

IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

LANGUAGE POLICY

Tauragės “Versmės“ gimnazija (049284)

IB MISSION

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.¹

PURPOSE OF LANGUAGE POLICY

As the International Baccalaureate is committed to supporting plurilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness as well as to providing access to IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds², so it is crucial for the IB World school to develop a language policy in order to provide the school’s IB community a framework about the values and aims in relation to successful implementation of the programme in different languages, equal access to plurilingual learning and teaching content as well as support in a variety of issues.

The policy is aimed to foster intercultural understanding through communication in the diverse environment, recognize plurilingualism, to describe language related rights and responsibilities of all members of the school’s IB community as well as identify a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development.

The language policy:

- recognizes that, since language is central to learning, all IB teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication.
- outlines how IB DP students are to learn at least one language in addition to their mother tongue.
- describes how the development and maintenance of the mother tongue for all IB DP learners is to be supported.

¹ IB mission (<https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/>)

² Language policy (<https://www.ibo.org/language-policy/>)

- ensures that there are practices in place to provide inclusion and equity of access to the IB DP offered by the school for all learners, including those who are learning a language other than their mother tongue.
- describes how the language of the host country is to be promoted.
- recognizes that administrators, teachers, librarians, and other school staff will require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching in order to make sure the language policy becomes a working document.
- considers what resources and practices are to be used to involve parents in planning their children’s language profile and development.³

LANGUAGE POLICY PHILOSOPHY

Acknowledging the diversity of language needs of the school’s IB DP community members, the language development is stated as the focal point of the school’s educational mission. Offering bilingual education to the IB DP students, Tauragės “Versmės“ gimnazija facilitates and appreciates students’ engagement in foreign languages learning as a means of enhancing intercultural communication and international-mindedness as well as a way of acquiring knowledge, exploring different concepts and perspectives, developing receptive, productive, and interactive skills.

The language of instruction at Tauragės “Versmės” Gymnasium is Lithuanian, for the IB DP working language at school is English. In addition to their mother tongue, Lithuanian students study English as a first foreign language and they may choose a second foreign language from German, French, and Russian. We value the linguistic diversity of our school community and are dedicated to support mother tongue development as well as the acquisition of additional languages as knowing more than one language and maintenance of the mother tongue enrich personal growth, provide cognitive advantages and is essential to the development of international mindedness, so every teacher at our school is considered a language teacher. Therefore, the IB teachers in particular are provided with the professional development opportunities such as language courses, job shadowing opportunities, international projects, learning / teaching materials, peer-teaching, etc. to improve their language skills.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN SUPPORTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

According to the IB standards and practices, all school’s IB community members are equally responsible for the language development. All members of the IB community (administrative staff, teachers, librarian, students, parents/guardians) are encouraged to model multilingualism and specifically are supported to continuously improve their proficiency in spoken and written English as it is the language of instructions of the school’s IB DP. Staff members are provided with professional language learning opportunities to improve their language skills thus being able to support students and their parents/guardians in acquiring the language of instruction. IB DP teachers have a responsibility to promote students’ language development within their subject areas and take an explicit approach to

³ Guidelines for developing a school language policy, 2008.

teaching the language of their subject. All teachers should be fluent in English and are expected to communicate exclusively in English with students in the classroom (apart from the lessons of other languages). The use of mother tongue in the classroom is accepted as a means of clarifying or reinforcing the idea and giving of formal feedback to parents/guardians. Formal assessment is carried only in English (apart from assessment of other languages). Therefore, administrative staff is expected to inform teachers about the language profiles of their students and their parents/guardians thus teachers being able to seek opportunities to incorporate the cultural richness of language backgrounds into teaching/learning opportunities. Parents/guardians are an integral part of our IB DP community, so the school provides tremendous support for them to be able to understand all the content, services, platforms of the IB providing all information in their mother tongue. By raising awareness for the importance of seeking language proficiency and improvement of cognitive ability, parents/guardians are encouraged to plan and finance (if needed) their children's language profile and development collaborating with school's IB administrative staff and teachers. The responsibility for language development also lies on the students themselves and they are expected to utilize their language learning experiences to the best of their abilities. Hence, all members of the school's IB DP community are expected to be interested in languages and seek the highest proficiency as well as see themselves as agents in the process of their own and others language acquisition.

PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT

For continuum and effective language learning:

- A conceptual understanding by school's IB DP teachers of how language and learning are connected in the continuum is critical in understanding why all IB teachers are teachers of language, and how they can be effective as language teachers.
- New learning is constructed on previous conceptual understandings and so activating prior learning and building up necessary knowledge is important good practice, particularly when the group is diverse and learners do not necessarily share the same cultural or linguistic background. Language profiles of students are practical documents that can help teachers be aware of the diversity within a class.
- Scaffolding for understanding enables learners to accomplish a task that would be impossible without such a strategy and is an effective way to extend learning. Scaffolding includes strategies such as graphic organizers and concept mapping.
- Language is integral to identity, which in turn determines how a person will act. Therefore, it is critical that the self-esteem of every learner is affirmed. The culture of the classroom should be collaborative and inclusive, and should provide an environment where students feel able to take risks in their language learning.

- The development of structures and systems for the support and maintenance of students' mother tongues is vital to support students in their cognitive development.⁴

IB DP LANGUAGE CURRICULUM AT TAURAGĖS “VERSMĖS“ GIMNAZIJA

Group 1: Studies in language and literature – Language A

- **Language A (Lithuanian): Literature**

All IB DP students study Lithuanian literature as a Group 1 subject *Language A: Literature (SL/HL)*. In this way the school ensures that students' mother tongue is developed by the teacher(s) of the subject.

In case the students are willing to study English A: language and literature (SL/HL) course, they are recommended to enroll the IB approved course provided by *Pamoja* ([IB Diploma Programme Online Courses - Pamoja \(pamojaeducation.com\)](http://IBDiplomaProgrammeOnlineCourses-Pamoja.pamojaeducation.com)) on their own expenses.

- **Language A: literature school-supported self-taught (SSST) (SL)**
 - ✓ Students of foreign backgrounds are able to choose *Language A: literature school-supported self-taught (SSST) (SL)* course. The students are encouraged to choose to study literature in their mother tongue but as an alternative they are able to choose English. The school provides the student with a generic SSST supervisor who is a Language A teacher at the school. The supervisor will meet the student on a regular basis to explain and make sure the student understands the assessment components and the respective assessment criteria fully.
 - ✓ If needed, the school supports a student in finding the language tutor using a number of IB DP tutoring-service providers or a tutor who is an IB DP teacher at another IB World School. If there are any fees corresponding to such tutoring service, it is the responsibility of the SSST student's parents/guardians to cover them. Close collaboration between the supervisor and the tutor is highly recommended.
 - ✓ The SSST student will receive about 100 hours of support from both the generic SSST supervisor and a language tutor. The distribution of hours will be decided on between the supervisor and the tutor.

Group 2: Language acquisition

- **Language B: English B (HL)**

All IB DP students study English as *Language B (HL)* is to become proficient in English in the language of the school's IB instructions. Also, students are expected to become the sophisticated English language users, so a variety of teaching and learning methods and techniques are used in various contexts, supported by different teaching/learning aids and resources thus developing all aspects of language competence, the ability to communicate in the target language through the study of language, themes, and texts. In doing so, they also develop conceptual understandings

⁴ Towards a continuum of international education, 2008

of how language works, as appropriate to the level of the course.⁵ Also, during this course English is developed for proficient use in different disciplines as a working language.

- **Language ab initio (SL):** German (also French will be offered *from September 2024*)
Seeking to encourage students' multilingualism, intercultural understanding, and international-mindedness, the school offers for the IB DP students start learning another foreign language in addition to English. German and French are offered at our school as *Language ab initio (SL)* course. If the students are willing to study other languages not offered by school, they are recommended to enroll *Language ab initio (SL) courses* provided by the IB approved organization *Pamoja* ([IB Diploma Programme Online Courses - Pamoja \(pamojaeducation.com\)](https://www.pamojaeducation.com)) on their own expenses.

MOTHER TONGUE SUPPORT

National curriculum

Learning a mother tongue is a compulsory component at all grades of a secondary school in Lithuania. The study of the Lithuanian language involves reading and analysing literary works, learning the language systems. In the final year students are required to take the compulsory Lithuanian Matura exam. For the majority of students, the native language is Lithuanian but due to the geopolitical situation in Ukraine the number of Ukrainian students increased at our school, so the students use their mother tongue, Ukrainian or Russian, as the learning language. The students with a foreign background are encouraged to learn the Lithuanian language at school by attending the Lithuanian lessons and the Lithuanian language courses organized free of charge at school.

IB Diploma classes

It is expected that every IB DP student takes a compulsory *Group 1 subject Language A: Literature (SL/HL)* course in their mother tongue, Lithuanian, which is the language of the majority of the students. The subject may be studied by students of foreign backgrounds as well if their language skills are good enough to understand, analyse and interpret literary works and produce written assignments. In such case the Lithuanian language test should be completed by the candidate to evaluate the proficiency in language and ability to complete the course. As a support, students may be offered additional lessons of the Lithuanian language in order to improve their skills to such a level at which studying the subject is possible and does not impose unnecessary burden on them before enrolling to the *Group 1 subject Language A (Lithuanian): Literature (SL/HL)* course. The test and the additional lessons are organized by the language teacher(s).

