



Akal Academy, Baru Sahib

LANGUAGE POLICY

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.

Akal Academy Mission Statement

Akal Academy aims at developing young people who have cultivated mind imbued with a spirit of inquiry, thirst for knowledge, respect for diverse world cultures and a keen desire to serve the community in which they live and work, as well as aspire to serve humanity at large through their spiritual values and knowledge acquired through modern education.

Akal Academy Vision

Our vision is to establish permanent peace in the world through value based education and spiritual rejuvenation, creating good global citizens.

IB General Regulations

Article 2.9 – School must provide instruction in the learning of a language other than the principal language of instruction of the school from at least the age of seven.

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. Language 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.

We believe that all teachers are language teachers as they help children learn and communicate in various languages. 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. Students are encouraged to question, challenge, think and rethink texts and their meanings.

They are not only exposed to different forms of communication, but they study the languages by applying inquiry techniques to their own work. 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. In keeping 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, viewing 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. 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.

Practices that reflect our beliefs (Our essential agreements)

- Teachers plan learning experiences in language within meaningful and enjoyable contexts and learners are able to make connections, apply their learning, and transfer their conceptual understanding to new situations. This progressive conceptual development, together with an enjoyment of the process, provides the foundation for lifelong learning.
- Language learning is spread across subject areas and through the programme of inquiry and all PYP teachers are viewed as language teachers
- The school also sees culturally diverse literature as a powerful means to develop international mindedness and the learner profile attributes in all learners. The library collection reflects this belief in its collection of picture books, folk tales, bilingual books etc.
- The learner profile, together with the essential elements of the programme knowledge, concepts, skills, and action informs planning, teaching and assessing language at Akal academy.
- The school has adapted the language scope and sequence document for the primary years. This is a working document aligned with IB Language scope and sequence document.
- Language learning activities that include listening, speaking, reading, writing, presenting, and viewing are purposefully planned and embedded into daily instruction. The school organizes language week, literacy day and many other language related events to promote multilingualism and international mindedness.
- Students are provided numerous opportunities to use language for a variety of authentic purposes.
- Remedial support is provided to enhance their language skills.
- Staff and students use language as a vehicle for engaging in inquiry-based learning.
- Students are allowed choices in how they want to communicate their learning and express themselves (translanguaging strategies)
- Student writing and teacher writing are displayed. Students have the opportunity to publish their work.
- Students are encouraged to inquire about other languages.
- The development of students' mother tongue is encouraged in the school.

- Teachers actively foster interest in other languages. They acknowledge and build on the knowledge of languages of their students.
- Teachers use a variety of texts (both print and digital) for reference in their teaching.
- All staff model and teach appropriate use of language (ex. writing, reading strategies, listening skills, appropriate speech).
- Students are frequently engaged in collaborative conversations that deepen their learning.
- Students use language as a means to reflect upon their learning and self.
- Learning language at Akal Academy is explored through various medium - Learning language, Learning about language and learning through language.
- Staff has high expectations for each student's language learning and use.
- Students fully engage, explore, learn and assess in learning a second language.

There are different developmental stages as well as learning styles in learning a language. Individual students will progress through the different stages at their own pace. Challenging a student's level of understanding and providing good models can further develop language skills.

Linguistic Profile of PYP Students

Akal Academy serves a student population from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. Our students come from different countries, various states of India, and have two or more languages in their language profile. Many of the students at Akal Academy are multilingual and are learning in a language that is not their mother tongue. We recognize these identities and therefore Akal Academy promotes a multicultural and multilingual learning environment, thus encouraging internationally minded individuals.

We believe that parents also play a major role in developing language profile in their early years. 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 English but be able to communicate effectively in their 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 and is reviewed every year for refinement and relevance.

Planning: While language is trans- disciplinary and forms the basis of all teaching learning under the Units of Inquiry (UOI), Akal Academy has decided to teach phonological awareness and grammar 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.

Homeroom teachers plan the language development of diverse learners with distinct learning needs/styles. Teachers use differentiated learning teaching strategies like leveled task sheets, choice cards, learning centers etc.

Assessment: It is important to allow for a variety of assessments in order to ensure that students are given multiple opportunities to strengthen language skills. These frequent assessments 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, testing of listening skills and language achievement tests.

All new students are administered a diagnostic test to ascertain their language abilities and needs. Based on the result of this test, if required, an IEP/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, graded work and report cards. The reading program has been revamped and enhanced with introduction of reading journal, running records and novel study while designing the Akal Academy language scope and sequence.

Strategies to Support Teachers - PYP teachers are provided support in the form of professional development sessions on teaching of English and Mentors guide them from time to time. Additionally, Grade Heads have been appointed to liaise between Mentors and teachers under their supervision. Appropriate resources have been procured for the Language Lab 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 Library Teacher, 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 an IB-trained Librarian and resource-rich library that caters to the language learning needs of the PYP program. The school has set up a PYP Library, a resource room where students and teachers can access literature and references pertaining to Program of Inquiry. Each grade has a scheduled 80-90 minutes per week to browse and explore resources from the PYP Library apart from the time allotted by Homeroom teachers for research and inquiry. The PYP Library and Main Library remain open after school hours for teachers and students.

