



Language Policy

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

Washington-Lee High School

Last Revised January 2019

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this document is to

- Communicate to all stakeholders in our IB community – administrators, teachers, students, and parents – the programmatic expectations for fostering language growth as required by IB.
- Provide clear guidelines to all stakeholders by defining language instruction and services offered in the context of the Diploma Programme at Washington-Lee High School.

This document draws its authority from the IB *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* (2007), *Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy* (2012), *Towards a continuum of international education* (2008), *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes* (2008) and *IB learner profile booklet* (2008), *What is an IB Education?* (2013), *Developing academic literacy in IB programmes* (2014), *Language and learning in IB programmes* (2011, updated 2014), and *Diploma Programme: From Principles to Practice* (2015). It was created in collaboration by teachers, administrators, central office staff, parents, and students.

This document will be reviewed annually by the IB Coordinator, Director of Counseling, World Language Department Chair, Assistant Principal, parents and students.

IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

Knowledgeable They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

Thinkers They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.

Communicators They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

Principled They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

Open-minded They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

Caring They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Risk-takers They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

Balanced They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

Reflective They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

Programme Philosophy

Washington-Lee High School (WLHS) serves the citizens of Arlington, Virginia's geographically smallest county, located across the Potomac River from the District of Columbia. We educate one of the nations' most diverse and sophisticated student populations – students come from 71 countries and speak 45 different languages. We serve students with a range of programs designed to meet individual needs. Our mission is to prepares and supports all students to strive for the best, to become life-long learners, and to become successful, active members of the global community.

As language is the key to all learning, all teachers at WLHS are language teachers. Language learning at WLHS refers not only to the learning of a specific language, but it includes any and all activities that bring about learning. Through language, students acquire the ability to think and to learn, to develop social skills and values, and to acquire knowledge. Language is taught through context and through building relationships between new information and existing concepts. This is reinforced by IB's language and learning cycle which draws off the work of Jim Cummins (1979) in identifying the importance of developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP):

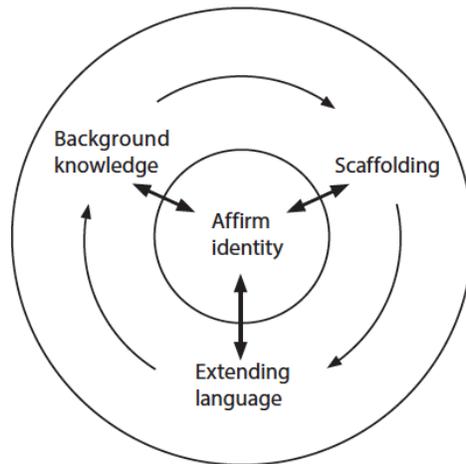


Figure 1
The language and learning cycle of good practice (based on the work of Jim Cummins)

Developing academic literacy in IB programmes (2014)

While the overall goal of WLHS is to help every student become proficient in two languages, the reality is that not every student will reach the same level of proficiency at the same time. Students vary in their ability to learn a second language; some will achieve basic proficiency in the target language while others will be prepared to reach true bilingual status throughout their continued secondary education. The acquisition of language must be seen as a continuum along which each individual student progresses at his/her own speed and, thus, differentiated instruction forms the core of all WLHS language instruction.

WLHS operates within the curricular framework of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) and is guided by the fundamental DP concept of preparing students to be active participants in the global community. The programme encourages students to make links within and across subject areas and to understand the wide variety of cultures throughout the world. The aim is for each student to reach his/her highest level of literacy and proficiency in a second language. The general language profile of WLHS includes:

- English-only background students with three years of Language B proficiency
- English-only background students with four years of Language B proficiency
- English background students with significant Language B proficiency as a result of study in a language immersion program
- Spanish background students with high level of competence in Spanish as a result of having taken Spanish AP for Fluent Speakers or at least three years in the Spanish for Fluent Speakers program.
- Bilingual students who have acquired both English and another language since birth
- Bilingual students with non-English speaking parents who have acquired English as a result of attending school

Group 1: Studies in Language and Literature

Language A

Language A currently includes English Literature and Spanish Language and Literature (Fluent Speakers) at the higher level as well as English Language and Literature at the standard level. As English is the language of instruction at WLHS, all students in the IB Diploma Programme are required to take either English Literature A at the higher level or English Language and Literature at the standard level as their Language A. A bilingual diploma will be awarded to a student who takes English Literature A or English Language and Literature A and Spanish Language and Literature A. Each must be passed with a grade 3 or above. Students are required to take a minimum of three years of Spanish for Fluent Speakers and are recommended to take Spanish AP Language for Fluent Speakers prior to starting Spanish Language and Literature A.

