



LANGUAGE POLICY

This policy should be read with the following IB publications: Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes, 2014, and Language and learning in IB programmes, 2014

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LANGUAGE POLICY

Boston School International knows that the development of language is fundamental in improving communication; it supports and enhances thinking and understanding. Mother tongue development is critical in the development of cultural identity. We value language as an expression of cultural diversity. Moreover, we know that language is central to inquiry and critical thinking as language is an expression which permeates the world in which we live. Students learn a language, learn through language, and learn about language in authentic settings. Therefore, we believe teaching language to be the responsibility of all members of the learning community.

This language policy is a working document developed by the school's administration in collaboration with faculty. It is consistent with the principles of IB and Leader in Me as well as the AdvancEd standards. This document outlines our school's language and academic goals is directly linked to our entire curriculum and defines the policies to help our students attain these goals. All members of the BSI community—students, faculty, staff, and parents—are asked to commit to it

Overview and goals

“To develop in our students, active, creative minds and the capacity for critical thinking through a technologically advanced, international bilingual education program.” (BSI's Mission)

BSI's mission statement is the foundation for our Language Policy. We believe that this policy is vital to achieving our mission, as language is the basis for all learning. At BSI we foster a challenging, motivational multilingual environment, which allows students to apply their individual skills, cultural experiences, and interests to their learning experience. Therefore, we are committed not just to provide diverse language instruction but also encourage students to inquire in English, the language of instruction; Spanish, the mother tongue of the majority; and Mandarin, the language of acquisition from preschool to ninth grade.

Multilingualism develops in our students the capacity to think critically and act creatively and enhances the acquisition of higher order thinking skills and development of multiple perspectives. Moreover, it promotes international awareness and global citizenship, which is a main goal of the IB program and BSI. Our Language Policy validates the equal status of all languages, reinforces cultural identity, and reflects the multicultural composition of our student body and faculty.

Multilingualism allows our students to use and access a variety of technological resources that not only enhance their learning experience and promote life-long learning but also represent a gateway to new language learning opportunities. This policy supports our Leader in Me program as it empowers our students to understand themselves and others by interpreting and responding to ideas, attitudes, and feelings. As a result, it fulfills our philosophy: “We promote learning through inquiry, leadership, development of tolerance, intercultural understanding, and citizenship.”



Practices

Language Teaching

At BSI we are committed to ensuring an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Therefore, our students are involved in different listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in English and Spanish. As a result, these acquired abilities and information develop in our students long-lasting educational attitudes. Student literacy activities are deliberately considered and created to empower students to think, apply, and share successfully their language skills, which will enable them to accomplish individual and professional objectives. Therefore, teachers strive to develop a caring language community in which every student feels accepted and confident that others support him or her as he or she takes risks to learn a language different from his or her mother tongue.

We wish to emphasize that the instruction language at BSI is English. All our students are immersed in an English learning environment from the day they join us, including students who still are not proficient in English. We believe that full immersion allows students to develop their language skills at a faster pace while continuing to be challenged academically at an age-appropriate level.

Because most of our students speak Spanish as their mother tongue, instruction of Spanish language is essential in supporting these students to maintain their mother tongue. In turn, this strategy will enhance their learning in other languages and reinforce their cultural identity. Currently, we do not offer classes in our students' other mother tongues, as Portuguese or Hindi, but promote all opportunities and activities that allow them to share their culture and language with their peers. Furthermore, we offer online library resources to allow them to continue their learning in the mother tongues.

We are committed to the following Practices:

- The school places importance on language learning, including English (language of instruction), mother tongue, and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).
 - Language is not only integrated into all subjects but also stand-alone language lessons are offered.
 - Language learning takes place in authentic contexts, both within and outside of the Programme of Inquiry.
- The school develops and promotes international-mindedness and all attributes of the IB learner profile across the school community. (IB Standard A, Practice 4).
 - The acquisition of English promotes learners' international awareness and global citizenship.
 - In accordance with the IB philosophy and Panamanian education policies, literacy in Spanish is recognized as an important part in the development of all students' self-esteem and cultural identity.



- The classroom environment supports language learning through a variety of print material and visual aids.
- The school promotes open communication based on understanding and respect. (IB Standard A, Practice 6).
- The school develops and implements policies and procedures that support the programme(s) (IB Standard B1, Practice 5).
 - Teachers in grades PK to sixth use the PYP unit planners to structure language instruction.
 - In grades seventh to twelfth English instruction language instruction is divided into three classes: Literature, Speech, and Writing & Grammar; all subjects, except for the other language courses and the Panamanian social studies courses, are taught in English.
 - For students in the DP Programme, language will be divided into studies in language and literature (Language A) in Spanish, literature (Language A) in English, and language acquisition courses (Language B).
- The school utilizes the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programme(s). (IB Standard B2, Practice 11).
 - Parents participate in their children’s learning opportunities as guest speakers, in both languages, and mentors of clubs.
 - Local writers visit the school to enhance our students learning experience.
 - Governmental organizations, as the Ministry of Health and of Education, as well as non-governmental organizations, give our students the opportunity to express their ideas in Spanish and English.
 - MUN Debating with many private and public local and international schools also allows our students to take advantage of community resources and to share their learning experiences with their classmates.
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognize that all teachers are responsible for language development of students. (IB Standard C1, Practice 8). ^[L]_[SEP]
 - In elementary, special subject teachers collaborate with the homeroom teachers to integrate learning and promote the importance of respect and understanding of all cultures, as they support the learning of the English, Mandarin, and Spanish.
 - Middle and high school teachers also collaborate with language teachers to integrate learning and promote multilingualism.
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8). ^[L]_[SEP]
 - Language is imbedded in all teaching practices and is a powerful tool to engage learners. Moreover, learners use it to acquire new meaning, understand new concepts, and enhance communication skills.



