

Language Policy

The St. Edmund Language Policy was developed for both the Primary and Middle Years Programmes in the school. It asserts the notion that all teachers are language teachers and that language learning is in alignment with the Learner Profile.

Rationale: Our policy was written with the premise that:

- ❖ A language policy is an integral part of an IB World School. This policy outlines guidelines for the use of languages in the school and in communication with other parties.
- ❖ A language policy is a working document that guides the learning practices for staff and students at St. Edmund School.
- ❖ There are significant implications to the implementation of the policy, including but not limited to, school operations, languages of instruction, the acquisition and development of learning resources
- ❖ The use of languages can have a significant impact on student learning, in particular a student's view and understanding of culture, international mindedness, and language structure.

Beliefs and Values: We believe and value that language is:

- ❖ A social means of exploring and communicating meaning.
- ❖ A way of communicating thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- ❖ Using prior knowledge to build upon a child's repertoire of skills
- ❖ A shared responsibility of all teachers

Our language philosophy at St. Edmund is that language is the foundation for communicating and inquiring, which is essential for the development of social, emotional and cognitive skills. Language is used and expressed differently in different contexts and audiences and will change over time.

Acquisition of language is an ongoing process as the child develops skills, knowledge and concepts to achieve fluency and proficiency. 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.

Objectives:

- ❖ to support children in the Language of Instruction as outlined in the Alberta Education Language Arts Program of Studies
- ❖ to build confidence and competence as foundation skills in French as a Second Language and build towards fluency
- ❖ to provide support to help manage everyday experiences in the local environment for English as Second Language (ELL) learners
- ❖ to facilitate the process of learning new languages in the future.
- ❖ to support mother-tongue learning, so as to assist any additional language learning and maintain and enhance a student's cultural links
- ❖ to utilize the students' language diversity within school contexts to enhance the qualities of the PYP and MYP.

These objectives are maintained by the following curricular supports in the school which include:

- Alberta Education Language Arts Program of Studies
- the language scope and sequence document as well as other curriculum support documents
- Alberta Education French as Second Language Program of Studies and scope and sequence documents
- Various language support materials and resources for different grades

Age and additional language learning

IB PYP: Instruction in an additional language should begin by the time the learner reaches age 7. In so doing, the child will have an understanding of language structure and the cognitive and metacognitive skills that may be used to facilitate the learning of the additional language.

IB MYP: Students must receive a minimum of 50 hours of instruction in Language B beginning in Grade 6.

Proficiency in an additional language

At St. Edmund, the PYP and MYP focuses on developing elements that will encourage the child to continue his or her involvement in learning an additional language. According to research these elements include the learner:

- having an established foundation in the first language
- participating in language instruction that seeks to develop skills in the five categories of language competency, as defined by Canale (1983):
 - ❖ grammatical competence (referring to knowledge of vocabulary, sound and grammar)
 - ❖ sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of how to use language appropriately in different contexts such as the Grade 8/9 Quebec Trip)
 - ❖ discourse competence (linking elements of language together to take part in certain kinds of discourse, for example, conversation or debate)
 - ❖ strategic competence (knowledge of appropriate strategies to use if communication breaks down and knowledge of how to learn language)
 - ❖ cultural competence (includes sensitivity toward attitudes, norms, behaviours and cultures in which the other language is spoken).
- having a positive experience in the learning of an additional language
- having attributes such as empathy and being open-minded toward risk taking.

Supporting the development of these elements is our focus, with our ultimate goal being to have students learn an additional language for the purpose of being able to use it for real and fluent communication.

The additional language is utilized, where feasible, in other subject areas. Teachers create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and use the Learner Profile as a fundamental guide to support the development of the learner so that he or she will be successful in learning an additional language.

The time spent on additional-language learning:

Age group 7-9 years (Grades 2 and 3)

Time spent weekly from 60 minutes to more than 120 minutes.

The time spent introducing the French language is done through an integrative approach. The teachers follow a scope and sequence to help support their teaching of these areas. Examples are days of the week, counting, greetings, and songs. There also are formal lessons taught during the week.

Age group 9-12 years (Grades 4-6)

For this age level, the teachers spend 150 minutes of French instruction a week. They strive for 30 minutes a day each week.

The school works to have language specialists available to teach French in Grades 4 – 6.

Age group 12 – 15 Grades 7 – 9

For this age level, the teachers spend 150 minutes of French instruction a week.

The school has a language specialist to teach French in Grades 7 – 9.

Time and additional language learning

IB:

The recommendation of regular, brief (30 minutes or slightly less), intensive daily lessons beginning by age 7, preferably integrated with other subjects can serve as a practical guide for PYP schools to fit the additional language into the timetable.

Alberta Education:

In Grades 4-6 it is recommended by Alberta Education that students are engaged in 95 hours of Core French per year.

In Grades 7 – 9 it is recommended by Alberta Education that students are engaged in 95 hours of Core French per year.

Mother Tongue Support

Mother tongue is a matter of cultural identity. In order to support this belief, every class has access to multilingual books from the School Library. School celebrations and events will be used as an important forum of inculcating an awareness of mother tongue in coordination with parents who will share their rich cultural heritage as well as mother tongue.

At St. Edmund we believe in accordance with the *Second-language Acquisition and Mother-tongue Development MYP guide*:

The research relating to mother-tongue maintenance and development (Cummins and Danesi, in Baker and Prys Jones, 1988) is particularly significant. This research indicates that students following a mother-tongue maintenance and development programme receive the following benefits.

- They avoid language loss and the resultant negative effects, for example, subtractive bilingualism (where the development of a second language is detrimental to the first language—see glossary for a more-detailed definition).
- They perform at least as well (often better) in mainstream subjects (science, humanities, etc) as monolingual students.
- They perform at least as well (often better) as second-language students who don't maintain their mother tongue and are schooled wholly in the second language.

- They retain a positive attitude toward their mother tongue and cultural background when the school shows acceptance of the mother-tongue language, accounting for increased self-esteem and its resultant benefits.

ELL Supports

Students receive ELL supports in the classrooms through differentiated instruction practices and modifications to programming where necessary. Students who require many modifications to programming often receive extra ELL instruction by a certified teacher outside of the regular classroom setting which is recorded on an IPP or individual program plan. The IPP includes differentiated scaffolding techniques such as visual aids, graphic organizers, dramatization, small group work, and awareness to change teacher language instruction approaches. The students at St. Edmund also have access to ELL liaisons who offer language translation and support services for students and their families.

Assessing proficiency in the additional language

Students who may qualify for ELL funding in our school district are assessed using the WMLS assessment, which provides the school with a CALP score.

All students at St. Edmund are assessed for their primary and secondary language proficiencies in reading, writing, speaking and listening using a variety of formal and informal measures. Further information regarding assessment practices are highlighted in our assessment policy document.

Action Plan:

All K- 3 teachers will teach French at a minimum of 30 minutes a week. The teachers have a K – 3 French language scope and sequence developed for them to use and develop in their classroom routines and units of inquiry.

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