



# AKAL ACADEMY BARU SAHIB

## Language Policy

### Language Philosophy

Language is the means through which we process thought and interact with the world. The ability to use language imaginatively, flexibly and in context is essential to development as individuals and as members of society. Language is also the medium through which we learn and express ourselves across the curriculum. Its study provides us with the skills to access and demonstrate knowledge and understanding for a variety of purposes, social and academic. In short, the study of language is essential to our development as rational, creative and successful members of a world community.

All students are language learners, regardless of what language they speak. Each student has his or her own background and their unique contributions, which is crucial for defining their cognitive development and in maintaining their cultural identity. At Akal Academy, we provide a learning community that promotes and supports language development in a multilingual environment which fosters confident, creative and responsible learners through inquiry based instruction. We believe that the twenty-first century students must be able to understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication to be able to successfully collaborate in a global society.

We acknowledge that language is fundamental to learning and permeates all subject areas. Inkeeping with this, about 40% of classroom time is allotted to teaching of languages. Language is seen as a transdisciplinary element throughout the curriculum. Therefore, all teachers are language teachers and play a significant role in the language development and learning of each student. Through language development, students are given the tools they need to interpret the world around them. Language is also a major component in encouraging understanding and tolerance of other culture groups and perspectives. Language is taught in context and addresses the following modalities: listening, speaking, reading, writing and presenting. It is not sufficient to learn about the language but also nurture and appreciation of the language.

To create good communicators, a language-rich environment is essential. Language is learned in a context where risk-taking is encouraged and mistakes are considered inevitable and necessary. Talk in the classroom is fundamental to learning. Language skills are acquired most effectively from using language in meaningful contexts, for real reasons and from experiencing real, multicultural literature.

Teachers are models of language usage and attitudes toward language and literature.

### Linguistic Profile of PYP Students at Akal Academy

Akal Academy serves a student population from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. Our students come from over 07 countries, 18 states of India, speaking over 10 different languages. English is our primary language of instruction; however, a diagnostic assessment

of all students is conducted at the beginning of the academic year to ascertain proficiency levels of individual students. This is used to prepare focused, remedial interventions to bring the students at par with grade-level proficiency. The progress and impact of these interventions are regularly monitored, both formally and informally.

## **Language of Instruction**

English is the primary language of instruction at Akal Academy. The school is committed to develop English among its primary students so that they become global communicators and access the curriculum equitably. It is assumed that students who join Akal Academy in Nursery/Kindergarten would not know any English but be able to communicate effectively in mother tongue. As such, most communication in Nursery for the first three months is bilingual. As students get more familiar with commonly used vocabulary and instructions, the teacher increasingly communicate in English.

Curriculum: Since English is not the mother-tongue of all our students, we have adopted a developmental approach to English acquisition. In November 2013, Akal Academy has created its own scope and sequence for English Language based on the IB PYP scope and sequence as reference. This has been implemented from March 2014. This is reviewed every year for refinement and relevance.

Planning: While language is transdisciplinary and forms the basis of all teaching learning under the Units Of Inquiry (UOI), Akal Academy has decided to teach phonological awareness, grammar and semantics as stand-alone using the PYP planner and inquiry-based approach. The practical usage of these language building blocks will be incorporated into the UOI. For instance, the format and structure of letter writing will be taught outside the UOI and once the students have learnt that, letter-writing will be incorporated into the UOI. For this purpose, Nursery-Grade 1 will spend up to 5 hours per week and Grade 2-5 will spend up to 6 hours per week learning the fundamentals of the Language of Instruction.

Teaching-Learning: About 20% of teaching time is devoted to teaching-learning of English, which is taken by homeroom teachers. Some of the ways in which teachers provide these language learning opportunities include modeling, vocabulary instruction, songs, rhymes, poems, predictable text, read-aloud, reading with partners, small group work, peer interactions, role-play, oral presentations, re-telling experience and direct teacher instruction. Teachers at Akal Academy create a print-rich environment and encourage students to articulate in a secure environment.

With the help of Assistant Teachers, Homeroom teachers plan the language development of diverse learners with distinct learning needs/styles. They use differentiated teaching learning strategies like leveled worksheets.

Assessment: It is important to allow for a variety of assessments in order to ensure that students are given multiple opportunities to show their listening and speaking abilities. These assessments frequently include: oral presentations, one-on-one teacher student interactions, teacher/self/peer editing, anecdotal records, informal and formal observations, reading logs, reading responses, oral or written re-telling, whole-group discussions, small-group discussions and standardized achievement testing. Progress in listening and speaking is reported to

parents through self-reflection, teacher and student-led conferences, performances, graded work, progress reports, report card, and standardized tests.

