



مدارس الفارس العالمية  
Al FARIS International School



## Al Faris International School

### Language Policy

*Updated: May 2020*

#### **Revision Process**

This policy was first developed during the school year 2013/14 by the DP coordinator in collaboration with language teachers at Al Faris International School. The IB coordinators, HODs, and subject coordinators reviewed the policy and then it was communicated with teachers during in-school service training sessions. This policy is published on the school website and its practices are communicated with parents in the handbook and during Open House meetings and other events, which are planned to develop their understanding of the school vision and practices about language. Besides, this policy is frequently updated and revised by the PLT and all teachers and considering parents' feedback and learners' achievement in communicative skills and language development.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to help the community understand the FIS perspective on language in addition to the main understandings, beliefs, practices, and policies we adhere to that meet the needs of students and reflect the principles of the IB continuum programme.

#### **Philosophy**

FIS believes in the importance of supporting the mother tongue and acquiring other language skills to help students

- Communicate confidently
- Respect and tolerate other cultures
- Prepare students to be effective global citizens.

FIS recognizes that in a transdisciplinary programme, PYP, language is essential to inquiry-based learning and the construction of knowledge. Relevant, authentic and



meaningful contexts, social interaction, and connection to prior knowledge are all essential components to effective language learning in the PYP; therefore, FIS believes that:

- The acquisition of more than one language and the maintenance of the mother tongue (first language) enrich personal growth and help facilitate international mindedness and understanding.
- The person's mother tongue is a direct link to the person's culture, identity, and heritage.
- The development of the mother tongue is crucial to maintaining cultural identity; thus, we encourage the use of mother tongue as a tool for understanding and sharing knowledge.
- The acquisition of additional languages allows students to further reflect upon and explore different cultural perspectives.
- Learning language is integral to the development of students' identity as well as making meaning of the world around them.
- Arabic has equal importance with the foreign languages; thus, first language of Arab students is to be supported.
- The development of language is fundamental to the instinctive need to communicate.
- The development of the essential language skills – reading and writing, listening and speaking, viewing and presenting – is an important part of a student's development.
- The learning process involves learning language, learning about the language, and learning through the language. (Halliday's Model)
- Language provides an intellectual framework that supports the conceptual development and critical thinking of students.
- Language is an important connecting element across the curriculum.
- Both the form and the functionality of language should be encouraged and appreciated.
- All teachers are language teachers with responsibilities in using language as a tool to facilitate communication.
- The language development of students is a shared responsibility of all community members: teachers, students, and parents.



In brief, language learning provides the students with an opportunity to expand their view of the world and develop in social contexts, encourage critical reflection on the relation between language and culture and language and thought, help to build practical skills that may be used in other disciplines, and foster their understanding of the interrelation between language and the human nature.

Students who are non-native speakers of English, and who have been identified as being in need of additional English language support, are immersed in regular classroom activities for the maximum amount of time possible. In some cases, students attend Reading classes for additional English language support to enhance their English proficiency.

### **School Language Profile**

The students at FIS are placed according to these categories:

- Bilingual students who speak their mother tongue Arabic as well as English will study Language and literature in the DP.
- English speaking students with prior Language Acquisition skills will study Language and literature as English and Language Acquisition as Arabic or French.
- The student in MYP Language Acquisition will move from one phase to another if he/she fulfilled the requirements.
- Non – English speaking students will be provided with ELL program.

### **Language of Instruction**

The language of instruction is English except for our French and Arabic classes where instruction is delivered in the target language. Arabic is offered during Arabic, Islamic and History & Geography of the Kingdom (Requirements of the Ministry of Education) whereas French is offered during the French classes.



## **Language of communication**

### **Oral Language – Listening and Speaking**

“Oral language encompasses all aspects of listening and speaking—skills that are essential for ongoing language development, for learning and for relating to others. Listening (the receptive mode) and speaking (the expressive mode) work together in a transactional process between listeners and speakers.” (PYP Scope and Sequence, page 16) Oral language skills are deemed to be the ‘building blocks’ for future language development of students and in the development of relationships with the community. Furthermore, the thinking process is further enhanced by the consolidation of listening and speaking skills.

### **Visual Language - Viewing and Presenting**

Viewing and presenting are fundamental processes that are historically and universally powerful and significant. The receptive processes (viewing) and expressive processes (presenting) are connected and allow for reciprocal growth in understanding; neither process has meaning except in relation to the other. These processes involve interpreting, using and constructing visuals and multimedia in a variety of situations and for a range of purposes and audiences. They allow students to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs. Visual texts may be paper, electronic or live, observable forms of communication that are consciously constructed to convey meaning and immediately engaging viewers, allowing them instant access to data. Examples of visual texts include: advertisements, brochures, computer games and programmes, websites, posters, maps, charts, graphs, etc.

