Roton Middle School Language Philosophy

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Purpose

This philosophy supports the MYP's goals to develop students' linguistic skills, cultural awareness, and appreciation of multilingualism. It aligns with the International Baccalaureate (IB) mission to foster international-mindedness, critical thinking, and respect for cultural diversity. The philosophy also reflects the standards and practices outlined in *MYP: From Principles into Practice* (2014) and aligns with Roton Middle School's broader educational goals.

Roton Middle School and the IB Mission

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end, the organization works with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

At Roton Middle School, our language philosophy outlines the principles and strategies guiding language instruction and acquisition within the MYP framework. It serves to inform educators,

students, families, and staff about our approach to fostering language learning and its integral role in the educational journey at our school.

This philosophy is inspired by the principles of the International Baccalaureate and reflects the mission and values of Roton Middle School. Its development is informed by research, IB publications, and insights gathered from surveys, observations, and discussions within our school community.

The language philosophy at Roton Middle School emphasizes three key aspects: learning languages, learning through languages, and learning about language. It aligns with the broader goals of the IB program, ensuring that language education supports students' academic and personal growth.

Roton Middle School Language philosophy Philosophy

At Roton Middle School, we believe that language is fundamental to learning, communication, and cultural connection. As an IB MYP school, our philosophy emphasizes the centrality of language in fostering intellectual growth, intercultural understanding, and personal development.

We recognize that all teachers are language teachers and that language learning occurs across disciplines, promoting both academic success and lifelong skills. Our inclusive approach supports multilingual learners, honors students' home languages, and encourages the celebration of cultural diversity.

We are committed to:

1. **Equity and Access**: Providing all students with the tools and support they need to succeed, including accommodations and scaffolding for multilingual learners and students with special needs.
2. **Language Development**: Cultivating proficiency in English and other languages while encouraging students to value and maintain their heritage languages.
3. **Cultural Appreciation**: Building an environment where students learn to respect and understand cultural differences, fostering a global perspective.
4. **Collaborative Practices**: Engaging educators, families, and the wider community in reflective practices to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of our language instruction.

By integrating language learning with the IB philosophy, Roton Middle School empowers students to become effective communicators, compassionate individuals, and globally-minded citizens.

Language of Instruction

Primary Language of Instruction:
The primary language of instruction in the MYP is English. This ensures students develop strong academic language skills necessary for success across subject areas and in international contexts.

Native Language Support and Mother Tongue Language and Literature Programme:
At Roton Middle School, students are encouraged to maintain and develop their native language(s) to enhance cognitive abilities, strengthen cultural connections, and build multilingual competence. Roton Middle School values linguistic diversity as a key contributor to global understanding and international-mindedness.

We recognize the importance of mother tongue, the language known best or used most for communication by the student. Developing a student's mother tongue can accelerate their acquisition of other languages and facilitate learning in all subject areas. To meet the diverse language needs of our student demographic, we have implemented the Spanish Language and Literature Programme for MYP students.

The Spanish Language and Literature Programme, for Multi-Language Learners (MLL), is intended for students who have a good command over their respective mother tongue in both written and oral contexts.

Additionally, Roton Middle School aligns its language instruction with the district's K-12 Literacy/English Language Arts program, designed to develop students' proficiency as readers, writers, listeners, speakers, and viewers. Guided by the Connecticut Core Standards, we prioritize:

- Supportive environments fostering academic discourse.
- Culturally responsive resources and instructional practices.
- Core instructional strategies ensuring inclusivity for multilingual learners and students with special needs.
- High expectations for all learners, utilizing a multi-tiered system of support.
- Data-driven instruction and interventions to close literacy gaps.
- Vertical articulation to ensure rigorous, standards-aligned learning.

These principles reinforce Roton Middle School's dedication to preparing students as effective communicators and critical thinkers ready for 21st-century challenges.

Language Acquisition

Additional Language Options:

MYP students study an additional language to promote multilingualism and intercultural understanding. Roton Middle School currently offers Spanish, French, Japanese, and Mandarin Chinese. Language acquisition courses are structured to address varying levels of proficiency, from beginner to advanced.

Differentiated Instruction:

Teachers use differentiated instructional strategies, such as scaffolding, individualized learning plans, and formative assessments, to accommodate diverse student needs and ensure equitable access to the curriculum. The use of PowerSchool's Parent Portal enables families to track language acquisition progress and collaborate with teachers to support learning goals.

