

Dobbs Ferry School District MYP Language Policy

Mission Statement:

The Dobbs Ferry School District strives to develop independent, curious, and open-minded learners who think critically, work collaboratively, act ethically and are knowledgeable about the world around them.

Statement of Language Policy:

Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School are IB World Schools that support all students in developing language skills in both their first languages and a second or other language. The Language Program is designed to support students in developing the language skills needed to be successful in the 21st century. While English is the primary language of instruction, Dobbs Ferry Middle School and High School have students from approximately 20 countries, many of whom do not speak English at home. Teachers in all subject groups plan learning experiences based on the IB Learner Profile, MYP criteria, district philosophy regarding teaching and learning, and NYS standards, while recognizing that they all have a responsibility to honor and develop the language experiences and learning of each student. Language assessment in the Middle Years Programme is both formative and summative and based on the MYP assessment criteria. All students in Dobbs Ferry Middle School and High School are provided with equitable opportunities to achieve the same educational goals and standards.

Principles that underpin all language learning

- All teachers are language teachers and are responsible for supporting and facilitating listening, speaking, reading and writing in either the language of the school or another language.
- These learning experiences promote the integration of the learning of languages with the different subject groups.
- Learning experiences are a means for students to express themselves while also reflecting on both their learning and the world around them.
- A deep understanding of one's first language enriches each person's ability to understand and appreciate themselves and the world at large.
- Learning another language helps one to understand the world and appreciate cultural differences and similarities and fosters a connection to our global society.

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Instruction and Assessment in Language and Literature

The primary language of instruction of Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School is English. Students in Language and Literature classes engage in a variety of learning experiences rooted in the Next Generation Learning Standards, as well as MYP objectives. These experiences include but are not limited to novel studies, vocabulary activities, close reading instruction, evaluating and analyzing texts and developing and sharing work in a social context. World literature is also explored in Language and Literature classes.

Students are assessed in Language and Literature classes using both formative and summative methods. Formative assessment provides information to teachers to assist in guiding further instruction. Examples of formative and summative assessments can include essays, public service announcements, speeches, poems, responses to prompts, conferences and observations. Teachers use both MYP criteria and Next Generation Learning Standards for assessment purposes.

Students in Language and Literature classes who need additional support are placed in support classes such as Advisory, Content Lab or AIS (Academic Intervention Services) classes.

Instruction and Assessment in Language Acquisition Classes

Language Acquisition classes are currently offered in French, Italian and Spanish. Students continue in their selected language for four years of MYP (Years 2-5). In Year 1, students participate in a “language carousel.” During quarter 1, students are introduced to language and culture. They discuss the origin of the 3 Romance languages and some common themes that can be found throughout the cultures. Connections to their own language, culture and daily life are also made. In quarters 2, 3 and 4, students rotate through French, Italian and Spanish classes, learning some basic vocabulary, grammar and culture before they make their final choice of language starting in Year 2.

Language Acquisition classes provide students with speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in the target language as well as foster cultural understandings. Vertical curriculum alignment of Language Acquisition classes from Year 1 through Year 5 ensures a smooth transition from phase to phase and year to year.

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Students are assessed in Language Acquisition classes using both formative and summative methods. Formative assessment provides information to teachers to assist in guiding further instruction. Examples of formative and summative assessments can include integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; analyzing grammatical structures; emphasizing vocabulary development; reflection writing in the target language and participating in authentic assessments. Teachers use both MYP criteria and New York State Standards for assessment purposes.

English as a New Language and First Language Support

While the primary language of instruction in Dobbs Ferry Middle School and High School is English, the schools also provide a comprehensive, freestanding and New York State Education Department approved English as a New Language (ENL) program for English Language Learners. All students are screened upon entry to the school district and then assessed annually on the New York State ESL Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to determine their eligibility for ENL services in the program.

Students identified for ENL services receive appropriate English instruction based on their specific needs, taught by a licensed and experienced English to Speakers of Other Languages Teacher. Students are evaluated annually to determine their levels of proficiency and receive additional support beyond proficiency in order to maximize academic achievement. The ENL Coordinator and teacher maintain a close connection with content-area teachers to monitor student progress in all academic areas as well as the students' emotional and social development. All New York State mandated accommodations are provided for English Language Learners.

Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School recognize that although a child may learn to speak English in a relatively short period of time in some cases, it usually takes several years to develop the academic skills to work on the level of native English speaking peers. With this in mind, students are encouraged to use their native languages to aid in their transition to English. New York State accommodations include the use of bilingual dictionaries and electronic translators on state exams for students who are identified as ENLs. The ENL Coordinator provides MYP teachers with information, support and suggestions on how to work with students who are non-native speakers of English in their classes.

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Cross Cultural Awareness

Although English is the primary language of the school and instruction, Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School values and shares cross cultural awareness. Students are encouraged to share and deepen their understanding of their native language and cultures, as well as local and regional cultures. English Language Learning/ENL classes provide academic opportunities to do this. Awareness of other cultures is also emphasized in the different subject groups, such as Individuals and Societies, Language Acquisition, and Language and Literature. Additionally, the schools' International Club, Foreign Language Honor Societies and American Sign Language Club provide regular activities and experiences for students to share their own cultures and/or languages and to learn about those of others

Policy Review

All stakeholders will review the MYP Language Policy on a bi-annual basis: teachers, students, parents and administration.

References:

Dobbs Ferry Middle School Student Handbook

Dobbs Ferry High School Student Handbook

Dobbs Ferry High School Teacher Handbook

MYP: From Principles to Practice (IBO September 2014)

Programme Standards and Practices (IBO 2014)

Guidelines for developing a school language policy (IBO 2008)