



This policy should be read with the following IB publications: Learning in a language other than Home Language in IB programmes, 2014, and Language and learning in IB programmes, 2019

MULTILINGUALISM POLICY

Created on: November 2017

Updated on: March 2025

PENDING:

In general, I think the whole document could be streamlined - the PYP, MYP and DP sections could be part of the appendices, with the PYP reference to translanguaging moved to the section on language learning earlier in the document. The admissions section could go into the admissions policy and be hyperlinked here. A 3 - 4 page document would, I believe, be optimal.

In general, it would be great to get more references to iSP's pillars and approach into the document (e.g. the five pillars, which are all interconnected and support each other, Learning.First, students leading their own learning, barriers to learning etc.)

Please flag multilingualism as a key pillar of the school and reference it's integral link to academic achievement at iSP schools in the first paragraph.

Please change all references to 'language of instruction' to 'language of education', to reflect iSP's Learning.First and learner-focused approach.

Please change all references to 'mother tongue' (now considered sexist/old-fashioned) to 'home language/s'. Also remove references to learning differences etc., as these should be part of the Inclusion Policy (which you could hyperlink if and where relevant)

Please reference the Multilingualism Roadmap rather than the EAL Framework - the ML Roadmap is our core quality assurance framework for multilingualism. We use this to drive improvement in this area in all our schools.

The entry and exit points to the EAL and SAL programmes need to be tightened up - entry to, or remaining in the programmes, shouldn't be based on parents' choices but rather on robust screening and exit data, in consultation with the Multilingualism specialist.

It's not clear in this doc whether or not intensive support in the EAL and SAL programmes are charged for - what is the situation?

Please change 'pull-out' and 'push-in' to the provision model we support at iSP - intensive, targeted and universal support.

English as an Additional Language Program (EAL)	7
Spanish as an Additional Language Program (SAL)	9
Parent Support for Language	9
School-Home Communication With Parents	9
Primary Years Programme (PYP)	10
Middle Year Programme (MYP)	12
Diploma Programme (DP)	12
Library and Media Center	13
References	14

LANGUAGE POLICY

At Boston School International (BSI), we recognize that language development is fundamental to effective communication, enhancing both thinking and comprehension skills. We value the development of mother tongue as essential for fostering cultural identity and promoting respect for cultural diversity. In addition, language plays a central role in inquiry, critical thinking, and academic success across disciplines.

We believe that language is not only a means of communication but also an essential tool for personal and intellectual growth. Our students engage with language in various contexts, learning a language, learning through language, and learning about language in authentic settings. Therefore, we view language education as a shared responsibility among all members of our learning community.

As part of the International Schools Partnership (ISP), BSI supports multilingualism through the implementation of an English as an Additional Language (EAL) framework. This framework is designed to support students in acquiring academic language skills necessary for success across the curriculum.

This language policy is a collaborative, evolving document developed by school administration in partnership with faculty, aligning with IB principles, philosophy, and the ISP Multilingualism approach. It outlines our language and academic objectives and provides guidelines that integrate language learning with our broader curriculum. We ask all members of the BSI community—including students, faculty, staff, and parents—to commit to supporting and upholding this policy.

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*) Our Language Policy is founded on BSI’s mission statement, as we believe language is the cornerstone of all learning. At BSI, we cultivate a challenging, motivating multilingual environment that enables students to apply their individual skills, cultural experiences, and interests to enhance their learning. Language learning and teaching are fundamentally social processes, shaped by relationships with oneself, others, the environment, and the broader world. Thus, we are committed to providing diverse language instruction and encouraging inquiry in **English**, our primary language of instruction; **Spanish**, the mother tongue of the majority; and **Mandarin**, which is taught as an additional language from Kinder through 6th grade. Multilingualism empowers our students to think critically, act creatively, and develop higher-order thinking skills and multiple perspectives. It also fosters international awareness and global citizenship, which are central goals for both the IB program and BSI. Our Language Policy acknowledges and validates the equal status of all languages, reinforces cultural identity, and reflects the multicultural composition of our student body and faculty.

Furthermore, multilingualism provides cognitive benefits, including:

- Enhanced attention and focus,
- Advanced problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and
- Increased metalinguistic awareness.

