

Desert Mountain High School  
IB Diploma Program Language Policy

**Rationale:**

Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need the development of sophisticated communication and language skills as the foundation of a comprehensive education program in order to successfully navigate in a complex global society. Our language policy involves all criteria from the IB-DP Language A and B Curricula; the Scottsdale Unified School District Scope and Sequence; and the Arizona Language Arts Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Viewing, and Presenting. We understand that proficiency in more than one language is conducive to the success of our students throughout their lives.

**Philosophy:**

The Desert Mountain International Baccalaureate Diploma Program serves a student population and community with diverse language needs and experiences. We welcome these students and strive to create a learning environment that validates and celebrates diverse language backgrounds. We also believe that our English language A program is central to learning in every curricular area and is critical to ensuring that our students become independent, critical thinkers, lifelong learners and responsible citizens. To this end DMHS and its faculty:

- Recognize that all teachers, regardless of content area, are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication.
- Prepare all students to be fluent in English.
- Encourage students to pursue competency in multiple languages.
- Foster an environment where all languages and cultures are appreciated and valued.
- Assist students in maintaining and developing their mother tongues whenever possible.
- Utilize instructional materials that integrate multicultural and diverse perspectives.

Because different languages are spoken throughout the DMHS extended community, our students are encouraged to understand each other's language and culture. We at Desert Mountain understand the power of language and realize that what we say and how we say it directly affects our perceptions of one another. Language lessons not only provide a medium for language acquisition; they also allow for holistic development of the whole person. Throughout their language studies, students address relevant issues and make links across subject areas, allowing students the opportunity to learn a new language and further their understanding of their own mother tongue, as well as foster a spirit of international mindedness that inspires the characteristics of the IB Learner Profile.

**Profile:**

Students attending Desert Mountain High School represent a diversity of language needs and experiences. Some of the populations we serve include:

- Mother tongue English students with limited exposure to Language B.
- Mother tongue English students with some exposure to Language B through a primary or middle school experience.
- Bilingual students who have acquired both mother tongue and English since birth.
- Bilingual students whose parents speak mother tongue only but are English proficient as a result of attending school.

**Language Programs at Desert Mountain:**

Our goal is to help every student become proficient in at least two languages. All students will use two languages, but not all of them to the same extent. Students vary in their ability to learn a second language; some achieve proficiency in their language B while others become truly bilingual.

Our language program, which ensures support for multilingualism and supports multiliteracies, operates within the curricular framework of the International Baccalaureate and is guided by the fundamental concepts of holistic learning, intercultural awareness and communication. Our program encourages students to make links within and across subject groups. In addition, we aim for each student to reach native fluency in a second language. Students currently choose between French, Mandarin, which was added in 2014, and Spanish for their Language B. In addition, all Language B students practice speaking in class on a regular basis to promote conversational and native speaker fluency at each student's own pace and ability level.

Language A is a rigorous, engaging curriculum taught in a way appropriate for students:

- For whom English is their mother tongue or one of their mother tongues
- Who have already reached native-speaker competency

Language B program affords students the opportunity to achieve proficiency in one or more second languages in a way appropriate for students:

- For whom French, Spanish, or Mandarin may not be one of their mother tongues
- Who have not yet reached native or near native fluency in French, Spanish or Mandarin

Desert Mountain High School's International Baccalaureate program, when determining placement of students in its world language courses, has been guided by IB policy in ensuring the best educational experience for all candidates. We also ask on our application to the MYP program what is the home language, so we can make sure the students are sufficiently challenged when selecting a Language B. Because of the

growing popularity of immersion programs, Desert Mountain has adopted the following policy to ensure fairness throughout its IB World Languages program while providing a challenging, enriching experience for MYP and DP students:

- Students enrolled in an immersion program, in which 50 percent of the courses are taught in a world language prior to entering Desert Mountain, will be eligible to take a Level III course their freshman year and a Level IV course their sophomore year. In instances when Desert Mountain does not offer a Level V in that world language, students who have completed Level IV will be enrolled in the IB Standard Level (SL) class. In most cases it will be a “class within a class” where the students will be prepared for the IB SL exam in their junior year.

