

LANGUAGE POLICY

approved June 25, 2025

Introduction

At Dallas International School (DIS), our mission is to educate students of all backgrounds to contribute to a dynamic world through an internationally renowned curriculum, multiple language instruction, and exposure to diverse cultural views. Language learning is central to this mission, not merely as a means of communication but as a key to unlocking a deeper understanding of the world. It is through language that students engage with complex ideas, connect with others across cultural divides, and develop the intellectual and social skills necessary to become global citizens.

DIS is not merely a language school; it is an independent institution committed to providing a rigorous Early Childhood through 12th grade academic program that prepares students for success in a globalized world. Our approach to language education is comprehensive and integrated across the curriculum, ensuring that students are not only proficient in multiple languages but also capable of using those languages to excel academically and to contribute meaningfully to society. At the heart of our language policy, we believe that all teachers are language teachers.

In alignment with our core values of academic excellence, cultural diversity, and lifelong learning, DIS's Language Policy is designed to foster linguistic and cultural competence in our students, equipping them with the skills they need to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world. This policy outlines our commitment to language instruction, acquisition, and support across all grade levels and programs.

Languages of Instruction

At DIS, the languages of instruction vary by grade level and program, ensuring that students are immersed in a multilingual environment that supports both their academic and linguistic development. The structure of language instruction is carefully designed to align with our educational goals and to provide students with a strong foundation in both French and English, while also offering opportunities to learn additional languages.

EC2-EC3: French and English

In the earliest years of education (EC2-EC3), students are immersed equally in French and English. This dual-language approach lays the groundwork for bilingualism, fostering cognitive flexibility and a deep understanding of both languages from an early age. The aim is to build strong foundational skills in both languages, setting the stage for continued language development throughout their academic journey.

EC4-5th: French (primary) and English (secondary)

From EC4 through 5th grade, French becomes the primary language of instruction, while English remains an important secondary language. This structure allows students to deepen their proficiency in French, which is essential for their success in the school's rigorous academic programs. English continues to be a key part of the curriculum, ensuring that students develop strong bilingual capabilities.

Secondary School International Program

In the 6th-12th International Program, English is the primary language of instruction for all subjects. This program is designed to prepare students for success in a global academic landscape, including the International Diploma Program at DIS, where proficiency in English is essential.

Secondary School French Program

In the 6th-12th French Program, French is the primary language of instruction, with English as a secondary language. This program is aligned with the French national curriculum and prepares students for the French Brevet and the French Baccalaureate. English is taught at a high level to ensure that students are proficient in both languages by the time they graduate.

Language Acquisition Offerings

Language acquisition at DIS is a deliberate and structured process that begins in the early grades and continues through high school. Our offerings are designed to build linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding, with differentiated instruction based on students' prior experience and proficiency levels.

EC2-EC3: None

At the EC2 and EC3 levels, the focus is on immersion in French and English. Formal language acquisition of additional languages is introduced in later grades to ensure that students first develop a strong foundation in these two languages.

EC4-4th: Spanish or Mandarin Chinese

Starting in EC4, students are introduced to Spanish or Mandarin Chinese. These languages are taught with a differentiated approach, taking into account each student's prior experience and proficiency level. This ensures that language instruction is tailored to meet individual needs and supports effective language learning for all students.

5^h-12th: Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, German, or French

In 5th through 12th grades, students have the opportunity to study additional languages, including Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, German, and French. This broad selection allows students to choose languages that align with their interests and future academic or career goals.

- **French Program.** Students target at least a proficiency level A2 for their modern foreign language Brevet exam in 9th grade. This level of proficiency ensures that students are well-prepared for the rigorous demands of the French Baccalaureate program. By 11th-12th grades, students aim for at least proficiency level B2 in English and at least proficiency level B1 in their additional language. Achieving these levels of proficiency is essential for their success in the French Baccalaureate and for their future academic endeavors.
- **International Program.** Students in 6th-10th grade select a Language Acquisition course that is suited to their experience and/or academic goals; they are encouraged to stick with this language throughout their time at DIS. Students in the 11th-12th International Baccalaureate Diploma Program may choose to study a Language B (which is for students with some prior experience) or Language *ab initio* (for beginners). Students may also elect to pursue two Languages A in order to earn the IB Bilingual Diploma. Select students may pursue two Languages A plus a humanity or science in a language other than English to earn the IB Advanced Bilingual Diploma.

