

# **MRHS IB Diploma Programme Language Policy**

## **Philosophy and Aims**

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International-mindedness is a cornerstone of the IB philosophy and curriculum. This mindset emphasizes the importance of language learning and mother-tongue as crucial aspects of cultural awareness and global citizenship. Students who value and understand their mother-tongue languages, language of instruction, and secondary languages are more effective at communication and learning across all disciplines. This means all staff are responsible for the language learning of students.

The MRHS language policy integrates the philosophies of the IBO and the policies of the state of North Carolina. In accordance with IBO, this policy seeks to accomplish the following aims:

- Encourage students to learn about other cultures and languages
- Support students in the acquisition of at least one secondary language
- Support and honor the mother-tongue languages and cultures of students and the school community
- Provide support for students who are not proficient in the language of instruction

## **School Language Profile**

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The MRHS student population is 99% English-speaking, with English-speaking parents, which supports the use of English as the primary language of instruction for students. Our school community does include over 20 mother-tongue languages, most commonly Telugu, Tamil, Spanish, German, French, and Chinese.

Students who are non-native English speakers, or English Language Learners (ELL), with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) receive services through the English as a Second Language Program (ESL). These students make up less than 1% of the whole school community and typically less than 1% of students participating in the IB Diploma Programme.

## **Receiving ESL Services**

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Families complete a home language survey when they register at a school in the Union County Public School system. If a family reports a home language other than English spoken in the household, children from that household will be referred to the ESL office for language testing. The initial testing determines if a student qualifies for ESL services based on English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. If parents feel that their children need to be evaluated for English proficiency, they can initiate contact with the ESL office.

If a student qualifies for services, an individualized LEP plan is created. The reading score especially determines the level of service and classroom modifications as well as testing accommodations that are outlined in the plan. Each school has an LEP team that develops and implements the LEP plan. If direct services are needed, they are delivered by the ESL teacher who serves the school cluster.

Students are re-tested each year using the AXIS test to determine whether they need to continue receiving services. Most of the students at MRHS are no longer receiving direct services; however, they continue to be monitored until they test out of the program.

The district and school policies prevent a student for being discriminated against for limited English proficiency.

## **Appreciating Mother-Tongue Languages**

Students are encouraged to understand, appreciate, and use their mother-tongue languages. For students whose mother-tongue language is the language of instruction (English), the Language A: Literature course emphasizes the history of English language and its evolution over different periods of literature. This course also introduces students to multiple works in translation and explores the multiple connections to the TOK curriculum regarding the acquisition of knowledge including the essential question: What knowledge, cultural and linguistic, is lost when a work is translated?

During the application process for the IB Diploma Programme students are asked to self-report mother-tongue and secondary language skills. Students who are already fluent in a language other than English are encouraged to participate in several unique opportunities that would allow them to apply these skills. For example, students can choose to complete their extended essays in a language other than English. They may also participate in global activities hosted at our school and across the state that highlight the importance of culture and language.

Bilingual students are encouraged to pursue the Bilingual IB Diploma, which students can earn by either of the following options:

- 1) A student who is fluent in English and another language can choose to take two Language A courses (in place of a Language B course, or language acquisition course). This would mean that the student takes two literature courses; the second would be an independent study overseen by a partnership between a Language A and Language B teacher. If the student earned passing marks in both Language A courses, he or she would be awarded the IB Bilingual Diploma.
- 2) A student who is fluent in English and another language can choose to complete his or her assessments in a Group 3 (such as history or ITGS) or Group 4 (sciences) course in a language other than English. For example, a student could choose to complete his or her biology assessments in Spanish. If the student earned passing marks in Language A: English literature and the Group 3 or 4 subject completed in another language, he or she would be awarded the IB Bilingual Diploma.

