



## Language Policy

### Ross Sheppard School Philosophy

Ross Sheppard High School is a proud community of **inquiring learners** that **embraces challenges and celebrates successes in academics, athletics, fine arts, and service**. WE ARE SHEP represents the pride, tradition, and excellence that is exhibited in our halls on a daily basis. We provide a **caring, safe and inclusive environment** that focuses on **engaged teaching and lifelong learning**. Ross Sheppard High School believes that all students can thrive and be successful in an environment that is **kind, respectful, and safe**. Our key strategies to achieve our success are held within the terms of **RelationShep, ScholarShep, MentorShep, LeaderShep and PartnerShep**. A long-standing tradition that represents our **reflective** practice is **"If better is possible; then good is not enough"** as a means to foster growth and success for all.

### IB Mission

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**.

## 1. Purpose

- To promote our role as a district site for the French Immersion and Chinese Bilingual programs.
- To outline guidelines for the use of languages in the school and in communication with other parties.
- To promote the use of language as impactful in student learning, particularly a student's worldview and understanding of culture and international-mindedness.
- To inform stakeholders of resources available to support the languages that students use at home, school and the community.

## 2. Philosophy

This language policy is an important working document that guides the practices for staff and students at Ross Sheppard High School. One of the fundamental goals of our school and our IB programme is to promote the creation of citizenship through development of intercultural communication, understanding, support, respect, and appreciation of one another. The cultural diversity that students bring to our school is a benefit to the entire student population and is especially appreciated in our IB classrooms as it helps our students to develop greater levels of international mindedness.

Edmonton Public School's shared beliefs and understandings about language are that "literacy skills must be embedded into the teaching of the programs of study in all subjects and that each staff member has the responsibility to create a positive learning environment that ensures effective and consistent literacy instruction for the success of each student." According to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Learners: Vision 2020, "each student in Edmonton Public Schools, must develop competency in reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, representing, and numeracy skills."

Ross Sheppard High School creates a safe and encouraging environment where students are encouraged to take risks as they learn language in all subject areas, whether in a traditional international language class, our language of instruction (English), or in any other subject specific area or class.

The school's philosophy includes the following important concepts:

- Language is the foundation for communication and inquiry and as such is essential for the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills.
- Language is a social means for exploring and communicating meaning, thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Language can help students use prior knowledge and build skills.

- Acquisition of language is an ongoing process as the child develops skills, knowledge, and concepts to achieve fluency and proficiency.
- Students are encouraged to become fluent in more than one language.
- It is important to respect and build upon a child's first language as experience in one language will benefit in the learning of other languages.
- Language permeates the whole curriculum and listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing are the necessary skills for knowledge acquisition and construction of meaning.
- Language is vital to all learning, and as such all teachers at Ross Sheppard High School are language teachers and have the responsibility to facilitate communication as much as possible in any or all forms (and should encourage the use of Mother tongue as an aid to expression and a bridge to learning other languages including the language of instruction).
- The study of languages develops international understanding, allows students to appreciate and understand other cultures, and helps them further develop aspects of the IB Learner Profile such as open-mindedness and caring.
- Language study promotes effective communication across cultures and allows students to understand and express ideas in more than one language.
- Acquisition of more than one language enriches personal development, helps facilitate international-mindedness, and clearly gives real world examples of different ways of knowing.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **A) Head of School will**

- ensure that the school's language philosophy is clear and aligned with the IB philosophy.
- ensure that resources are available in the school for learning in several different languages.
- ensure that personnel are available for instruction in various languages
  - i) French
  - ii) Mandarin Chinese
  - iii) Spanish
- ensure that language support is available for students learning in a language that is not their mother-tongue, including support from:
  - i) the Curriculum Coordinator of Inclusive Learning,
  - ii) the English language learner (ELL) teachers,
  - iii) other language teachers,
  - iv) the librarian,
  - v) translation dictionaries,
  - vi) the library with books in various languages, and/or
  - vii) software to promote language learning.

#### **B) IB Diploma Coordinator will**

- ensure that all teachers are aware that they are language teachers.
- ensure that language acquisition (group 2) subjects meet the needs of the majority of the student population.
- ensure that students are appropriately placed in IB language courses according to their individual needs.
- consult with students wishing to engage in Language A: literature school supported self taught SL and help them to find appropriate tutors and SSST supervisors.

**C) Teachers will**

- recognize that they are all language teachers regardless of their subject area.
- use instructional strategies for language development in the classroom.

**D) Students will**

- advocate for their language needs.
- seek out resources to support them in learning the language of instruction and their mother tongue.

**4. Policy Overview**

**A) Definitions**

**English language learner (ELL):** a student whose first language or home/personal language is not English.

**Home/personal language:** The language that is commonly used in the home and is most often the first language spoken.

**B) Our School's Language Profile**

The official languages in Alberta are English and French, with English as the language of instruction in all but language acquisition subjects. In order to earn an Alberta High School Diploma, students must study English language and literature in all three years of High School.

