

Language Policy



Seven Peaks School

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program

Authorized School

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Candidate
School

PHILOSOPHY

As an International Baccalaureate school, we seek to cultivate a sense of literacy that promotes understanding of the world by developing a global perspective that nurtures cultural appreciation through language. Language education spans across all educational contexts. Poetry, literature, art, history, drama, music, science, technology, athletics, and mathematics all encourage critical interactions between students as they develop communication skills within 21st Century global contexts.

Seven Peaks School expects and empowers all Middle Years Program and Primary Years Program teachers to teach the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and media literacy. At the center of the Seven Peaks curriculum, language instruction prepares students to thrive as critical thinkers and to develop into effective and compassionate communicators.

Seven Peaks believes:

- Every teacher is a language teacher
- Multiple learning preferences must be addressed in all subject areas
- Oral language is the foundation for effective communication
- Differentiated language instruction is a priority
- Language skills must be developed in context through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work
- Learning more than one language enriches personal growth and facilitates global understanding

Seven Peaks' Language Policy is broad and can be broken down into the following subcategories:

- Integrated English Language Instruction
- Additional Support for English Speakers
- English to Speakers of Other Languages
- Language and Literature
- Language Acquisition
- Family Involvement
- Policy Review Process

INTEGRATED ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Integrating English language instruction in every subject in the MYP and PYP program allows students to develop language skills in the context of purposeful inquiry. Students may experience language through the following mediums:

Reading:

Biographies
 Fiction
 Factual accounts
 Expository texts
 Read alouds
 Comics and graphic novels
 Newspapers and magazines
 Academic texts
 Poetry
 Reading music
 Phonemic awareness/Phonics
 Reader's theater

Writing:

Reports
 Journal entries
 Letters
 Poetry and lyrics
 Email and instant messages
 Interactive writing and editing
 Fictional narratives
 Persuasive/opinion
 Handwriting

Speaking and Listening:

Cooperative learning
 Vocabulary front loading
 Presenting
 Public speaking (small groups and whole class)
 Music and lyrics
 Discussions and debates
 Peer planning and editing of writing

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Upon entering Seven Peaks School, all students are screened for reading and writing proficiencies, and students' test scores and past records are reviewed. Students with special learning needs that result in slower language development may receive support according to an inclusion model, speech therapy, interventions, or any combination of the three. Students with literacy skills significantly below grade level participate in specialized CARE program. These may or may not be students who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue. Seven Peaks School utilizes a framework to guide our language policy decisions. A decision making body is established. This group consists of the school's leadership, which includes the school administration, and advisory team of teachers to ensure research-based interventions are implemented with fidelity. Progress monitoring data and documentation support changes to a student's level of intervention. (See: Inclusion/Special Needs Policy for additional information)

ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

Seven Peaks students who identify a language other than English spoken at home are screened for language usage. Those who are considered English language learners receive support from school staff to acquire English. During this instructional time, students will work to develop all domains of language: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and media literacy. Classroom teachers provide differentiated instruction. The Learning Specialist may provide pull-out support as well. Our goal is to provide focused instruction in English in order to support success in all subject areas.

Additionally, while acquisition of English is paramount, we are devoted to the idea that students who come to school speaking another language must not only be supported in English acquisition, but also in their first language. Support for a student's primary language can be provided in some of the following ways:

- Sharing of language and culture in all classrooms
- Materials available in the classroom in the student's mother tongue
- Development of a multilingual collections of classroom libraries
- Picture books in the mother tongue in the classroom libraries
- Visual aides in the classroom
- Access to English/mother tongue dictionary and/or online translators
- Parent communication (translated if necessary) stressing the importance and showing value of the mother tongue
- Translation of documents for parents when possible
- Clustering of students who share a common language into one classroom to allow for classroom/playground/lunch room interactions in the mother tongue

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (ENGLISH)

At Seven Peaks, the MYP subject area titled Language and Literature is offered in English. In the PYP, English Language Arts is taught within the classroom during the transdisciplinary unit. Students explore three types of writing: narrative, informational, and persuasive/argumentative. Students study and analyze a broad range of cultures within folk, classic, and contemporary literature. Seven Peaks teachers incorporate the literacy targets in unit planning by carefully articulating curriculum through horizontal and vertical planning. Teachers execute quality assessments, and additionally, students self-evaluate in conjunction with Approaches to Learning. Distinctive to the MYP program is our cross-curricular format in which Language and Literature is often approached alongside MYP Individuals and Societies (Humanities) in a thematically meaningful way. In the PYP, language skills are woven throughout the unit of inquiry.

