



Language Policy

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Last Revised January 2021

IB 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.

Jefferson Mission Statement:

Learning together to understand and improve ourselves, our futures, and our world.

I. Philosophy

Mission, Vision and Values

At Thomas Jefferson Middle School, our mission is “Learning Together to understand and improve ourselves, our futures, and our world.” Learning languages is at the heart of learning together. As *MYP Principles into Practices* states, “Language is central to learning” (p 26). We want students to be effective communicators “to create a better world.”¹ To realize this vision all students learn English, an additional language of their choice and have support for the language of their mother tongue.

Language Philosophy - Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers, Students, and Families

Thomas Jefferson is a multilingual school as a fact, a right and a resource. A fact in that our students are from all across the globe. A right in that students have a right to continue to learn in their mother tongue as they learn other languages. And a resource, in that our student’s multilingualism helps them develop critical thinking skills and international-mindedness. While all students are required to learn English, all students are strongly encouraged to learn another language and support is given through the library and technology to support students use and development of the language of their mother tongue. We share and practice the belief expressed in *Language and learning in IB programmes* that “The ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language is essential to the concept of an international education that promotes intercultural perspectives” (p 1). At Jefferson with almost a 1,000 students representing dozens of countries, promoting intercultural perspectives is not only an aim, but also an everyday necessity.

We believe all teachers at Jefferson are language teachers, that is every teacher helps develop students' "ability to effectively read, write, listen, and speak."² We do this through the development of Approaches to Learning skills and in every subject area, communication is an objective and criterion for assessment. In addition, for weekly/daily learning experiences teachers should include content and language objectives.

Teachers will:

- [Use the SIOP content and language goals to support students.](#)
- [Focus on key SIOP strategies](#)
- [Follow the WIDA "Can Do's"](#)
- [Use additional WIDA strategies by domain](#)

Students will:

- Have the opportunity to develop and acquire languages (in a modified/sheltered and scaffolded learning environment)
- Be able to demonstrate and receive language input through all language competencies (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
- Have the right to demonstrate understanding in multiple languages.

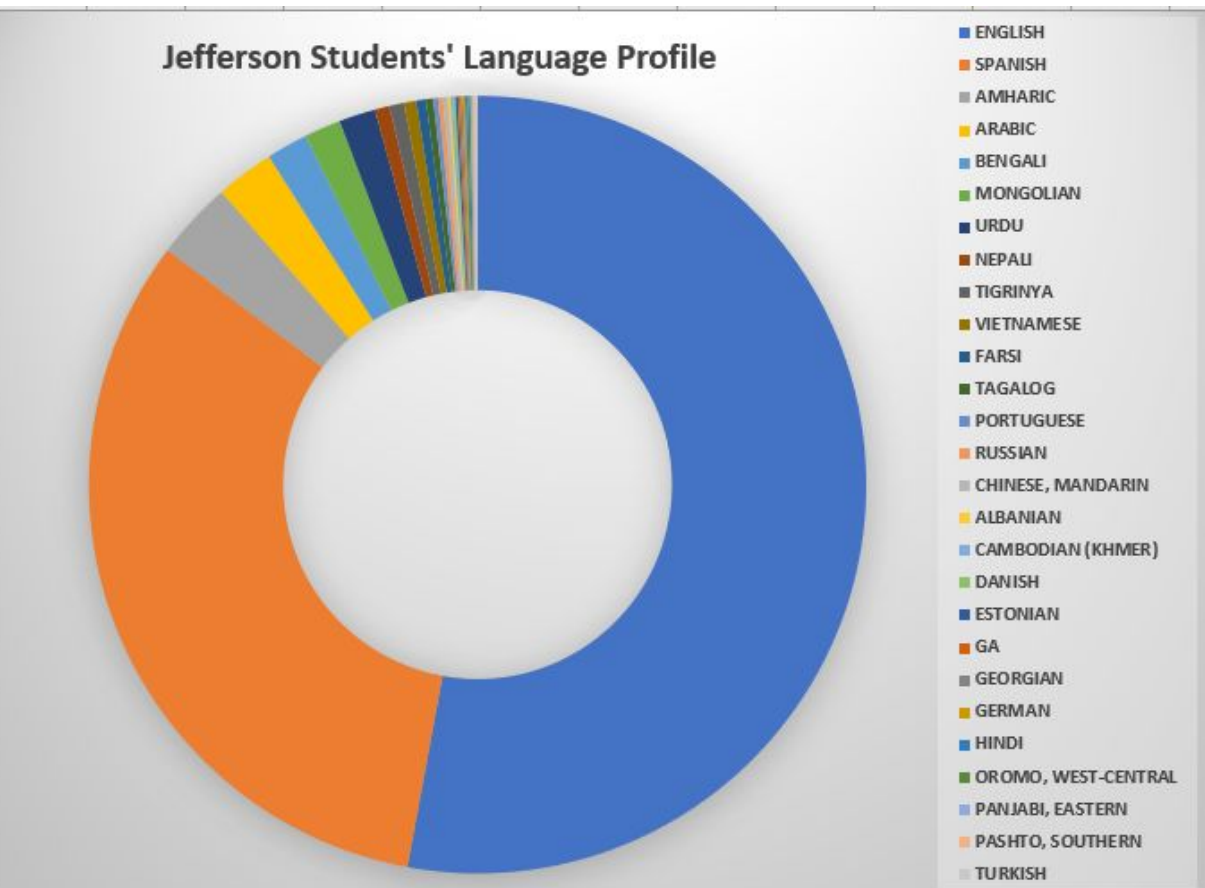
Parents/Guardians will:

