

Prince William County Public Schools International Baccalaureate Programme Language Policy

Philosophy

Language is a powerful tool for communication, connection, and cultural understanding. In Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS), our commitment to language acquisition is reflected in our division literacy vision: “In PWCS, literacy launches thriving futures.”

Aligned with our Strategic Plan, PWCS promotes critical thinking, responsible digital citizenship, and resilience. Students engage daily in reading, writing, speaking, and thinking across all subjects, supported by evidence-based, student-centered literacy practices.

All International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme teachers are language teachers. They support communication and learning in every classroom. Language shapes how we think, learn, and interact, and students should have opportunities to become proficient in both their first language and additional languages. This supports the IB mission to foster intercultural understanding and respect, preparing students to communicate across cultures and contribute to a more peaceful world.

Language Access and Equity

PWCS IB schools are committed to engaging all students and families by providing services and materials in their working and access languages.

Access: Strategically selected to support inclusivity and diversity within the IB community.

Internal: English is used for most operational, academic, and governance activities.

Working: The languages in which the organization communicates with its stakeholders and in which it is committed to providing all services needed for the implementation of the programs. Currently, the IB’s three working languages are English, French, and Spanish.

PWCS Language Profile

PWCS is the most diverse school district in Virginia and the 10th most diverse in the nation, representing 166 total birth countries and 189 total home languages.

Language Courses Offered



Curriculum for Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme

Our primary language of instruction is English. English is taught in all subject areas of the curriculum. Currently, every student from kindergarten to grade eight receives core literacy instruction based on scientifically based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, as defined in the Virginia Literacy Act. Students in kindergarten through grade eight will also receive evidence-based supplemental instruction and intervention, as outlined in an individualized student reading plan, if they do not meet literacy benchmarks.

- Evidence-based instruction is the core curriculum for literacy instruction in PWCS for grades K-8.
- Evidence-based intervention supplemental phonics instruction resources for grades K-2.
- Evidence-based supplemental comprehension instruction resources for grades K-8.



Primary Years Programme

The IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) in PWCS actively promotes language learning through conceptual, inquiry-based, and transdisciplinary teaching and learning. This comprehensive approach encompasses the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All schools integrate media and digital literacy into the curriculum, ensuring that language instruction is embedded across all content areas. This fosters a rich linguistic environment that enhances students' language skills and prepares them for global citizenship.

Students begin to learn a second world language in kindergarten. Presently, the duration of instruction is 45 minutes. The frequency of instruction is a site-based decision.



Middle Years Program

The following English language and literature courses are offered:

- IB MYP Language Arts 6, IB MYP Language Arts Extended 6 (Beville Middle School, Fred Lynn Middle School, Hampton Middle School, and Unity Braxton Middle School)
- IB MYP Language Arts 7, IB MYP Language Arts Extended 6 (Beville Middle School, Fred Lynn Middle School, Hampton Middle School, and Unity Braxton Middle School)
- IB MYP Language Arts 8, IB MYP Language Arts Extended 8 (Beville Middle School, Fred Lynn Middle School, Hampton Middle School, and Unity Braxton Middle School)
- Advanced Middle Years Programme English 9 (Gar-Field High School and Unity Reed High School)
- Advanced Middle Years Programme English 10 (Gar-Field High School and Unity Reed High School)

Language Acquisition

Importance of Language and Culture in Learning

Language and culture are key to effective communication – knowing how, when, why, and to whom to say something. While grammar and vocabulary remain important, modern language instruction emphasizes real-world communication, including cultural and social context.

All teachers are language teachers. Students learning in a language other than their home language engage in a complex process: learning a language, learning through language, and learning about language (Halliday, 2008).

PWCS supports these learners through inclusive, language-rich classrooms that promote reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while affirming identity and building background knowledge.

All students have equal access to the curriculum, regardless of language background. Instructional practices are designed to support diverse learners in a safe, engaging environment that fosters both language development and conceptual understanding.

Studying another language and culture enhances personal growth, deepens understanding of one's own language, and builds appreciation for others. It also strengthens interdisciplinary connections – linking language learning with history, science, math, and the arts – and prepares students to be effective communicators and responsible global citizens.

