



SPOJENÁ ŠKOLA
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Language Policy and Philosophy

At Spojená škola Novohradská in Bratislava we believe that language is a tool to articulate thinking and construct meaning about the world in which we live. It permeates all areas of the curriculum and allows us to communicate our thoughts, feelings and ideas. Learning about language enables our students to appreciate the richness of language, develop a love of literature and recognize the connections between different languages.

The better developed the conceptual foundation of the students' first language, the more likely they are to develop their second language. (Carrasquillo and Rodriguez 2002).

Since learning an additional language at an early age helps our students to develop the language centres of the brain, it is crucial that students are exposed to other languages early in their education. This philosophical belief is evident in the way in which we approach the teaching and learning of language in our school.

In accordance with our School Philosophy, we want our students to become:

Inquirers – They use language as the primary medium of inquiry to learn about language and through language.

Thinkers – They use language precisely and skillfully in the context of higher level thinking. They evaluate information and search for reliable resources. They are able to analyze problem and find solution before taking action using language in various forms.

Communicators – They are confident users of oral and written language forms in a variety of situations. They express themselves confidently and creatively in their best language and also in other languages in many ways. They use polite and respectful communication in written and oral form when communication with each other or with people around them.

Courageous/Risk taker – They are willing to attempt to read, write or speak in situations where they may not feel totally competent.

Knowledgeable – They understand the internal structure of language and the various influences on its development. They have experienced a wide variety of literature. They are aware of using appropriate format and language in range of disciplines.

Principled – They are aware that language is powerful, that it can have a profound effect and that it must therefore be used responsibly. They follow the rules of acknowledgment of sources and of academic honesty.

Caring – They show responsible, caring attitudes towards the use of language and they value literature for the insight it gives into the feelings of others.

Open-Minded – They respect differences and dialects. They are aware of the use of language is an expression of bias and strive to maintain an objective stance. They are willing to grow from experience.

Balanced – They are aware of the need for an educated person to be an effective communicator. They use literature for learning and leisure.

Reflective – They reflect on their own language development in their mother-tongue and other languages. They consciously work at improving their language proficiency.

We view all members of the school community as essential contributors to the language process. We value the linguistic and cultural background of all members of the school community: teachers, students, families, administration and support staff and agree that language develops international understanding, cultural identity, personal growth and effective communication skills.

The great majority of learners in our school are from Slovak backgrounds with Slovak as their mother tongue. In the English section of the PYP programme, MYP and DP, the language of instruction is English; the language of instruction in the Slovak section of the PYP is Slovak. A further explanation of the approach to languages is detailed for each section later in the Language Policy. Based on the regular review of our learner population the language policy is modified accordingly.

Principles of Language Learning

We believe that optimal language learning takes place when:

- Students are immersed in a whole language environment that provides a meaningful and purposeful context.
- Students are aware of the authentic reasons for what and why they are learning.
- The students are taught at their developmentally appropriate rate within a supportive learning environment and challenged to achieve their potential.
- Students receive constructive feedback in order to better reflect upon their performance and set future learning goals.
- Assessment of learning is sensitive to, and appropriate for individual needs and learning styles.
- Language is taught holistically.
- Each programme has specific learning outcomes for strands of speaking and listening, reading and writing, and viewing and presenting appropriate to the students' level.
- Students are exposed to the inquiry-based authentic learning.

Middle Years Programme

Practices

At the MYP we recognize and value the benefits of multilingualism, encourage and provide opportunities for students and all members of the school staff to develop their multilingual abilities.

The Language of Instruction

In the Middle Years Programme at Spojená škola Novohradská in Bratislava, English is the Language of Instruction. Language learning in school is not a separate discipline isolated from all other learning and is crucial for academic growth and the construction of knowledge. The basic skills for all types of communication –oral, written and visual, are explicitly planned (eg. using lab reports, essays, reflections and articles) in their proper form. When students are acquiring a language, our teaching is informed by incorporating four concepts: context, culture, reflection and fluency. As students' progress, teachers enable them to see language as a means of self-expression, exploration of self and others, as context driven, having multiple meanings, and involving a personal stance at all levels of discourse, from simple communication to the core of academic language.

Competence and fluency in English is the key to the students' success in all subjects. All MYP students are fluent in English, because they came from the PYP programme or they past entrance tests to MYP programme in English, where their level of competence was tested.

All subject teachers are language teachers as well, therefore they contribute to the development of students' language skills, especially those skills and terminology required in their own subjects. While both languages (the host language and the language of instruction) are valued, our school ensures that collaboration among staff is efficient. All staff are expected to have a functional level of English to effectively participate.

Language Programmes Offered

From September 2019 **English language and literature** will be taught to all preMYP, MYP 4 and MYP 5 students (according to the recommendation from the last evaluation). Grades MYP 1, 2 and 3 will continue in the previous system with English Acquisition lessons and the achievement levels will be tested every school year.

From September 2020 based on the internal end of the year 2019 assessment results **English language and literature** will be taught to all preMYP, MYP 3, MYP 4 and MYP 5 students. MYP 1 and 2 students, based on the end of the year 2019 assessment results, will either continue in the previous system with English Acquisition lessons or start following **English language and literature** lessons.

