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Language Policy

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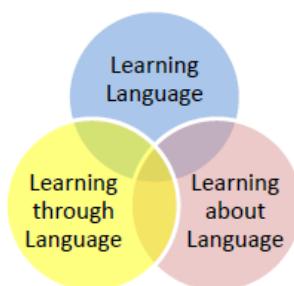
Language Philosophy at St. Andrew's School

In St. Andrew's School we believe that language is a means of both creating and communicating. It is essential for children's intellectual, social and emotional development. Competence in language enables people to function in society and to fulfil their potential as individuals. It enables people to share their own and others' experiences, feelings and ideas, giving them order and meaning. Therefore all teachers are teachers of language (*Language and Learning in IB Programmes 2011*) since through language comes understanding and mastery.

In order to be effective in this area, all teachers should:

- attend whole school, and departmental training
- follow the language teaching forums on MyIB/ Ibo.org
- read appropriate texts from the staff CPD library and other sources
- follow the guidance within this policy and keep abreast of updates
- make links with teachers in different subject areas

The process is not only that of learning a language, but also of learning about language and through language:



The communication strands of listening, speaking, writing, reading and visual language are interrelated and interactive, with learning in one supported by another. At St. Andrew's we consider language development from numerous perspectives: those of class teachers, specialist teachers, learning support teachers and students.

We believe that mother tongue language development is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and emotional stability and that acquisition of more than one language enriches personal growth and helps facilitate international understanding. Students and parents are encouraged to continue the study of their mother tongue and are supported where possible in school. They are also encouraged

to form links within the community. Opportunities exist for further study in both French and Spanish, alongside English.

All language learning at St. Andrew's is guided by the school's mission and vision statements, as well as our stated objectives and the IB learner profile.

School Language Profile

- As of 2022, St. Andrew's students represent 16 different nationalities.
- The vast majority (76%) of St. Andrew's students are Bahamian and so speak English as a first language.
- A further 14.5% are from other English-speaking nations (USA, Great Britain, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica).
- The remaining 9.5% of students comprises the following nationalities: Cuba, Mexico, Germany, France, South Africa, Brazil, China, Switzerland, Italy and India.

The majority of these students speak and write English fluently due to previously attending schools where English was the primary language of instruction or having received all their education in English at St. Andrew's.

Some require further support (see [Support Services](#))



Admissions Policy

Students are assessed upon application via interviews to gauge a student's ability to access the curriculum and language proficiency test. The current test is the Cambridge Institute English Level Test, which assesses students using the CEFR program.

The admissions office gathers information on mother tongue language as well as other languages spoken by our students' parents and this is brought together in a database to help ESL students and their parents on arrival at the school and to help make links within the community. We also gather information concerning language proficiency, tuition and help outside of school, speech therapy and language support. Copies of any psycho-educational assessment reports are also requested at this time.

Primary- MAPs assessments are given to all students applying to study at St. Andrew's for grades 2-5. This tests vocabulary, reading comprehension and mathematics. Each student entering Grade 1 also has to write an essay. Recommendations and reports in language from the student's previous school are also considered.

Threshold Literacy in school for academic proficiency

St. Andrew's sees threshold literacy as the ability of students to fully access the curriculum at their age-appropriate level. The school believes in supporting all students to fulfill their linguistic and academic potential.

Where students struggle with threshold literacy, appropriate support is offered. There are differentiated levels of support offered for these students based on their level of need. This might include specific differentiation and inclusion strategies by teachers, in-class support from educational assistants, discrete instruction or support programs for IB students.

Every effort is made to make sure that students who struggle with the language of instruction are not viewed through a deficit lens at this school. However the school realizes that on-going professional development is essential therefore, every effort will be made to get all teachers involved in a student's language development.

Students are identified for support through a variety of ways including: the admissions process, primary/ secondary liaison, teacher referral, parent referral and the results of various formative and summative assessments.

Language Programs Overview

Language A

Due to the language profile of our students, at St. Andrews's language A is English. Historically this has been British English, but this is currently under review and it is likely that US English will be adopted as well.

English Language courses from the ELC to the end of Middle School are guided by the [Common Core Language Arts standards](#) and in the primary school, the PYP language scope and sequence. Course overviews and curriculum documents make it clear where standards are being taught and revisited.

