

Language Policy



**Lake Wales High School
International Baccalaureate Diploma
Program**

Philosophy

Mission Statement: Creating a vibrant, internationally-minded community where students are encouraged to seek a life of inquiry, reflection, and merit.

As an IB world school Lake Wales High School (LWHS) has a written language policy that outlines goals for language teaching and learning. It is a statement of action describing practices for achieving and evaluating goals.

Language is at the heart of learning. It is how thought, meaning and understanding are expressed, and provides access to literature, culture, history, the sciences, mathematics and the arts. It provides students with immediate access to different cultures and perspectives and integration into the school community as well as local and international communities.

Lake Wales High School is public charter school with approximately 70% of students on free and reduced lunch and the most common first language is English with a small percentage of students who are native speakers of several languages such as Spanish, German, Hindi, Gujarati, Mandarin, and French. The language of instruction is English, and student's fluency ranges from low levels to mother tongue fluency with every stage in between. We believe the ability for students to communicate with each other at LWHS, and for them to communicate with others around the world in more than one language, is critical in fostering international understanding, cultural empathy and in developing balanced, open-minded global citizens for the next generation. To this end all teachers throughout the school are viewed as language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating appropriate communication.

Practices:

Admissions: As a public charter school, we do not require proficiency in English or another language for admission to the program. Having said that, it is rare to have an applicant who does not speak at least some English. Students who do not speak English are given a language proficiency assessment to determine their level of English proficiency. The information gathered from the assessment is used to determine the level of additional support services needed. The IB Program at LWHS accepts applications from all students. Given the rigor of the program, it turns out, students who come in with a 3.25 GPA or higher, standardized test scores of Level 3 or higher on a scale of 1-5 with achievement level 3 as a passing score, tend to do better in the IB program – both academically and emotionally. Students who have lower proficiency tend to struggle in most cases, but we do have some who have gone on to earn the IB Diploma despite low test scores and GPA in the middle school years. The two tests scores we look at are the Florida State Assessments (FSA)– English Language Arts (ELA), and FSA Math. We strive to provide open access so if a student's GPA is below a 3.25 or they do not have the expected test scores, the IB coordinator meets with the family, and the student to familiarize them with the rigor of the IB program and if the student wants to work towards the IB Diploma, they are granted admission. No student is denied admission if they want to work towards the Diploma despite having low test scores or limited English language proficiency. It is the goal of

all of the teachers in the IB Program to provide a caring environment for all students admitted to this program regardless of language proficiency.

Language A: English is the main language of instruction for all students. Language A is limited to the English language and students are taught English syntax, grammar, and communication skills in all IB classes. All students are involved in Language A learning from grades nine through twelve and it aligns with the requirements of Florida Public Schools, Florida Common Core standards, and the International Baccalaureate Language A objectives. However, to support students with *Limited English Proficiency* (LEP), all of our teachers are required to work towards becoming *English as a Second Language* (ESOL) certified.

In order to graduate from LWHS all students must take and pass a non-ESL mainstream English course (English Literature 1) and in order to study in the IB Diploma Program all students must have sufficient fluency to study English A Literature HL.

Language B: Second language, or Language B, classes are available throughout grades 9-12 in Spanish. The study of a second language provides access to a different culture, and learning culture through language is the focus of second language classes. Due to our historical connection with and student representation from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, and availability of staff, Spanish is the main second language at LWHS.

Mother Tongue Development: Mother tongue development is recognized as important for learning other languages, including English, and is encouraged both formally and informally. English is not offered as an IB Language B course because of the need for greater fluency in English at US universities, which is the preferred destination of the majority of LWHS graduates.

Promotion of other languages: We value other languages and want to expand the Language B offerings beyond Spanish at the school. The physical location of the school limits access to foreign language teachers. We want to offer another language such as Mandarin or French but need to have two teachers to ensure continuity of instruction. Until then, students who want to learn a third language or formally study their mother tongue can take dual enrollment classes. They can also take classes online using the providers like Edgenuity - our Virtual School or Pamoja. It is our hope that the interactions between different cultures represented in the student body will encourage all students to be life-long learners and inquirers.

Language Development and Support across the curriculum: LWHS facilitates the development of language skills by reading in all classes while paying attention to student progress in reading comprehension and evaluating text complexity. Once or twice a week, we also have a dedicated block of time called Read-to-Read (R2R), where all students, teachers, and admin staff must be engaged in reading. Students are encouraged to read outside of the classroom and to make it an effective practice, the media specialist at LWHS gets input from students and has the freedom to purchase books that reflect student interest every semester. Since the initiation of this practice, book checkouts have more than quadrupled and students are reading for the love of reading and not purely for academic purposes.

Within the classroom, teachers use a variety of practices and tools such as thinking maps and graphic organizers to differentiate instruction for all levels of language proficiency. Students are encouraged to incorporate reading in their forms of communication by reading aloud, reading in groups, and reading expressively – both in Language A and Language B classrooms. Students are also exposed to a variety of genres, including but not limited to fiction, poetry, plays, trade books, short stories, newspapers/magazines, and informational texts in both, English and Spanish. Students are encouraged to develop their language skills through writing in all subject areas. They are exposed to varied, challenging, and meaningful opportunities to write that correspond to the requirements of the subject area and the IB Diploma program. A variety of genres are used to develop student writing skills including but not limited to journaling, essays, reflections, discussion posts on our Learning Management System – Schoology, and writing lab reports. Students receive skill-building feedback from teachers, peers, and other adults who are providing instruction and modeling the correct usage of written and oral language. Students are provided ample opportunities to develop and utilize oral language across the curriculum. Beyond their daily conversations, students develop skill through oral presentations, debates, speeches, poetry recitations, songs, and dramatic readings. Teachers model the correct language usage in conversations and instructional presentations while maintaining sensitivity to the students' language proficiency and cultural background.

All students working towards the IB Diploma are actively involved in CAS activities and projects through the diploma years. Many of the projects and activities provide student opportunities to use the language of their heritage and develop their communication skills in both their mother tongue and English. Students are encouraged to select activities and projects that have personal deep meaning and can select projects that give back to the countries and cultures that their families represent.

Language Support: Even though the majority of the students at Lake Wales High School are considered English speakers, some of our students are bilingual and multilingual. Spanish speaking students are encouraged to help the Language B teachers of their respective mother tongue by working with students to develop proper accents and pronunciation of words. This practice supports the students' mother tongue while helping to promote a global mindedness among our students. Language A and Language B teachers are encouraged to select literary works that represent the cultural background of some of our students. This practice enhances the class discussions and helps all students develop an open mind about those cultures that are different from their own. The bilingual and multilingual students receive support from our English Language Learners program (ELL), and scaffolding in the classroom as needed. Our ELL coordinator oversees the language development of many of our students and assists the teachers in meeting the language needs of our students.

References and Resources

- Guidelines for developing a school language policy. IBO, 2008.

- Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy. IBO, 2012.
- Language and learning in IB programmes. IBO, 2011.
- Language Policy of Vanguard High School, Florida.
- Language Policy of International School of Paris, France
- Language Policy of Verde Valley School, Arizona

The language policy was created in 2017/2018 and updated in April 2019 by the Language Policy Steering Committee comprised of Language A and Language B teachers, an IB Diploma parent, guidance counselor, the Assistant Principal/IB Coordinator, and feedback from IB Juniors and Seniors. The language policy will be reviewed every spring and based on feedback from the different stakeholders, a revised policy will be published every year.