In the PYP, our language program aligns with the Common Core State Standards. We incorporate and ensure a balance of reading, writing, listening and speaking in the English language throughout our Primary Years Program.

- Reading: We practice a balanced reading approach, which includes comprehension of informational and narrative texts, looking at the vocabulary and parts of speech, exploring language in expository and narrative texts, as well as oral and silent reading fluency in texts.
- Writing: We teach students to compose, write and revise expository, narrative and argumentative/persuasive texts on a variety of assigned, as well as self-selected topics. We write for a variety of purposes.
- Speaking and Listening: We explicitly teach speaking and listening dialogically, academically, and conversationally. We emphasize active listening and civil discourse as a part of our teaching.

- Integration of Language within Subjects: Reading, writing, speaking and listening are utilized in every subject area in the Primary Years Programme. Explicit instruction in how to read primary documents, expository texts, and other required texts, both digital and in print, takes place in every classroom. Students are required to learn and use academic vocabulary in all of the disciplines, as well as articulate their ideas and thoughtfully engage in discussions across subject areas. Students are expected to write in the persuasive, expository, and narrative forms in all of the disciplines. Scaffolding and differentiation within these subjects is used to provide all students access to the curriculum.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SPANISH)

In addition to integrated and focused English instruction, the second language offered at Seven Peaks is Spanish. In the MYP, the course is titled Language Acquisition and students receive an average of 100 minutes per week of Spanish instruction. In the PYP students receive an average of 90 minutes per week of Spanish instruction. As with English instruction, Language Acquisition also addresses the five domains of language: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension. In addition, students experience exposure to literature and culture associated with the Spanish language. Students develop language at various rates depending on their own engagement and understanding of the language. Our goal is for SPS students to successfully transition to Spanish 2 or 3 in high school.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Parents are key partners in meeting the needs of all learners. To ensure that all parents have the information and tools they need, teachers at Seven Peaks communicate with parents regularly. Teachers host “office hours” throughout the entire school year, during which parents or teachers may schedule a meeting to discuss the progress and needs of the student.

In addition to office hours, teachers continue to facilitate positive communication through the following strategies:

- Communication via Canvas including, but not limited to: information about current units, events, assessments, and homework.
- Emails and phone calls
- Helpful information and updates on the school website
- In the PYP, classroom newsletters are sent at least twice a month, in addition to face to face communication

Parents are encouraged to participate in the following events and activities to maintain positive and regular parent-teacher communication:

- Back to School Night
- Re-Enrollment Night

- Celebration of Innovation: A week of inquiry using the design cycle where parents are invited in for volunteer support
- Literacy homework that includes reading to, with, and by parents and/or family members
- Parent/family projects
- Volunteering in the classroom and/or for community service projects and special events
- All School Assemblies
- Field Trips
- Special Events: music concerts, art show, sports events, talent show, Turkey Trot, holiday celebrations, earth day, unit culminations,

POLICY REVIEW PROCESS

Every year a committee will be assembled to perform a complete examination of the Language Policy. The committee will include, but is not limited to, a representative from Language and Literature and Language Acquisition, a few primary teachers, as well as the IB MYP and PYP Coordinator, and a member of the Academic Administrative Team. The purpose of the committee will be to study the current document to ensure its accuracy toward meeting IB MYP and PYP standards, as well as the CCSS.

If changes arise in the years between formal reviews, specifically in regards to MYP : The Next Chapter, PYP requirements, new CCSS/National Standards, and research-based pedagogy that impact assessment practices at SPS, a committee can be formed to make the necessary changes to the Language Policy as well as tasked with informing all affected parties.