IEP-Required Support Services

All students may require some form of assistance when learning a new concept or skill. Special Education Teachers design specialized instructional approaches and materials, working in partnership with general education teachers to deliver educational programs within the mainstream classroom while promoting inclusion. Accommodations are not intended to replace fundamental knowledge and skills but help students with disabilities demonstrate their understanding and abilities. Accommodations may involve adjustments, differentiation, and scaffolding. We believe that learning in smaller settings, such as pullout services, provides students with an environment where they can focus and enhance their language skills and overall proficiency.

As outlined in Individual Education Plans (IEPs), some students receive scheduled speech therapy and occupational therapy. These services are designed to support the language development of each individual student.

Support for Multi-Language Learners (MLL)

Children entering Norwalk Public Schools (NPS) come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. As required by law, the district identifies children who speak a language other than English at home and assesses them to determine if they require English Language Services. Upon registration at the Family Center, all students take the LAS Links Assessment to evaluate their English language proficiency.

The LAS Links Assessment measures students' proficiency in four language areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Each student receives a score for each of these language modalities, along with an overall score. The proficiency levels are as follows:

- **Level 1**: Beginning
- **Level 2**: Early Intermediate
- **Level 3**: Intermediate
- **Level 4**: Proficient
- **Level 5**: Above Proficient

Based on their assessment scores, students are placed in one of the three Multi-Language Learner (MLL) programs offered at Norwalk Public Schools. These programs are designed to provide the necessary support and instruction to help students develop proficiency in English while continuing to build their skills in their home language.

Language Support Services:

Multi-Language Learners (MLL) will have access to tailored support services, including co-taught classes, bilingual resources, and additional time for assignments and assessments. These services align with the IB's commitment to inclusivity.

- Bilingual - Spanish Native Language Support
- ESL Program-Language Arts, and content-area instruction are taught in English with the support of certified TESOL teachers.

Transitional Support:

MLL students receive focused support to transition effectively into the MYP's language demands. This includes dedicated support staff, personalized learning goals, and regular progress monitoring to ensure successful integration into academic and social environments.

Criteria for Exiting the MLL Program

At the end of each school year, Multi-Language Learners (MLLs) are reassessed using the LAS Links Assessment to evaluate their English language development and growth. A student is considered ready to exit the MLL program if they achieve an overall score of Proficient (Level 4) or Above Proficient (Level 5), with scores of Level 4 or 5 in both reading and writing.

Goals of the MLL Program

We maintain high expectations for all students in our three MLL programs and are committed to supporting their success through high school graduation. The specific goals of the MLL program are:

- To support English language acquisition through the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- To provide educational experiences that prepare students for high school completion and entry into higher education and/or the workforce

- To help students and their families become familiar with the school and community
- To encourage students to appreciate and celebrate their cultural heritage

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Encouragement of Native Language Development

Cultural Events and Celebrations:
Roton Middle School celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity through events such as International Day, Multilingual Poetry Competitions, and Community Heritage Nights. These events provide opportunities for students to share their languages and cultures, fostering a respectful and inclusive environment.

Native Language Resources:
The school library and online platforms offer resources in multiple languages to encourage students to explore literature, history, and culture in their native languages.

World Language Education at RMS:
Roton Middle School embraces the district's commitment to world language proficiency, adhering to Connecticut State standards and ACTFL guidelines. World language instruction prioritizes communication, cultural appreciation, and literacy skills essential for thriving in a global society.

Key elements of our program include:

- Developing students' abilities as speakers, listeners, readers, and writers in the target language.
- Active engagement in real-life cultural contexts to enhance communication skills.
- Preparing students for diverse futures by building their intercultural understanding and multilingual competence.

The experience of learning a world language enriches students' academic and personal lives, cultivating their roles as globally minded citizens.

Academic and Social Language Use

Formal and Informal Contexts:
MYP students are expected to recognize and adapt language use depending on context. Formal language is required for academic work, while respectful and effective communication is encouraged in social interactions.

Encouraging Code-Switching:
Students are supported in understanding and using code-switching effectively, enabling them to adapt their language use to different settings while valuing and demonstrating their multilingual skills.

Teacher and Staff Responsibilities

Language Development Across the Curriculum:
All teachers are language teachers, responsible for promoting language development within their subject areas. This includes supporting students' understanding and expression in both academic and social contexts. Teachers integrate language learning strategies into their instruction to meet IB standards.

Professional Development:
Teachers participate in ongoing professional development on effective language instruction, multicultural competence, and inclusive classroom practices. Training sessions align with IB's recommended practices and address the evolving needs of students and faculty.

