

LANGUAGE POLICY MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, AHMEDABAD

A. About the School

Mahatma Gandhi International School (MGIS) believes in the ethos of joyful learning and meaningful experiential pedagogy. It promotes the free expression of feelings, thoughts and ideas, through verbal and non-verbal communication. It is a place where we give students tools to communicate through our unique multi-sensorial methodology and active learning pedagogy. Diversity here is a tool in the learning process and this diversity is reflected in the student and teacher profile, the range of teaching methodologies and the use of resources. Our approach is holistic and student centered. We cater to individual needs and adapt to the background of each student through differential teaching and spiral learning.

B. Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi International School (MGIS) recognizes the need for a coherent and strong guiding policy for language, since language is fundamental to all learning and permeates the entire curriculum.

With this in mind, throughout our curriculum, we foster the development of the language of instruction, English, as well as regional languages such as Gujarati and Hindi.

C. Language Philosophy

We understand that all teachers are language teachers and encourage our teachers to recognize the language needs of all students and work to serve these needs within and outside of the classroom.

We recognize the need to provide a foundation for the lifelong process of language acquisition since language enables students to become inquirers as well as develop critical thinking and social skills. Furthermore, language proficiency enables students to acquire knowledge related to all areas of the IB MYP, DP and CP curricular framework. We also affirm the belief that language learning promotes internationalism and multicultural understanding which is at the core of the IB.

Intercultural awareness and links to real life and concrete experiences are promoted through project-based approach, which includes the use of regional languages (Hindi and Gujarati) where appropriate, in the class work. We initiate students to meaningful and enriching learning where the use of the body, emotions, and space is actively solicited in acquiring language.

Regional language learning at MGIS is facilitated by native speakers of the languages

offered, and parents participate enthusiastically in this effort when required. The diversity in our teacher profile allows us to make language acquisition a natural process through communicative methodology. Our multicultural diversity in teacher and student profiles enables us to offer the opportunity of integrated learning through natural contexts and authentic sources like exchange programs, cultural festivals, stories and folk tales in native languages, and experiential interactions with the community and the city.

D. Creating a Multilingual environment

The school encourages strong student involvement in the construction of their knowledge at every stage of teaching and learning. Intercultural awareness and links to real life and concrete experience is promoted through project work, which includes, where appropriate, the use of the regional languages (Hindi and Gujarati) in learning and teaching experiences.

Learning experiences in class projects are designed to develop students' language and literacy skills in their mother tongue and/or regional language. The school environment enables students to express themselves appropriately and creatively in a wide range of situations, both orally and in writing. Students explore different styles of their native language and literature, and are introduced progressively to a wide range of literary genres as well as the social and historical contexts within which the works are written.

E. Language of Instruction

At MGIS, the medium of instruction is English. English is also the school's internal working language; it is the language used by the management and the academic and policy making committees. Due to the diversity of the student body, some teachers and students also use the regional language and/or mother tongue as a support language of communication when necessary, to facilitate comprehension of important concepts, instructions and guidelines.

Moreover, while the majority of our students speak English, a statistical analysis of the demographic profile of the students reveals that there is great diversity in the languages spoken at home and that English is the mother tongue of very few students.

Because of this diversity, our students fall into one of the following categories:

- Students who speak a language other than English
- International students who speak a foreign language other than English
- Students who are able to communicate orally in English but have difficulty reading and writing it

- English speaking students with limited or no language B experience
- English speaking students with prior language B instruction
- Bilingual students who speak their mother tongue as well as English
- Multilingual students who are proficient in Language B and English

F. Language Development across the Programs.

G.1 Language A

At MGIS, English is offered as Language A.

1.1 Language A in Primary Years: It must be noted that in the Primary Years, Grades K-3, emphasis is laid on listening and speaking skills in English; and the focus is on acquiring a healthy vocabulary through stories, role-plays, and multi-sensorial day-to-day activities in the school café, library and their immediate surrounding environment.