The Primary School

Students in the Primary school will have approximately 10 hours of Language Arts lessons per week. The focus is mainly on:

- Building a strong reading foundation
- Accessing complex text
- Finding and using text evidence
- Learning spelling, punctuation, and grammar rules
- Writing effectively in different genres
- Engaging in collaborative conversations

These will mostly follow the McGraw-Hill program, *Wonders*, for grades 2-5. This was chosen from several possible programs as the most appropriate and effective for St. Andrew's students. These resources will support existing ones to allow students to make the best progress against the standards.

Students will not only read from texts chosen to be challenging at their own ability level in the classroom, but they will also have access to a personalized online library at home, using sites like [Get Epic!](#).

Other language teaching will be embedded in PYP units of enquiry, and ultimately, language skills will be assessed as a component of the grade 5 terminal 'Exhibition' project.



The Secondary School

Students in **Grades 6-9** continue their Language A work primarily in the English classroom and receive 315 minutes of instruction per 6 day rotation.

The curriculum continues to follow New York Common Core standards and is based around the study of long texts such as novels, plays, short stories and films as well as shorter texts such as poetry, print adverts and non-fiction articles. Students study the conventions of many genres and also have opportunities to write in these genres. Students begin the process of detailed literary analysis in Grade 6 as preparation for future certificate courses.

There is a daily, discreet focus on 'Knowledge about Language' (spelling, punctuation or grammar) in English lessons as well as other support contextualized within the units of study.

Students are encouraged to use and develop oral and aural skills through listening and responding in peer and class discussion as well as by giving presentations.

In **Grades 6-8**, students learn about the history and development of the English language. In year 7 they learn about Old English and study the text *Beowulf*. In year 8 they move on to Middle English and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and in year 9 they begin to study early Modern English and Shakespeare.

In **Grades 9 and 10** students work towards IGCSE examinations in *English Language and Literature*. Texts studied include a variety of local and regional works. They receive 360 minutes of instruction per 6 day rotation. From 2016, students will study iGCSEs.

In **Grades 11 and 12** students study *IB Language & Literature* at either SL or HL. They receive 270 minutes of instruction per 6 day rotation.

Language B and Other Languages

We are increasingly experiencing the need to meet the needs of a rapidly changing, highly competitive and closely-connected global environment. There is continuous growth in technological transfer and communication, global exchange of goods and services, tourism and international team-building. We recognize that competence in a foreign language plays a critical role in meeting the need for effective interaction between and among culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

The Primary School

Students in the Primary School receive instruction in Spanish from a qualified teacher. Spanish is the fourth most commonly spoken language in the world and is used by an estimated 350 million people. The proximity of the Bahamas to the USA (particularly Florida) where Spanish is widely spoken, as well as to Central and South America makes this a sensible choice of second language for our students. More than half of all students studying a second language at US colleges choose Spanish.

Currently, lessons are delivered in the Spanish classroom as follows:

Preschool- Grade 1: 1 hour per week

Grades 2-5: 1.5 hours per week

Learning at this stage is organized and delivered with an emphasis on enjoyment and building the motivation and enthusiasm for second language learning. Lessons are delivered in English for the most part. Students learn basic conversational Spanish as well as vocabulary pertaining to planned PYP topics being studied elsewhere. Students also learn about Spanish culture and the celebrations, food and values of Spanish-speaking peoples. Students maintain a folder of written work but also play word games, many of these kinesthetic, to increase enjoyment and enthusiasm and therefore deepen learning. The school has an online subscription to *Linguscope* which is mainly used for reinforcement and homework activities. Dual language cartoons such as *El Perro Y El Gato* help students make links between English and Spanish.

In their regular classrooms, students may also use Spanish alongside English when using dates, times etc.



The Secondary School

French and Spanish are taught as Language B in the secondary school by the Modern Foreign Languages department and students are offered a choice between these.

At present, students in **Grade 9** will have 180 minutes of teaching in their chosen target language in a weekly rotation.

