student with an International Baccalaureate (IB) education that prepares them for college, career, and life.

Our Equity and Access Statement: We believe that every student, staff, and community stakeholder should be treated equitably. Our focus is to eliminate disparities among all groups.

Henry Foss High School is an urban public high school in the Tacoma School District in Washington State, USA. Foss High School has been an approved IB Diploma Programme school since 1982. We have a mix of special education, traditional, and identified gifted students in grades 9 through 12. Because of declining enrollment and demographic shifts, our size has decreased over the past 10 years. For the 2020–2021 academic year, we have approximately 7 diploma candidates and another 7 candidates for the 2021-2022 academic year. We expect that number to grow over the next several years as interest in the program increases as well as the rebuilding of Hunt Middle School, previously and anticipated IB Middle Years Programme school.

To become more equitable in our distribution of students in and out of the Diploma Programme, and to encourage more students to participate in the Diploma Programme, the school made choices to add Middle Years Programme (2020) and candidacy application for the Career-related Programme (2021). The goal is to create an “IB for all” environment at Foss. Aligned with that direction, starting in 2016, all juniors (except for students whose IEP necessitated an alternative course) took at least one diploma programme (DP) course in the studies in language and literature.

The diploma programme and middle years programme at our school is open access, as will be career programme; any student who wishes to take on the challenge of advanced coursework may do so, whether for a single class or the full diploma programme. We, do, however, **require** students to sit for the May exam session and complete the IB assessment requirements as part of their IB course experience. We make it a point to counsel students about their curricular choices. We do not believe in gatekeeping for college-preparatory coursework. We believe it is important to challenge students as appropriate to their individual needs and abilities while balancing their post-secondary goals.

We believe that the study of languages provides a powerful means by which one gains understanding of other cultures and that being able to speak a language indicated deep respect for that culture.

In addition, we believe strongly in preserving and developing a student's native language, should this not be English, for three reasons:

- Encourages a celebration of diversity and develops cross-cultural awareness and understanding
- Enables the development of higher order cognitive thinking skills
- Enables students who are members of small cultural subgroups within the school to better maintain and transmit cultural identity within our multicultural society.

Tacoma Public School District

Tacoma Public Schools has a strong commitment toward ensuring an equal educational opportunity for every student. While English is the basic language of instruction in the district's schools, the district provides a transitional bilingual/alternative instruction program for children whose primary language is not English and whose English skills are sufficiently deficient or absent to impair learning.

The district and its staff shall:

- A. Make an instructional program available to each eligible student whose primary language is not English and whose English skills are deficient;
- B. Communicate, whenever feasible, with parents/guardians/custodians of students in the bilingual/alternative program in a language they can understand;
- C. Provide in-service training for teachers, counselors and other staff who are involved in the transitional bilingual program, including alternative instructional programs, on appropriate instructional strategies for students of culturally different backgrounds and use of curriculum materials and program models; and
- D. Provide suggestions and recommendations to adapt current curriculum materials for English Language Learners (ELL).

For purposes of providing such services, the superintendent/designee shall establish procedures for identifying eligible students, communicating with parents and translating essential school documents that require signatures, determining student progress, exiting the program, evaluating a student's previous course work, and granting credit to a student for graduation purposes.

Language Philosophy: Henry Foss High School recognizes that language is central to learning and that all teachers are language teachers. We are committed to providing access to all students, regardless of cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds. We actively support the diverse families in our school community. Students learn reading strategies in all subject areas. We strive to learn about various cultures and languages from our own diverse population, as well as those in our local and global communities.

Process: When a student enrolls in the Tacoma School District, the student is asked to identify their primary language. If students mark that they speak a language other than English at home, then they are given an assessment. After the assessment, if students score at or below a certain level,

then they are placed in the ELL program. If parents sign a waiver, the student doesn't have to remain in the program at the school.

Language Profile: Students from our school come from a diverse background. Most students' mother tongue is English; however, we also have a significant population that claims other languages which include but are not limited to Arabic, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Korean, Swahili, and Samoan among others.

Mother Tongue Support: We support the development of students' mother tongue languages by encouraging multilingual students in a variety of ways: demonstrating that we value languages of origin, along with culture; acknowledging vocabulary in the mother tongue languages; offering books and magazines in multiple languages; and learning about cultures and languages in the classroom. In addition, our school district offers informational materials in multiple languages for communication with parents.

English Language Learners: Currently, teachers make accommodations as needed for students who have limited language skills in English. At Foss High School, we have an ELL teacher who teaches three classes of ELL in addition to their regular studies.