(*Kessler & Quinn, 1980; Zelasko & Antunez, 2000*)

Multilingualism enables our students to access a variety of technological resources, enriching their learning experience, promoting life-long learning, and providing gateways to further language acquisition opportunities.

ISP focus of multilingualism lies in the following 5 cornerstones:

- **Improved Academic Performance:** Learning a second language can help to improve academic performance in other subjects. This is because multilingualism helps to develop enhanced problem-solving and critical thinking skills, as well as improved memory, concentration, and mental flexibility.
- **Broader World View:** Being able to communicate in different languages gives students the opportunity to experience different cultures, languages, and perspectives. This can help to foster a greater understanding and appreciation for different people and cultures.
- **Improved Cognitive Function:** Studies have shown that learning a second language can help improve cognitive functions such as memory, concentration, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- **Enhanced Communication Skills:** Being able to communicate in multiple languages can help to improve communication skills overall. This is because it helps to develop a better understanding of grammar and language structure, as well as improved pronunciation and listening skills.
- **Increased Employability:** In an increasingly globalized world, being able to communicate in multiple languages is becoming a must-have skill in the job market. Employers often look for candidates who have an understanding of different cultures and can communicate in multiple languages for global roles.

BSI will be using the ISP EAL & Multilingualism Roadmap to help evaluate the language programs where they are in terms of their provision and approach.

This policy 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 fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Our students engage in diverse listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in both English and Spanish. This approach supports the development of enduring educational attitudes, equipping students with language skills that empower them to think critically, apply knowledge effectively, and confidently share their ideas. Teachers intentionally design literacy activities to build a foundation that helps students achieve personal and professional goals. We aim to create a caring language community where each student feels accepted and supported by others as they take risks to learn languages different from their mother tongue.

In the **PYP**, we encourage students to communicate confidently and creatively in multiple languages, fostering an understanding of the impact of language choices—including style, tone, word choice, and expression—on others.

Through language, students:

- Express identity,
- Develop international-mindedness,
- Achieve literacy,
- Become effective inquirers, and
- Communicate purposefully.

We emphasize that **English is the primary language of instruction** at BSI. All students, including those not yet proficient in English, are immersed in an English-speaking environment from their first day. We believe that full immersion enables students to develop language skills rapidly while continuing to be academically challenged at an age-appropriate level.

As most of our students speak **Spanish as their mother tongue**, Spanish language instruction is essential for supporting students in maintaining their native language, which enhances learning in additional languages and reinforces their cultural identity. Although we currently do not offer classes in other mother tongues, such as Portuguese, Hindi, Afrikaans, and Arabic, we actively promote opportunities for students to share their cultural heritage and native languages with peers. Additionally, our **online library resources** provide students with materials to continue learning in their mother tongues.

Language services are offered through the **Students Services Department** to assist students in their language development.

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, Literacy instruction and 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, such 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.
 - 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, using different models such as MUN among others.

- Collaborative planning and reflection recognize that all teachers are responsible for language development of students. (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).
 - In primary school, 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 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 the language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).
 - Language is embedded 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).
- 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).
 - All students are given access to the curriculum and a variety of strategies and instruction are 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 assessments that allows them to utilize not only their knowledge but also their language skills.

English as an Additional Language Program (EAL)

Our EAL Program provides targeted, high-quality instruction to students identified as EAL learners, aiming to develop their language proficiency skills and facilitate access to grade-level content. Instruction focuses on the reading, writing, speaking, and listening domains, tailored to students’ needs. **Inclusion criteria** for the program are as follows:

- Students with low English proficiency, as measured by WIDA Model scores (below 4 in each language domain) or the RazPlus ELL Assessment.
- Students requiring one-on-one or small group English instruction, selected on a case-by-case basis based on academic and behavioral needs.
- Referrals from the Admissions team.
- Students previously enrolled in the EAL program with continued interest from parents.
- Students with below-average scores in MAP Tests (Reading and Language Arts sections).

Program Structure and Support

Students receive language instruction outside the classroom twice per week through pull-out sessions during ELA, Mandarin, or other lessons, determined case-by-case. The WIDA framework, Raz-Plus Resources for ELLs, Starfall materials and the Picture-Word Inductive Model (PWIM) serve as core references for program development.