### **Mother Tongue Development:**

The development of language is central to the whole development of all cognitive skills in children. In general, students with good mother tongue skills develop general language skills and thus improved skills in English. As language is part of one’s identity, the recognition of mother tongue, and the culture associated with it, increases a child’s self-esteem and general sense of well-being. Students who have a mother tongue not taught at the school are taught in English, but their parents are encouraged to support their mother tongue studies as much as possible at home. Currently at Desert Mountain in the DP program we offer coursework in mother tongue development in English, French, Spanish and Mandarin during the school day. Outside of the IB program we offer classes in Japanese and Italian. Desert Mountain is committed to looking for creative ways to support students’ mother tongue. We have families who have identified 39 different languages as the language spoken at home. Because teachers respect all of these different languages and cultures, teachers are able to access information about what language is spoken at home through the attendance program. Through this information, they can plan lessons which support these students and show them how they are valued.

Because of the diversity of sociocultural and languages represented at Desert Mountain and the District, the Scottsdale Unified School District has translation services for any families and teachers who need information translated. Families can request that information from the district be translated, and teachers can get information translated before they send it to families. This includes announcements, fliers or any communication that comes from the district. The district has also adopted an app called Parent Square which is a means of communicating with families that has a translation feature to it.

### **English Learners (ELs):**

Desert Mountain High School, along with all public schools in the state of Arizona, is required by law to adhere to specific policy guidelines with students whose mother tongue is not English.

In Arizona, students who have been identified as second language learners on the Home Language Survey take the AZELLA placement test, and the students’

proficiency scores determine appropriate placement for instruction. Students who have been placed into an English Language Development (ELD) program will also take the AZELLA reassessment once per year until they achieve proficiency. Students who have scored proficient on the AZELLA are then monitored for two years to help ensure success.

In 2019, the Arizona State Board of Education developed and adopted research-based models of Structured English Immersion (SEI) to be used in school districts and charter schools in Arizona. Arizona Revised Statute (A.R.S) §15-756.01 requires that the SEI Models include a minimum of 100 minutes of English Language Development (ELD) per day for grades 6-12. Approved models adhere to the following criteria:

- Provide coherent instruction aligned with Arizona's English Language Proficiency Standards and Performance Indicators.
- Include oral and written language instruction, including structured opportunities to develop verbal and written skills and comprehension strategies.
- Include access to complex language content through grade-level texts and materials with appropriate supports.
- Include parental engagement strategies.

At DMHS English learners are provided targeted and explicit English language instruction with an ELD specialist and integrated English language instruction with a content area teacher.

### **Language Teacher Training:**

All IB language A and B teachers are qualified and appropriately certified in their area of instruction. All public-school teachers working with English learners delivering required minutes of the SEI models are required to have an ESL, BLE, or SEI Endorsement. (*AZ Board Rule, 7 A.A.C. 2.L*).

### **Language Curricula:**

There are course syllabi for each language (English A, Spanish B, Mandarin B and French B) which include content and assessment criteria. These course syllabi are intended to ensure continuity and development of the courses offered at each level. However, in the context of true internationalism, we find variation in our second language students. This variation differs from year to year and can be attributed to such circumstances as family mobility and individual interest and ability level. Our guidance counselors meet with students and their families to determine the best path based on their mother tongue and language background. Accommodating the language needs of our students is key to their success, so each teacher aims to adapt his or her course syllabus appropriately. The curriculum also evolves as we continue to develop new interdisciplinary TOK links and integration of current events into our lessons.

### **Language Assessment:**

Teachers regularly use formative and summative assessments to assist in the teaching and learning of both Language A and B students. Student's language A and B work is assessed using rubrics aligned with subject specific IB testing criteria. Students and parents are kept informed of student progress through informal parent/teacher meetings and our on-line grade book. Assessment in language, as is true of all other subject areas within the school, is carried out in accordance with the Scottsdale Unified School District's assessment policy and DMHS school handbook. These guidelines follow the general principals of the IB Diploma Program, the SUSD Scope and Sequence, as well as the Arizona State Academic Standards.

### **Review Process:**

Teachers and administrators are responsible for implementing the Language Policy. However, as needed, teachers, administrators, students and parents can come together to evaluate and review the policy. Their responsibility will be to make sure the policy is up to date with the best practices in the teaching field and to make sure that the Language Policy is relevant and fair for all students. In regards to the DP program, the DP coordinator will discuss with new teachers in the program how our DP program implements this language policy. Also, veteran teachers in the different subject areas will assist new teachers and explain how this policy applies to their specific field. As with all IB policies, it is posted on the DMHS IB page for anyone to see. This policy was reviewed by all IB DP teachers along with representatives of the IB Parents' Association during the 2023-24 school year. After changes were made, it was then sent to our EL teacher at Desert Mountain who then reviewed with Jaime White, a district English Language Development coach for the district, to make sure we were in compliance with state mandates.