Accountability and Evaluation

Feedback Mechanisms:
Teachers provide constructive feedback on language use in both formal assignments and everyday interactions. Feedback aligns with IB's assessment criteria to ensure consistency and fairness.

Reflective Exercises:
Students engage in reflective exercises to evaluate their language use and growth, supporting their personal and academic development. These reflections are integrated into classroom activities and portfolio reviews.

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philosophy Review and Updates

Annual Evaluation:
This philosophy will undergo an annual review involving input from teachers, students, parents, MYP Coordinator, and administration to ensure it remains effective and aligned with IB standards.

Adjustment to Evolving Needs: Updates will address changing language needs, resources, and program requirements, ensuring that the philosophy continues to support the development of multilingual, globally minded learners.

IB MYP Standards and Practices Addressed

1. **Standard 1.3** – *Language development across the curriculum:* All teachers are responsible for promoting language development within their subject areas to support students' communication skills.
2. **Standard 2.1** – *Mother tongue support:* Schools should encourage the development of students' mother tongue as it aids in cognitive development and facilitates the acquisition of additional languages.
3. **Standard 2.2** – *Language of instruction:* The primary language of instruction should support students' development of academic language skills necessary for success in various subject areas and international contexts.
4. **Standard 2.3** – *World language instruction:* World language education should prioritize communication, cultural understanding, and literacy skills, preparing students for global engagement.
5. **Standard 3.2** – *Additional language options:* Schools should offer language acquisition courses in at least one additional language, supporting multilingualism and intercultural understanding.
6. **Standard 3.3** – *Language support services:* Tailored language support services should be provided to ensure that all students, particularly multi-language learners, have equitable access to the curriculum.
7. **Standard 3.4** – *Transitional support:* Schools should implement strategies to help multi-language learners transition effectively into the academic language demands of the MYP.
8. **Standard 4.4** – *Language use in academic and social contexts:* Students should be taught to adapt their language use based on different contexts, ensuring effective communication in both academic and social settings.
9. **Standard 4.5** – *Code-switching:* Students should be supported in understanding and using code-switching effectively to navigate between languages and contexts.
10. **Standard 5.2** – *Native language resources:* Schools should provide a range of resources in native languages to support students' development and cultural exploration.
11. **Standard 5.3** – *Cultural awareness:* Schools should promote linguistic and cultural diversity through events, activities, and initiatives that foster inclusion and global understanding.
12. **Standard 5.4** – *Feedback mechanisms:* Regular and constructive feedback should be provided to students on their language development, guiding their learning progress.

13. **Standard 5.5** – *Reflective exercises:* Students should engage in reflective practices to assess their language use, fostering personal growth and self-awareness.
14. **Standard 6.1** – *Professional development:* Teachers should engage in ongoing professional development related to language instruction and inclusive practices to meet the evolving needs of students.

Approaches to Learning (ATLs):

1. **Communication:** The philosophy promotes the development of effective communication skills through language acquisition and the adaptation of language use in various contexts, both academic and social.
2. **Collaboration:** The philosophy fosters collaborative learning through co-taught classes, group activities, and school-wide cultural events that encourage students to share and appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity.
3. **Critical Thinking:** The philosophy encourages students to critically reflect on their language use, analyze their progress, and make informed decisions to enhance their language development.
4. **Self-Management:** The philosophy supports students in managing their language learning through differentiated instruction, personalized goals, and tailored support services to meet individual needs.
5. **Research:** The philosophy promotes research skills by providing multilingual resources and encouraging students to explore literature, culture, and history in their native and additional languages.

These ATLs are integrated into the *RMS Language philosophy 2024-2025* to ensure that students develop essential skills for success in a multilingual, global context.

IB Learner Profile attributes:

1. **Inquirers:** The philosophy encourages students to explore languages, cultures, and resources, fostering curiosity and independent research in both their native and additional languages.
2. **Knowledgeable:** The philosophy promotes cultural and linguistic awareness, helping students gain a broad understanding of global perspectives through language acquisition and multicultural activities.
3. **Thinkers:** The philosophy supports critical thinking by encouraging students to reflect on their language use, analyze their progress, and make informed decisions to improve their skills.

