



Cornerstone International Academy Language Policy

Introduction

This document describes Cornerstone International Academy's perspective on language, important principles when learning a language and how these principles influence our teaching of language.

It is consistent with our school's vision which states, 'To create a nationally known and internationally recognized school that produces result oriented students and staff with loyalty, wisdom and responsibility for life long character.'

An effective elementary literacy program is a powerful vehicle that enables all students to become successful, independent readers, writers and thinkers. As such, this policy also reflects our school and community's beliefs and practices in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

- It provides the school with a framework that will promote consistency between grades and subject areas.
- It provides families with information about our principles and practices and assists them in understanding our curriculum.
- It is a tool that offers an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their language practice and guide their professional development.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end, the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

Our Mission

To empower all our students through the nurturing of their individual capabilities in a fast-changing world to be responsible and contribute to the world.

Our Vision

To create a nationally known and internationally recognized school that produces result-oriented students and staff with loyalty, wisdom and responsibility for life long character.

Our Guiding Principle: A peaceful world.

Our Core Values: Collaboration, Integrity, Achievement, Respect, Reliability

Our Philosophy;

- To be recognized by the success of our students in achieving their personal goals
- To make student development the center of all the school's decisions.
- To aspire to the highest internationally recognized performance standards.
- To build and celebrate a culture based on internationalism.
- To enable staff to become life-long learners through the development of their professional practice.

Our belief about Language Learning

We believe that language is fundamental, the basis for all learning and a lifelong process. Staff and students are equally actively engaged in language acquisition. Language is a tool primarily used in communication. We also believe language is fundamental to relationships development and community building.

Our role as educators is to develop communication skills in our students, in both social and academic aspects, through English as the primary language of instruction, French as second language acquisition, and one local language support and development (Twi).

In order to reach these goals, we strive to build a community of learners that emphasizes language development using a culturally sensitive and intelligent transdisciplinary means of instruction.

As a Candidate School* we are committed to a language pedagogy that emphasizes on speaking, listening and non-verbal communication.

*Candidate School- This implies the school is still in the authorization process to be recognized as an IB World school. This usually takes a period of two years depending on a school's preparedness

Purpose

Our main goal is to nurture and empower learners to be internationally minded, as defined by the International Baccalaureate Organization.

Agreeably, excellent language prowess is fundamental to achieving this international mindedness.

It is our goal to develop an internationally minded learner as defined in the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile. The profile describes a learner who is well rounded, and emphasizes intellectual, personal, emotional, and social growth. Strong language skills play a central role in the development of learner attributes and need to be carefully developed to ensure student success.

Inquirers

Students search and make conscious efforts to improve their oral and written language to further their understanding of the society and the world at large.

Thinkers

Students read wide and improve their use of language which enables them to structure relevant questions to provoke an intelligent thought process towards problem-solving.

Communicators

Through and not limited to communication styles like poetry, oral language, story-writing and presentations students are able to express themselves confidently in all aspects of their lives.

Risk takers

Students explore through reading, writing and speaking in ways that challenge them to develop their language skills, knowing that learning and using different languages is a form of risk-taking that should be embraced in their language development process as lifelong learners.

Knowledgeable

Students acquire a broad knowledge base of vocabulary, phonics, reading and listening skills and applying them in real life situations.

Principled

Students demonstrate that language is powerful and has a profound effect by using it with fairness, justice, respect, and responsibility.

Caring

Students show care in their use of verbal and non-verbal language and are aware of how the use of language and nuances can affect perceptions.

Open-minded

Students understand that learning a world language develops their understanding of cultures other than their own. They make efforts to understand dialects and accents and know that learning a world language takes time. They are accepting of different levels and styles of language development.

Balanced

Students express themselves orally and in writing. They find a balance between listening and speaking in communicating with others. They read a variety of written material. Students write for different purposes and audiences using multiple presentation formats.

Reflective

Students reflect on learning through writing and speaking. They reflect on how they choose books and how those books affect them. They also reflect on the difference between expressing ideas in their mother tongue and in a different language.

Principles and Practices of Teaching Language

Language is fundamental to learning, thinking and communicating and permeates the whole curriculum. It is necessary not only to learn language, but also learn about language and through language.

Making the PYP Happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education p. 68 (2007),

We believe that students become good communicators when they are actively engaged in the language strands; listening and speaking, viewing and presenting and reading and writing as spelt out in the IB Language Arts Scope and Sequence.

From the age of five (5) we teach French as an additional language. Students in Kindergarten (age 5) are engaged in forty (40) minutes per week of French while students from the age of six (6) are engaged in 80 minutes of instructional time of French every week.

Oral Language-Listening

Listening involves more than just hearing sounds. It requires active and conscious attention in order to make sense of what is heard.

Making the PYP Happen, p. 73 (2009)

Listening is an active process, where students need to hear, understand, and interpret what is being said to them. We foster the attribute open-mindedness through listening to the perspectives and opinions of others. To enhance our students' listening skills, we engage in a variety of learning opportunities.

- Focusing on the speaker and the information that is being shared. This may mean eye contact, stopping activity, and turning to the speaker.
- Paraphrasing and summarizing what was read to or said to the listener. This process promotes accountability and engagement.
- Responding to what was said through actions, words, physical cues or written expression. This practice demonstrates that the listener is engaged and being a thinker.

Students' listening skills are assessed specifically for giving attention to the speaker, asking for clarification, and providing feedback to the speaker. Students also engage in self-assessment and reflection of their own listening skill development.

