



Language Policy

1. Purpose:

- to outline guidelines for the use of languages in the school and in communication with other parties
- to promote the use of language as impactful in student learning, particularly a student's worldview and understanding of culture and international mindedness
- to inform stakeholders of resources available to support the languages that students use at home, in school and the community

2. Philosophy

This language policy is an important working document that guides the practices for staff and students at Old Scona Academic High School. One of the fundamental goals of our school and our IB programme is to promote the creation of citizenship through development of intercultural communication, understanding, support, respect, and appreciation of one another. The cultural diversity that students bring to our school is a benefit to the entire student population and is especially appreciated in our IB classrooms as it helps our students to develop greater levels of international mindedness.

Edmonton Public School's shared beliefs and understandings about language are that "literacy skills must be embedded into the teaching of the programs of study in all subjects and that each staff member has the responsibility to create a positive learning environment that ensures effective and consistent literacy instruction for the success of each student." According to 21st Century Literacy Learners: Vision 2020, "each student in Edmonton Public Schools, must develop competency in reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, representing, and numeracy as foundational skills for 21st century learning"

Old Scona Academic creates a safe and motivating environment where students are encouraged to take risks as they learn language in all subject areas, whether in a traditional international language class, our language of instruction (English class) or in any other subject specific area or class.

The school's philosophy includes the following important concepts

- Language is the foundation of communication and inquiry and as such is essential for the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills
- Language is a social means for exploring and communicating meaning, thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Language can help students access prior knowledge and build skills
- Acquisition of language is an ongoing process as the student develops skills, knowledge and concepts to achieve fluency and proficiency
- Students are encouraged to become fluent in more than one language
- It is important to respect and build upon a child's first language as experience in one language will benefit in the learning of other languages
- Language permeates the whole curriculum and listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and representing are the necessary skills for knowledge acquisition and construction of meaning
- Language is vital to all learning, and as such all teachers at Old Scona Academic are language teachers and have the responsibility to facilitate communication as much as possible in any or all forms (and should encourage the use of Mother tongue as an aid to expression and a bridge to learning other languages including the language of instruction)
- The study of languages develops international understanding, allows students to appreciate and understand other cultures, and helps them further develop aspects of the IB Learner Profile such as open-mindedness and caring
- Language study promotes effective communication across cultures and allows students to understand and express ideas in more than one language
- Acquisition of more than one language enriches personal development, helps facilitate international-mindedness, and clearly gives real world examples of different ways of knowing

3. Roles and Responsibilities

A) Head of School will

- ensure that the school's language philosophy is clear and aligned with the IB philosophy
- ensure that resources are available in the school for learning in several different languages
- ensure that personnel are available for instruction in person in French and online instruction through Pamoja for students who wish to study Mandarin Chinese or Spanish
- ensure that language support is available for a student learning in a language that is not their mother tongue if they are coded and have an IPP in place

B) IB Diploma Coordinator will

- ensure that all teachers are aware that they are language teachers

- ensure that language acquisition (group 2) subjects meet the needs of the majority of the student population
- ensure that students are appropriately placed in IB language courses according to their individual needs

C) Teachers will

- recognize that they are all language teachers regardless of their subject area
- use instructional strategies for language development in the classroom

D) Students will

- advocate for their language needs
- seek out resources to support them in learning the language of instruction and their mother tongue

4. Policy Overview

A) Definitions

English language learner (ELL): a student whose first language or home/personal language is not English.

Home/personal language: The language that is commonly used in the home and is most often the first language spoken.

B) Our School’s Language Profile:

The official languages in Alberta are English and French, with English as the language of instruction in all but language acquisition subjects. In order to earn an Alberta High School Diploma, students must study English language and literature in all three years of High School.

The student population is culturally diverse with many different languages spoken in the home. The linguistic and cultural backgrounds include, but are not limited to, English, French, Spanish, Canada First Nations, Mandarin, Cantonese, Filipino, Korean, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Farsi, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, etc. There are up to 40 different languages and dialects spoken by our students.