4. **Communicators:** The philosophy enhances students' ability to express themselves effectively in multiple languages, both orally and in writing, across various contexts.
5. **Principled:** The philosophy emphasizes the importance of respecting linguistic diversity and fostering an inclusive, supportive learning environment for all students.
6. **Open-minded:** The philosophy encourages students to appreciate and embrace different languages and cultures, promoting intercultural understanding and global citizenship.
7. **Caring:** The philosophy cultivates empathy and respect for linguistic and cultural differences, fostering a nurturing environment for multilingual learners.
8. **Risk-takers:** The philosophy encourages students to step outside their comfort zones by learning new languages, adapting to different linguistic contexts, and participating in cultural activities.
9. **Balanced:** The philosophy supports the development of well-rounded learners by integrating language acquisition with academic and social skills, ensuring students thrive in all areas of their education.
10. **Reflective:** The philosophy encourages students to reflect on their language learning experiences, assess their strengths and areas for improvement, and set goals for their continued development.

By addressing these Learner Profile attributes, the *RMS Language philosophy 2024-2025* helps foster globally minded, multilingual students who are equipped to navigate diverse environments.

Alignment with the **Assessment philosophy**, **Inclusion philosophy**, and **Academic Integrity philosophy** by ensuring consistency in practices that support equitable, inclusive, and fair educational experiences for all students. Here's how the language philosophy aligns with each of these policies:

Alignment with the Assessment philosophy:

- **Language Development in Assessment:** The language philosophy emphasizes that all teachers are language teachers, integrating language development strategies into their subject areas. This supports the Assessment philosophy by ensuring that language skills are considered when assessing students' understanding across different disciplines.
- **Differentiation in Assessment:** The philosophy advocates for differentiated instruction and assessment strategies to meet the diverse needs of multilingual learners (MLLs), such as tailored support services, co-teaching, and formative assessments. This aligns with the Assessment philosophy's focus on using varied assessment methods to ensure fairness and accessibility for all students.

- **Feedback and Reflection:** The philosophy supports the provision of constructive feedback on students' language development, which is consistent with the Assessment philosophy's requirement for regular, reflective assessment practices that guide students in their learning process.

Alignment with the Inclusion philosophy:

- **Equity and Access for All Learners:** The language philosophy is designed to ensure equitable access to education by supporting multi-language learners (MLLs) through tailored resources and differentiated instruction. This directly aligns with the Inclusion philosophy's goal of providing an inclusive environment that meets the diverse needs of all students.
- **Support for Multilingual Learners (MLLs):** The language philosophy outlines specific support services for MLLs, such as co-taught classes, bilingual resources, and additional time for assignments. This ensures that MLLs can fully participate in the MYP curriculum, aligning with the Inclusion philosophy's focus on supporting students with diverse backgrounds and needs.
- **Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** By celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity through events and providing resources in multiple languages, the philosophy ensures that all students feel valued and included, consistent with the Inclusion philosophy's emphasis on fostering a welcoming, respectful environment for all.

Alignment with the Academic Integrity philosophy:

- **Honesty in Language Use:** The language philosophy emphasizes the importance of academic language use and communication skills, which fosters an environment where students are expected to express their thoughts clearly and honestly in both their native and additional languages. This supports the Academic Integrity philosophy's focus on upholding academic honesty and discouraging plagiarism.
- **Reflection and Ethical Learning:** Reflective exercises, as mentioned in the language philosophy, encourage students to assess their language development and the authenticity of their work. This aligns with the Academic Integrity philosophy's emphasis on self-awareness and responsibility in academic tasks.
- **Respect for Intellectual Property:** The language philosophy provides resources and frameworks for students to use language responsibly and ethically. This supports the Academic Integrity philosophy's objective to uphold the integrity of students' academic work by encouraging proper citation and respectful use of ideas and sources.

By aligning with these policies, the *RMS Language philosophy 2024-2025* ensures a holistic, inclusive approach to education that fosters academic integrity, supports language development, and respects the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of students.

Communication of the Language philosophy

Roton Middle School is committed to maintaining transparent communication about its language philosophy throughout the school community. A collaborative working group, including teachers from various departments and subject areas, ensures that the philosophy is effectively shared and understood across the school.

This language philosophy is aligned with the school's overall strategic plan, which is accessible on the Roton Middle School website.

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philosophy Review: The first year of implementing the current practices helped to solidify the foundations for ongoing improvements. Although the initial changes in our policies presented challenges, they have resulted in long-term benefits. This philosophy was last reviewed in January of 2025, and feedback on its effectiveness continues to be shared with stakeholders through meetings with parents, conducted by the MYP Coordinator, and through our website and handbook. These continuous reflections and updates ensure that our practices remain relevant and effective in supporting student success.

Resources

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