For students of foreign backgrounds, the *Language A: literature school-supported self-taught (SSST) (SL)* course is offered. The students are encouraged to choose to study literature in their mother tongue but as an alternative they are able to choose English A: language and literature (SL/HL) (organized by

⁵ Language B guide, p. 6

Pamoja). The school provides the student with a generic SSST supervisor who is a Language A teacher at the school and a mother tongue language tutor if possible.

PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

A school librarian is responsible for curating the content and creating services that support diverse language profiles and should be actively involved in respecting and supporting languages and dialects used throughout the school, supporting multilingualism, so one should strive to support as many language profiles as possible meeting the school IB DP community's needs. The librarian is expected to be fully engaged with the community members to develop collections and activities that sensibly support language development and serves to enhance their personal, social, and academic communication.⁶ So, school librarian in collaboration with IB DP language teachers and administrative staff takes responsibility to promote the importance of language to the intellectual, creative, and ethical development of students. Also, it is crucial that collaboratively the information about the physical and virtual language learning/teaching resources and opportunities would be promoted and facilitated effectively within all members of the school's IB DP community. The staff work to ensure a wide variety of physical and virtual resources in languages offered by the school to meet the needs of language learners and teachers. The library maintains a collection of resources that include a broad and representative selection of works by local and international authors, provide access to databases, language learning tools. Constant development of physical and virtual collections that reflect the community's needs and objectives for personal, academic, or professional learning, multiliteracies, and language development is required.

LINKS TO OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

This policy has been produced in alignment with the school's IB DP Admissions policy, Assessment policy and Inclusion policy:

- Admissions policy – since English is the language of instructions in our school's IB DP classes, no lower than B2 level of English ([Common European Framework of Reference \(CEFR\)](#) is required for the IB DP candidates. Candidates must provide school records about the grades of the English language subjects for the last two years (Part II, 9-10 grades). The grades should be no less than 9 (very good) and 10 (excellent). If the grades are lower, then candidates take a written language placement test in English to estimate their level of proficiency, followed by an interview in English to determine their level of oral English fluency. If the level is lower than B2, candidates are asked to improve their skills and retake the test.
- Assessment policy – teachers recognize students' level of the English language competency and consider this when developing assessment, use a variety of assessment methods and techniques, encourage self-assessment and self-reflection. Formative and summative assessments are used in all subjects to measure the improvement of the students and provide information to parents/guardians.

⁶ Ideal libraries: A guide for schools, 2022

- Inclusion policy – Learning support requirements Support and/or access required to enable some students, who have the aptitude to meet all curriculum and assessment requirements, to reach their full potential in learning and assessment. Not all students who have access requirements will need learning support. Students with identified challenges (such as: autism/Asperger’s syndrome; learning challenges; speech, communication, physical and sensory challenges; social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties; medical and mental health challenges) may have learning support requirements. Also, additional language learners may receive learning support to bridge and develop their language. However, learning support is not restricted to students with identified challenges and must be provided to any student who requires support.

LANGUAGE POLICY REVIEW

This policy is a living document. It is reviewed every 2 years or when the IB policies/regulations change and when it is required due to other circumstances. To ensure it aligns with the school language profile, IB DP procedures and regulations, the policy is reviewed at a general meeting of IB DP teachers, organized by school’s IB DP coordinator at the end of the school year. Beforehand, the observations about the language development needs or suggestions for improvement from the IB DP teachers, students and their parents/guardians are gathered and communicated to the librarian and administrative staff of the school and considered during the review of the policy.

COMMUNICATION OF THE SCHOOL’S LANGUAGE POLICY

At the beginning of DP Year 1 students and their parents/guardians are presented with the policy provision. The policy is also available on the school website (<https://versme.org/>). New IB staff will be familiarised with the document during orientation.

REFERENCES:

1. *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* (IBO, April 2008)
2. *Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy* (IBO, 2012)
3. *IB mission* (<https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/>)
4. *Ideal libraries: A guide for schools* (IBO, 2022)
5. *Language B guide* (IBO, 2018)
6. *Language policy* (<https://www.ibo.org/language-policy/>)
7. *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes* (IBO, 2008)
8. *Programme standards and practices* (IBO, March 2019)
9. *Towards a continuum of international education* (IBO, 2008)