

Language Policy

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School – Halton Catholic District School Board (applicable to IB programme)

At St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, we believe that the foundation for all learning is language. Language is the primary means of communication, and language skills are fundamental to lifelong learning. For students to be successful learners, they must be able to use language appropriately, accurately, and confidently both orally and in writing in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes. Language proficiency enables students to develop the inquiry skills needed to acquire knowledge related to all areas of the IB Diploma Programme.

All Teachers are Language Teachers

Language acquisition is a life-long process; therefore, all teachers are considered language teachers. As noted in the document *Learning in a language other than mother tongue*, “language development is a process of [...] learning language, learning through language and learning about language.” Thus, in addition to studying English A: Language and Literature HL, there is a school-wide commitment by teachers of all subjects to help students develop their language skills.

Additional Language Learning

The primary aim of the Language Acquisition course is to encourage students to gain competence in a second language with the long-term goal of balanced bilingualism. This is in recognition of the role that a second language has in appreciation of cultural diversity and global mindedness.

The course offered for Language Acquisition is French BSL, as it is one of Canada’s official languages and as such the study of it reflects its importance in our national identity. In this programme, students are exposed to the richness of cultural studies, and the curriculum choices reinforce themes and values that are connected to our rich heritage. Additionally, a fundamental part of this program is the study of the vast and varied French-speaking world of over 40 countries from all continents.

Students begin their second language instruction in Ontario in grade 4. Students enter the Language Acquisition programme from both core and extended French options.

Mother Tongue Support

We recognize that our school is part of a culturally diverse community which has complex language and learning-related needs. While our students are literate in English, many students may have a mother tongue other than English or may speak a language other than English at home. To support language

diversity and mother tongue development, students are encouraged to continue honing their language skills at home and in their community.

The Halton Catholic District School Board runs an International Languages program in support of mother tongue language development. The program deepens students' cultural awareness, fosters pride in their heritage, and strengthens their self-esteem and self-image. Additionally, international language instruction helps students communicate more effectively with people of diverse backgrounds. Students build language skills that they will be able to use locally, nationally, and globally, giving them more opportunities to represent Canada in the global village.

Language in the Community

The majority of our students have identified that they speak English most often. The remaining students speak a wide variety of languages, including Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Korean. Almost half of our students speak a language in addition to their mother tongue, and as a group, speak more than 15 different languages regularly.

Language Equity and Inclusion (Support for students who are not proficient in the language of instruction)

Halton Catholic District Board *Equity and Inclusive Education* policy (2012) states that "Both in its content and methodology, inclusive curriculum seeks to recognize our commitment to Catholic values and to affirm the life experiences of all students, regardless of [...] linguistic background." Therefore, "effective evaluation includes researched best practices that truly reflect the current level of achievement of the student. Multiple opportunities for assessment allow for student learning and accuracy of assessment and instruction. Students must be represented in the curriculum and heard in the assessment and evaluation. Students' voice is fundamental in the planning for instruction and the accuracy of assessment."

IB students must demonstrate a high level of language proficiency in reading and writing in English in order to be successful in the program. English Language Learners (ELL) will receive language support from individual classroom teachers and ESL school staff. To support parents who are ELLs, the school provides many publications in different languages and provides translators for parent-teacher interviews. HCDSB employs settlement workers to support students and families with after-school programs.

Promotion of English

English is the language of instruction and extra-curricular activity at our school. Due to the rigour of the IB program students have to demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing English. English instruction is mandated as cross-curricular by the Ontario Ministry of Education and, therefore, is a key component of the curricula of all DP subject groups. Language A is offered in English and is taken at HL.

Professional Development

We recognize that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching. This is achieved through official IB training, and through PD provided by the board, school or department level. For example, teachers receive opportunities for learning about language development, strategies for supporting English Language Learners, and fostering language diversity and intercultural awareness.

This document was developed by a committee of teachers and the IB coordinator, and reviewed by administrators and department heads. The IB language policy is posted on our school website and is available in print format for anyone who requests it. This policy will be reviewed every year by a committee consisting of the Diploma Coordinator, teaching staff members, and an administrator.

Documents consulted during the preparation of this policy:

- Halton Catholic District School Board Policy II-45: *Equity and Inclusive Education* (2012);
- *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* (2008), published by the International Baccalaureate Organization.
- *Programme standards and practices* (2016), published by the International Baccalaureate Organization.