- Teaching and learning fosters a stimulating learning environment based on understanding and respect. (IB Standard C3, Practice 14). ^[L]_[SEP]
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7). ^[L]_[SEP]
 - Differentiation of instruction is used to support the language needs of all students.
- Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s) (IB Standard C4, Practice 1).
 - Teachers provide students with a variety of assessment that allows them to utilize not only their knowledge but also their language skills.

Primary Years Programme (PYP)

In the PYP, scope and sequence phases documents are used for language learning. The students' language development is described on a continuum of phases within the four strands of language learning:

- Listening and Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Viewing and Presenting

Within these phases, outcomes define the individual skills, and students master conceptual understanding.

All BSI elementary students learn by participating in Reader's and Writer's Workshop concentrated in the following areas:

Oral Language:

- Intentional use of accountable speaking in and out of the classroom.
- Learners utilize an assortment of oral interaction encounters to become confident.
- Learners discuss their emotions, interest, and mediate class issues in both small and large groups.
- Learners experience the importance of listening in all circumstances.

Reader's Workshop

Students encounter an adjusted learning environment that incorporates the following:

- Students engage in autonomous reading with little or substantial group direction.
- Students react to what they have read and express their thoughts about characters, setting, plot, and conclusions.
- Teachers use small group guidelines in order to apply a differentiated approach.



Writing Workshops

- At every review level, students write with various purposes using appropriate sentence and passage structure.
- They plan and edit their compositions.

Expectations or learning outcomes will vary according to individual differences and the diversity of language learning experiences. The program acknowledges that language learning is a development process within meaningful and enjoyable contexts. The learner will be able to make connections, apply learning, and transfer conceptual understanding to new situations.

Diploma Programme (DP)

BSI students participating in the DP Programme will participate in the Bilingual IB Diploma programme. Therefore, they must complete English Language A and Spanish Language A, both from group 1. The programme covers Language and Literature in Spanish (HL) and Literature in English (SL).

Language A and Mother Tongue Programmes

Students are required to study two language A, which in some cases is the continued study of the students' mother tongue. As a result, students will participate in the bilingual IB programme and comply with requirements of the Panamanian education programme. Moreover, we believe that developing a student's mother tongue accelerates the rate of English language acquisition, supports achievement in all subject areas, increases self-esteem, and enhances intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.

Through these language courses students, will develop

- a personal appreciation of language and literature
 - skills in literary criticism using a range of texts from different periods, styles and genres
 - an understanding of the formal, stylistic and aesthetic qualities of texts
 - strong powers of expression, both written and oral
 - an appreciation of cultural differences in perspective
 - an understanding of how language challenges and sustains ways of thinking.
- When students begin the DP programme, they study English as one of their Language A (Standard Level), if their skills in all four language areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking) enables them to access this curriculum.
 - When students, whose mother tongue is Spanish, begin the DP programme, they study Spanish as one of their language A (Higher Level). Other students who have reached native language proficiency in Spanish may also study Spanish as the language A.
 - Students, who are unable to fully access the academic curriculum delivered in English or Spanish, will receive additional individualized or small group language and academic support scheduled as appropriate.



Language B

As we will be offering a bilingual Diploma, most of our students will enroll in two Language A classes, as previously stated. Moreover, we will be offering Language B English for those students who do not have the proficiency For English A. We also foresee Spanish Language B class for students who do not have the proficiency in Spanish.

Library and Media Center

Information literacy is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. Moreover, it is the basis for lifelong learning as it enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. Therefore, our library is key to school policies particularly the Language Policy, Honesty Policy and Assessment Policy.

Our library facilitates and promotes information literacy through a variety of books, magazines, scholarly articles, newspaper, and other databases, accessible physically or online. Additionally, the library's online resources allows students to access learning in a variety of languages that support their mother tongues. Also, the librarian promotes reading in English as she collaborates with teachers in diverse activities throughout the school year. The librarian is key to the Honesty Policy as she aids teachers and students in the formatting for source citations (Modern Language Association) and their correct usage.

Parent Support for Language

A parent's attitude toward language learning is crucial to a child's success. At BSI we know that the involvement of parents is necessary for the continuous improvement of language development and overall student learning. For this reason, we actively encourage parents to support their mother tongues, as well as the ongoing development of international mindedness at home.

The support can take many forms; therefore, we suggest parents speak and read to their children in English and assist them with assignments like writing prompts, inquiry-guided research, and reading comprehension. We also encourage parents to prompt their children to watch TV programs and movies and to converse about daily school occurrences in English and in their mother tongue, as a way to reinforce language learning. At BSI, we know that instilling respect for a multilingual and multicultural world helps students see the purpose in their mother tongue, as well as the importance of a second language as many influential texts are written in a variety of languages, and translations often distort the original meaning.

School-Home Communication With Parents

Recognizing that many of our parents are only fluent in Spanish, the school provides nearly all school-home communications in both English and Spanish. We also give bilingual presentations for our parent meetings. Our school monthly newspaper, the *Boston Way*, written and edited by students, is also published in both languages.



References

Language and Learning in IB Programme, OCC IBO.

Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes, OCC IBO.

Guidelines for following developing School Language Policy, OCC IBO.

Programme Standards & Practices, OCC IBO.

International School Utrecht Language Policy

Bavarian International School Language Policy

International School of Paris Language Policy