- Have translators (for written and spoken communication) available upon need
- Have access to resources available in multiple languages

II. Language Profile

In the 2020-2021 school year, Jefferson has students from more than 60 different countries speaking more than 30 languages. English is a widely spoken language (522 students) who speak it as their mother tongue, about 53 percent of the student body. English is the official language of the school and is the basis for all Language and literature classes. Spanish is the second most widely spoken language (320 students) speak it as their mother tongue (32 percent). Amharic is the third most popular language with 32 students (3 percent). Students who speak Arabic, Bengali, Mongolian and Urdu as their mother tongues make up about 7 percent of our students. The rest of the languages spoken by Jefferson students represent 1 percent or less of the student body. The full breakdown down of languages spoken at Jefferson is as follows:

Language	Students
ENGLISH	522
SPANISH	320
AMHARIC	32
ARABIC	24
BENGALI	17
MONGOLIAN	15
URDU	15
NEPALI	6
TIGRINYA	6
VIETNAMESE	5
FARSI	4
TAGALOG	3
PORTUGUESE	2
RUSSIAN	2
CHINESE, MANDARIN	2
ALBANIAN	1
CAMBODIAN (KHMER)	1
DANISH	1
ESTONIAN	1
GA	1
GEORGIAN	1
GERMAN	1
HINDI	1
OROMO, WEST-CENTRAL	1
PANJABI, EASTERN	1
PASHTO, SOUTHERN	1
TURKISH	1
Grand Total	986



Language requirements

Jefferson students are required to take three years of Language and literature (English Language Arts) classes. They are strongly encouraged, but not required, to learn an additional language. If students have a language other than English as their mother tongue, they may be supported by English Language Learner classes to increase their access to and use of English.

III. Language and literature and Language acquisition

Language and literature practices and progression

At Jefferson, Language and literature classes are English Literature Arts classes are required for all students in every year of the program. We believe as the *Language and literature guide* states, “Language is fundamental to learning, thinking and communicating; therefore it permeates the whole curriculum” (p 4). Through Approaches to Learning skills and the communication criterion, all teachers are language teachers.