Program Timeline

Step 1: Screening

Eligible students are identified using:

- WIDA MODEL scores (below 4 in each language domain) or RazPlus ELL Assessment
- MAP Test Scores (Reading and Language Arts)
- Feedback from homeroom and English teachers, based on students' academic and behavioral performance
- Referrals from the Admissions team

Step 2: Placement

Students' English proficiency is assessed using:

- **WIDA MODEL or RazPlus ELL Assessment** (assessing proficiency levels according to WIDA's English Language Standards for Grades 1-12) – Administered in August/September
 - Proficiency levels range from 1 to 6 (1-Entering, 2-Beginning, 3-Developing, 4-Expanding, 5-Bridging, 6-Reaching). Students scoring below level 4 are candidates for the program.
- **MAP Test** (Grades 1-9) – Fall session

Step 3: Monitoring Student Progress

Student progress is monitored through:

- MAP Test – Winter and Spring sessions
- Monthly assessments of fluency and accuracy in reading

Step 4: Exit Criteria

When the ELA teacher and homeroom teacher agree that a student is ready to exit, they consult the Personal Achievement Coordinator and the Head of Section. To exit, students must meet the following criteria:

- For language proficiency difficulties: a score of 4 or higher in each domain on the WIDA MODEL or RazPlus ELL Assessment.

- For learning proficiency or learning differences: MAP scores should be at or above the low-average range.

Support Options for EAL Students

Based on assessment results, students receive the following support:

- **Pull-out support** (two times per week): Students learn essential academic vocabulary outside the regular classroom, focusing on language needed for academic success and daily school interactions.
- **Push-in support**: EAL teachers work with students within the classroom, providing scaffolded or modified assessments and tasks appropriate to students' English proficiency levels.
- **Monitoring**: Classroom and EAL teachers collaborate periodically to discuss students' progress, adapting assignments and strategies to support language development.
- **Exit**: Students who meet the criteria for exiting the program no longer receive EAL department support or monitoring.

Spanish as an Additional Language Program (SAL)

The SAL program at BSI aims to support and enhance students' comprehension and fluency in Spanish by developing language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Through a structured approach based on the five standards of language acquisition—**Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Communities, and Connections** (the "Five C's" of World Languages)—the program ensures that students build a well-rounded foundation in Spanish.

Inclusion Criteria

Students are eligible for the SAL program if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Native English speakers who are newly exposed to Spanish.
- Students requiring one-on-one or small group Spanish instruction, determined on a case-by-case basis.
- Students previously enrolled in the SAL program, whose parents wish to continue the service.
- Referrals from the Admissions Department.

Students participate in pull-out sessions for language instruction outside of the classroom twice a week, allowing focused support tailored to their language needs.

Parent Support for Language

At BSI, we believe that parental involvement significantly impacts language development and student learning. We encourage parents to actively support their child's mother tongue and foster international-mindedness at home. Suggestions for parental support include:

- Speaking and reading to children in English and assisting with assignments such as writing prompts, research projects, and reading comprehension.
- Encouraging students to engage with English and Spanish media, such as TV programs, movies, and daily conversations about school.

This support reinforces the value of multilingualism and respects the cultural nuances of language, emphasizing the importance of both native and second languages.

School-Home Communication with Parents

Understanding that many BSI families are fluent only in Spanish, the school provides nearly all communications in both English and Spanish, ensuring inclusivity. Bilingual presentations are also offered at parent meetings. Additionally, our school newsletter and communications, are published in multiple languages, written by various school stakeholders and shared by our communication liaison.

Primary Years Programme (PYP)

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) beliefs and values about language are embedded implicitly throughout the learner profile and explicitly through the attribute of “communicator”, as well as in the IB’s approaches to learning. Through an IB education, PYP learning communities use language to build a better and more peaceful world. A culture of language learning is foundational to a PYP learning community. Language has the power to bring the learning community closer together and overcome boundaries. It excites and invites communication in many ways, supporting and strengthening relationships and the building of international-mindedness. Language learning is located in both local and global communities. Students are able to flourish in an interconnected, mobile global community using technologies to communicate and sustain relationships. At the same time, they are rooted in local communities through cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills.