## **Language A Courses**

Continuous language instruction is an integral part of the curriculum in North Carolina and helps prepare students for the rigors of the IB curriculum. North Carolina students are required to take English I, II, III, and IV in order to graduate with a NC diploma, and the NC collegiate system prefers students take English each year of high school. Some students, close to half of our student population, complete the English I requirement in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. These students are encouraged to take an honors elective called Advanced Inquiry and Research during 9<sup>th</sup> grade to be better prepared for the advanced English coursework of IB and AP courses. A typical IB student will complete English I, II, and possibly Advanced Inquiry by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. All IB Diploma students at MRHS take Higher Level Language A: English Literature, which the state of NC recognizes as meeting the requirements of English III and IV.

## **Language B Courses**

Most students in the Marvin school continuum begin secondary language learning in high school, but some students do have access to multilingual education in primary school. Many middle schools in the district, including Marvin Ridge Middle School, offer Spanish I. Multiple elementary schools, including Marvin Elementary, offer dual language immersion programs. Students who complete the Mandarin Chinese dual language immersion pathway will have access to IB Language A: Chinese Literature during grades 11 and 12 once they reach high school.

MRHS currently offers IB Language B courses in Spanish, French, Chinese, and German. These courses are available to students who have completed at least 3 units of study in the chosen language or can prove equivalent mastery of at least 3 units of study before 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Students who have not completed the required coursework, but are proficient in a second language, can request to take a placement test.

Students who are unable to meet this requirement are encouraged to participate in French Ab Initio, an introductory French course, with no language prerequisite, that meets the requirements of the IB Diploma. While students can achieve course credit through virtual courses, our team strongly encourages participation in face-to-face language instruction, which has proven to be more beneficial for students on their pathway to proficiency in another language.

## **District, School, and Program Responsibilities**

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- Emphasize the value of language learning across all disciplines
- Foster an environment of respect and appreciation for cultural diversity
- Encourage students to become multi-lingual
- Respect and promote the value of mother-tongue languages
- Make communications available in mother-tongue languages when necessary
- Provide funding for ESL services and IB training for staff
- Ensure the media center contains sufficient resources in a variety of languages

## **Teacher Responsibilities**

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- Identify students who are struggling with language learning and help them access the appropriate levels of intervention and available resources for remediation
- Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all language learners
- Encourage students to use their mother-tongue whenever possible such as when taking notes, annotating texts, or making cultural connections
- Teach, assess, and provide feedback on literacy skills including reading, writing, and speaking in all disciplines
- Provide instruction and materials that reflect an appreciation of cultural diversity
- Advise students in the research and writing process for the extended essay
- Participate in collaborative planning and training to continue to develop strategies to support students in their language learning.

## **Student Responsibilities**

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- Become fluent in a secondary language in addition to your mother-tongue
- Take advantage of language learning resources available in your physical and digital classrooms as well as the media center
- Be respectful of other languages and cultures
- Reflect on the development of your language skills
- Communicate with your teachers about your progress

## **Parent Responsibilities**

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- Encourage and support language learning in your home
- Attend parent meetings at the school to learn more about how these policies are put into practice
- Encourage your child to seek help if he or she needs additional resources to be successful
- Notify the school if a student's language learning needs are not being met
- Consider volunteering to share your language and cultural experiences and skills with students to support language learning at school

## **Desired Outcomes**

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The above policies and practices seek to encourage life-long learning and cultural appreciation that will extend beyond high school language instruction. MRHS graduates are encouraged to take placement tests and additional language courses in their university studies so that they can continue developing their language skills. Graduates are also encouraged to consider how they can implement language acquisition skills in their chosen career fields.

Understanding your mother-tongue and language of instruction are important steps in understanding yourself as well as the social and political implications of communication. Power and language are deeply interconnected. Understanding the complexity and value of acquiring additional languages leads to empathy and the appreciation of people from other cultures. Respectful, knowledgeable communication and life-long learning are essential goals of an IB education.

*\*This policy was most recently revised in 2020 with the input of the IB staff, IB DP coordinator, school administration, and ESL staff. It is revised regularly to reflect changes in policy and practice. The policy is shared with families upon entry in the program and is available to the community on the MRHS IB website.*