

International School of Piraeus

Language Policy

Mission Statement

At ISP we offer high quality education in an encouraging supportive environment that helps our students achieve excellence, reach their full potential and relate school experiences to real life. With a holistic, student centered and inquiry-based approach our students develop globally relevant concepts, skills and positive attitudes which enable them to become active, creative and responsible members of the local and international community.

Language Philosophy

The student's intellectual, personal and social development is the focus of the International School's programme. We offer a comprehensive, inquiry-based and student-centred approach to teaching and learning in an encouraging and supporting environment. We promote high academic standards and intellectual rigor, but also develop various skills and positive attitudes towards learning.

Organisation of language support in and out of the classroom

Languages are taught by the homeroom and single subject teachers in the PYP. All teachers are considered language teachers and must develop language skills in all subject areas. They must work on subject specific vocabulary and on paraphrasing resource texts in order that students understand them and be able to use them.

The objectives of the Language Programme

- Use language to communicate effectively, accurately and appropriately.
- Explore language in meaningful contexts.
- Understand and utilise language in listening, speaking, reading and writing activities.
- Develop the confidence to take risks in all language experiences.
- Discover that language learning is a continuous process based on previous experiences.
- Develop an awareness of the literary tradition, its value, its position, its complexity, and its relationship to culture.
- Learn the reading and writing process simultaneously.

Language Programmes Offered

Language A Greek is taught to all students as most of our students are native Greeks or with Greek origins.

Language B English is taught from the age of 3 (KG1) until the age of 12 (Grade 6). In Primary there are 14 lesson hours of English a week whereas from Nursery to Kindergarten there are two teachers (a Greek and an English one who teach the same amount of hours per week scaffolding the language development).

Language C French/ German is a requirement to all students from Grade 3-6 and taught three times a week.

A Language support programme is organised for Greek students who have limited competence in Greek or English and experience difficulties in coping with mainstream lessons. Thus, we make sure that their individual needs are appropriately met. These lessons are offered during Greek or English lessons (pull- out) (3 lessons per week / each student).

As regards foreign students who are not familiar with the Greek language, we offer a program of support similar to the one for the Greek students (pull-out) and an additional evening Greek study program (10). The language program for foreign students is carried out by another teacher.

Other Activities That Support Language Development

- *Learning environment*
We have created a suitable environment, classrooms and school routines that help develop students' language skills and interest.
- *Library programme/ reading programme in the library*
Students have regular weekly lessons in the library in the PYP. There is a sufficient amount of books in Greek and English in the library and classrooms that students are able to borrow.
- *Drama programme and performance*
There is a drama performance every year either in English or French/German where students practise the language and develop their speaking, presentation and communication skills.

Integration of language learning into the programme and activities other than lessons in the PYP
Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Its application through oral, written and visual communication strands is seen and learned across the subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry.

In order to communicate effectively and to establish and maintain relationships, students have many opportunities to listen, speak, read and write in their classrooms.

The primary objective of classroom libraries, I-pads and the media centre is to provide materials supporting the curriculum, taking into consideration the interests and requests of students, as well as the professional needs of teachers and staff.

The librarian and the teachers select the materials and equipment in collaboration with other teachers and staff, with consideration to maintaining a variety of appropriate formats, appropriate reading levels and the presentation of a variety of viewpoints.

Learning language is also connected to the broader world technology – global electronic networks, in order to access a vast range of multimedia resources. Every PYP classroom has a computer and internet connection and for a whole class research the school offers a computer lab with 24 computers and 25 iPads connected to the internet and installed applications.

Language support that is provided to enable all students to participate in the programme of inquiry/ interdisciplinary units/units as fully as possible

Our student population is mostly Greeks whereas there is a number of International students who possess no, or very little Greek when they arrive.

The school's main objective is to assist students, whose primary language is not Greek, to acquire the social and academic language needed to integrate successfully into all mainstream classes and school life with their peers as soon as possible.

The school's support programme begins in grade 1 and its support is provided through a combination of withdrawal (small group instruction with a specialist teacher taking place in parallel to regular classes during core Greek lessons) and inclusion (additional support in the mainstream class, differentiation based on knowledge, interest, learning styles).

Students are also encouraged to research subjects in their mother tongue, so accelerating their acquisition of knowledge and increasing their subject specific vocabulary.

When a student has been identified with additional learning need including language difficulties or gifted and talented abilities, intervention and support are provided through the learning support programme.

Decision-making process the school used to identify the language needs of each student

In order to best assess students' Greek language abilities and ensure the appropriate language support, language placement interviews may be organised for students at the application process. Students can be assessed on entry by an evaluation panel made up of language specialists and then on an on-going basis by the homeroom teachers and an EAL teacher; and are re-integrated into their class once they have acquired a sufficient level of English to be able to function socially. This is agreed by the homeroom teacher and the single subject teacher based on their personal judgements.

Ways of encouraging parents to help children develop language skills at home

ISP encourages parents to help develop language skills at home by suggesting a list of books. Parents are asked on regular basis to read aloud to their children, have a variety of books and other reading resources at home (parents are also able to borrow books from the school library), use public libraries (especially during holidays) and encourage students to participate in extra

curriculum activities. A book bazaar takes place twice a year (Christmas and on Open Day) where parents are encouraged to purchase Greek/ English books for their children. Also, a book week takes place once a year and the students have the chance to develop their language skills through a variety of activities.