In Grades 4 and 5, the children begin understanding syntax and other grammatical structures with a view to developing strong written language skills. They are exposed to various grammatical notions of language and are allowed to manipulate and utilize language in myriad forms to build their understanding of the different kinds of narratives. Grammar is taught implicitly through language building activities to ensure a good language base is developed.

1.2 Language A in Middle Years: In the MYP, more complex notions of persuasive and creative writing and analytical commentaries involving complex structures are tackled, using age appropriate texts and stimuli. Children are encouraged to read a variety of literature and texts where they analyze the tone and structure of the language as well as the information provided by said texts.

Children are prompted to write detailed and descriptive passages during their reflection sessions to ensure a strong communicative base of written language before they reach MYP Year 5. The reflection sessions are conducted from the primary years, initially orally and then as children acquire writing skills, through written reflections.

1.3 Language A in CP/DP: Different levels of Language A are offered in the Diploma Program. Students are guided in their subject selection based on their performance in the previous years, and an aptitude test for languages.

G.2 Language B – Local, Official National Language and French Inclusion

2.1 Language B in Primary Years: Most local students in the primary years K-3 generally speak Hindi, and therefore the focus is more on developing the oral skills of the students in English.

In the primary years Grades 3 to 5, reading and writing in the regional language, Gujarati, is introduced. Since a majority of students generally speak and understand Gujarati; the skill of reading and writing is acquired through project based activities and community interactions.

2.2 Language B in Middle Years

Hindi is the language currently offered as Language B in the MYP. Hindi is the logical choice, being an official language of the country. French is an option for international students who have little or no exposure to Hindi as a language.

2.3 Language B in Diploma and Career-related Programs: In the CP and DP, apart from Hindi Standard Level and Hindi Higher Level, French is offered in 3 categories as Language B –

- Ab Initio: Students who have never been exposed to French and those who are at Phase 1 or 2 of French at the end of MYP Year 5
- Standard Level: Students who have achieved a higher phase (3-5) during the MYP may choose this option.
- Higher Level: International Students who are native French speakers, or those who have achieved phase 6 at the end of MYP Year 5.

G.3 Language in BTEC

The BTEC program offered at MGIS is flexible on the languages used and in fact encourages the use of local and national language for greater community outreach. Students have the option of handing in assignments and assessments in any language, English, Gujarati or Hindi provided an assessor is available to grade the assignments in the said language.

G.4 Language in IB CP courses

The CP program offered at MGIS is flexible on the languages used within the CP Framework. For the Language Development section of the CP core the students can choose language B then they can take extension of the language B and in fact MGIS

encourages the use of local and national language for greater community outreach.

Language Development in the CP:

Language Development is a compulsory component of the Career-related Programme (CP) core. It ensures that all students have access and exposure to a language programme that will assist and further their understanding of the wider world.

In Language Development students have to achieve four skill based objectives.

1. Oral communication
2. Visual interpretation
3. Reading comprehension
4. Writing

Learning Outcomes - The Language Development Portfolio

The Language portfolio demonstrates ability, engagement and evidence of language development, a component of the CP core. It is used to chart students' progress in developing language skills and intercultural experiences while providing an opportunity for students to develop reflective practice.

Language phases

Depending on their prior knowledge, students can begin their language development in any phase on the continuum and can exit from any phase. During language development, there is no requirement for students to move from one phase to the next; instead, students must show development of their language skills using the language objectives.

There are 6 Phases:

Phase 1 & 2 Emergent Communicator

Phase 3 & 4 Capable Communicator

Phase 5 & 6 Proficient Communicator

Options for Language Development(From the CP guide)

MGIS offers our IBCP students two languages for LD: Gujarati and French. In terms of language proficiency, each student has a different starting point, goals and needs. They begin the CP with a range and variety of language learning experiences. The choice of what language to study is entirely up to the school and students.

