

## **Ross Sheppard High School IB Language Policy**

### **Rationale:**

- A language policy is an integral part of an IB World School. This policy outlines guidelines for the use of languages in the school and in communication with other parties.
- A language policy is a working document that guides the learning practices for staff and students at Ross Sheppard High School.
- There are significant implications to the implementation of the policy, including but not limited to school operation, languages of instruction, and the acquisition and development of learning resources.
- The use of languages can have a significant impact on student learning, in particular a student's view and understanding of culture, international mindedness, and language structure.

### **Philosophy – We believe and Value that:**

- Language is a social means for exploring and communicating meaning, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and is a way for students to use prior knowledge to build skills.
- Language is the foundation for communication and inquiry and as such is essential for the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills.
- Language is used and expressed differently in different contexts and audiences and will change over time. Acquisition of language is an ongoing process as the child develops skills, knowledge and concepts to achieve fluency and proficiency.
- 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 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.
- Language study also promotes effective communication across cultures and allows students to understand and express ideas in more than one language.
- Furthermore, acquisition of more than one language enriches personal development, helps facilitate international-mindedness, and clearly gives real world examples of different ways of knowing.
- Ross Sheppard creates a positive and non-threatening 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 Class) or in any other subject specific area or class.
- If students are struggling we have many supports for students that are not proficient in the language of instruction including: ELL specific classrooms; the ability to audit some courses; weekly help and tutorial sessions for all courses, as well as at noon hour and after school in specific teacher classrooms as per that teacher.

### **Our School's Language Profile:**

Alberta is a province within the bilingual country of Canada. Our two official languages are English and French. However, as the vast majority of people in Alberta speak English, it is Ross Sheppard's language of instruction in all classrooms except for classes studying international languages. In order to earn

an Alberta High School Diploma, students must study English through all three years of High School. Ross Sheppard's group 1 language A1 is English HL. This can be especially trying for some of our ELL students; we recognize that and try to support them as much as possible.

Our school population is diverse and multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual. Our students stem from many heritages such as North and South and Central America, North, South, East and West Asia, Europe and Africa. Several different languages and dialects are spoken by our students to some degree and especially by those who are more recent immigrants or whose families may have immigrated prior to the students birth.

The Alberta Government and our Edmonton Public School Board encourages students to take at least three years of international (non-English) language instruction as part of an Alberta Diploma but it is not a requirement at this time. The international languages that are taught at Ross Sheppard are French, Mandarin, and Spanish. In IB, we teach Language B at three levels:

- Ab initio is offered for Mandarin and Spanish to students who have never studied a language before and/or who wish to begin the study of a new language at the high school level.
- Standard Level is offered in French and Mandarin for students who have had previous language experience
- Higher Level is offered in Mandarin for students who have had significant language experience. We are also open to students exploring French at the Higher Level based on the student's previous involvement with French.

At Ross Sheppard, all teachers are language teachers and as such, they all play a key role in language teaching 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 has developed a document titled

21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Learners: Vision 2020. This document recognizes all teachers are language teachers and our District has targeted Professional Development opportunities to strengthen language teaching across all disciplines. 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." Thus, language instruction has taken on a fundamental role within our school district which has increased our professional development opportunities.

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

- Promote inquiry-based authentic language learning
- Focus on the trans-disciplinary nature of language learning
- Incorporate the teaching and learning of language into the programme of inquiry
- Develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy
- Interrelate the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy
- Promote consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of all languages.

**Mother Tongue and Mother Tongue Supports:**

Mother tongue is a matter of cultural identity. In order to support this, students are encouraged to speak their mother tongue in social situations: in the halls, with their friends, and when they need help from another native speaker in translating materials inside all subject area classroom, as long as the use of that

language stays respectful, follows proper decorum, and adheres to school policies.

When students are working to learn the English language or other areas of instruction that are taught in English, they are encouraged to use English, but are allowed to use Bilingual dictionaries or ask for help from other students who speak their mother tongue (especially if they need help translating materials to enhance their learning during classroom instruction).

Bilingual translation dictionaries are allowed on Alberta Diploma exams and IB Final Exams as per Alberta Government Exam and IB Exam protocols. In order to use this support, a student must properly identify themselves to the IB Coordinator during the IB Exam information session or to IB Teachers prior to the classroom exams in question (where applicable) so that accommodations can be made.

