



## EXCEL Academy Public Charter School Prince George's County Public Schools International Baccalaureate (IB) Language Policy

### Introduction

At EXCEL Academy PCS we believe that language is fundamental to the success of all student learning. Language learning is essential to building students' cognitive skills, ability to construct knowledge, and develop socially and personally. With over 135,000 students and nearly 19,000 employees, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) offers a wealth of linguistic diversity. This diversity permits the development of genuine international mindedness and intercultural understanding. PGCPS students speak over 103 different languages at home with English and Spanish being the primary languages of our community accounting for 96% of the district's population. EXCEL Academy PCS students speak 5 different languages, with English and Spanish being the primary languages of 97.4% of our student population. Other languages of our population include Ibo, Turkish and Yoruba.

The school district strives to facilitate a culture of language learning. Our educators understand that students who are multilingual reap a myriad of benefits, including increased cognitive function, greater creativity and problem-solving skills, and a more perceptive understanding of the world and their place within it. As such, PGCPS commits to language learning with the offering of dual language and immersion programs starting at the primary years and expanding the world languages course offerings at the secondary level.

As a commitment to language development and intercultural understanding, all PGCPS students are required to take two full years of a world language and pass with academic success prior to receiving their high school diploma. All students at EXCEL academy will receive full Spanish instruction beginning at Kindergarten through 8th grade.

### Philosophy of Language Learning in PGCPS IB World Schools

In PGCPS IB World Schools, it is understood that:

- All teachers are language teachers;
- We are communicators by nature, and language is fundamental to this instinctive need;
- Our mother languages are the roots of our identities and cultures;
- Mastery of a language is an open door to additional knowledge;
- Valuing all languages in the community demonstrates open-mindedness;
- Language acquisition is a lifelong, ongoing process;
- All stakeholders have a part to play;
- Language learning promotes international-mindedness and intercultural awareness; and
- All languages must be valued.

### Primary Language of Instruction

*The Language Policy is reviewed and revised annually by PGCPS and the individual IB World Schools.  
Date of Last Review: October 2021*



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- English is the primary language of instruction, and each member of the learning community will demand and demonstrate excellence in written and oral language. Teachers will assume the primary responsibility for modeling and holding students accountable for using language effectively, as well as a consistent approach to content, organization, style and language mechanics. All teachers are language and literacy teachers.
- Students will demonstrate oral and written proficiency in American Standard English in order to meet the demands of Maryland Common Core State Standards (MCCSS), Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), and the PGCPS curriculum.

## **Language Acquisition**

Through an IB education, school communities strive to leverage language learning to build a better and more peaceful world. Proficiency in a world language, along with an understanding of diverse perspectives, will help IB students become active, thoughtful participants in an increasingly globalized community.

### ***Elementary***

PGCPS IB World Schools at the elementary level provide students with access to a second language, Spanish, starting in kindergarten to support the development of international-mindedness. The district has made a commitment to the IB World Schools to ensure adequate staffing, resources, and commitment to the acquisition of a second language. These language acquisition courses are guided by the IB PYP objectives and assessment criteria as well as the PGCPS curriculum, and the National Standards of Foreign Language Education based in the 5 C's: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. School communities including teachers and heads of schools are expected to promote language learning as a means to building understanding and appreciation of cultures. Due to the early integration of language learning, all students at our IB World Schools have the ability to earn high school credits, complete phases one and two of language acquisition courses, and become proficient in a second language upon the completion of eighth grade. Exceptions are made for students under special circumstances to include but not limited to the Special Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students adhering to the policies and procedures outlined in the IB Inclusion Policy or the students Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

## **Language and Literature**

Language and Literature in the IB World Schools is taught in English. English is the primary language of instruction in our IB World Schools; In the Primary Years Programme the PGCPS Reading/English Language Arts (RELA) Curriculum, developed using Common Core and Maryland State Standards, serves as the basis for instruction. Teachers develop and deliver Units of Inquiry (PYP) and Unit Plans (MYP) based on the IB Subject Guides and the RELA Curricular Standards.



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### Home Language Support

IB Language policy stresses these points regarding support of a student's mother tongue:

- Language learning includes the development of home and family languages, languages of the school, additional languages and literacy;
- Language is a means of affirming and expressing cultural identity and developing international-mindedness;
- Multilingualism benefits learners and the learning community in a variety of ways;
- Schools provide students with multiple, authentic opportunities to learn language, learn about language and learn through language; and
- The student language portrait is a tool that captures a learner's complex language profile.

Home Language Supports:

- Accessing individual and group tutoring provided by ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) staff;
- Accessing counseling about social, academic or other concerns from the school system's International School Counseling Office;
- Providing access to digital tools and text that support the mother tongue language development, and
- Offering school sponsored clubs and language honor societies in order to provide opportunities that support students in their mother tongue.

### English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program

The Prince George's County Public Schools ESOL/Title III program is designed to provide appropriate, effective English language instruction and to facilitate cultural awareness for ELLs, Grades K–12, as required by both federal and state regulations. ESOL courses and support are offered, as needed, at every level of schooling based on student assessment scores in conjunction with WIDA standards.

As Prince George's County continues to grow more diverse culturally, it also is becoming more diverse linguistically. In 2019, just over 20% of PGCPs' student population qualified as English Language Learners (ELL) (up from 15% in 2015). In 2021, 4.6% of EXCEL's student population qualified as English Language Learners (ELL). IB schools work in partnership with the ESOL Office in PGCPs to prepare ELL students to effectively use English language skills and academic strategies to participate confidently and successfully as productive citizens in the school community and beyond. Students who enter the PGCPs school system and who are, through a language proficiency test, determined to be in sufficient need of specialized English instruction receive language support from a certified teacher who has extensive knowledge of second language acquisition.

To facilitate communication with ESOL students and their families, PGCPs offers Language Link, a service via phone that provides real-time translation between school staff and students'

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families who speak twenty-one different languages. In addition, district policies, letters, and memorandums are translated in several languages to further open communication with our community.

### **School-Specific Profile of Language Learners**

Each IB World School in Prince George's County has a unique approach to its language efforts. Schools vary in terms of student demographics, language courses offered, and other schoolwide characteristics.

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