In Language and literature in particular, “The Arlington Public Schools English Language Arts (ELA) program seeks to develop students who are strategic readers, effective writers, engaging speakers, and critical thinkers.”³ To this end, we offer Language and literature classes that are built on a spiraling written curriculum that includes standards on communication, reading, writing, and research. The following classes are offered in year of the program:

- In year one (6th Grade), English Language Arts students focus on reading comprehension with both fiction and non-fiction texts. Students will focus on vocabulary development and work on the writing process. Students work to find resources for a research project.⁴
- Also, in year one (6th Grade), students take an English Reading class. This class gives students the opportunity to receive additional reading practice in both fiction and non-fiction texts. Students will read to inspire action and to be strategic readers.⁵
- In year two (7th Grade), English Language Arts students continue to focus on reading comprehension with fiction, but with a greater emphasis on non-fiction texts. Students will continue development of vocabulary and the writing process with greater focus on expository and persuasive writing.⁶
- In year three (8th Grade), English and Language Arts students continue to read fiction and non-fiction texts, develop vocabulary and work on the writing process. In 8th grade, students learn to write a thesis statement about change and defend it with evidence.⁷

To help students to succeed through all years of the program, teachers help students learn language with many of the following practices:

- Before reading strategies
 - Previewing a text
 - Setting a purpose
 - Anticipation guides
- During reading strategies
 - 3-2-1 strategy
 - Double entry journal
 - Marking up the text
 - Movie frame notes
- After reading strategies
 - One dollar summary

Language acquisition classes (phases in class names) and practices

At Jefferson we believe learning another language in addition to English is critical for a world class education. Learning another language also helps students develop critical thinking skills and a sense of international-mindedness. This is also an Arlington Public Schools value, "All APS students should be proficient in at least two languages upon graduation and should have access to world language proficiency programs regardless of school of attendance." (adopted as part of the FLES matrix by the Board on December 16, 2010).⁸ We offer seven languages including: American Sign Language, Arabic, Chinese, French, Latin, Spanish and Spanish for Fluent Speakers. According to the *Language acquisition guide*, "The MYP structures additional language learning in phases so that the complexity and range of language profiles that students bring to their MYP classroom is acknowledged and fostered" (p 5). All language acquisition classes at Jefferson use the IB phases one and two as outlined in the *Language acquisition guide*. Specifically we offer [\(the full list and sequence of language acquisition in Arlington Public Schools are listed here on page 65\)](#):

Introduction to American Sign Language - This is an exploratory course designed to introduce students to basic receptive and expressive skills including appropriate non-manual behavior (i.e., facial expression, body language, and use of space). Students understand and use limited phrases. Students ask and answer questions about self. Students are also exposed to aspects of Deaf culture.

American Sign Language I - Students will learn receptive and expressive language skills within the context of everyday interaction with others in their home, school, and community environments. Students will learn to ask and answer questions about family, school events and celebrations. They will exchange essential information such as making introductions, leave-taking, getting attention and negotiating the signing environment using appropriate non-manual behaviors (i.e., facial expression, body posture, spatial organization). Students will study the history of American Sign Language and will explore aspects of Deaf culture.

American Sign Language II - *Prerequisite: Successful completion of ASL I, or equivalent proficiency as determined by the teacher.* Students will expand and enhance the communicative skills in ASL. They will ask and respond to questions for clarification and be able to further express opinions and preferences regarding their everyday experiences and environment. Students will expand their vocabulary and conversational ability by studying more abstract topics and literary works. A deeper understanding of the Deaf community will also be a goal of this level, through the discussion of the community's norms and values. Students will gain an understanding of concepts that are unique to the Deaf community and their implications for language learning. They will be encouraged to interact with others using their ASL skills beyond the classroom level.

Arabic I - This level introduces students to the Arabic alphabet and sound system. The history of the Arabic language, family tree of Arabic language and script are given. In addition to the initial focus on the sound and writing systems, students learn and reproduce sounds, stress patterns, intonation of the language. Basic grammatical structures and vocabulary are introduced so that students can produce very basic formulaic exchanges in simple sentences and conversations in contexts appropriate to the level.

Arabic I, Intensified - *Prerequisite: Intro to Arabic, I Intensified is for students who have successfully completed Introduction to Arabic.* The goal of this course is to equip students to develop higher levels of proficiency based on their previous Arabic studies. The curriculum meets all objectives in Arabic I and provides a rigorous treatment of content and additional advanced topics. This course will provide a greater focus on developing oral communications skills and a more in-depth study, of the cultural perspectives and practices of Arabic-speaking countries.