The IB middle and high school sequence of course offerings is shown in the table below.

Grade	Introduction to Foreign Languages	Spanish	French	Spanish for Fluent Speakers
Grade 6	MYP Level 1	MYP Level 1A	MYP Level 1A	
Grade 7		MYP Level 1A MYP Level 1B MYP Level 1	MYP Level 1A MYP Level 1B MYP Level 1	Spanish for Fluent Speakers 1A - Beginning Level
Grade 8		MYP Level 1B MYP Level 1 MYP Level 2	MYP Level 1B MYP Level 1 MYP Level 2	Spanish for Fluent Speakers 1B - Beginning Level
Grade 9		MYP Level 2 Advanced MYP Level 3	Advanced MYP Level 3 DP Level 4	Spanish for Fluent Speakers 1 -Beginning Level Spanish for Fluent Speakers 2 - Intermediate Level
Grade 10		Advanced MYP Level 3 DP Level 4	Advanced MYP Level 3 DP Level 4	Spanish for Fluent Speakers 2 -Intermediate Level Spanish for Fluent Speakers 3 - Advanced Level

Grade 11		DP Level 4 DP Level 5 SL	DP Level 4 DP Level 5 SL	Spanish for Fluent Speakers 3 - Advanced Level IB DP Spanish A1 SL (Gar-Field High School)
Grade 12		DP Level 4 DP Level 5 SL DP Level 5 HL	DP Level 4 DP Level 5 SL DP Level 5 HL	IB DP Spanish A1 SL or HL (Gar- Field High School)



Career-Related Programme

Students taking a Diploma Programme (DP) Language Acquisition course are required to take at least two other DP courses to satisfy the Career Programme (CP) requirement. DP Language Acquisition is not allowed to be one of the courses used as the two DP courses for the CP, except in very specific cases where a student will be asked to use Duolingo to learn a different language outside of the classroom. All students work on obtaining their language development evidence during year one of the program and then reflect on their evidence to create their language portfolio during year two.

Students not taking a DP Language Acquisition course can choose to either take a language acquisition course during their first year in the program (this course can be a DP course or another language acquisition course offered at our school) or they can use Duolingo and be part of a Duolingo classroom to work on their language development outside of school.

IB CP Language Portfolio Development

Students spend year one of the program gaining evidence of language development and spend year two reflecting on that evidence and creating their portfolios. Students are monitored by their language acquisition teacher during their first year in the program as they grow in their language learning. During the second year, the Personal and Professional Skills Teacher, along

with the IB CP Coordinator, monitors student progress as they reflect on their learning and create their portfolios.

Connections to the career-related study are made during the second year in the Personal and Professional Skills class. This connection is reflected in and is a part of their final language portfolios.

Language development has not changed much since authorization, but we are starting to move away from using an evidence and reflection model for our portfolios and instead providing options for a more project-based portfolio. The project-based portfolio will allow students to create new content using their newly developed language while also reflecting on their language learning process.

IB CP Language Development Objectives

The Language Development objectives are organized into four communicative processes across the six phases. The cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural aspects of communication intertwine within each of the four objectives.

Students are expected to develop competencies to communicate in the target language:

- Appropriately, accurately, and effectively
- In an increasing range of social, cultural, and academic contexts
- For an increasing variety of purposes

Teachers must consider these objectives when planning, teaching, assessing, and reporting on the student's language development and communicative competence.

At the beginning of language development, students map their language skills against the four objectives and do so again on completion.

Students' learning should cover all the objectives at a conceptually and linguistically appropriate level for each phase.

Oral Communication Objectives

- Listen and respond
- Interact socially
- Speak for specific purposes

Research professional etiquette in a culture you are interested in. Write a script for introductions and an informal conversation in a professional scenario associated with your career-related study (CRS). Perform and film the role play with two of your peers.

With a peer, plan and enact a university, internship, or job interview in the target language.

