



Fairfax County Public Schools IB Schools Language Policy

The Office of PreK-12 Curriculum and Instruction and the Office of Language Acquisition collaborated with representatives of our IB schools, including IB coordinators, ESOL teachers, English teachers, and world language teachers, to develop our language policy. This is a working document.

The essence of human interaction is language and communication. The world that our students will encounter as adults will be vastly different from the one we know today. The rapid development of telecommunications will make the ability to communicate in more than one language a necessity. Therefore, it is important to prepare our students for this multilingual environment by ensuring that they are able to function in at least two languages. During the learning process, they will derive the benefits of developing insight into their own language and culture as they learn to communicate with others.

The primary goals of the language program in Fairfax County Public Schools are to ensure that students:

- Communicate in languages other than English
- Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures
- Connect with other disciplines and acquire information
- Develop insight into the nature of language and culture
- Participate in multicultural communities at home and around the world

These goals include a comprehensive focus for instruction that takes language learners beyond the traditional confines of the classroom. In the world language curriculum, students will not only learn to communicate with native speakers of the language, but they will do so with the cultural knowledge necessary to interact in an appropriate way.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) recognizes the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of our students and their families and is committed to providing an appropriate education for each of our students: supporting language acquisition, sustaining the mother tongue, and requiring English language arts instruction. As a district, 20% percent of our students are language minority students; approximately 13% of our students are supported by ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services, although that percentage is considerably higher in many of our eight diploma schools (four of which also offer the MYP), five middle schools, and six elementary schools with MYP sixth graders. FCPS supports language minority families by providing adult English language instruction, resources in multiple languages, and translation services. Although the primary cultural home for many of our students is a language other than English, some do not have the linguistic structure; the students can speak, but not read and write fluently in their home language. We offer language instruction to these students with courses in Language A2 when appropriate.

FCPS also supports students with formal language instruction in other languages by offering credit by examination in 18 different languages. Students must demonstrate that they have reached the intermediate range of proficiency

as described by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) K-12 Performance Guidelines.

Student Achievement Goals

The IB programs in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) support the FCPS Portrait of a Graduate, which outlines attributes students are to develop to be life-long and successful learners. Students of all FCPS schools are expected to become an Ethical and Global Citizen and a Communicator, both attributes that develop language learning. Additionally, the FCPS School Board Student Achievement Goals outline two precise targets for all students to aspire to meet.

- o All students will communicate in at least two languages. This goal has two components: native English-speaking students will become competent in communicating in at least one other language in addition to English and English Language Learners (ELLs) of other world languages will become proficient communicators in English.
- o Students will understand the interrelationship and interdependence of the countries and cultures of the world.

It is also our goal that all students will take at least one advanced academic course (IB) before graduation; the IB program in FCPS is an open access program. Our focus is on closing the achievement gap for all students, including our under-represented minority populations as well as our English Language Learners.

FCPS Language Curriculum

Language A

English is the primary Language A instruction in FCPS. Our IB schools have worked diligently to build strong vertical articulation to prepare students to complete their Language A studies successfully. In addition to English language instruction, FCPS supports reading and writing across the curriculum; we believe that it is the responsibility of all teachers to improve our students' ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing. In the diploma program, schools have the choice of offering English A1 at both the higher and standard levels. FCPS has been monitoring the new Group 1 curriculum to ensure a smooth transition. We feel strongly that the new Language and Literature courses have the potential of providing increased access to our students, including English Language Learners and students with special needs.

Fairfax County provides additional support in English language acquisition for our English Language Learners (ELLs). The state of Virginia has adopted the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) as its assessment for students' English language proficiency. Students assessed as *entering, beginning, developing, or expanding* receive classroom instruction in English for speakers of other languages. Students may access Transitional English 9 as a bridge to the general English classroom. English teachers also coordinate with ESOL teachers to provide appropriate differentiation in the English Language Arts classroom. FCPS teachers are encouraged to give students the opportunity to reflect and communicate in their mother tongue as a scaffold to understanding. We believe that allowing students to process the content in their native language is effective in building knowledge.

FCPS also supports students in their mother tongue by offering the option of Language A1 self-taught. Individual schools create the most appropriate course of study for their students with the guidance of student services and the IB coordinator.

Language B

The content of the World Languages Program of Studies is organized around seven essential strands of language development and application for students: Person-to-Person Communication; Listening and Reading for Understanding; Oral and Written Presentation; Cultural Perspectives, Practices, and Products; Making Connections through Language; Cultural and Linguistic Comparisons; and Communication across Communities. The two strands for Latin in lieu of the Person-to-Person strand are Reading for Understanding and Using Oral and Written Language for Understanding.