IB Language Policy at Foss High School

Language A: The language of the school is English. All teachers support English language literacy. The language of instruction is English for all students. Language A is taught every other day formally for 85 minutes. Language A teaching, however, is not limited to that block of time because students additionally engage in discussion and written assignments in other disciplines, which have incorporated language rubrics, as well.

Features of the Language A curriculum include grammar, writing mechanics and organization of content. Classes typically read works of literature as well as other texts as needed to support their Units of Inquiry. Oral communication in English, as well as listening skills, are emphasized through individual student reports and presentations.

Above and beyond the impact the classroom teachers have on their students through direct instruction, we consider language as something taught across the board, by all teachers. It is trans-disciplinary in nature and touches upon all aspects of expression and communication. Language is a component of our assessments and is built into our practices.

Language B: All students are expected to study both Language A (English) and their choice of a Language B. Language B offerings at Foss High School currently include French, Korean, Chinese/Mandarin, and Spanish. For those students in the Diploma Programme, Language B is required through both years of the program. Students, unless there is a compelling reason, may only test in Year 2. This requirement stems from our belief that language is central to the human experience and that language acquisition never truly ends.

Students in the MYP will also have a Language B requirement to engage in at least 50 hours of instruction over 1 year. The Career-Related Programme will also require a language component. Students will study a language other than their mother tongue, complete a language development portfolio, as well as be able to test in that language as an IB DP course.

Additional Language Study: Our goal is for all students to become proficient by graduation in a second language. By grades nine and ten, we have students with a wide variety of backgrounds in second language study. As a result, the school recognizes that we must be flexible in our student groupings and provide classroom settings that match as closely as possible the level of proficiency of the students. In the cases of lesser-taught languages, such as Korean and Chinese, blended classes with all levels of instruction are the rule rather than the exception. Though as we receive students from feeder MYP schools who teach Korean and Chinese, we will see greater numbers and increased proficiency.

Language Portfolio (CP): Students enrolled in the Career-Related Programme will be expected to complete the Language Portfolio which includes the following: Profile, Experiences, and Evidence.

Equity of Access: In addition to students with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan, all students can learn and communicate their learning in different ways.

Native Speakers in IB Languages

For students who are fluent (native speakers) or near fluent (heritage speakers), special consideration must be given to complete IB Group 2 requirements. While Foss High School strives to challenge students in all their coursework, local conditions sometimes prevent the school from providing courses that meet student needs, particularly the needs of native speakers.

Student Assessment for Placement: Students who are fluent in a language are not permitted to complete the IB Language B program in that language. However, students from immersion programs (who may have not had enough total time with that language) or students who speak a language but lack the ability to read and write in that language may be better served in Language B.

Placement is determined by a written test or an interview with a Foss world language teacher. A teacher may also contact a student's previous teacher to learn more about the student's performance and ability. Input from parents and the student about academic goals, university aspirations etc. may also inform the teacher, but the ultimate authority for placement lies with the teacher.

Depending on this placement assessment, there are two basic routes students will follow.

Route 1: Language B. Students are placed so that they complete IB Language B levels 7-10 during the 2 years of the DP. For example, a typical 9th grader with middle school preparation starts with Language 3-4. This student would complete Language B SL or HL for the IB Diploma. A particularly advanced 9th grader might be placed in level 5-6, although this is unusual. The typical course sequence for students (grades 9-12) would then be:

- Language Level 3-4
- Language Level 5-6
- IB Language Level 7-8 (may not test per policy)
- IB Language Level 9-10 (test Language B SL or HL)

Route 2: Language A1. The school has supported several students through Language A1 Literature in the past, although our resources and faculty allocation make this problematic at this time. Should the need arise, A1 School Supported Self Study students will meet with a Foss staff member after regular school hours every 2 weeks for one hour. Such students would be placed so that they

complete A1 School Supported Self Study during the 2 years of the IB Diploma. A traditional 9th grader who shows the knowledge and skills to reach A1 starts with level 7-8. This student would complete Language A1 Literature SL for the IB Diploma. Their schedule of courses would then be:

IB Language Level 7-8

IB Language Level 9-10

IB A1 Literature School Supported Self-Study SL

IB A1 Literature School Supported Self-Study SL

Alternatives. To date there have not been sufficient *interested* numbers of students to warrant specific classes for native speakers. If a student is not interested in pursuing Language A1 School Supported Self Study SL, the student may opt to study a different language *ab initio* during the IB Diploma years.