Visual Interpretation Objectives

- Interpret and engage with images presented with spoken and written language.
- Support opinions and personal responses with examples from the text. Visual texts: posters, maps, graphics, films, etc.

Select two posters or commercials on the same topic from your culture and from the target culture. Identify differences and similarities in how the message is conveyed and explain what they may suggest about cultural similarities and differences.

Collect images of items, people, or groups connected to your CRS. Identify patterns in cultural representation and visuals that could be misinterpreted in different cultures.

Reading Comprehension Objectives

- Understand information
- Interpret and engage with written text
- Support opinions and personal responses with examples from the text

Read through the website of a company, organization, or university that you are interested in and that is in a country where the target language is spoken. Identify key points for potential applicants.

Research an organization or group from a country you are not familiar with but might like to work in. How does the individual career development pathway compare to that of a similar local organization for your CRS?

Writing Objectives

- Organize and express thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions, and information in writing
- Write for specific purposes
- Write with increasing accuracy

Write a set of clear, concise, and easy-to-follow instructions in the target language for using equipment in a work environment (for example, an office, workshop, studio, or kitchen).

Write an application letter in the target language for an internship with an organization you are interested in.

Direct Student Supports

PWCS provides a range of support to assist students with language acquisition. The supports in place are:

- English language learners (ELL) students are screened before entering school by taking the WIDA (World Class Instructional Design Assessment) test. This test assesses students' abilities to read, write, listen, and speak at their current ELL level.
- ELL students take the WIDA mid-winter each year to track their language acquisition.
- Academic language instruction is provided to students at English language proficiency levels 1-5 for success in language arts, math, social studies, and science.
- Delivery styles to maximize service opportunities: co-taught, push-in, pull-out, inclusion, and EL-only class.
- Support from ESOL-certified teachers and content teachers knowledgeable in techniques that support English language development.
- PWCS' 1-to-1 device policy allows students to use technology to help support language acquisition. The main support in classrooms is Microsoft Translate. The translation app allows students to communicate with each other. Live, in-person conversations can be captioned and translated.

Support for Multilingual Families

Family and community engagement is a core priority in the PWCS Strategic Plan. We believe strong partnerships between home and school are essential to student success.

PWCS is committed to supporting families through interpretation and translation services. Each school has a parent liaison who serves as a bridge between families and the school – helping with communication, connecting families to resources, organizing events, and guiding them through school procedures.

While school materials are primarily in English, key documents and essential communications are translated into the most requested languages. PWCS also provides professional interpreters for parent-teacher conferences and other school-related matters at no cost to families.

If an in-person interpreter is unavailable, staff use a language identification poster to determine language needs and connect families to services. Families can also access translation tools such as machine translations through the "Auto Translate" menu and manual translations in the

PWCS Translations section on the PWCS website. For in-person support, families may contact their student's school or the Global Welcome Center.

Library

The PWCS school library program connects all learners by empowering them to Think, Create, Share, and Grow (AASL 2018). School librarians have the unique opportunity to impact instruction in every content area and every grade level. In this environment, students can combine classroom skills with unique learning experiences centered around all forms of literacy.

School librarians curate collections that focus on the unique needs of their students and engage them in an ongoing cycle to discover, organize, describe, promote, and reflect on resources in all formats.

Students visiting the library have the option to select library books they want to read without limits based on reading level or factors determined by others. Students browse and select choice material by using the library catalog.

Resources and Instructional Materials

Libraries provide students with access to materials to support academic needs, student growth, literacy development, and personal interests. Certified school librarians co-teach lessons that focus on multiple literacies. Literacies are immersed in the National School Library Standards defined by the American Association of School Librarians, which empower students to think, create, share, and grow their learning through the PWCS curriculum and the Virginia Standards of Learning ([VAASL](#) 2018).

Staff Professional Development

Decisions about professional development are guided by the needs of each school. Professional development could be IB professional development at off-site/on-site workshops and shared best practices at staff meetings and/or collaborative learning team meetings. Additionally, staff have the opportunity to attend other training courses that are content-specific and designed to enhance their expertise in strategies to support students' needs.

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