Secondary School Language Levels and Pathways

Language levels and pathways in the DIS Secondary School are designed to differentiate students' language acquisition experiences by providing students with an appropriate level of challenge in order to prepare them for various language courses at the baccalaureate levels. Students may, therefore, be required to take placement tests in order to determine the most appropriate course for them.

In Middle School, students will be placed into one of six levels based on a placement test and will progress through the levels after successfully passing each year of the course:

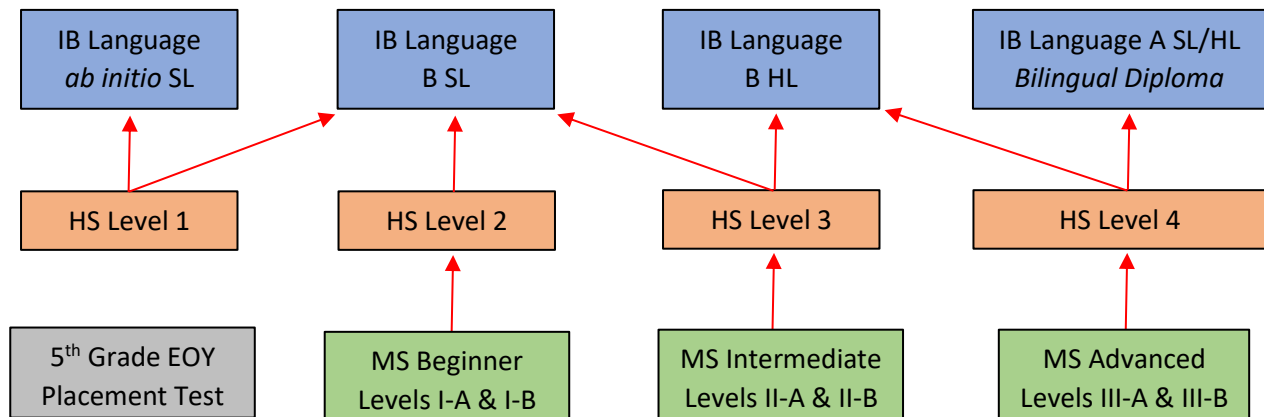
- **Level I (Beginner)**
 - **Level I-A.** This course is for new beginners in the language.
 - **Level I-B.** This course is for false beginners in the language.
- **Level II (Intermediate)**
 - **Level II-A.** This course is for students with a lower intermediate language level.
 - **Level II-B.** This course is for students with an upper intermediate language level.
- **Level III (Advanced)**
 - **Level III-A.** This course is for students with an advanced language level.
 - **Level III-B.** This course is for students with near-native competency in the language.

In High School, students will be placed into one of four levels based on placement tests or successful completion of a prior language level:

- **Level 1.** This course is for new and false beginners to the language.
- **Level 2.** This course is for students who successfully complete Middle School Level I-A or I-B.
- **Level 3.** This course is for students who successfully complete Middle School Level II-A or II-B.
- **Level 4.** This course is for students who successfully complete Middle School Level III-A or III-B.

In the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, students will select one of four language levels based on prior experience with the language and/or a required placement test:

- **Language *ab initio*.** This course is for new and false beginners to the language.
- **Language B SL.** This course is for students who successfully complete High School Level 2 or 3.
- **Language B HL.** This course is for students who successfully complete High School Level 3 or 4.
- **Language A.** This course is for students who successfully complete High School Level 4.



Change of Language

At Dallas International School, language acquisition is a cornerstone of our multilingual and multicultural mission. The choice of a second or third language is not only a curricular decision but a long-term academic commitment. Students are expected to continue with the language selected at the start of their Elementary, Middle, or High School pathway through to the end of their respective academic program (i.e., French Program or International Program). As such, requests to change languages are considered exceptional and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Middle School

Students entering 6th grade are invited to begin a new language. Current offerings include Mandarin, Spanish, and German. These choices are intended to be sustained throughout the student's academic journey at DIS.