C) IB Language Subjects offered

Language A

- English A Literature HL

Language Acquisition

- French B SL (intermediate French)
- Mandarin AB Initio SL (through Pamoja)

- Spanish AB Initio SL (through Pamoja)

D) Language in the subject classroom

At Old Scona Academic school, all teachers are language teachers and play a key role in language learning especially as they teach new subject specific vocabulary and terminology. Teachers of all disciplines assess and teach reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the central role language plays in learning and recognizes that all teachers are language teachers. The district has targeted professional development opportunities to strengthen language teaching across all disciplines. Thus, language instruction has taken on a fundamental role within our school district.

Within the context of teaching we strive to:

- Promote inquiry-based authentic language learning
- Recognize the trans-disciplinary nature of language learning
- Develop and interrelate listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy skills
- support equity of access and inclusion by supporting language learning across the disciplines
- Promote consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of all languages.

E) Support for students whose first language is not English

While English is the main language of instruction, the school respects and supports the maintenance of mother tongue and heritage languages if possible, involving parents, district consultants and community partners in discussion of how best these might be maintained.

- Students are encouraged to form informal groups of friends for support and familiar interaction in the language of their choice, but also to be open to interacting with other people from other cultures and backgrounds as well
- English language learners may use their home/personal language resources and skills to facilitate learning within the classroom
- Students are encouraged to use English in subjects that are taught in English, but may use bilingual dictionaries or ask for help from other students who speak their mother tongue if they need help translating materials to enhance their learning during classroom instruction
- Alberta Diploma exams and IB examinations allow the use of translation dictionaries as per Alberta Government Exam and IB examination protocols. Students wishing to use translation dictionaries must identify

themselves to the IB Coordinator during registration for IB Exams in October of grade 12

- English Language Learners are provided additional support and funding from the school district. If they are coded they will have an IPP and may be given extra support during assessments such as additional time or a reader
- Finally, all students receive constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers (see the assessment policy). Our students have access to, and are taught through a variety of technological and information resources.
- opportunities to maintain and value mother tongue and culture exist outside of the classroom
 - international school trips
 - UNESCO schools based CAS and Leadership Projects
 - Social Justice Projects
 - Me to We Projects that help support international special needs
 - Cultural Festivals such as Multicultural Day where we celebrate international languages, foods, dance, and other cultural activities.
- students may write their Extended Essay in their mother tongue if it is available in the IB course offerings and if an advisor fluent in the language can be found

One of the fundamental goals of our school and our IB programme is to promote the creation of citizenship through development of intercultural communication, understanding, support, respect, and appreciation of one another. In many of our classroom settings, students are asked to share their own language stories. The cultural diversity that these students bring to our school is a benefit to the entire student population and is especially appreciated in our IB classrooms as it helps our students to develop greater levels of international mindedness.

F) Parent and Community Involvement:

Parents help to promote cultural awareness and international language acquisition in the school community in the following ways:

- supporting their student's choice in international language instruction
- preserving mother tongue use at home
- providing home/personal language books, videos, news media
- supporting cultural dress, food preparations, etc... when we celebrate our many cultures and languages during our multicultural celebration

Parents are actively involved in the IB Programme and IB course registration process for their children. Our open door policy invites parents to be involved or ask questions at any time. All Programme and registration documents are provided to parents and the selection of courses requires the consent of parents.

Our parent community is very multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual and they are very supportive of their children studying international languages and are also highly supportive of cultural appreciation activities and mother tongue initiatives.

5. Policy Review:

This policy was initially developed by a committee of IB teachers at Old Scona Academic school. The policy is reviewed yearly by the IB Coordinator and Administration and was last reviewed in August 2022. Amendments are made as needed.

Resources:

Edmonton Public Schools (2021). *Student Rights and Responsibilities: Old Scona Academic School.*

Edmonton Public Schools (2021). *School Assessment Plan: Old Scona Academic School.*

International Baccalaureate Organisation (2015). *DP From Principles to Practice.*

International Baccalaureate Organisation (2020). *DP language courses: overview and placement guidance.*

International Baccalaureate Organisation (2020). *IB Programme Standards and Practices.*