



Whole School Language Policy

Updated December 2008 (Lower School October 2011)

ISA Mission Statement

It is our mission to create a welcoming school environment where open-mindedness and respect are fostered. Here learners are challenged and supported to achieve their unique potential and to become confident, caring citizens of the world.

International School Augsburg Philosophy

The International School Augsburg is committed to creating and maintaining a collaborative community in which learners can discover and develop their talents and fulfill their individual potential.

We provide a balanced, intellectually challenging programme which fosters in students the skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to be successful in school and in life.

We value the diversity of cultures within our school and our links to the local and global community. We recognize and accept our responsibility to promote intercultural understanding and to contribute to a sustainable, peaceful world.

Our Commitment to the International Baccalaureate Organisation

The International School Augsburg has made a commitment to the philosophy of the IBO and to the IBPYP and IB Diploma programmes. In our teaching and learning, in our work and in all our interactions as members of the ISA community, we strive to realise the attributes of the IB the Learner Profile. As ISA teachers we strive to

- be **principled** and confident to **take risks** and meet new challenges
- model **inquiry** in all aspects of school life in order to promote **critical thinking** and develop greater **knowledge**
- **respect** and appreciate individual and cultural differences with an **open mind**
- **reflect** with integrity on their professional roles in order to develop excellent practice
- be effective and receptive **communicators**
- be **caring** and empathetic towards themselves, others and the environment
- be a complementary player in a **well balanced** team

International School Augsburg **Whole School Language Policy**

Introduction

This language policy describes the philosophy and practice which drives language teaching at ISA. It will be used as a means to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of our language teaching, as we aim to maintain an up-to-date, well organised and well resourced programme.

At the time of writing, the majority of ISA students are native speakers of German. There are currently 20 languages spoken in the homes of ISA students. The largest groups of German (non-English speakers) are in grades 1 and 5 where the school has its biggest intake of new students each year (as we are creating parallel classes).

- This Language Policy is a statement of our school's beliefs about language teaching. ISA teachers are expected to make a commitment to achieving the goals of this policy through the approaches outlined.
- As learning is largely assimilated through language, this policy is fundamental to teaching and learning at our school. The language policy is an integral part of our ISA philosophy and practice.
- Our goal for our students is that they reflect the attributes of the IB Learner profile in relation to language learning.

Our Beliefs

At ISA we believe that

1. Language is fundamental to all learning, therefore all teachers are involved in the language teaching process.
2. Language learning is a developmental process in which the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are interdependent. Mother tongue language development is essential in establishing a firm foundation for thinking processes, in maintaining cultural identity, and in developing communicative and literacy competence.
3. Language development in one language transfers to additional languages. The child's first language is an important basis for building skills in additional languages.
4. Language development in more than one language enriches personal growth and is contributes to the development of international understanding.
5. Language is learnt by learning about the language (explicit teaching eg grammar), learning through the language (using the language to explore ideas and new knowledge), and learning in the language (learning as we practice the language eg reading and writing).
6. Additional languages are gateways to other cultures, as well as vehicles for developing language awareness.
7. Language acquisition and learning both take place best in a positive environment that affords opportunities for students to be engaged in meaningful learning experiences.
8. The overriding goal is making and sharing meaning. The ultimate goal of the language programme is to foster excellent communicators – they listen effectively and speak clearly and with joy.
9. Language learning should be fun and is most effective in a positive and encouraging environment.
10. Bilingualism and academic success go hand in hand; among the benefits of bilingualism are cognitive and meta-linguistic advantages. All teachers will work collaboratively to provide a programme of English language learning for all students to address the academic proficiency needs of first and second English language learners.