Oral Language-Speaking

Purposeful talk enables learners to articulate thoughts as they construct and reconstruct meaning to understand the world around them.

Making the PYP Happen, p. 73 (2009)

Students prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. Speaking is a combination of verbal communication and non-verbal cues used to convey information to a variety of audiences. These speaking opportunities come through formal and informal engagements.

- Daily opportunities to speak in informal settings such as sharing, "turn and talk", solving problems, shared and choral readings, reacting to shared information, and collaborating on ideas.
- Presenting information in an organized manner so that listeners can follow line of thinking.
- Speaking to different audiences and for multiple purposes. Students learn to reflect on their use of volume, style of speaking, and word choice.

Visual Language- Viewing and Presenting

They allow students to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs.

Making the Primary Years Programme Happen, p. 73 (2009)

Visual language impacts a student's learning throughout the day. It may be the images they see on a website, or information that is shared in video and even graphs worked on during mathematics. Students are taught skills to help them make sense of what they are viewing and for preparing a presentation.

- Distinguishing between fact and opinion when researching.
- Interpreting what they see or read, determining the important details.
- Preparing visuals for presentations, such as posters, electronic presentations, and materials for Exhibition.
- Assessing through rubrics for clarity of topic, ease of understanding, inclusion of important details, and quality of work.

Reading and Writing

Reading and writing are embedded in all curricula in a relevant and meaningful way. Students practice and use reading and writing across the curriculum and engage in a wide variety of activities. The school provides a learning environment with multiple opportunities for language development.

- Daily modeling occurs throughout the day.
- Teachers emphasize that writing is a process best learned by writing various genres during multiple experiences.
- There is a balance of teacher and student-led discussions of texts.
- Since reading is a social act, readers and writers need opportunities for discussion, both teacher-led and student-led. Discussions of text promote reading comprehension, motivation to read and high-level thinking skills.
- There is a strong focus on vocabulary development throughout the units of inquiry with particular emphasis on critical new academic vocabulary in order to nurture the richness of language.
- All classrooms maintain an extensive collection of age appropriate books for students to use. Classroom libraries include a wide variety of genres that expose students to many types of culturally diverse literature.
- Teachers provide children with high-quality literature across a wide range of genres including using non-fiction texts at least 50% of the time.
- Classroom and shared bookroom materials are leveled using Fountas and Pinnell leveling system to ensure highest level of reading success for all students.
- Students read a minimum of 90 minutes a day; including self-selected material.
- Students read at their independent or instructional level based on their Fountas and Pinnell level/s.
- Instructional level reading is often teacher supported.
- Student interest can sometimes overpower accuracy limitations, especially with support.
- Teachers teach reading for authentic meaning-making experiences: for pleasure, to be informed, or to perform tasks.
- Students use writing to show what they know, respond to learning and communicate with others.

General Principles and Practices

Assessment and feedback play an important role in our literacy program.

In practice this means

- Teachers pre assess student’s prior knowledge and provide experiences to share and build on that knowledge so students can succeed with literacy tasks.
- Assessments include a combination of informal, formative and summative assessments, all of which help to guide instruction and meet students’ needs.
- Teachers use a range of assessment methods such as portfolios, conferencing, miscue analysis, oral reading fluency and response journals.
- Assessment feedback is ongoing, positive, constructive and descriptive.
- Students are engaged in frequent reflection of their learning through self and peer assessment.

Different linguistic backgrounds and recognized and valued.

In practice this means

- Teachers encourage all students to share their first language with others.
- The school showcases and celebrates the language diversity of its students and staff.
- Morning meeting greetings, activities, and songs may be presented in different languages.
- Teachers encourage discussions about different languages as opportunities arise.

Mother tongue development is supported and valued in a variety of ways.

In practice this means

- Staff members show interest in a student’s first language.
- Students are given opportunities to be language ‘experts’ and teach other students and staff.
- The school encourages parents and students to continue using their native language at home.
- Where applicable, parent-teacher-student conferences are conducted in the students’ and parents’ first language through interpreters if need be.
- Where possible, the school provides school information in the parents’ native language through interpretation.
- Learning activities are adjusted where needed to support English Language Learners.
- The school utilizes information technologies to foster the development of foreign language skills.
- There are some reading resources and materials in different mother tongue language available in our library. There are print and online resources in Asante Twi available in our Media Studies Center*

We see value in reflecting on languages as systems with patterns and structures and as a tool for communication in different situations.

In practice this means

- Patterns and structures are essential in learning basic skills and will improve the student's ability to read, write, speak, and listen.
- Students learn that there are connections between languages in form and function.
- Language usage is closely related to the sense of belonging to one's culture.
- The curriculum stresses the student understanding of language patterns rather than specifics.
- Language can be broken down into patterns.
- Non-verbal communication is important

The staff model effective communication strategies.

In practice this means

- All staff members see themselves as language teachers.
- Communications are screened for high quality language.
- The staff models the use of all language strands.
- The staff communicates to families in multiple ways (examples; school newsletters, classroom newsletters or posts, parent conferences, e-mail, website, etc.).
- The staff responds to parent inquiries in a timely and professional fashion.

This policy was written by:

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Prior to adoption, this policy was shared, and feedback sought from the following different representatives of school stakeholders:

1. Parents Association of Cornerstone International Academy (PACIA) on October 3, 2018
2. Board of Directors on August 1, 2018
3. School Management and Pedagogical leadership August 1, 2018
4. C.I.A. Facilitators on August 1, 2018

This document was adopted on September 20, 2018 and is expected to be reviewed three (3) years after the date of adoption.

References

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