Working collaboratively with homeroom teachers, the Library Teacher has identified learning outcomes from the scope and sequence document that can be developed / supported through the reading program in the library. The Library Teacher 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. The Library Teacher participates in the collaborative planning and reflection meeting and recommends books from the PYP Library.

For instance, if a grade is inquiring into governments, under the theme How we organize ourselves, the Library teacher will recommend books that can be used and engage the students around the theme during the Library time. These may then be borrowed by the Grade for class library during the course of that Unit of Inquiry. Students can borrow their favorite books for reading throughout the year.

A copy of all IB and school developed documents is also available in the library for reference and to 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, teachers identify students who require additional language support through Language Support Program. Grades 3-5 students who require this additional support are referred to the Language Support Lab for remedial learning. Teachers plan IEP/ILP and gives individualized attention in the class and during extended time slots and further support is provided in the Language Support Lab through a multimedia curriculum targeting both receptive and expressive language acquisition once a week.

During class time, teacher provides differentiated instructions to students who are a part of the Language Support Program with simplified vocabulary, differentiated task sheets 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 approximately 80% of the student population, is the second language at Akal Academy. Offered from LKG onwards, it is allotted about 15% of the teaching time.

Curriculum:

The school has its own scope and sequence for Punjabi. While grammar and syntax are taught stand-alone, most of the reading, writing, speaking and listening is through transdisciplinary Units of Inquiry. Punjabi teachers attend the collaborative planning and reflection meetings regularly.

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 are 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, testing of listening skills and language achievement tests.

We report student's language development to parents through portfolios, parent-teacher conferences, student - led conferences, graded work and report cards.

Hindi as an Additional Language

At Akal Academy, Hindi is offered as an Additional Language from Grade UKG onwards. However, it is an optional language for the Non Resident Indian (NRI) students.

Curriculum:

The school has its own scope and sequence for Hindi. Approximately 5% of the instruction time is devoted to Hindi. While the grammar and syntax are taught stand-alone, most of the reading and writing is through units of inquiry. Hindi teachers attend the collaborative planning and reflection meeting (horizontal and vertical) regularly.

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, testing of listening skills and language achievement tests.

We report student's language development to parents through portfolios, parent-teacher conferences, student-led conferences, graded work and report cards.

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 like Pahari, Haryanvi, 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.

Translanguaging:

At Akal Academy, teachers use translanguaging strategies, to help students make meaning, access content, and promote cognitive growth. Translanguaging can help unlock the potential of every student through framing students in terms of what they can do with the right scaffolds—not only what they can produce in the language of instruction. It activates prior knowledge embedded in a different language, whilst affirming cultural identity.

When planning for inquiries and assessment, teachers build appropriate opportunities for students to draw on home and additional languages. Teachers use the following key questions while planning translanguaging learning experiences;

- What are the language backgrounds and needs of my students?
- Do I want to scaffold content or language?
- What content is not easily accessible to particular students?

- What are the unit aspects which might best be approached through a home language? (for example, local or cultural knowledge).
- In what ways can translanguaging strategies are incorporated into the engagements—pre-engagement, partner/collaborative and using home language resources?
- Am I using home languages for input or output or both?

To support agency in language learning and effectively incorporate translanguaging strategies, students discuss what language means to them personally and set language goals for themselves. A powerful means to establish a multilingual class community is for students to develop their own “student language agreements” as a group or learning community (Chumak-Horbatsch 2012).

Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies extend our awareness of the multiple ways texts (live, electronic or paper) draw on our ability to make and express meaning. Literacy is being re-imagined to include not only digital technologies but also the ways in which we use visual, auditory and spatial modes to create texts such as presentations, dance, music and art. We believe that text can be live, electronic, paper or visual and is more than just written language. A video clip is a text that might use music, pictures, gestures and words to convey its message. Likewise, a painting is a text using colour, space, and lines to convey meaning to its viewers. We collaborate with specialist teachers to address multiliteracies. Addressing multiliteracies through effective learning and teaching means drawing on the wide range of strengths, needs and interests, among students.

Language 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.

Teachers:

Akal Academy teachers are 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/HODs 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.

Subject Mentor:

Language Mentor provides information that helps teachers to plan and implement school programs with multicultural perspectives, and develop cross-cultural understandings with their students.

In addition to this, subject mentor provides resource information for teachers in the areas of language of instruction, classroom organization, and selection of suitable texts and resources for IEP/ILP learners therefore assists teachers to plan and implement a program inclusive of IEP needs. English Subject Mentor assists the classroom teacher in assessing IEP students' competence in English, formulating practical goals and objectives for IEP learners and planning a program that caters for the needs of all IEP/ILP learners. English Mentor organizes information and learning sessions during collaborative meetings.