Self-Taught

In 2008, WLHS graduated its first self-taught student in Arabic. Arlington Public Schools now offers Arabic and Chinese classes to middle and high school students. There are presently enough students to make up a level 3 class in each of these subjects, and as a result, WLHS continues to offer Language B Arabic and Chinese/Mandarin.

Group 2: Language Acquisition

Language B

Language B currently includes both French and Spanish at the higher and standard level. Students are required to complete a minimum of four years of language study in a chosen language prior to entering the first year of the Diploma Programme.

Classical Language

Classical language is offered in Latin at the higher and standard level. Students are required to complete a minimum of three years of Latin before entering the first year of the Diploma Programme.

Ab initio

Language ab initio is available in Spanish, French, Arabic and Chinese/Mandarin. They are language learning courses for beginners, designed to be followed over two years by students who have no previous experience of learning the target language. Language ab initio is only available at the standard level.

Communication with Non-English Speaking Parents and Guardians

WLHS recognizes the value of effective and timely communication with parents and works to foster such communication. In the case of communicating with parents who do not speak English:

- WLHS's Bilingual IB Educational Administrative Assistant works to encourage clear communication with all lingual groups.
- WLHS's Hispanic Parent Liaison often fills the role of translator between the school and parents.
- WLHS, as one school within Arlington Public Schools, has access to both translators and a translation phone line.
- WLHS will seek out families in our community who have the required language proficiency to act as translators.

Heritage Speakers Support

WLHS acknowledges the cultural importance of a student's mother tongue for, but not limited to, the following reasons:

- The preservation and development of first languages foster the celebration of diversity and enable cross-cultural awareness, appreciation, and understanding
- The preservation and development of first languages enable the development of higher-order cognitive skills
- The preservation and development of first languages enable people who are members of small cultural subgroups to better maintain and transmit cultural identity within a multicultural society
- WLHS has a very diverse population with a large number of students whose first language is not English, including a significant population of Spanish Heritage students who have demonstrated fluency in Spanish.

The IB Diploma Programme at WLHS provides formal support for Heritage Speakers of Spanish through Language A instruction. WLHS has a well-established Spanish for Fluent Speakers program that offers a continuum of Spanish For Fluent Speakers courses from levels 1, 2, 3, Spanish FS AP Language, Spanish IB FS Language and Literature A first year, and Spanish IB FS Language and Literature A second year at the high level.

WLHS encourages the continued development of language through cross-curricular application, extracurricular activities (i.e., Spanish Club, Latin American Students Association, French Club, Chinese Club), and community-based activities involving local universities. Students also have the opportunity to pursue other languages through non-IB electives, such as Chinese, German, Arabic, Japanese and American Sign Language.

Accommodations for students who are non-native English speakers include additional tutoring, curriculum modifications, and assistance from the school division's HILT (High Intensity Language Training) program, established to provide intensive language training as

well as modifications and remediation for non-native speakers who struggle with the core language of instruction.

Language Placement

Placement of students in language courses is dependent on the sequence of courses they have had before grade 11. Students coming from outside of Arlington Public Schools are given a diagnostic test at the beginning of their tenure at WLHS to determine the best placement. This test is administered and graded by the World Language Department Chair. Students wishing to pursue the full IB Diploma have several options to strengthen their language skills pursuant to entering the program, including Concordia Language Village programs during the summer, Northern Virginia Community College summer school courses or evening courses, or programs such as the *Amigos* program which couples language acquisition with community service.

Language Policy Review

This policy is evaluated annually by the IB Coordinator, Director of Counseling, World Language Department Chair, Assistant Principal, and World Language Supervisor. It is the responsibility of the IB Coordinator to ensure the success of the language policy review. The next review period is scheduled for January 2020. This policy can be downloaded electronically from the W-L IB website.

For additional information, please contact the WLHS IB office at 703-228-6234.