In order to support our student achievement goal that all students will be able to communicate in two languages, FCPS continues to expand its world languages program, especially in elementary school. In our partial immersion program, started in 1989, students learn mathematics, science, and health through the medium of a world language (French, German, Japanese or Spanish). Half the school day is spent learning math, science and health in the target language. Students receive instruction in English for language arts and social studies during the other half of the day. The FCPS program model is based on the highly successful immersion programs that were implemented in many school districts throughout Canada and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. The uniqueness of an immersion program is that the world language is not taught as a subject. Instead, the language becomes the language of instruction for part of the curriculum. Children then acquire the second language through interesting and meaningful activities in the language as they learn the concepts of the various subjects included in the elementary curriculum. Research studies show that learning a second language at an early age has a positive effect on intellectual growth and leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and improved listening skills. The IB program builds on the partial immersion program by allowing students to continue their study of the language in high school; Spanish immersion students may choose to study Spanish A2. A limited number of students have been able to study French A2. Individual schools adopt their language B choices to meet the needs of their immersion students. For example, if a boundary change brings an influx of students from a partial immersion program in a language not offered at the high school, the language will be introduced to the IB program.

FCPS has also introduced the FLES program (Foreign Language in the Elementary School), beginning with first grade in selected schools. FLES is an approach to language learning that allows students to develop basic communicative skills in a language while reinforcing and enriching content in other disciplines. The FCPS FLES model develops students' language proficiency by providing language instruction that supports the concepts taught in the subject areas at the respective grade level. Generally, programs have 30 minutes of instruction two to three times per week, which is articulated through middle and high school. FCPS FLES model is based on the research that shows that students are not only able to learn, but are also highly engaged in learning content through the target language. In addition, the culture of the target language is integrated into instruction in support of our student achievement goals. FLES is being introduced progressively starting with the lower grades and eventually will become available to K-6, including our middle years sixth graders.

In three of the five feeder elementary schools to Robinson, all students receive a minimum of 50 hours of Spanish language instruction in sixth grade; each of the elementary schools has chosen one world language for instruction. Robinson is a secondary school, authorized to take part in the MYP, and our students choose a world language for instruction beginning in the seventh grade. Most seventh grade students begin their study with a semester of

instruction presented in a sustained delivery model over the course of an academic year. Eighth grade students continue their course of study, receiving high school credit for successfully completing a year of instruction at the high school level. Students in the IB diploma program who were not a part of the Middle Years Program are counseled to begin their study of a second language no later than eighth grade. Students who do not have the opportunity to study a second language by ninth grade (i.e., transfer from another school district) may study language at the standard level; students with three or fewer years of a language may study language *ab initio*.

Each school has the option to choose its world languages for instruction. We currently offer language instruction in Spanish, French, Korean, American Sign Language, Russian, German, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and Classical Languages. Our world languages program is fluid, recognizing changes in the global community. FCPS continues to offer European languages and Latin, but we are also including more opportunities to study Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic. In adding or changing a language for study, schools usually survey the community, including parents and students. Changes are also instituted when necessary to allow students to continue their studies from elementary and middle school.

ROBINSON SECONDARY SCHOOL

James W. Robinson, Jr. Secondary School is a 7-12 school serving approximately 4,000 students. Demographically, the high school (grades 9 – 12) student body is 57% white, 13% Asian, 15% Hispanic, 7% Black and 8% other, with approximately 3% of students classified as an English Language Learner (ELL). The IB program at Robinson embraces the importance of communication in languages other than English and the gaining of knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Although language study is primarily the role of group 1 and group 2 teachers, courses across the discipline include units that help students to develop insight into the nature of language and culture. Our 10th grade government course, to better align with the IB mission, is comparative in nature; students study the governments of six other countries in addition to that of the United States. The mathematics internal assessments encourage the investigation of statistics and mathematical problem-solving in other parts of the world. IB Theatre investigations explore dramatic tradition and language from other cultures. IB Film looks at sub-titled films and explores the nature of film-making and the issues of translation with works from other cultures. IB Sciences Each year, multiple students also choose to write their extended essays in their native language, exploring elements of culture and language. These students work closely with a language teacher or translator in the school as their mentor.

Students are required to complete two years of World Language study in order to earn a Standard Virginia high school Diploma and three years of World Language study in order to earn an Advanced Studies Virginia high school Diploma. Students also have the opportunity to earn a Bi-Literacy seal upon graduation if they take four years of world languages and pass a proficiency test.

Language A

The English Department at Robinson offers a number of choices at each grade level to fulfill state as well as IB requirements. Students in grades 9 - 10 may choose regular English 9 or 10 or Honors English 9 or 10. The Honors courses are designed to allow intellectually curious, highly capable and motivated students to move at a faster pace, deal with more abstract and complex material and begin to focus on the writer's use of language. The Honors courses are open access and students seeking a challenge are encouraged to take one or both courses. Additionally, we offer Transitional English 9, a course taken concurrently with the final year of ESOL education. It is a modified English 9 course, designed for students who are still learning English. IB English is, of course, a two year program offered in grades 11 and 12 at both the SL and HL levels. Students may move into IB English 1 from

regular English 10, although students planning to take IB English are encouraged to take the Honors courses. At Robinson, we offer both the IB English Literature and IB English Language and Literature options. Additionally, the school now offers Honors English 11 and Honors English 12 for students not ready for IB English but who demonstrate an interest in a greater challenge in language arts. Since we have been officially authorized for three years, all subject teachers have been incorporating the MYP approaches to teaching and learning into their planning and teaching. There has been particular attention paid to developing personal communication and presentation skills in the classroom. Many students also choose to explore elements of their heritage languages and cultures while developing their MYP project.