All new students are administered a standardized test in reading and writing to ascertain their language abilities and needs. Based on the result of this test, if required, an ILP may be designed and a student may be put on support to bring him/her at par with the grade level.

We report student's language development to parents through portfolios, parent-teacher conferences, student-led conferences progress reports, graded work, report cards, and standardized tests. The reading program has been revamped and enhanced in 2014 with introduction of reading journal, running records and novel study while designing the Akal Academy language scope and sequence. In 2017, novel study using study guides will be piloted for grade 4/5 readers.

Strategies to Support Teachers - PYP teachers are provided support in the form of professional development sessions on teaching of English and Mentors who guide them from time to time. Additionally, Grade Heads have been appointed in March 2015 to liaise between Mentors and teachers under their supervision. Appropriate resources have been procured for the Language Lab and job description of Assistant Teachers has been revised so that teachers address the language learning needs of the students more effectively. There is also a reading assessment test, conducted twice a year by the PYP Librarian, so that teachers have diagnostic data to inform teaching-learning. This along with psycho-educational assessment by the school Counselor and teachers' feedback is used to identify students who may need additional support in language.

Resources: Akal Academy has a dedicated Librarian and resource-rich library that caters to the language learning needs of the PYP program. Additionally, the school has set up a PYP Library, a resource room where students and teachers can access literature and reference pertaining to Program of Inquiry. Each grade has a scheduled 80-90 minutes per week to browse and explore resources from the PYP Library. The PYP and Main Library is also open on holidays and after school hours for teachers and students.

Working collaboratively with homeroom teachers, the Librarian has identified learning outcomes from the scope and sequence document that can be developed/supported through the reading program in the library. The Librarian engages students in age-appropriate language learning strategies such as story-telling, role-play, reading response, Reader's Theatre etc. Inquiry-based learning forms the basis of engagement with the students in the PYP Library. They participate in the collaborative planning meeting and recommend materials from and linkages with PYP Library. For instance, if a grade is inquiring into governments, the PYP Library will recommend books that the teacher can use and engage the students around the theme of government during the PYP Library time. These may then be borrowed by the grade for class library during the course of that UOI.

A copy of all IB and school documents is also available in the library to enable teachers hold effective and more informed vertical and horizontal meetings.

### **Language Support**

At the time of admission and at the beginning of the academic year, English proficiency of the Grades 1-5 students is assessed. Based on this evaluation, Akal Academy identifies students that require additional language support through Language Support Program. Grade 1-5 students who require this additional support are referred to the Language Learning Lab for

remedial learning. The Assistant Teachers gives individualized attention and support to such students and support in the Language Lab is provided through a multimedia curriculum targeting both receptive and expressive language acquisition.

During class time, Assistant Teacher gives individualized attention to students who are a part of the Language Support Program with simplified vocabulary, differentiated worksheets and as advised in the Individualized Language Plans. The classroom focus is on developing these students' oral and visual language through discussion, role play, illustrations, gestures, symbols, and modeling of proper spoken and written language to raise the students' proficiency level in the English language and make gains in their academic achievement.

## **Second Language**

Punjabi, the mother-tongue of about 80% of student population, is the second language at the Akal Academy. Offered from Kindergarten onwards, it is allotted about 12-15% of the teaching time. Grades KG-5 spends 6 periods per week to learn Punjabi.

### Curriculum:

The school has its own scope and sequence for Punjabi. About 12% - 15% of the instruction time is devoted to Punjabi. While the grammar and syntax is taught stand-alone, most of the reading, writing, speaking and listening is through transdisciplinary UOIs.

Teaching-Learning: Akal Academy maintains a collection of mother tongue resources for Punjabi students. Some of the ways in which teachers provide these language learning opportunities include modeling, vocabulary instruction, songs, rhymes, poems, predictable text, read-aloud, reading with partners, small group work, peer to peer interactions, role-play, oral presentations, re-telling experience and direct teacher instruction. Punjabi teachers attend the collaborative planning and reflection meeting (horizontal and vertical) and incorporate the PYP essential elements in their teaching-learning. Regular morning assemblies to be organized to give opportunity to the students to practice and demonstrate their fluency in mother tongue.