Arabic II - *Prerequisite: Successful completion of Arabic I or equivalent proficiency in the language as determined by the teacher.* This course continues the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing at a novice proficiency level and revolves around daily life situations students in Arabic speaking countries may encounter. Students increase vocabulary building and continue to learn more about basic Arabic sentence structure and to apply basic grammatical structures for engaging in functional language. Upon completion of Arabic II, students will be able to initiate social interactions, and be aware of basic cultural perspectives.

Chinese I - Students develop the ability to communicate about themselves and their immediate environment using simple sentences containing basic language structures. This communication is evidenced in all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – with emphasis on the ability to communicate orally and in writing. Students begin to explore and study the themes: Personal and Family Life, School Life, Social Life, and Community Life.

Chinese I, Intensified - *Prerequisite: Intro to Chinese I, Intensified is for students who have successfully completed Introduction to Chinese.* The goal of this course is to equip students to develop higher levels of proficiency based on their previous Chinese studies. The curriculum meets all objectives in Chinese I and provides a rigorous treatment of content and additional advanced topics. This course will provide a greater focus on developing oral communication skills and a more in-depth study of the cultural perspectives and practices of China.

Chinese II - *Prerequisite: Successful completion of Chinese I or equivalent proficiency in the language as determined by the teacher.* Students continue to develop the ability to communicate about themselves and their immediate environment using simple sentences containing basic language structures. This communication is evidenced in all four language skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing-with emphasis on the ability to communicate orally and in writing. Students begin to expand their study on new themes of Personal and Family Life, School Life, Social Life, and Community Life while some familiar themes and topics from level I may re-occur at the same time. However, the spiral character of the theme-based instruction requires students to demonstrate their communicative skills and sophistication at a new developmental level.

Introduction to French - Students are introduced to the target language and learn basic communication skills such as: understand, ask and answer questions about self; participate in basic social interactions with memorized phrases; understand and use limited phrases and exchanges related to greetings, colors, numbers, and food. This course is designed to provide exposure to the language prior to committing to a high school credit-bearing course. It will provide a foundation in the structure of the target language to enable participating students to be more successful in a chosen language used to fulfill high school graduation requirements

French I - The focus for language learning is on real life, functional use of language through dialogues, skits and other creative, hands-on activities. Students develop skills and learn basic structures and vocabulary of the language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities

French I, Intensified - *Prerequisite: Intro to French.* French I, Intensified is for students who have successfully completed Introduction to French. The goal of this course is to equip students to develop higher levels of proficiency based on their previous French studies. The curriculum meets all objectives in French I and provides rigorous content and additional advanced topics. This course will provide a greater focus on developing oral communication skills and a more in-depth study of the cultural perspectives and practices of French-speaking countries.

French II - *Prerequisite: Successful completion of French I or equivalent proficiency in the language as determined by the teacher.* Students continue to develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and develop a broader understanding of cultural aspects of the target language.

Introduction to Latin - Students are introduced to the language and life of the Romans. Basic concepts about language are presented as students learn a beginning Latin vocabulary. A strong emphasis is placed on word formation from Latin.

Latin I, Intensified - *Prerequisite: Intro to Latin.* Latin I, Intensified is for students who have successfully completed Introduction to Latin. The goal of this course is to equip students to develop higher levels of proficiency based on their previous Latin studies. The curriculum meets all objectives in Latin I and provides a rigorous content and additional and advanced topics.

Latin II - Prerequisite: Successful completion of Latin I or equivalent proficiency in the language as determined by the teacher. Students expand their skills by reading more complex and authentic Latin texts. They study Roman culture, history, and mythology in greater depth.

Introduction to Spanish - The middle school provides a variety of learning experiences through the exploratory/electives courses. Through these courses, students have opportunities to develop new interests and discover new abilities with the specialized staff and facilities of the middle school. Elective course offerings depend on sufficient student enrollment. Exploratory and elective classes vary in their meeting schedules and in the amount of curriculum they cover.