“These processes involve interpreting, using and constructing visuals and multimedia in a variety of situations and for a range of purposes and audiences. They allow students to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs.” (PYP Scope and Sequence, page 18). It is important to note the connectedness of the visual and presentation aspect of language development, which in turn integrates the use of technology into this medium. It is acknowledged that in contemporary society visual language



underpins a significant portion of the language development of three individuals; for example through cartoons, graphic organizers, electronic mediums (e.g. ipads and ebooks), illustrations and websites.

## **Written Language – Reading**

Reading is a developmental process that involves constructing meaning from text. The process is interactive and involves the reader’s purpose for reading, the reader’s prior knowledge and experience and the text itself. Enthusiasm and curiosity are essential ingredients in promoting the desire to read. Children of all ages need to experience and enjoy a wide variety of interesting, informative, intriguing, and creative reading materials.

The written text is fundamental for the development of the concept of reading for meaning; whereby experiences and knowledge of events surrounding the given text are highly valued. In turn the expressive nature of this medium is appreciated as individuals learn to use this as means to communicate identity. It is important to note that ‘accuracy and skills grow out of the process of producing meaningful communication ‘(PYP Scope and Sequence, page 19).

Children learn to read by reading. To develop lifelong reading habits, learners need to have extended periods of time to read for pleasure, interest, and information, experiencing an extensive range of quality fiction and non-fiction texts. As learners engage with interesting and appealing texts, appropriate to their experiences and developmental phase, they acquire the skills, strategies, and conceptual understanding necessary to become competent, motivated, independent readers.

## **Written Language - Writing**

Writing is a way of expressing ourselves. Writing is primarily concerned with communicating meaning and intention. When children are encouraged to express themselves and reveal their own “voice”, writing is a genuine expression of the individual. The quality of expression lies in the authenticity of the message and



the desire to communicate. Over time, writing involves developing a variety of structures, strategies and literary techniques (spelling, grammar, plot, character, punctuation, voice) and applying them with increasing skill and effectiveness. The writer's ability to communicate his or her intention and share meaning takes precedence over accuracy and the application to skills. Accuracy and skills grow out of the process of producing meaningful communication. Children learn to write by writing. Acquiring a set of isolated skills will not turn them into writers. It is only in the process of sharing their ideas in written form that skills are developed applied and refined to produce increasingly effective written communication.

The four language continuums in the Language scope and sequence (2009) have been organized into five developmental phases with each phase building upon and complementing the previous one. These phases have not been named in order to avoid the value judgment implied in labelling a learner as “developing” or “proficient”, for example. The continuums make explicit the conceptual understandings that need to be developed at each phase. Evidence of these understandings is described in the behaviors or learning outcomes associated with each phase

### ***Oral language—listening and speaking***

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<b><i>Phase 1</i></b>	Learners show an understanding of the value of speaking and listening to communicate. They recognize that sounds are associated with objects, or with symbolic representations of them. They are using language to name their environment, to get to know each other, to initiate and explore relationships, to question and inquire.
<b><i>Phase 2</i></b>	Learners show an understanding that sounds are associated with objects, events and ideas, or with symbolic representations of them. They are aware that an object or symbol may have different sounds or words associated with it in different languages. They are beginning to be cognizant about the high degree of variability of language and its uses.
<b><i>Phase 3</i></b>	Learners show an understanding of the wide range of purposes of spoken language: that it instructs, informs, entertains, reassures; that each listener's perception of what they hear is unique. They are compiling rules about the use of different aspects of language.

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**Phase 4** Learners show an understanding of the conventions associated with speaking and listening and the value of adhering to those conventions. They are aware that language is a vehicle for becoming knowledgeable; for negotiating understanding; and for negotiating the social dimension.

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**Phase 5** Learners are able to understand the difference between literal and figurative language; how to use language differently for different purposes. They are aware that they are building on their previous experiences and using language to construct new meaning.

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### ***Visual Language—viewing and presenting***

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**Phase 1** Learners show an understanding that the world around them is full of visual language that conveys meaning. They are able to interpret and respond to visual texts. Although much of their own visual language is spontaneous, they are extending and using visual language in more purposeful ways.

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**Phase 2** Learners identify, interpret and respond to a range of visual text prompts and show an understanding that different types of visual texts serve different purposes. They use this knowledge to create their own visual texts for particular purposes.

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**Phase 3** Learners show an understanding that visual text may represent reality or fantasy. They recognize that visual text resources can provide factual information and increase understanding. They use visual text in a reflective way to enrich their storytelling or presentations, and to organize and represent information.