Assessment: Second language assessments frequently include: oral presentations, one-on-one teacher student interactions, teacher/self/peer editing, anecdotal records, informal and formal observations, reading logs, reading responses, oral or written re-telling, whole-group discussions, small-group discussions and standardized achievement testing. Progress in listening and speaking is reported to parents through self-reflection, teacher and student-led conferences, performances, graded work, progress reports, report card and standardized tests, incorporating the PYP essential elements.

## **Hindi as an Additional Language**

At Akal Academy, Hindi is offered as an Additional Language from Grade LKG onwards. Offered as a compulsory additional language, students spend 2-3 hours per week to learn Hindi. It is an optional language for the NRI students.

### Curriculum:

The school has its own scope and sequence for Hindi. About 5% of the instruction time is devoted to Hindi. While the grammar and syntax is taught stand-alone, most of the reading and

writing is transdisciplinary UOIs. Hindi teachers attend the collaborative planning and reflection meeting (horizontal and vertical).

Teaching-Learning: Akal Academy maintains a collection of resources for Hindi students. Some of the ways in which teachers provide these language learning opportunities include modeling, vocabulary instruction, songs, rhymes, poems, predictable text, read-aloud, reading with partners, small group work, peer to peer interactions, role-play, oral presentations, re-telling experience and direct teacher instruction incorporating the PYP essential elements.

Assessment: Additional language assessments frequently include: oral presentations, one-on-one teacher student interactions, teacher/self/peer editing, anecdotal records, informal and formal observations, reading logs, reading responses, oral or written re-telling, whole-group discussions, small-group discussions and standardized achievement testing. Progress in listening and speaking is reported to parents through self-reflection, teacher and student-led conferences, performances, graded work, progress reports, report card, and standardized tests, including the assessment of PYP essential elements.

### **Support for Mother-tongue(s)**

Akal Academy recognizes the crucial importance of students developing and maintaining literacy in their mother tongue, for their personal and educational growth.

About 5% of students speak non-Punjabi/Hindi languages such as Pahari, Bengali etc. Akal Academy organizes language sharing through regular story-telling, show and tell sessions etc for these languages so that all the students are exposed to multilingual culture. Regular interactions with resource persons from the community are organized to give students a flavor of different languages.

### **Transdisciplinary Language:**

Besides the above-mentioned languages, at Akal Academy, we ensure that the student learns the many languages that there are in order to learn the different disciplines and be able to express and articulate in the different disciplines.

The Language of mathematics, arts, music, technology and the hundred languages of children will be given due attention by the teachers both within as well as outside the Program of Inquiry.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### Students:

Akal Academy students gradually develop respect and responsibility for their language learning with the help of appropriate instructions and linguistic exposure.

Students are encouraged to actively pursue opportunities within and outside the classroom to enrich their communication skills.

Students must develop literacy skills by taking interest to read material that reflects diversity and develop appreciation for the same.

### Classroom Teachers:

Akal Academy teachers are well conversant with the IB Language scope and sequence from Nursery to Grade 5 and have prepared their own language scope and sequence aligned to the IB document. They use differentiated instructional strategies and assessment tasks. They design balanced literacy program with fair time and focus allotted to reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and presenting. The instructional activities and assessment tasks require higher order thinking skills making them thoughtful inquirers and effective communicators. Teachers also create opportunities for students to acquire and apply new language learning in the wider context of community and the world. These are in the form of extra-curricular activities that support the language program.

Additionally, Grade Heads have been appointed to liaise between Mentors and teachers under their supervision.

Akal Academy teachers are also committed to their own professional development and will bring in innovative and effective ways of language instruction.

### Assistant Teachers:

The Assistant Teachers at Akal have the shared responsibility with the homeroom teachers to address language learning gaps and needs of students implementing differentiation and Individualized Language Plans. They are expected to provide one-on-one language scaffolds for students during the UOI time as planned with the homeroom teachers.

### PYP Coordinator:

The PYPC ensures that the language program of Akal Academy is scheduled and organized as per the language policy. He monitors the implementation of the program and provides necessary support and guidance to the teachers for successful implementation of the program. He also ensures that the teachers maintain proper documentation pertaining to their own work and the work of students in alignment with the language policy.

The PYPC ensures that the teachers plan collaboratively to articulate the Language program vertically and horizontally through the grades. The PYPC ensures proper implementation of the curriculum and appropriate accommodations and adequate support, whenever required by students.

### Head of School:

The Head of School ensures that the students have access to the best linguistic experience and that the teachers have the knowledge and resources for designing such experiences. The Head of School encourages and supports the initiatives and professional development of teachers in the teaching of Languages.

Reviewed annually by: Head of School, PYP Coordinator and all PYP Teachers