In 6th grade, a request to change language must be submitted prior to the October break and is only considered under exceptional circumstances. After 6th grade, a change of language may be permitted only in the following cases:

- The student is a native or heritage speaker of the new target language.
- The student is new to DIS and has not studied any of the offered languages previously.
- The student can demonstrate appropriate proficiency in the new target language through a formal placement assessment.

It is important to note that changing language tracks midstream may result in academic gaps, as students will not have covered all the curriculum content of the new language level. In such cases, additional academic support, such as tutoring, may be required, and approval is contingent on the student's demonstrated motivation and capacity to catch up.

High School

Given the high academic expectations of language study at the secondary level, particularly in preparation for baccalaureate-level coursework, changes in language after 9th grade are strongly discouraged. Requests to change languages in High School will only be considered if the student is a native or heritage speaker of the new target language. All other requests to change language after 9th will be declined, as they pose significant challenges to curricular continuity and student performance in final examinations.

Process for Requesting a Language Change

Any request to change a language must follow the formal process outlined below:

1. Parents/guardians must complete and submit the official Change of Course Request Form to the appropriate Program Coordinator.
2. The Program Coordinator will review the request and consult with relevant faculty members, including current and prospective language teachers.
3. Based on teacher feedback and language proficiency assessments (if applicable), the Program Coordinator will render a decision.
4. If the change is approved, the Registrar will update the student's academic record in MyDIS.
5. Parents will be notified of the final decision.

DIS is committed to maintaining stability in academic pathways, and therefore language change requests will be approved only in exceptional cases where it is in the best academic interest of the student.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is an educational practice that encourages students to utilize their entire linguistic repertoire, including all the languages they know, to enhance their learning and understanding. Rather than keeping languages compartmentalized, translanguaging allows students to fluidly move between languages within a single lesson or activity. This approach acknowledges and leverages the full range of students' linguistic abilities, promoting deeper cognitive engagement, better comprehension, and more meaningful communication.

Encouraging Translanguaging at DIS

At Dallas International School, translanguaging is actively encouraged as part of our commitment to fostering a truly multilingual environment. We recognize that students come to us with diverse linguistic backgrounds, and we believe that all their languages are valuable assets in their education. By allowing students to use all their languages in the classroom, we:

- **Enhance understanding.** Students can use their stronger language to help make sense of complex concepts introduced in a new language. This practice deepens understanding and reinforces learning across languages.
- **Promote cognitive flexibility.** Translanguaging encourages students to code switch as they draw on all their language skills to solve problems, express ideas, and engage with content.
- **Support identity and inclusion.** By acknowledging and valuing all languages spoken by our students, translanguaging helps them feel more confident and connected to their cultural and linguistic identities. This practice also promotes inclusion, as it respects and celebrates linguistic diversity within our school community.
- **Facilitate peer collaboration.** Students are encouraged to collaborate using their full linguistic resources. This allows them to support each other in learning, regardless of their individual language proficiency levels, and fosters a cooperative learning environment.

Teachers at DIS are encouraged to create learning activities and environments that support translanguaging. They might, for example, allow students to discuss a topic in their stronger language before writing about it in their target language, or they might encourage students to annotate texts in multiple languages to enhance understanding. This pedagogical approach not only supports language development but also prepares students to navigate and contribute to an increasingly multilingual world.

Admission Prerequisites

To ensure that students are well-prepared for the academic challenges of DIS, certain language prerequisites may be required for admission to different grade levels and programs.

Early Childhood: None

There are no language prerequisites for students entering the Early Childhood program (EC2-KG). This allows for a diverse group of students to begin their educational journey at DIS, regardless of their prior language experience.

Elementary School: Academic French

For students entering 1st through 5th grade mainstream classes, prior on-level academic experience in French is required. This ensures that students are equipped to succeed in the French-dominant instructional environment.

Elementary School Immersion: Strong Mother Tongue

Students entering the 1st-3rd grade Immersion program are expected to have a strong mother tongue, which will support their acquisition of a new language. A solid foundation in their native language helps students to transfer linguistic skills to their new language of instruction.

Secondary School International Program: Academic English

Students entering the International Program must demonstrate strong academic English skills. This prerequisite is crucial for their success in a program where English is the primary language of instruction.