The CP coordinator, together with the Language Development teacher/supervisor, should ensure that students study the language that:

- is best suited to their background and needs
- will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge.

Students may choose to study:

- the language of their host country, if living overseas
- the language of another culture, with future aspirations in mind
- a language that supports the language of their DP courses
- a language that will be useful for a component of the CP core, such as an overseas trip for (SL) service learning

The most important considerations are that:

- the language studied is not the student's best language
- Language development should be a challenging educational experience
- Language development should have a clear purpose for students.

The IBCP students are hence encouraged to make films in languages which are not their best or they can do subtitles for the made language to fulfill the LD hours of the IBCP course. This is in place already as often students make movies in Hindi and Gujarati with English subtitles Example: Khushi Ganeriwala's advertisement. Or they use Hindi or Gujarati subtitles. Example: AMA teacher training edited by students.

Language Development and International mindedness

LD plays a vital role in the cultivation of intercultural understanding and as a learning environment for exploring issues that connect to the real world. Intercultural competence is not a naturally occurring phenomenon and as such the LD course seeks to explicitly address ways of teaching and learning skills for interaction and understanding as part of lifelong learning.

While learning the target language, the student becomes aware of the similarities and differences between his or her own culture(s) and those of the target culture(s). With this awareness, a greater respect for other people and the way in which they lead their lives is fostered.

Language development can be based on themes relating to the students' career-related studies, with a greater emphasis on gaining cultural understandings from countries that use the target language, thereby fostering an awareness of international perspectives.

Language Development and the Career-Related Study (CRS)

Language Development can provide opportunities for students to learn about the role of language in work-related contexts and to increase employability through the acquisition of new vocabulary and understandings relevant to their future career plans.

A Language Development course can be designed to fully embed one or multiple Career-Related Studies (CRS) as a means of providing real, authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

Some important features of the Language Development (LD) course at MGIS:

1. LD gives students authentic opportunities to realize that there are diverse ways of living, behaving and viewing the world that reach beyond the scope of individual subjects.
2. It offers an opportunity for students to deepen and/or broaden language and intercultural skills and understandings that can be transferred to life beyond the CP.
3. LD has an explicit, dual and integrated focus on language(s) and culture(s).
4. It is an additional language, which is not the student's best language.
5. It involves general language learning focusing on developing language skills and socio-cultural understandings in a language of interest to the student.
6. It can also be the learning of a Heritage language.
7. Modes of learning can be Face to Face/Remote : Online, mobile, distance learning / Blended.
8. Blended learning context involves: Immersion and Inter cultural experience and Student collaboration
9. LD responds to the diversity of candidates.
10. The LD coordinator has to be part of the school's language policy steering committee, and engage with relevant stakeholders in creating and implementing the school's language policy.

G.5 Language Support Classes

Students from a non-English speaking country as well as local students who face challenges in communicating in English due to cultural or socio-economic factors are identified and enrolled for a support program for the acquisition of the language of instruction – English. This program enables these students to access, participate, and

achieve success in the academic, social and cultural life of the school. To this end, the school conducts intensive English classes using proven pedagogical methods in order to ensure that each child has a smooth integration into the mainstream classroom.

Class teachers work closely with the language support persons to ensure that the needs of their students are met as soon as possible to ensure their participation in class activities and projects.

A phased support program is put in place, where the students undergo an intensive immersion program in English at the beginning of their term. This program focuses on their oral communication skills more than anything else, so that children may actively participate with their peer groups. Once this has been achieved, the students then receive support classes in English, focusing on acquiring reading and writing skills, as well as understanding linguistic conventions.

H. Language Steering Committee & Signing off on Policy

A Language Steering Committee is defined, and roles and responsibilities of the members assigned with a view to periodically reviewing the Language Philosophy and Policy of the school. This policy and all further amendments to the same should be approved and signed off by the Language Steering Committee and School Management.