

Dobbs Ferry School District International Baccalaureate Program Language Policy

Mission Statement:

The Dobbs Ferry School District strives to develop independent, curious, and open-minded learners who think critically, work collaboratively, act ethically and are knowledgeable about the world around them.

Statement of Language Policy

Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School are IB World Schools and support all students in developing language skills in both their mother tongues and a second or other language. The Language Program is designed to support students in developing the language skills needed to be successful in the 21st century. While English is the primary language of instruction, Dobbs Ferry High School has students who speak approximately twenty different languages in their homes, many of whom do not speak English at home. Teachers in all subject groups plan learning experiences based on the IB Learner Profile, MYP criteria, DP criteria, district philosophy regarding teaching and learning, and NYS standards, while recognizing that they all have a responsibility to honor and develop the language experiences and learning of each student. Language assessment in the Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme are both formative and summative and based on IB's assessment criteria. All students in Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School are provided with equitable opportunities to achieve the same educational goals and standards.

Principles that underpin all language learning

- All teachers are language teachers and are responsible for supporting and facilitating listening, speaking, reading and writing in either the language of the school or another language.
- These learning experiences promote the integration of the learning of languages with the different subject groups.
- Learning experiences are a means for students to express themselves while also reflecting on both their learning and the world around them.

Language Policy Updated:
November 2025
September 2025
December 2023
October 2021
September 2018

- A deep understanding of one’s mother tongue enriches each person’s ability to understand and appreciate themselves and the world at large.
- Learning another language helps one to understand the world and appreciate cultural differences and similarities and fosters a connection to our global society.
- Supporting Multilingualism and Multiliteracies: By valuing and supporting students' entire linguistic repertoires, including their mother tongues, Dobbs Ferry School District fosters an environment where students can develop multiliteracies. This is the ability to understand and communicate meaning effectively across diverse cultural, linguistic, and digital contexts, a critical skill for global citizenship.

Instruction and Assessment in Language and Literature

The primary language of instruction of Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School is English. Students in Language and Literature classes engage in a variety of learning experiences rooted in the Next Generation Learning Standards, as well as MYP objectives. These experiences include but are not limited to novel studies, vocabulary activities, close reading instruction, evaluating and analyzing texts and developing and sharing work in a social context. World literature is also explored in Language and Literature classes.

Students are assessed in Language and Literature classes using both formative and summative methods. Formative assessment provides information to teachers to assist in guiding further instruction. Examples of formative and summative assessments can include essays, public service announcements, speeches, poems, responses to prompts, conferences and observations. Teachers use both MYP criteria and Next Generation Learning Standards for assessment purposes.

Students in Language and Literature classes who need additional support are placed in support classes such as Advisory, Content Lab or AIS (Academic Intervention Services) classes.

Instruction and Assessment in Language Acquisition Classes

Language Acquisition classes are currently offered in French, Italian and Spanish. Students continue in their selected language for four years of MYP (Years 2-5). In Year 1, students participate in a “language carousel.” In quarters 1, 2 and 3, students rotate

Language Policy Updated:
November 2025
September 2025
December 2023
October 2021
September 2018

through French, Italian and Spanish classes, learning some basic vocabulary, grammar and culture before they make their final choice of language starting in Year 2. During quarter 4, students are introduced to language and culture. They discuss the origin of the 3 Romance languages and some common themes that can be found throughout the cultures. Connections to their own language, culture and daily life are also made. Information about the courses is provided to parents and students prior to language selection so an informed decision can be made.

Language Acquisition classes provide students with speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in the target language as well as foster cultural understandings. Vertical curriculum alignment of Language Acquisition classes from Year 1 through Year 5 ensures a smooth transition from phase to phase and year to year.

Students are assessed in Language Acquisition classes using both formative and summative methods. Formative assessment provides information to teachers to assist in guiding further instruction. Examples of formative and summative assessments can include integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; analyzing grammatical structures; emphasizing vocabulary development; reflection writing in the target language and participating in authentic assessments. Teachers use both MYP criteria and New York State Standards for assessment purposes.

Diploma Programme Language Acquisition Courses

Language A Courses

The Group One offerings are in English. All students take either Language A (English): Literature SL or HL. These courses engage students in the learning experiences of the curriculum and include ongoing listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. All Group One assessments in the Diploma Programme are both formative and summative and based on IB's assessment criteria.