The student population is culturally diverse with many different languages spoken in the home. The linguistic and cultural backgrounds include, but are not limited to, English, French, Spanish, Cree, Mandarin, Cantonese, Filipino, Korean, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Farsi, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Somali, Sudanese, Kurdish, etc. There are up to 50 different languages and dialects spoken by our students.

**C) IB Language Subjects offered**

**Language A**

- English A: Literature HL
- Language A: literature school supported self taught SL (with student consultation with the IB Diploma Coordinator and the ability to find an appropriate tutor and SSST supervisor in the language;

when a student wishes to explore this option, Ross Sheppard High School will do its best to support them in this endeavor)

### **Language Acquisition**

The following IB group 2 language acquisition subjects are offered at Ross Sheppard High School:

- French B SL (intermediate French)
- Spanish ab initio SL (beginner Spanish)
- Chinese ab initio SL (beginner Mandarin Chinese/Chinese 3 year course)
- Chinese B SL (intermediate Mandarin Chinese/Chinese Language & Arts - 12 year Program or Chinese Bilingual)
- Chinese B HL (advanced Mandarin Chinese/Chinese Language & Arts - 12 year Program or Chinese Bilingual)

### **D) Language in the subject classroom**

At Ross Sheppard High School, all teachers are language teachers and play a key role in language learning especially as they teach new subject specific vocabulary and terminology. Teachers of all disciplines assess and teach reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the central role language plays in learning and recognizes that all teachers are language teachers. The Division has targeted professional development opportunities to strengthen language teaching across all disciplines. Thus, language instruction has taken on a fundamental role within our school Division.

### **Within the context of teaching we strive to:**

- promote inquiry-based authentic language learning.
- recognize the trans-disciplinary nature of language learning.
- develop and interrelate listening, speaking, reading, writing, and media literacy skills.
- support equity of access and inclusion by supporting language learning across the disciplines.
- promote consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of all languages.

### **E) Support for students whose first language is not English**

Mother tongue is a matter of cultural identity. To this end, we promote and support the use of home/personal languages whenever possible. We also provide support to ELL students who must learn subjects in English which is not their first language.

- Students are encouraged to speak their home/personal language in social situations and when they need help from another native speaker in translating materials inside all subject area classrooms (provided the use of language remains respectful, follows proper decorum, and adheres to school policies).

- English language learners may use their home/personal language resources and skills to facilitate learning within the classroom.
- Students are encouraged to use English in subjects that are taught in English, but may use bilingual dictionaries or ask for help from other students who speak their mother tongue if they need help translating materials to enhance their learning during classroom instruction.
- Alberta Diploma exams and IB examinations allow the use of translation dictionaries as per Alberta Government Exam and IB examination protocols. Students wishing to use translation dictionaries must identify themselves to the IB Diploma Coordinator during registration for IB Exams in October of grade 12.
- English Language Learners are provided additional support and funding from the school Division. If they are coded, they will have an IPP and may be given extra support during assessments such as additional time or a reader (see Inclusion Policy for details on coding/IPP's).
- All students receive constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers (see the Assessment Policy). Our students have access to, and are taught through, a variety of technological and information resources.
- Opportunities to maintain and value mother tongue and culture exist outside of the classroom:
  - international school trips to China and other countries
  - the Social Justice Club
  - the Shep Asian Alliance Association
  - the Shep Chinese Lion Dance Club
  - Cultural Festivals where we celebrate international languages, foods, dance, and other cultural activities
  - students are encouraged to attend events in the larger community
- ELL students may complete their group 2 subject at the Language A: self-taught level under the following conditions:
  - the subject area is available in the IB course offerings
  - an IB English teacher is available to supervise the student
  - a tutor in the language can be found to work with the student
- Students may write their Extended Essay in their mother tongue if it is available in the IB course offerings and if an advisor fluent in the language can be found.
- ELL students may move into an IB class in grade 11 without the prerequisite grade 10 pre-IB class if the student, teacher, and IB Diploma Coordinator believe that the student is capable of success. This is decided on a case by case basis.

## **F) Parent and Community Involvement**

Parents help to promote cultural awareness and international language acquisition in the school community in the following ways:

- supporting their student's choice in international language instruction.
- preserving mother tongue use at home.
- providing home/personal language books, videos, and/or news media.

- supporting cultural dress, food preparations, etc. when we celebrate our many cultures and languages during special celebrations including our Chinese graduation.
- some parents are active members of the Confucius Institute of Alberta which promotes Chinese language in schools.

## **5. Policy Review**

This policy was initially developed by a committee of IB teachers at Ross Sheppard High School. It is reviewed by IB teachers and school administration as needed, or at least once every five years. Amendments are made as needed.

## References

- Edmonton Public Schools (2021). *Student Rights and Responsibilities: Ross Sheppard High School*.
- Edmonton Public Schools (2021). *School Assessment Plan: Ross Sheppard High School*.
- International Baccalaureate Organisation (2015). *DP From Principles to Practice*.
- International Baccalaureate Organisation (2020). *DP language courses: overview and placement guidance*.
- International Baccalaureate Organisation (2020). *IB Programme Standards and Practices*.