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 through inquiry using the Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop Model focusing on the following areas:

Oral Language:

- Intentional use of accountable speaking in and out of the classroom.
- Learners utilize an assortment of oral interactions and encounters to become confident.
- Learners discuss their emotions, interests, 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. As well as making connections and inferences about different types of texts.
- Teachers use small group guidelines to apply a differentiated approach.
- Students are able to have voice, choice, and agency.

- Conferring serves to amplify inquiry and honor agency.

Writer’s Workshop: Students encounter an adjusted learning environment that incorporates the following:

- At every review level, students write with various purposes using appropriate sentence and passage structure.
- They plan, revise, edit, and publish their compositions.
- The purpose of the Workshop Model is to inquire into writing through the lense of a writer as well as a reader of writing allowing the BSI learner to have voice, choice, and ownership.

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. Language learning and teaching immerses students in the interplay between learning a language, learning through language and learning about language. Although these aspects are inseparable, they are used here to support an understanding of how language is learned and used to make meaning.

Translanguaging:

Students at BSI are encouraged to use language effectively by drawing on their prior linguistic knowledge, skills, and strategies. They benefit from understanding the similarities and differences between their languages, such as phonemic, syntactic, and grammatical structures, which strengthens their linguistic awareness and adaptability. Translanguaging—defined as the process where students actively use their complete linguistic repertoire to communicate and create meaning (Garcia, Li Wei, 2014)—is a key aspect of our language learning approach.

To promote authentic multilingual engagement, BSI provides:

- **Bilingual reading materials** to enrich vocabulary and comprehension.
- **Opportunities to interact with peers and community members** who speak the same language, fostering real-world connections and cultural exchanges.
- **Activities that encourage connections** between languages, reinforcing similarities and expanding understanding across linguistic boundaries.

To further support language agency, students explore what language means to them personally and set individualized language goals. These goals are developed through collaboration with peers, teachers, and parents and are regularly reviewed through self-assessment and teacher feedback. This approach allows students to take ownership of their language journey, developing confidence and skill as multilingual learners.

Middle Year Programme (MYP)

The MYP programs follows the Language Phylosy of the school across all sections aligned with the principals and practice of IB standards.

In the MYP students will have Spanish A and English A Language and Literature. In case of students with low proficiency level in either language they will follow the EAL/SAL protocol to determine their level of

achievement. This will guarantee that students receive the correct support in the acquisition or development of the language.

In the MYP, Language is assessed using the following criteria:

A. Analyzing	B. Organizing	C. Producing text	D. Using language
---------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Each criterion can have a maximum of 8 marks adding up to a maximum of 32 marks. See Assessment Policy for more details.

MYP Spanish Language Acquisition

This program (Used from 7th to 10th grade) is developed directly with the IB to be fully integrated with the revised MYP Language Acquisition framework. It's an inquiry-based resource that equips learners to acquire and practice essential Spanish language skills while developing wider conceptual and contextual awareness.

The main idea and focus of this curriculum is to secure the essential language foundations. This resource helps students develop vital comprehension and skills in phases 1 and 2, thoroughly preparing learners to progress. An inquiry-based format applies key and related concepts to relevant learning material, helping teachers fully deliver the MYP approach and build meaningful conceptual connections in students.

Also, it connects activities with the MYP assessment criteria, preparing learners for summative assessment Mapped to the current MYP curriculum framework.

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 languages 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 languages which includes skills in all four language areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

Language A

- When students, whose mother tongue is Spanish, begin the DP programme, they study Spanish as one of their languages 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 offer 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 or Spanish) for those students who do not have proficiency in either language.

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, Academic Honesty Policy, and Assessment Policy.

Our library facilitates and promotes information literacy through a variety of books, magazines, scholarly articles, newspapers, and other databases, accessible physically or online. Additionally, the library's online resources allow students to access learning in a variety of languages that support their mother tongues.

References

Language and Learning in IB Programme, IBO.

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

Guidelines for following developing School Language Policy, IBO.

Programme Standards & Practices, IBO.

International Schools Partnership ISP Language Philosophy. <https://ispschools.es/en/benefits-of-multilingualism/>