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**Phase 4** Learners show an open-mindedness about the use of a range of visual text resources to access information. They think critically, and are articulate about the use of visual text to influence the viewer. They are able to use visual imagery to present factual information, or to tell a story.

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**Phase 5** Through inquiry, learners engage with an increasing range of visual text resources. As well as exploring the viewing and presenting strategies that are a part of the planned learning environment, they select and use strategies that suit their learning styles. They are able to make connections between visual imagery and social commentary. They show more discernment in selecting information they consider reliable. They are able to use visual imagery to support a position.

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## *Written Language—reading*

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<b>Phase 1</b>	Learners show an understanding that print represents the real or the imagined world. They know that reading gives them knowledge and pleasure; that it can be a social activity or an individual activity. They have a concept of a “book”, and an awareness of some of its structural elements. They use visual cues to recall sounds and the words they are “reading” to construct meaning.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Learners show an understanding that language can be represented visually through codes and symbols. They are extending their data bank of printed codes and symbols and are able to recognize them in new contexts. They understand that reading is a vehicle for learning, and that the combination of codes conveys meaning.
<b>Phase 3</b>	Learners show an understanding that text is used to convey meaning in different ways and for different purposes—they are developing an awareness of context. They use strategies, based on what they know, to read for understanding. They recognize that the structure and organization of text conveys meaning.
<b>Phase 4</b>	Learners show an understanding of the relationship between reading, thinking and reflection. They know that reading is extending their world, both real and imagined, and that there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Most importantly, they have established reading routines and relish the process of reading.
<b>Phase 5</b>	Learners show an understanding of the strategies authors use to engage them. They have their favorite authors and can articulate reasons for their choices. Reading provides a sense of accomplishment, not only in the process, but in the access, it provides them to further knowledge about, and understanding of, the world.

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## *Written Language—writing*

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<b>Phase 1</b>	Learners show an understanding that writing is a form of expression to be enjoyed. They know that how you write and what you write conveys meaning; that writing is a purposeful act, with both individual and collaborative aspects.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Learners show an understanding that writing is a means of recording, remembering, and communicating. They know that writing involves the use of codes and symbols to convey meaning to others; that writing and reading uses the same codes and symbols. They know that writing can describe the factual or the imagined world.
<b>Phase 3</b>	Learners show an understanding that writing can be structured in different ways to express different purposes. They use imagery in their stories to enhance the meaning and to make it more enjoyable to write and read. They understand that writing can produce a variety of responses from readers. They can tell a story and create characters in their writing.
<b>Phase 4</b>	Learners show an understanding of the role of the author and are able to take on the responsibilities of authorship. They demonstrate an understanding of story structure and are able to make critical judgments about their writing, and the writing of others. They are able to rewrite to improve the quality of their writing.

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**Phase 5** Learners show an understanding of the conventions pertaining to writing, in its different forms, that are widely accepted. In addition, they demonstrate a high level of integration of the strands of language in order to create meaning in a manner that suits their learning styles. They can analyze the writing of others and identify common or recurring themes or issues. They accept feedback from others.

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### **Languages Offered**

FIS offers the following:

Language and Literature: Arabic A and English A (in MYP and DP)

Language Acquisition: Arabic B, English B, and Arabic ab initio & French ab initio (for non-Arab speakers) in the DP and French in the MYP.

Students will have to sit for language diagnostic tests at the end of the first term and then at the beginning of the year to assess their level of proficiency and therefore be admitted to the suitable phase. In case of need, English language acquisition class will be offered in the MYP.

Students begin acquiring the language from primary years until the DP years. Non-Arab speakers have the option to choose a third language either French ab initio or Arabic ab initio in the DP.

### **Language Practices-Language and Literature**

- All teachers will use a wide range of strategies to provide a balance between the students' first language and second language of instruction.
- Students will be allowed to appreciate language as a tool, so emergent writing is to be encouraged.
- Conventional writing will not be emphasized in preschool. It will be emphasized gradually starting with the age group 6-7 years.
- The early emphasis will be on the sounds of the letters. Students will then move to relating sounds to letters then to conventional language.
- Conversations will be emphasized, so students are given chances to build their vocabulary and become good readers and communicators. Students will be encouraged to ask their own genuine questions.