Language B Acquisition Courses

Group Two (Language B) classes are currently offered in French, Italian, Spanish, and Spanish Ab Initio. These world language courses provide students with listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the target language as well as foster cultural understandings. All Group Two assessments in the Diploma Programme are both formative and summative and based on IB's assessment criteria.

English as a New Language and Mother Tongue Support

While the primary language of instruction in DFHS is English, the school also provides a comprehensive, freestanding and New York State Department of Education approved English as a New Language (ENL) program for English Language Learners (ELLs). All students are screened upon entry to the school district and then assessed annually on the New York State ESL Achievement Test to determine their eligibility for ENL services in the program.

Students identified for ENL services receive appropriate English language instruction based on their specific needs taught by a New York State licensed and experienced English to Speakers of Other Languages Teacher. Students are evaluated annually to determine their levels of English proficiency and receive additional support beyond proficiency to maximize academic achievement. The ENL Coordinator and teacher maintain a close connection with content-area teachers to monitor student progress in all academic areas as well as socially. All New York State accommodations are provided for English Language Learners.

Dobbs Ferry High School recognizes that although a child may learn to speak English in a relatively short period of time in some cases, it usually takes several years to develop the academic skills to work on the level of native English speaking peers. With this in mind, students are encouraged to use their native languages to aid in their transition to English. New York State accommodations include the use of bilingual translating dictionaries on state exams for students who are identified as ELLs. The Dobbs Ferry High School IB Coordinator ensures these are provided for these students on their IB assessments in Groups Three through Six and all IB teachers have received information and support on how to work with students who are non-native speakers of English in their classes.

Parental Involvement in Language Development

Dobbs Ferry School District believes that a partnership with parents is essential for a student's linguistic development. The school utilizes the following resources and practices to involve parents in planning their children's language profile:

- **Initial Consultation:** Parents of new students, particularly those identified as English Language Learners, meet with the ENL/ELL Coordinator to discuss the student's linguistic background, previous schooling, and goals for language development.
- **Collaborative Planning:** Parents are included in parent-teacher conferences and meetings to monitor student progress. The school provides translation services when necessary to ensure clear communication about language learning goals and course selections.
- **Resource Sharing:** The school informs families about co-curricular opportunities that support language and cultural development, such as the International Club, World Language Societies, and other school experiences. This allows parents to encourage their children to maintain and develop their mother tongue and cultural identity.

Cross-Cultural Awareness

Although English is the primary language of the school and instruction, Dobbs Ferry High School values and shares its rich lingual and cultural diversity. Students are encouraged to share and deepen their understanding of their native languages and cultures. Awareness of American and other cultures is also emphasized in the different subject groups and the Diploma core. Additionally, the schools' International Club, World Language Societies, Sign Language Club, Creative Writing Club, pen pal exchanges, travel experiences, and other organizations provide regular activities and experiences for students to share their own cultures and languages and to learn about those of others.

New York State Seal of Biliteracy

The NYSSB recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in English and one or more world languages. The intent of the NYSSB is to encourage the study of languages, to identify high school graduates with language and

Language Policy Updated:
November 2025
September 2025
December 2023
October 2021
September 2018

biliteracy skills for employers, to provide universities with additional information about applicants seeking admission and placement, to prepare students with twenty-first century skills, to recognize the value of language instruction, and to affirm the value of diversity in a multilingual society. The NYSSB takes the form of a Seal on the student's diploma and a medallion worn at graduation.

Procedures for the publication and review of this policy:

To ensure that effective practices are shared, updated, understood, and implemented by the Dobbs Ferry community, this policy will be made publicly available to the community and posted on the school's website. All stakeholders will review the Language Policy on a bi-annual basis: teachers, students, parents and administration.

References and Resources:

Dobbs Ferry MS and HS Assessment Policies

Dobbs Ferry Teacher Handbook

Dobbs Ferry MS and HS Student Handbook

Dobbs Ferry High School Diploma Programme Handbook

MYP: From Principles to Practice (IBO September 2014)

Programme Standards and Practices (IBO, Updated November 2024)

Guidelines for developing a school language policy (IBO 2008)

Language Policy Updated:
November 2025
September 2025
December 2023
October 2021
September 2018