Additionally, the subject mentor consults with School Psychologist regarding the language development of the students with IEPs and ILP. The subject mentor also consults with language teachers and language departments in the assessment of language skills and placement into the relevant language classes. English subject mentor also works in cooperation with the Grade heads in the design and implementation of the curriculum in order to cater for the needs of language learning.

PYP Coordinator:

The PYPC ensures that the language program is scheduled and organized as per the language policy. He /She monitors the implementation of the program and provides necessary support and guidance to the teachers for successful implementation of the program. He/ She 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.

Language and Learner Profile:

Communicators: We understand that communication is at the heart of education, that communication in more than one language is a key to intercultural understanding. We help our students to be strong communicators.

Open-minded: We understand and appreciate our own language and encourage students to respect the languages of other individuals and communities.

Courageous: We recognize that language learning involves risk taking. We encourage our students to be independent, brave and articulate.

Thinkers: We believe in fostering critical and creative thinking skills to help students use language to approach complex problems.

Reflective: We believe that reflection helps both students and teachers assess and understand the strengths and limitations of language use. Through reflection, language learning and personal developments are considered.

Connections to other Policies

Language and Admissions

Students wishing to be admitted to PYP must take an English admission test before entry. The English entrance test is also used as a language placement test to ensure accurate phase placement and admissions to the school. Together with the academic records and language background information, the student is placed into the relevant language phase. A remedial plan is created and implemented soon after the learning gap is diagnosed. Students with identified learning difficulties are granted inclusive access arrangements, for example additional time, assistive resources etc. as required by their Individualized Education Program plan.

Language and Inclusion

At Akal Academy, all teachers are believed to be language teachers and all members of the learning community are involved in a child's language development. Our school aims that students also develop and keep up with their home language, additional language and the medium of instruction languages while perusing their studies at Akal Academy. Student's language portrait is ascertained at the time of admission especially in upper PYP to understand their language bank and work on developing them.

All teachers work together in an inclusive design and students learn English through subjects by accommodated instruction, strategy of teaching, differentiation and extension. Through strong collaboration with teachers, family and student, classroom teacher closely follows the language development of the child through observations, data collection and assessments. The language development of the child is documented in report cards and child's language portrait, this helps to inform teaching, learning and assessment of the language learning.

The Subject Mentor meets regularly with the teachers through collaboration cycles, transdisciplinary planning meetings and faculty meetings to inform the teachers regarding IEP students and their inclusion to the mainstream classes and progress in their language learning abilities.

Language and Academic integrity

At Akal academy, the Academic integrity document includes clear definitions, practices and consequences of academic dishonesty. Through their language learning, students are expected to be principled learners in furthering their language development.

Though academic dishonesty is defined and explained in the Academic integrity document, it may look different in language classes and in the use of English or other languages provided at Akal Academy.

Language and Assessment

At Akal Academy, assessment of language learning is an on-going process throughout the school year in both formal assessments (formative and summative) and informal situations (learning experiences and inquiry). All the language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, presenting), as well as the students' knowledge of grammatical structures and their ability to use these correctly, are assessed regularly at levels appropriate to the students' language phase and abilities. A range of formative assessment measures are used. The grading scheme used in the report cards is directly aligned with all language skill areas.

IB Standards and Practices for Language

Culture 4: The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews a language policy that helps to foster intercultural understanding through communicating in a variety of ways in more than one language (0301-04)

Culture 4.1: The school implements and reviews a language policy that is aligned with IB language policy guidelines. (0301-04-0100)

Culture 4.2: The school describes in its language policy the way that the school recognizes multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource for learning. (0301-04-0200)

Culture 4.3: The school identifies in its language policy a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development. (0301-04-0300)

Culture 4.4: The school clearly describes in its language policy the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community and what constitutes good practice within the school context. (0301-04-0400)

PYP 1: The school ensures that students learn a language in addition to the language of instruction, at least from the age of seven; multilingual programmes, where students are learning at least two languages can but are not required to offer additional languages. (0301-04-0411)

Lifelong learners 7.2: Students take opportunities to develop their language profiles.

Approaches to teaching 5.3: Teachers use IB mandated policies to support students.

Approaches to teaching 5.4: Teachers support language development with consideration for the language profiles of students.

Review Cycle

Following a full review by Teachers, Parent representatives, Mentors and the Pedagogical Leadership Team, this policy was first adopted in 2013; reviewed and updated annually in February / March with additions and modifications wherever necessary.

The policy was last reviewed in March 2022.

References:

- Guidelines for developing a school language policy 2008, by IBO
- Language and learning in IB program 2011, International Baccalaureate Organization
- General regulations - Primary Years Program 2014
- IB Learner Profile booklet
- Other schools policies for best practices
- Internet sources
- Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes
- Learning stories-A learning story about how a school's language policy supports multilingualism in a culturally diverse community, resource from MY IB
- Making the PYP Happen (2009), Language Scope and sequence International Baccalaureate Organization 2018.
- Translanguaging- updated Dec 2018, resource from MY IB
- IB standard and Practices document 2020