- Students will be encouraged to express themselves in various forms of communication, whether oral or written.
- Students will be encouraged to comprehend language through listening, reading, and viewing and to express language through speaking, writing, and presenting. Since all these language areas go hand in hand, the school promotes integrated language development.
- Language is integrated into the program of inquiry. Students use language all throughout the units of inquiry by asking questions, researching, presenting research findings, etc.
- Students engage in inquiry-based authentic language learning engagements. Thus, language experiences are relevant, challenging, significant, and engaging.
- Random code-switching while communicating with students is not allowed.
- Bilingual labels will be used while designing learning environments.
- Preschool and elementary publications and notices to parents will be written in Standard Arabic, English or French.

In the MYP, students in language acquisition are grouped into phases. In Language acquisition, emphasis is placed on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Formative and summative assessments are used to enhance teaching and evaluate student progress. Students will sit for a placement test to determine in which phase they will continue with language acquisition from PYP (once applicable). These phases are divided into:

- a) Phases 1-2 which is considered emergent
- b) Phases 3-4 which is considered capable
- c) Phases 5-6 which is considered proficient (*for more information, please refer to the MYP Language acquisition guide, 2014*)

Class distribution will depend on the number of students and the constraints of the timetable.

Students' progress from the MYP based on the language acquisition phase and are then placed in the appropriate language acquisition in the DP.



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DP students starting at the ab initio level have the option of changing to standard level at any time during the two years of the DP when sufficient progress is noticed. Students will study the Arabic subjects (ministry requires fulfilling the credit hours required to graduate), and non-Arab speakers will take special Arabic/ Arabic ab initio and cover the same ministry's requirements but in English Language.

*For more information on Assessment in the IB programs, please refer to the assessment policy and Inclusion policy.*

### **Language Admissions and Support**

Students will have to sit for language diagnostic test the end of the first term and then at the beginning of the year to assess their level of proficiency and therefore be admitted to the suitable phase. In case of need, English language acquisition class will be offered in the MYP.

Students who are non-native speakers of English, and who have been identified as being in need of additional English language support, are immersed in regular classroom activities for the maximum amount of time possible. In some cases, students attend Reading classes for additional English language support to enhance their English proficiency.

Students are encouraged to maintain their cultural identity and native language while celebrating other countries that share the language.

- **Support for first language**

Students are encouraged to use the library that contains multiple resources for their first language. In addition, FIS established an agreement with King Fahed Public Library. Students are welcome to visit and use its resources.



Additionally, parents are invited into the classroom and to school events whenever possible to share their language and culture. We are committed to providing a school environment that supports students in their first language.

During their first years at preschool, students are encouraged to use their mother tongue colloquial language for communicating with peers and adults. The mother tongue colloquial language is the starting point for building students' literacy. Students are encouraged to feel at ease with the language, so they could easily express themselves and communicate with their teachers and peers. Students will start to be exposed to Standard English and Arabic Language. The Standard Arabic and English will be used in oral discussions, reading stories, writing, etc. As students move from one phase to another, there will be more stress on Standard languages than on colloquial ones.

- **Support for students who are not yet proficient in the language of instruction**

FIS provides support classes in English for students from Years 1 to 5. These classes will ensure that the students are provided with the appropriate English skills for them to meet the Language and Literature's class objectives. These classes will continue to ensure students reached the level of proficiency required.

The school will provide that multiple resources to assist with finding tutors during school hours, and if needed after school hours. Students with different mother tongue language can take self-taught course in the DP.

- **ELL Programs**

FIS work on certain routines and programs to help establish better literacy of English language among the community of the school.

**Daily 5** is a literacy management system invented by Joan Moser and Gail Boucher, 2 sisters from America. The system has 5 components- read to self, read



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to someone, listen to reading, work on writing and word work. Each component is introduced separately, and students work to build their stamina to be able to independently work on a learning task for approximately 20 mins (depending on child's age). When 2 or 3 components have been introduced and the students are able to work independently for 20 mins, the students are able to choose which component they are going to work on each round. While the students are working independently the teacher is either working with individual students or with groups of students with similar needs to develop their reading, spelling or writing skills. Each round lasts for approximately 20 mins( depending on age), after which the students are brought back together as a whole group for a 5-7 minute explicit mini lesson which focuses on developing their reading, comprehension, spelling or writing skills.

These explicit lessons are taken from the CAFE menu. CAFE stands for C- comprehension A- Accuracy F- fluency and E- expanding vocabulary.

#### Leveled Reading Classes:

Upon the evaluation of the students their teachers and the recommendation of their parents, students attend leveled reading classes (under the ELL program) for a certain duration of time of the day to enrich their English proficiency.



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## ***Acknowledgements***

*PYP: From principles into practice (2014)*

*Making the PYP Happen (2009)*

*MYP: From principles into practice (2014), “[Implementation policies](#)”*

*DP: From principles into practice (2014)*

*Coordinator Support Material (2016)*