



Middle Years Programme

Julius West Middle School and Richard Montgomery High School Language Policy

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School Language Philosophy

Learning to communicate in a variety of ways and in more than one language is an essential part of responsible global citizenship. Language allows students to connect and collaborate with others and to understand diverse perspectives. Language fluency allows for students to articulate deeper conceptual understandings, and display critical and creative thinking that is central to the IB. Facility with language also helps students navigate the academic and social challenges of adolescence.

Staff members at Julius West Middle School and Richard Montgomery High School are committed to language instruction across all content areas.

School Language Profile

The primary language of communication in our schools is English.

Our students reflect the diversity of our community, representing 63 different national backgrounds and speaking 58 different languages at home.

Approximately 9% of our students are enrolled as English Language Learners receiving direct instructional support in English language.

School Language Practices

Literacy is a critical focus area for our educational program. All teachers are considered teachers of language. Therefore, they explicitly teach vocabulary strategies, integrate varied Command Terms into objectives, lessons and documents, and structure frequent opportunities for student discourse. Teachers engage in regular professional development to enhance Academic Language instruction. That professional development takes the form of targeted training on Academic Language strategies, peer visits focused on Academic Language, and collaborative reflection. Each school develops a yearlong professional development action plan, highlighting training goals, action steps, and monitoring checkpoints.

Proficiency in a world language, along with an understanding of other cultures, will help students become active participants in an increasingly diverse and globalized community. All students are encouraged to take a **Language Acquisition** course starting from the first year of the programme and continuing throughout the programme. Students may take courses in Chinese, French, or Spanish. Students who are native

Spanish speakers make take a Spanish course designed to enhance their reading and writing skills in the target language. All language courses are taught 90% or higher in the target language in order to build listening and speaking fluency.

All students are also enrolled in a **Language and Literature** course to learn how to interpret varied texts and to communicate ideas clearly in speaking and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. This course integrates the processes of language arts: reading, writing, listening, speaking, presenting, and viewing. The goal of the secondary Language and Literature program is “to create literate, thoughtful communicators, capable of controlling language effectively as they negotiate an increasingly complex and information-rich world.” Students read a variety of novels, poetry, short stories, plays, non-fiction works, and visual texts, and complete common tasks such as essays, creative works, and multimedia presentations, which allow them opportunities to demonstrate and deepen their learning.

Digital Literacy courses are offered to students in Year 1 and Year 2 of the programme. This course develops students’ capacities to think critically and creatively through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. Students practice these skills through real-world scenarios, investigating problems, engaging in sustained inquiry, and developing solutions.

Support for English Language Learners

Students whose native language is not English participate in our **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** program, which focuses on developing fluency in speaking, reading, and writing English. Students enter the program based on English language proficiency level, and are regularly re-evaluated for placement. All students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) are assessed using the WIDA ACCESS assessment administered each winter. Teachers use assessment data along with academic performance to determine appropriate instructional placement and eligibility for exit. English Language Learners are placed in as many mainstream classes as possible in order to encourage linguistic and social development. English Language Learners receive support in their mainstream classes through differentiation, accommodations, and dedicated support staffing.

Support for Mother-Tongue Language Development

In addition to ensuring students’ language development in English, the schools support students’ development in their mother-tongues by offering language acquisition courses that are designed to meet the unique needs of mother-tongue speakers. The schools offer two levels of a Spanish for Spanish Speakers course for students whose native language is Spanish. Students who enter the partnership through the French language immersion program at Maryvale Elementary School are permitted to take advanced language courses at Richard Montgomery High School in order to ensure they progress in their language studies. Pilot versions of courses for native speakers of Chinese are currently in process of being approved for teaching in future school years.

Procedures for the publication and review of this policy

This policy was last reviewed and revised in fall 2016.