Students who are classified as ELL (English Language Learners – where English is not their mother tongue) are provided additional supports and funding from our district (as instruction inside most of our classes is in English). If they are coded, they will have an IPP and will be given additional supports (such as additional time or a reader) to complete assessments if required.

Our ELL students may use native language resources and language skills to help facilitate learning within the classroom. All students are given access to support services as required and are encouraged to become fluent in more than one language.

All subjects offer a balanced program of instruction including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and presentation skills. 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.” All students are encouraged to take risks. Finally, 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.

Our students also have many opportunities to maintain and value their mother tongue and culture outside of the classroom as well. For example, our school encourages participation in: international language class projects, international school trips, school-based CAS and Leadership Projects, Social Justice Projects and Junior Rotary/Interact Projects that help support international projects, Cultural Festivals such as Shareitage Days where we celebrate international languages foods, dance, and other international club cultural activities. Students are encouraged to form informal groups of friends for support and familiar interaction in the language of their choice, but also to be open to interacting with other people from other cultures and backgrounds as well. One of the fundamental goals of our school and our IB programme is also to promote the creation of citizenship through development of inter-cultural communication, understanding, support, respect, and appreciation of one another. In many of our classroom settings, students are asked to share their own language stories. The cultural diversity that these 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.

#### **Additional IB Programme Supports for Promotion of Mother Tongues:**

- We recognize that being an ELL student could impact possible admission into our IB Programme if students do not meet marks recommendations when they apply for entry, therefore these students may be admitted with lower than the required marks for admission on a case by case basis following an interview with the IBC.

- Students may also enter ELL specific classes in grade 10 but with teacher recommendations may be allowed to enter our IB Programme in grade 11 rather than have to enter directly into the grade 10 Ross Sheppard pre-IB Diploma Programme on a case-by-case basis.
- In order to maintain or complete an IB diploma, ELL students who are strong enough at reading and writing in their mother tongue may be allowed to complete their group 2 course as a Language A – self-taught candidate:
  - if that subject area is available in the IB Course offerings
  - And if they were unable to take or be successful at one of the IB International languages that we currently offer at our school. If this occurs their IB English teacher will help with their supervision and will ensure that they are reading different works in translation than they are currently doing within their IB English Classroom.
- If students are identified as being strong enough (or self-identify that way) students may be able to write their Extended Essay in their mother tongue if IB has that language on their course offerings and if we can find an advisor that can work with our students.

### **Parent and Community Involvement:**

Ross Sheppard parents are encouraged to be actively involved in all aspects of their children's education. Parents are given assessment updates through our district's School zone website which is updated by teachers on at least a monthly basis. In addition, parents are encouraged to participate in school decision making through our Parental Advisory Council (PAC).

Most Ross Sheppard parents help promote cultural awareness and international language acquisition by supporting their sons' and daughters' choices in international language instruction by:

- preserving mother tongue use at home

- providing their children with exposure to mother tongue books, videos, news media, as well as by helping to provide or generate culture dress, cultural food preparations, etc... when we celebrate our many cultures and languages during the annual Shareitage Days celebrations.

Ross Sheppard and its parents are active members of the ECBEA (Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association). We are also partnered with the Confucius Institute to help fund student travel to China on a biannual basis.

Parents are actively involved in the IB Programme and IB course registration process for their children. Our open door policy invites parents to be involved or ask questions at any time. All Programme and registration documents are provided to parents and the selection of courses requires the consent of parents.

Our parent community is very multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual and they are very supportive of their children studying international languages and are also highly supportive of cultural appreciation activities and mother tongue initiatives.

### **Additional Notes:**

Each year, the steering committee will update and revise this document through consultation with available stakeholders. This document and any annual changes to its make-up will be communicated to the IB school community through School Zone and / or our IB page on the Ross Sheppard website.

### **References:**

Our Language Policy is based on the principles and guidelines provided in the following sources:

- *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*

- *Guidelines for developing a school language policy*
- *Towards a continuum of international education*
- *Programme standards and practices,*
- *IB learner profile booklet*