Across all DP subjects, instruction is a whole language approach. Students are actively engaged in reading, writing, speaking and listening, both informally and formally. All teachers embrace the importance of drafting, feedback, revision and publishing in all writing assessments and projects.. Students are taught how to talk about writing in peer revision groups and how to make substantive changes to their own work based on the feedback of others. Students are invited to revise multiple times, learning to refine their language, clarify ideas, and develop their thoughts in detail. The relationship between the reader and the writer is emphasized through the use of reader response and structured Socratic Seminars. Opportunities for writing and speaking for different purposes and different audiences are provided throughout the four year program. In particular, the preparation and teaching necessary for successful completion of internal assessments allows teachers opportunities for teaching written and oral communication.

Robinson Secondary School also teaches elective courses designed to further enhance communication skills: Creative Writing, Combating Intolerance, Broadcast Journalism, Journalism, Film Study, Marketing, and African American History. These courses may be taken in addition to the regular required courses. Additional opportunities to develop these skills occur in school clubs, in particular the Speech and Debate Club, Carousel Magazine (creative writing), DECA (Distributive Education CA), FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America). These clubs are open to all students who attend Robinson Secondary School.

Language B

Students at Robinson have the opportunity to study French, German, Latin and Spanish as a second language and may begin this study in grade 7, affording them the opportunity to study a second language for six years. Additionally, Robinson has special classes in the middle school (grades 7 – 8) for students who have been Spanish immersion students in elementary school; in grades 1 – 6, immersion students have received 50% of their daily instruction in multiple subjects in Spanish. As middle school students, they are grouped together and given formal Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 coursework that emphasizes reading and writing skills. These students then take Spanish 3 and Spanish 4 in the high school before entering the IB Spanish B classes, where they will do higher level work. The high school offers Spanish 1, Spanish 2 and Spanish 3 for fluent speakers, in recognition of the growing Hispanic population in our community and the need to differentiate instruction for these students.

We have a small ELL (English Language Learners) population. Students enrolled in English as a Second Language courses often acquire enough English skills that they can attempt IB math and science courses as well as some IB electives. Teachers are sensitive to the issues of language acquisition and make accommodations to help students navigate the terminology and develop conceptual understanding.

Instruction in the world languages classes follows the whole language approach; students are actively involved in speaking, listening, reading and writing in the target language on a daily basis. Additionally, teachers have worked to create vertical articulation from level one through IB courses so that students in the early years of language are

receiving IB-like instruction. Students are encouraged in performance assessments throughout their world language experience.

In addition to this classroom instructional languages offer opportunities outside of the classroom to engage with the various languages through travel, honor societies, and exchange programs. Honor societies and students from those societies are actively engaged in tutoring younger students. Some tutoring opportunities involved older students speaking in students' mother tongue to assist English Language Learners with Math. Each language honor society works to showcase their language's culture to students not in the class through events at the school. For example, the German classes do a German cafe open to all students and teachers. The school also holds an annual highly successful International Night which showcases foods, dress, music and dance from around the world. Teachers in all four languages annually sponsor trips abroad to countries in which the second language is spoken.

Teachers of both Language A and Language B courses are regularly sent for IB training and they participate in networking sessions sponsored by IBMA, the regional IB organization.

Formulation and Dissemination of the Policy

The language policy is established at the county school system level by specialists in language arts and second languages and in concert with committees of classroom teachers. The local school practices reflect both the county policy as well as the guidelines provided by the International Baccalaureate. Local school instruction reflects regular team meetings within departments to review pedagogy, share instructional strategies and review assessment practices. Teachers are regularly provided free county and school specific training to enhance and develop their language teaching skills. Individual teachers communicate with parents through Back to School Night programs, regular emails and special program evenings. Robinson also employs two translators: one in Spanish and one in Korean, who provide assistance about academics and athletics during and after school. The World Language teachers regularly make themselves available to listen to and respond to parent questions and concerns from their respective communities. Additionally, there is a parent newsletter, the RamGram, that disseminates information monthly. A variety of communication options are available to facilitate an understanding of all school-sponsored events. In addition, there is a rising seventh grade information night, which both students and parents attend. At this information night, individual language teachers present and share expectations for their subjects so they can make an informed decision about their language choice. The county language policy is posted on the fcps.edu website and the school policy is posted in the Diploma Program tab of the Robinson homepage. The school policy is reviewed annually by teachers in the English, World Languages and Special Education Departments.