From September 2021 **English language and literature** will be taught to all MYP students. English lessons are scheduled four times a week.

Slovak language and literature is taught from preMYP to MYP 5. The majority of our students are native Slovaks. This subject follows the Slovak national curriculum. Lessons are scheduled five times a week in preMYP and MYP3, four times a week in MYP 1 and MYP2, 3 times a week in MYP 4 and 5.

Slovak language acquisition is offered to non-native Slovaks as additional lessons at beginner or advanced level. All non-native Slovak students are tested in the preMYP class for the best placement into the phases. Students have one additional lesson than is scheduled in their grade.

German, Spanish or French language acquisition is offered for all MYP students. In preMYP they choose one of the offered languages. All students are placed in phases according to their results from the test at the end of the school year. PreMYP students are tested at the beginning of the school year in September. Lessons are scheduled three times a week.

The Language acquisition course is offered from the beginning level. All students are tested at the beginning of the school year in preMYP classes to place them properly into phases of the chosen second language. Based on the overall achievement of the students and results at the end of the school year test, students are placed into a relevant phase. A minimum number of 10 students is required to form a foreign language group, yet the principal can use their judgment.

Mother tongue support

The majority of our students are native Slovaks. Slovak language is supported by Slovak language and literature lessons and by parents and major community interactions.

For non-Slovak students, the school encourages all parents to continue providing instruction of their mother tongues to their children. Appreciation of students' mother tongue increases their self-esteem and makes them proud of their language, country and culture. Students who already have communicative skills in a mother tongue may become functional in social communication in another language within two years because of the transfer of understanding already in place.

Students are permitted to use their mother tongue to carry out research. To facilitate this, the school encourages students to use their mother tongue dictionaries for reference. The school also offers classrooms for after school lessons to any group of parents who would like to organize lessons with a teacher that they provide themselves. The school library also keeps resources in the respective students' native languages provided by the parents' communities or the Embassies.

Admission

Our MYP students continue automatically from the PYP programme. Because of the state regulation, we could have more students in our MYP classes, that is why we accept 2-3 new students through the entrance tests. To pass the English test they need to be fluent and competent in the English language and they are at the same level as other students.

Language curriculum

Languages are taught by subject teachers and language teacher specialists.

The aims of the Language Programme are to:

- Use language as a vehicle for thought, creativity, reflection, learning, self-expression, analysis and social interaction

- Develop the skills involved in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting in a variety of contexts
- Develop critical, creative and personal approaches to studying and analyzing literary and non-literary texts
- Engage with text from different historical periods and a variety of cultures
- Explore and analyze aspects of personal, host and other cultures through literary and non-literary texts
- Explore language through a variety of media and modes
- Develop a lifelong interest in reading
- Apply linguistic and literary concepts and skills in a variety of authentic contexts

Assessment

Our assessment takes a holistic view of a student's capabilities and progress in languages. Assessment for language and literature and language acquisition courses is criterion-related, based on four equally weighted assessment criteria as per the MYP Language Guides.

To support our students, teachers use assessment modification and differentiation as appropriate for the students' learning stage and course requirements.

Methods

Students are able to use and interpret language suitably for a variety of intentions and contexts. They work with both familiar and unseen texts, in order to practice, develop and demonstrate their language and literature skills. Students should engage with texts from different times, places, cultures, geographical regions, historical periods and perspectives.

Oral communication encompasses all aspects of listening and speaking – skills that are essential for language development, for learning and for relating to others.

Written communication encompasses all aspects of reading and writing. Reading is constructing meaning from text by making inferences and interpretations. Writing allows students to develop, organize and communicate thoughts, ideas and information.

Visual communication encompasses all aspects of viewing and presenting, which means interpreting or constructing visual and multimedia in a variety of situations and for a range of purposes and audiences.

Resources

Individual teachers, the MYP coordinator and the librarian decide what books, a variety of texts, textbooks and materials will be bought to satisfy the needs of the language programme in MYP according to topics and communication skills. The head of the school and coordinator order professional development materials for the staff.

Students are expected to have their own bilingual dictionaries in their mother tongue at home. A variety of English dictionaries for school work are available at the school.

Budgeting

The school budget operates on a needs basis. The amount spent on new resources varies from year to year. Teachers and librarians order materials for the classes they teach and the library, the budget is coordinated and administered by the school administration.

Staff

All teachers of the language department are qualified language teachers with a university degree. Other teachers are qualified in their subjects and are fluent in the language of instruction.

Other activities that support language development

We have created a suitable environment, classrooms and school routines that help develop student's language skills and interest.

The Library programme/ reading programme – for all students is mandatory to read 5 books in one school year for the Language and literature course and one book in the Language acquisition course.

Reading in other programmes is supported by each teacher separately according to the planned curriculum.

Professional development

All teachers are committed to professional development as language teachers. They cooperate and collaborate to support all aspects of the language teaching. We aim for the IB workshop for every teacher once in two years to support the understanding of language teaching as well as to support our understanding of the IB philosophy.

Responsibility for implementation and regular revision of the MYP section of the language policy

Reviewed Feb 2019

Next review May 2020