This language policy is divided into three sections: Early Years (encompassing the ELC 1 and ELC 2 classes), Lower School and Upper School. The policy makes reference to the following areas:

- English – as a separate subject and as the language of instruction
- EAL – English as an Additional Language
- German – as a separate subject
- GAL – German as an Additional Language/host country language
- Mother Tongue Instruction
- Foreign Languages – French and Spanish

Early Years ELC 1 (4 year olds) and ELC 2 (5 year olds)

Admission and Placement

During an interview informal information is gathered about the each student's language level. Non-English speaking children who do not appear to be stable in their mother tongue may not be accepted. The child spends a trial day in the appropriate class giving teachers the opportunity to observe and assess. Every effort will be made to place children according to their abilities and needs.

English

Our Early Years Programme is an English immersion programme for all students. There are no pull-out EAL classes, since all children including our English mother tongue students, are learning to speak and understand English at this age. However, the teachers are flexible and able to cope with a wide range of language and literacy development within one class. There is a student-teacher ratio of maximum 8 students to one adult (teacher plus teaching assistant).

German (host country language)

In ELC 1 and 2, all students receive 2 x 45 minute German lessons each week, taught by a German language teacher.

Mother Tongue

There is a practice of informing parents of the importance of supporting the child's mother tongue(s) development at home. For the non-English or German mother tongue children, there is one 45-minute lesson per week. The lesson is out the classroom, but connection is made to the content of the current unit of inquiry.

Methodology

With our English immersion programme, the children *learn English, learn about English, and learn through English* in authentic, meaningful situations throughout their school day. Be it during freer or more structured activities, the class and specialist teachers act as role models by interacting in English with the children, and encouraging them to take risks with the language.

Early reading and writing skills are taught through a range of activities, in a whole class situation, in smaller groups, or in a one-to-one situation with the teacher or assistant. A love of reading is fostered through regular shared reading at school, home reading, library visits and buddy reading with older students. The writing process is supported by encouraging role play writing, shared writing, making individual and class books, recording in journals, labelling pictures, and with specific teaching of phonetics from ELC 2, and how to form, them in meaningful contexts.

Resources

The Early Years classroom provides a language-rich environment to support the children's learning. In each classroom there is an attractive reading corner with fiction and non-fiction books in the different languages of the children in the class, a listening centre with a range of stories and songs on tapes and CDs, a well-supplied writing centre, a role play area, and plenty of language games.

A variety of books are sorted into broad level bands to send home as reading books. For the teaching of specific reading and writing skills 'Jolly Phonics' is used as a resource.

Assessment

The Early Year teacher uses a variety of methods to assess the children's language learning including anecdotal records based upon observations, the First Steps Continuum, collecting samples of work for the portfolio, using checklists, interviews and rubrics.

Lower School (Grades 1 to 5)

Admission and Placement

During an interview informal information is gathered about the each student's language level. Previous school reports are consulted, and non-English speaking children who do not appear to be stable in their mother tongue may not be accepted. The child spends a trial day in the appropriate class giving teachers the opportunity to observe and assess. For non-native speakers, the EAL teacher also assesses the child's level of English. Every effort will be made to place children according to their abilities and needs.

Groups

Class sizes in grades 1 – 5 are between 10 and 19 students. EAL classes for grades 1–5 consist of five periods of pull-out for beginners, and flexible in-class support where needed. Intermediate EAL students continue to receive in-class support from an EAL teacher, and some pull-out where appropriate. Learning needs change across the course of the year, and we aim to keep as much flexibility as possible in the programme.

Courses (Classes)

English

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

German Mother Tongue

German as an Additional Language (GAL)

German

The German programme consists of 4 forty-five minute periods per week for Grades 1 and 5 periods from grade 2-5. The majority of students remain in their class groups and German is taught at native speaker level.

GAL

German as an Additional Language is offered to students new to the German language. These specialist German teachers teach basic German language skills and support the children in learning social language (eg playground). In grades 1-5 the students have 5 lessons of GAL per week.