In these three years, students will not only build speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, they will also learn about French or Spanish culture and its global impact. The amount of English spoken in lessons is expected to decrease with time as students become more proficient in the target language. As a minimum, students are expected to make everyday requests to the teacher using the target language.

A range of US textbooks are the main teaching resource and have been selected because many of them are available online and are easily accessible to students. These resources also facilitate differentiation in MFL lessons. Teachers also make use of other online resources such as quizlet.

Teachers employ various methodologies to make language learning effective and fun. Assessments will frequently be project-based.

In **Grades 9 and 10** students work towards the international IGCSE examinations in their target language to be taken at the end of grade 10. Students may also opt to take French and/or Spanish BGCSE (Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Information). Both French and Spanish are offered and students will have 180 minutes of instruction per rotation.

Material covered in these years extends beyond the GCSE course as students continue to investigate culture. Alternative assessments may focus on issues such as the environment and the outcome of these may be a presentation, leaflet or other non-traditional text.

In **Grades 11 and 12**, students undertake the IB diploma. Students have the choice to study French or Spanish at HL, SL, or Ab initio level and actual classes each year will depend on student choice from this offering.

Students receive 270 minutes of instruction per 6 day rotation.

At HL, two complete literary works are studied. All students explore the target language based on five overarching themes, focusing on five elements of conceptual understanding: audience, context, purpose, meaning and variation.



Support Services

The school's English as an Additional Language (EAL) department offers support to students whose first language is not English

Students are offered an immersion program in which they participate in classes but undertake modified assessments until their competence in English allows full participation. The school also recommends persons in the community who provide ESL private tuition and may facilitate such lessons during a time when student may be withdrawn from a particular lesson.

In the ELC and primary school, withdrawn students work on specific ESL programs designed to improve their English language acquisition for 1-2 hours per week. An Individualized Educational Plan outlines their goals and objectives for the trimester.

Parents are encouraged to arrange further English tuition and the school can help to organize this.

Library Language Resources

The library stocks books in many different languages to encourage students whose first language is not English to read for pleasure in their mother tongue. There is an impressive range of texts in English appropriate to all reading abilities. Visual texts which support language learning such as magazines, graphic novels and DVDs are widely available as are aural resources such as audiobooks.

Mother Tongue

Whilst St. Andrew's School population contains relatively few students whose first language is other than English, we acknowledge the importance of maintaining the mother tongue in both cultural and personal development and its role in enabling the student to achieve their full potential.

The school is currently limited in its ability to provide mother tongue language support in class. Where possible, ESL students have one to one or small group lessons with a teacher who also speaks that language. This is often possible with French, Spanish, Hebrew, German and Italian but largely depends on the skills and experience of faculty in any given academic year. Students are also encouraged to share and celebrate their own language and culture with other students in the classroom, broadening the experience for all.

Parents are also encouraged to maintain and develop skills in native language through the home and with private tuition.

Extra-Curricular Language and Culture Opportunities

Each year students are offered a range of extra-curricular clubs aimed at increasing their enthusiasm for using language and broadening their horizons. These may include, but are not limited to:

| School newspapers | Writing Clubs | Book Clubs | School Spelling Bee |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Debating | Writing competitions | Theatre visits | Author visits |
| Film and Anime Clubs | Language immersion trips | Foreign Culture trips | French Club |
| Spanish club | Cultural Awareness day | | |



Strategies to Support all Teachers in the Language Development of all Students:

St Andrew's International School is committed to supporting teachers in using effective differentiation strategies for the language development of all students.

As part of the formal lesson observation process, feedback is given on how effectively the lesson was differentiated to meet the needs of students and this is inclusive of their language development needs. At least once per year, a workshop focused on differentiation strategies is conducted with all teachers.

The Diploma Program unit planner support document supports staff with their planning and preparation regarding language learners.

Mini-PD staff meetings are held on a regular basis to support teachers with the language development of all students.

Communication of the Language Policy to the SAS community

The language policy will be shared on the school website and promoted through the 'Heads Up' newsletter, and at parent and staff meetings. The policy will be available to staff on the shared intranet drive.

New staff will be introduced to the policy during induction.

The Diploma Programme Coordinator and the Primary Years Programme Coordinator are responsible for ensuring the implementation, updating and periodic review of this policy.