Secondary School French Program: Academic French

Students entering the French Program must demonstrate strong academic French skills. This ensures that they are prepared to meet the demands of the French curriculum and succeed in a French language-dominant academic environment.

Language Support

DIS is committed to providing comprehensive language support to ensure that all students can access the curriculum and succeed academically, regardless of their language background.

English Language Learners (ELL)

- ELL needs are identified through a home language survey and admissions meetings, ensuring that each student receives the appropriate level of support from the outset.
- Annual reclassification through WIDA testing helps to determine whether students need continued support or are ready to exit the ELL program. This ongoing assessment ensures that support is tailored to the student's current needs.
- ELL support is differentiated by grade level and proficiency needs, with both pull-out and push-in support options available. This flexibility allows for a more personalized approach to language learning.
- The ELL Coordinator collaborates directly with English teachers to implement necessary accommodations and modifications, ensuring that ELL students can fully participate in the curriculum.
- After exiting the ELL program, students are monitored to ensure they continue to progress in English without language regression. This post-exit support is critical to sustaining the gains made during ELL instruction.

French Immersion Program

The Immersion Program offers a dedicated class for students in Cycle 2 (1st-3rd grades) to help them transition to learning in a new language. This support is crucial in the early stages of language immersion, providing students with the tools they need to succeed in a bilingual environment.

French Academics Support Track (FAST)

FAST is offered from Kindergarten through 4th grade, providing tailored support for students at different grade levels and proficiency levels. Support includes both pull-out and push-in services, as well as small group instruction, ensuring that students receive the help they need to meet the academic demands of the curriculum.

Mother Tongue Learning

DIS recognizes the importance of maintaining and developing students' mother tongues, especially as they acquire additional languages. To support this, DIS offers the IB Language A: Literature SL School-Supported Self-Taught option for 11th and 12th grade students. This program allows students to continue developing their native language skills, which is essential for their cognitive development and cultural identity, while also fulfilling the requirements of the IB Diploma Program.

External Language Assessments

DIS language instruction directly and indirectly prepares students for a comprehensive range of external assessments to measure and support students' language proficiency. While some assessments are given internally at DIS, others must be taken externally. These assessments help ensure that students are meeting academic standards and are prepared for future educational opportunities.

English

- **WIDA:** Assesses academic English language proficiency.
- **IPT, MAP:** Used to measure students' progress in English language arts.
- **PSAT, SAT, ACT, TOEFL:** Standardized tests used for college admissions and language proficiency evaluation.
- **Brevet, Ev@lang, French Bac, IB DP:** French and IB Diploma assessments for bilingual and international students.

French

- **DELF:** *Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française*, assessing French language proficiency.
- **Evaluations Nationales:** National assessments in French language and other core subjects.
- **Brevet, French Bac, AP, IB DP:** Key assessments in the French national and IB curriculum.

Spanish

- **DELE:** *Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera*, assessing Spanish language proficiency.
- **AP, Brevet, French Bac, IB DP:** Advanced assessments in the Spanish language.

Chinese

- **HSK:** *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (汉语水平考试), the Chinese Proficiency Test.
- **AP, Brevet, French Bac, IB DP:** Assessments in the Chinese language for secondary students.

German

- **ZD:** *Zertifikat Deutsch*, assessing German language proficiency.
- **AP, Brevet, French Bac, IB DP:** Advanced assessments in German language proficiency.



Adult Language Learning

DIS extends its commitment to language learning beyond the student body through the DIS Language Institute, which offers language courses for adults.

Complimentary for DIS Employees

English, French, and Spanish courses are available at no cost to DIS employees, supporting their professional development and ability to engage with the school's multilingual community. This initiative aligns with our commitment to lifelong learning and the professional growth of our staff.

Courses Open to the Public

Arabic, Spanish, French, and Mandarin courses are offered to the public. These courses provide valuable language learning opportunities for the broader community, promoting cultural exchange and the value of multilingualism.

Policy Review and Publication

This policy is reviewed regularly through collaborative planning, and final versions for publication are sent to and formally approved by the DIS Executive Leadership Team. The latest version of this policy is made available to the DIS community through the MyDIS platform.