Spanish I - The focus for language learning is on real life, functional use of language through dialogues, skits, and other creative, hands-on activities. Students develop skills and learn basic structures and vocabulary of the language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities.

Spanish I, Intensified - *Prerequisite: Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) and/or Transitional/Intro to Spanish I.* Intensified is for students who have participated in the foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) Program and successfully completed Introduction /Transitional to Spanish. The goal of this course is to equip students to develop higher levels of proficiency based on their previous Spanish studies. The curriculum meets all objectives in Spanish I and provides a rigorous treatment of content and additional advance topics. This course will provide a greater focus on developing oral communication skills and a more in-depth study of the cultural perspectives and practice of Spanish-speaking countries.

Spanish II - *Prerequisite: Successful completion of Spanish I or equivalent proficiency in the language as determined by the teacher.* Students continue to develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and develop a broader understanding of cultural aspects of the target language.

Introduction to Spanish for Fluent Speakers - This course is for 6th grade students who are familiar with Spanish, but still need to learn basic communication skills in reading and writing such as: understand, ask and answer questions about self; participate in basic social interactions with memorized phrases; understand and use limited phrases and exchanges related to greetings, colors, numbers and food.

Spanish for Fluent Speakers I - This course is designed for students who have native or near native oral fluency in Spanish but may not have mastered basic reading and writing skills. Students develop communication skills in reading, writing, and speaking and begin the study of Spanish grammar. Students develop a deeper understanding of perspectives and practices of the Hispanic culture.

Spanish for Fluent Speakers II - *Prerequisite: Successful completion of Spanish for Fluent Speakers I or equivalent proficiency in the language as determined by placement test.* This course is designed for students who already know how to read and write in Spanish at the basic level. Students continue to develop oral communication skills through oral presentations, role-play and skits. Students improve spelling and mechanics and write short compositions. They read original works and begin to interpret narratives. The study of grammar continues.

English Learner Program

Jefferson has hundreds of students whose first language is not English. We believe it is imperative that all students are given the support they need to succeed in English. The mission of the Arlington Public Schools English Learner Program "is dedicated to honoring and building upon the diverse cultural and language backgrounds of English learners and to ensure that they achieve their fullest linguistic, academic, cognitive and social potential."² We have a committed team of EL teachers and an EL counselor to support our students.

Students who are new to Arlington Public Schools, and whose first language or the language most often used at home is other than English, take a WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT). The WIDA test assesses Reading, Writing,

Speaking and Listening skills. The results of this assessment are used to determine a student's EL placement. Each school year, students with a WIDA level of 1-4 take the ACCESS (assessing comprehension and communication in English state-to-state) for ELs test, an English language proficiency assessment that meets the U.S. federal requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act for monitoring and reporting ELs' progress toward English language proficiency.

Also available are the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, a test administered individually to students identified as ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities and the LEP Checklist for students with hearing and visual impairments. The ACCESS for ELLs assessment consists of four domains - listening, reading, writing and speaking. Students continue to take this assessment until they earn a proficient score and test out of the EL program.

In EL, we use the following practices as outlined in *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*:

- Scaffolding
 - Visual aids
 - Graphic organizers
 - modeling
 - dramatization
- We implement the Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model that includes
 - Lesson preparation - many resources and differentiated for life skills
 - Building background - previewing knowledge students are to learn
 - Comprehensive input - multiple learning activities
 - Learning strategies - give multiple opportunities for learning, with scaffolding
 - Interaction - many opportunities for discussion between students and teacher
 - Practice and application - use activities that focus on all language skills
 - Lesson delivery - appropriate pace for 90-100% engagement
 - Review and assessment - comprehensive review of concepts and key vocab

IV. Language support

Support for language learning across all subjects

All teachers support language learning with assessments based on criterion C - Communication. In every class, students need to be able to listen, read, speak and write. For students to achieve at the highest levels all teachers teach Approaches to Learning skills. Particularly important in teaching languages are communication and research skills, which all teachers teach both in subject classes and teacher advisory class at the beginning of the day.