Provisions made for staffing and professional development to ensure best language-teaching practices

All PYP core subject teachers, language and subject teachers are qualified elementary/subject teachers with a university teaching degree.

Every year teachers attend seminars and workshops organised in Greece by the IBO, the Greek Ministry of Education, Foreign language Publishers, Organisations and courses run by the British Council.

The school buys different books for professional development and educational magazines on a regular basis.

During the school year the teachers meet two times a week to discuss affairs and to plan stimulating units, themes and events.

Processes that are used to identify suitable and adequate resources for language learning

Every school year teachers and the librarian prepare the lists of needed resources.

Every school year the administrators and the coordinator perform classroom performance observations, which are focused on the structure of the lesson, teacher's teaching techniques, students' work and resources and other materials used. After this observation, an individual meeting with the teacher observed is organised to give feedback on the observations. The teachers also get a written report on the classroom performance observation, which is combined with two tools: the check list and anecdotal notes.

Proficiency levels are the students expected to achieve

The school's primary focus is on providing students with a sufficient level of Greek and English to acquire and demonstrate skills and understanding that have developed during the Units of Inquiry. 6th Grade students have the opportunity to take A1 and A2 exams in French/ German and English accordingly to certify their level of knowledge.

Language Strategies

Learning Language:

With regard to spoken language, instructional programmes emphasise the opportunities to comprehend a variety of genres, from directions to narratives and opportunities to experiment with modes of expression.

With regard to written language, classrooms for young children provide opportunities to learn alphabetic symbols, grapho-phonemic relationships (letter-sound relationships), basic sight

vocabulary, and comprehension strategies; and also feature the reading of stories designed for young children. Students have opportunities to learn how to express themselves through written language, including opportunities to form letters, words, sentences, and text structures, and opportunities to learn how to put together a written story.

Learn Through: Planning includes partner, whole class and small group discussions, their scaffolding and feedback or response. This use of multiple strategies is used in order to read for meaning, make connections and find tensions in issues. Multiple strategies are used for discussions and responses to issues that cause tension in literature circles, sustained dialogue, debating, genre studies, author studies, theme studies, reflective journals and sharing time.

Learn About: Teachers model strategies, teaching children to use them when they are needed. Teachers focus on strategies rather than isolated skills.

Reading and writing skills and strategies are taught through guided reading, genre studies in reading/writing and inquiry, as well as writing styles, author studies and specific subject matter. Skills and strategies are directly taught in spelling, vocabulary and word study. Read-aloud texts are chosen to go beyond the reading level of the class with challenging issues addressed and discussed.

Language Assessment

Learn language:

Evidence: Children show a sustained interest in reading/writing/speaking and listening. Teachers record the increased experimentation and enthusiasm for expression in language that students' use. Student work exhibits personal development, vocabulary development, as well as appropriate use of conventions in new situations. Reading/writing records show increased diversity of choice, and/or sustained interest. Children share their work formally and informally with classmates, willingly interacting with their classmates. The library increases its collection for increased encouragement of students to read and write in their mother tongue.

Tools: Reading/writing interviews, observational records, photographs/reflections, student reading record and portfolio.

Learning through language:

Evidence: Students read, discuss, make connections, seek out issues, and ask questions. Students discuss their understandings, present their thinking to others using multiple communication systems, and reflect on their learning. Students are able to apply learned strategies to new situations and describe what they have done. Students are able to challenge ideas, seek further information, explain and justify their understandings, and reflect critically on their learning. Parents assist their children in understanding concepts and ideas through dialogue in their native tongue.

Tools: Video/audio tapes/transcripts of discussions, response journals in reading, writing, mathematics, art, music, drama, movement, presentations, student portfolios, self-reflections.

Learn About language:

Evidence: Teachers/students identify and use subject specific language in work/presentation. Students use learned skills in authentic contexts. Students are able to apply learned strategies and

skills in their investigations, presentations, and new contexts. There is improved proficiency in all forms of language. The school literature explicitly encourages mother tongue development.

Tools: Student portfolios, oral/written reflections, teacher check lists/graphs, on-going observations, pre-assessments, displays/room environment.

Opportunities the school provides for the students to actively use their mother tongue

The school organises many events providing students to use their mother tongue. Every year on International Mother tongue day children are welcomed to greet the school community in the school assembly using their mother tongue.

Resources the school provides in the students' mother tongues

The school purchases books in foreign languages and welcomes parents to donate books in their mother tongue in order to enrich the library.

Language Learner Profile

In order to monitor the progress of language learners in our department we keep records of students' progress in language development across language A, languages B and C.

Implementation of Language Policy

All teachers participate at various regular workshops (once a month) at which they develop teaching techniques and methods that promote development of language and communication skills and differentiation to answer various students' readiness levels and teaching styles. Workshops are organised and lead by the administrators, educational advisor and programme coordinator.

At classroom observation, the indicators of successful implementation of language policy are observed and recommendations stated in the reports if necessary.

Once a year, at staff meetings all school routines and policies are analysed and strategic plans for improvements made.

Responsibility for Implementation and Regular Revision

All teachers are responsible for implementation of the school Language Policy. The administrators and programme coordinator are responsible for the supervision of the implementation and regular (every two years) revision of the policy according to the students' and school's needs.