Mother Tongue

We offer Mother Tongue support during the school day to children with a first language other than English or German. This is provided on a needs basis and currently consists of one or two forty-five minute lessons a week, held during school hours. The Mother Tongue support is offered to support the children's classroom learning, maintain their cultural identity, and is

found to be essential in providing help for them to develop understandings related to the units of inquiry. Mother Tongue support is provided by a teacher of that language/those languages. With this support, the children are better able to develop literacy and communicative competence in both languages.

There is a policy of informing parents of the importance of supporting the child's mother tongue(s) development at home.

Methodology

As an IB school, we follow an inquiry approach to language teaching. Students are encouraged to be risk-takers and reflective problem solvers in their learning of language. We strive for a balanced approach within the framework of Halliday's three circles (learning through, learning about and learning language). The importance of oral language development is stressed, as students construct meaning through the articulation of their thinking. Students are given many opportunities engage in meaningful discussion with their peers and to use their language skills in drama-related work and performance. Frequent read-alouds, guided reading, sharing times, student presentations, regular opportunities for meaningful writing and discussion are part of the programme.

Resources

The Lower School has a wide range of resources including First Steps Teachers books, Oxford Reading Tree books, Longmans, the Jolly Phonics program, Rigby Rocket and Rigby Sails books, as well as guided reading books. Each classroom has a class library. There is a well stocked school library. There is a wide selection of take home readers which have been banded into levels.

Assessment

Much of the assessment of language learning is formative, and consists of teacher observations, interviews with students, analysis of samples of student writing. ACER tests are administered on an annual basis, to all students who have spent more than two years at ISA (starting in February 2008). Running records are taken to measure the students' reading level, and monitor development.

Entering and Exiting EAL

Decisions regarding entering and exiting are made as a result of careful observation of student progress and consultation among teachers.

Upper School (Grades 6 to 10)

Admission / Placement

There is no formal assessment of entering students. During an interview informal information is gathered about the each student's language level. Non-English speaking children who do not appear to be stable in their mother tongue may not be accepted. If deemed necessary, the child may spend a trial day in the appropriate class giving teachers the opportunity to observe and assess. Every effort will be made to place children according to their abilities and needs. The school is currently assessing the need to introduce a more formal pre-entry language assessment.

Students entering Upper School are placed in different ability groups according to the level of their written and spoken English. Placement is determined by relevant discussion between the Language teachers and the Upper School Coordinator.

Courses

English Language
English Literature
German Mother Tongue
German as an Additional Language
Foreign Language French
Foreign Language Spanish

French and Spanish are offered as Foreign Languages from grade 7 onwards. Either language is compulsory for all students, with the exception of those who need extra support in English Language.

German

The German programme consists of 4 forty-five minute periods per week. The majority of students remain in their class groups and German is taught at native speaker level.

GAL

German as an Additional Language is offered to students new to the German language.

Group Size

In Upper School, English Language groups should not exceed ten students, in order to ensure optimum learning and maximum interaction between the students and the teacher. Foreign Language classes, such as French or Spanish, should have a maximum size of eighteen students.

Methodology

As an IB school, we follow an inquiry approach to language teaching. Students are encouraged to be risk-takers and reflective problem solvers in their learning of language. In Upper School, emphasis is put on creating an environment in which a student feels comfortable enough to learn and practice a language. This is achieved through our commitment to having small language groups. A variety of instructional methods are used and students may be grouped in a variety of ways. The students are also encouraged to use a range of media (books, newspapers, internet, DVDs) outside English Language classes to continue improving their level of English. The importance of oral language development and practice is stressed and students are given many opportunities to use their language skills in peer and performance situations.

Resources

A number of textbooks and books are used according to the needs of each English language group. Each teacher will use the resources he or she thinks are most relevant for a particular group.

Assessment

Students are assessed both formally and informally throughout the year. Assessment is used to monitor students' progress in the language they are learning. Students can be assessed through written or oral assignments. ACER tests are administered on an annual basis, to all students who have spent more than two years at ISA (starting in February 2008).

Entering and Exiting EAL

Decisions regarding entering and exiting are made as a result of careful observation of student progress and consultation among teachers.