Furthermore, we have an academic honesty policy that requires students to cite ideas that are not their own. Students may use either APA or MLA formatting guides both which are outlined by our library website.¹⁰

Library support

Our library offers a wealth of resources for students and staff. We have numerous high interest, young adult books. We have a series of eBooks and audible books that are available for students. Language and literature classes regularly visit the library to learn research skills and to choose high interest books. The library also plays a critical role in supporting students as they research and complete their community project.

Mother tongue support

Jefferson teachers and staff are proud of our multilingual school. We support students learning their mother tongue for all students which is according to the *Language and learning in IB programmes*, "language learned first, the language identified as a 'native speaker,' the language known best; the language used most" (p. 16). The library offers books in Arabic, Chinese, French and Spanish.

Furthermore, all Arlington Public School students are offered Language Acquisition (World Languages) Credit by Exam. All year two (7th grade) and year three (8th grade) students “have the opportunity to take a proficiency exam and potentially earn up to four world language credits in nearly 100 languages.”¹¹ There is a form through which students can register online posted at the beginning of every school year and frequently asked questions are answered [here](#).

Family support

Jefferson is committed to the involvement of all its parents and guardians in their children’s education. To this end, several programs are in place. The school has formed a Family Engagement Committee that ensures current language and family background information is collected, works with the PTA to plan major family events and regularly assesses the school’s family outreach efforts. A key goal of the committee is to ensure information is provided in multiple languages. Our Jefferson IB Newsletter is published in our 4 major languages (English, Spanish, Mongolian, and Amharic) and posted on the school website. Most major announcements are sent home in “Backpack” mail in English and Spanish and recorded phone messages are made in both languages as well.

In fall 2014, the school began a program called FACEtime, “Family and Community Engagement Time.” The program is designed for our parents of second language learners, and provides weekly English language instruction while teaching skills and providing information needed for increased parent involvement. The IBMYP is presented to parents at the beginning of the year at PTA meetings with translations. The program is also presented at FACE Time.

We also have the APS Language Line to support teachers in calling home. Teachers can access it using [this page](#).

Parent and Guardian Involvement in Students Language Plans

Students’ language development plans are part of the EL plans. These are outlined at the time of enrollment at the Language Services Registration Center and are updated at the school at the end of each academic year. Teachers analyze annual language assessments and meet with the EL Secondary Specialist to place students in the appropriate language level.

Language goals are specific to each language level and correlate to the WIDA English language proficiency standards. Parents are invited to participate in the placement meetings and planning of language goals. The EL Department meets with parents to review the county-wide EL Program and how it is implemented at the school level. Parents also receive an individualized list of accommodations that their children receive in instructional settings and on assessments.

Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was written in 2018 by a variety of teachers and the IB Coordinator. It was shared with the Language Acquisition and Language and Literature departments first for revision and review. Then it was shared with the school leadership team. The draft Language policy was sent to all teachers for their feedback. After receiving that input, the policy was adopted by the school leadership team. It will be reviewed annually every September by the IB Committee and approved every October by the leadership team.

V. Alignment with all policies

[Integrity/Honesty](#)

Our Language policy requires that students cite ideas that are not their own, which is then spelled out in the Honesty policy. This policy includes a signed pledge to which they agree to follow protocols for referencing, use of bibliographic styles as well as to demonstrate honesty with regard to completion of homework assignments and assessment tasks. The policy was reviewed by parents for input.

Assessment

Our assessment policy states the primary purpose for assessment is to “support and encourage learning.”¹⁰ Furthermore, criterion C-Communication, in every subject area assess students’ ability to listen, speak and write, ensuring that all teachers are language teachers. Finally, all Literature and language, Language acquisition, and EL classes use criterion-related IB rubrics,

Inclusion

All Jefferson students with special needs (students who have an Individualized Education Plan [IEP] or 504 plan) are expected to take a language acquisition class, unless they need another class in their mother tongue. The Language policy includes all the recommended accommodations for students with special needs as outlined in the inclusion policy. The EL resource teachers work closely with special education teachers to support the language needs of culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional learners.

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