Rockwall High School
International Baccalaureate
Language Policy

PURPOSE: Rockwall High School's Language Policy articulates the ways in which we promote language development and honor the home/personal language of all learners, including Emergent Bilingual (EB) students.

PHILOSOPHY: Rockwall High School recognizes that *all* teachers are language teachers, in that they are responsible for promoting appropriate communication among students, and that it is incumbent upon teachers to provide the language of the course that is necessary for mastery of that subject. This is particularly important for EB students. As a result, we employ teachers who are excellent communicators with the written and the spoken word.

INSTRUCTION: The primary language of instruction at Rockwall High School is English, and the majority of our students and teachers are native English speakers. Rockwall HS does not restrict access to IB courses based on English proficiency.

PATH TO IB LANGUAGE B: The State of Texas requires that all students successfully complete four years of English and two years of a Language Other Than English (LOTE) to graduate. For students for whom English is their home/personal language, Rockwall HS offers Spanish and French as options for second-language study. Students may enroll in Spanish I in eighth grade and continue studying Spanish through their first year in IB as juniors in the Spanish B SL course. Conversely, students may take Spanish or French during all four years of high school, culminating in the Language B SL course during the senior year. Spanish and French *Ab Initio* are offered for students with no prior Spanish/French instruction who want to enter the program, but do not have the foundation to meet IB diploma requirements. This planning gives students the opportunity for up to four years of second-language study before leaving high school, and this model of concurrent language learning serves as a foundation for pursuing the IB Diploma.

SUPPORT: To support students whose native language is not English but who are considering enrollment in the IB program at Rockwall High School, there are several systems in place. The English as a Second Language (ESL) program is the bilingual support on campus for Emergent Bilingual students. The ESL program is designed to make grade level academic content accessible to our EB students, and has one full time teacher with special training dedicated to students who are second language learners, and multiple teachers on campus who have ESL Certifications through the State of Texas Department of Education. Every English Language Arts teacher in Rockwall ISD is required to have an ESL certification.

Depending upon the level of fluency of students, they are enrolled in ESL classes that not only address and promote their understanding of the English language, but also provide support for academic learning in all classes. Additionally, the Language B program within Rockwall HS IB program emphasizes communication in multiple cultural contexts, thus allowing students to learn language specifically for the goal of global communication and cultural understanding.

Our school library houses a collection of books written in other languages, primarily Spanish, as that is our largest non-English demographic, and our district invites experts qualified in the linguistics field to provide professional development opportunities (e.g. Teaching EB students in the mainstream classrooms) for teachers.

We also provide support for college-bound non-native English speakers with the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) courses. Students may enroll in the AVID program beginning in middle school and continue through high school. In AVID, students learn specific study skills that support all content areas as well as college preparation information. Ideally, the students would enroll in AVID in middle school and continue with the AVID program in the 9th grade as they transition to high school. As a 10th grader, these students would have the study skills and support necessary to enroll in more rigorous coursework advanced academics classes to prepare them for the IB classes by their 11th grade year. This important resource provides an excellent conduit for students to enter the rigorous academic preparation expected by the IB Programme.

At the district level, Rockwall ISD provides EB classes for *parents* four times a week at the RISD Parent Education Center. This opportunity for parents to learn the English language while continuing to provide students a rich environment in their home/personal language is paramount to the success of students.

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS: Rockwall High School has several English-speaking teachers on campus who are also fluent in other languages including Spanish, French, Arabic, Mandarin, Ukrainian, Russian and American Sign Language (ASL). These teachers come from diverse cultural backgrounds from around the world, providing a rich learning experience for our students. We recognize that while it is critical to ensure that the language of instruction does not serve as a prolonged obstacle to learning, it is equally important to support the development, maintenance and fluency of the international students' home/personal languages. To that end, Rockwall HS strives to achieve this through organizations and events that highlight and honor the home languages and cultures of our student population. These include our French Club and Spanish Club, and their respective National Honor Societies, as well as American Sign Language Club, Ancient Languages Club, Model United Nations, Hispanic Heritage Club, and the International Foods Club, a group that brings together students from various parts of the world through the foods that honor and enrich their cultures.

Rockwall High School recognizes that language learning is imperative in forming students' understanding and interpretations of what it is to be human; language shapes our world view. It is our responsibility as educators to provide opportunities for students to experience the world through language, as well as other areas of knowledge. Rockwall High School will reinforce the values of this collective responsibility in order to develop internationally-minded young adults.

UPDATE AND REVISION: This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by members of the school community including students, teachers, administration, and parents to ensure alignment with the guidelines of all governing bodies.