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International Baccalaureate PYP and MYP St Brigid's College Language Policy

Language Learning Philosophy

Language plays a central role in human life. It provides a vehicle for communication, is a tool for thinking, a means of creativity and a source of pleasure. An understanding of language and the ability to use it effectively gives students access to knowledge, enables them to play an active part in society and contributes to their personal growth. It is acknowledged that learning and communicating in any society is dependent on language competence. Communication skills give students access to more choices in learning areas, possibilities for contributing to the school culture, post-school options in the workforce and further education. Students are also better prepared to contribute to society through advocacy for themselves and others in personal, social, political and legal fields.

The St Brigid's College mission statement emphasises the importance of developing Christ-centred learning environments that foster students' participation as positive, contributing members of the community. This Language Policy reflects the College's mission of supporting students' abilities to speak two languages, as well as being able to master the six key skill areas of, "listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting," which "develop as both independent and interdependent skills." (IBO MYP Language and Literature Guide, page 4). In addition, the policy supports the premise that "the development of language is fundamental to that need to communicate." (IBO PYP Language Scope and Sequence, page 1). The St Brigid's College Language Policy has been developed to provide a framework to promote the development of language skills across all year levels, which are developmentally appropriate and enable students to attain cultural and intercultural awareness through language mastery. The literacy vision of St Brigid's College is to ensure that everyone within our community is empowered to be a responsible, life-long learner, by providing all with the opportunity to acquire the necessary language skills to successfully communicate.

Modern Literacy Requirements

Literacy is the ability to use language to operate successfully within one's society. Modern citizens face diverse demands on their language skills. Changes in the nature of work and social life as well as the development of new technologies have produced a proliferation of different forms of communication. Students need high levels of literacy to meet these challenges.

- **Functional literacy**

Functional literacy involves the ability to control and understand the conventions of English that are

valued and rewarded by our society. A concern for inclusivity and empowerment requires that all students develop the ability to use these conventions and have an understanding of their importance. These conventions include written conventions ranging from handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar through to the more complex conventions of form, genre and register; oral language conventions associated with different purposes, contexts and audiences; conventions associated with the presentation of information, ideas and entertainment in the mass media and new information technologies; and conventions associated with literary texts of all kinds.

- **Critical literacy**

Students also require highly-developed critical literacy skills. Critical literacy depends on an understanding that language is a dynamic social process which responds to and reflects changing social conditions, and that the use of English is inextricably involved with values, beliefs and ways of thinking about ourselves and the world we inhabit. It involves an appreciation of and sensitivity to socio-cultural diversity and awareness that the meaning of any form of communication depends on context, purpose and audience.

- **Future literacy demands**

Students also need to be prepared to meet future challenges. The English language is not a set of neutral, unchanging and established rules or practices that apply at all times and in all situations. Literacy requirements change over time. Students need an understanding and a command of language which enables them to adapt to new demands and new situations.

Language Profile of St Brigid's College

a) Diversity of Language - Language Needs of the Community

A variety of languages are spoken in the home environment by St Brigid's College students and their families. It is identified that students in the College speak over nine differing languages in the home environment; examples of these include Bard and Jaru (both Aboriginal Australian dialects).

A number of St Brigid's College students are EALD students. English as an Additional Language and Dialect (EALD) is the study of English by students who already speak at least one other language or who come from a home in which a language other than English is used. Where students have been identified as being from an EALD background, support will be provided to assist students to develop their language skills. The level of mastery of Language/English which the student possesses will guide the level of support which is provided. It is recognised that Australian society is enhanced by EALD students having access to EALD programmes that enable them to develop an understanding of attitudes and beliefs regarding Australian society, citizenship and position on the world stage.

Three broad guidelines are adhered to:

- **Accepting and valuing Aboriginal English and all languages other than English**

St Brigid's College believes that it is imperative that existing linguistic and learning competence of speakers of languages other than English be accepted and valued. The College also believes that it is imperative for the underlying world views of these languages to be accepted and valued.

- **Broadening the linguistic repertoire of EALD Students**

St Brigid's College believes that teachers need to explicitly teach students the conventions of the English language, particularly with reference to audience, purpose and context.

- **Providing all students with the opportunity to be exposed to a range of language systems**

St Brigid's College believes that this broadens students' abilities to interact with people and cultures other than their own.

Support offered to students includes (though is not limited to):

- The creation of Curriculum Adjustment Plans/Individual Education Plans
- Individual support within the classroom environment by a Literacy Support Teacher
- Involvement in programmes such as Rad Readers in the Junior School
- Support/tuition coordinated by the College's Aboriginal Liaison Officer
- Lunchtime language tuition
- Integration of technology to further develop language mastery skills
- The use of Language Assistants in classrooms
- Literacy support on an individual or group tuition basis
- Differentiation of learning activities and assessment tasks within the classroom setting

Where appropriate, students will be provided with extension opportunities within Language Acquisition so as to develop their mother tongue in these languages.

In the cases of students whose mother tongue is an Indigenous dialect, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer will work with the students to encourage development of this language. Culturally, it is important that girls are not given their full language by elders until they have passed through lore, hence the way the College supports students' development of language (for example Bard and Jaru) needs to reflect a sensitivity to this.

Language Pathways at St Brigid's College

St Brigid's College supports an inclusive approach to the study of languages. Within the classroom environment, teachers provide a curriculum which allows for all students to reach their potential. St Brigid's College offers students a number of language pathways. Students have the opportunity to choose which Language/Language Acquisition (MYP) they wish to study and St Brigid's College will determine their eligibility to study of French, Italian or Japanese. If students have lived in France, Italy or Japan and have been instructed in that language for a period of time, they will be accommodated based on the timetable structure.

Students will commit to the study of one language where possible for the duration of their involvement in the PYP or MYP. French (Kindergarten, Year Five to Year Eight), Italian (Kindergarten to Year Twelve) and Japanese (Year Nine to Year Ten) are formally taught within the College.

As Language Acquisition progresses throughout the MYP, it is intended that within each class the various phases will be accommodated to allow for students to develop a level of proficiency in their chosen language. Generally, most students will commence with a background whereby they have had little or no formal previous instruction and will not be proficient in the language before starting the course.

Cross-Curricular Language Learning

It is essential to recognise that language mastery cannot develop without the integration of teaching / learning experiences pertaining to language conventions in all learning areas. Literacy is a stated General Capability of the Western Australian Curriculum and it is through the principles of this General Capability that all learning areas should integrate the explicit teaching of subject-specific literacy skills. The Western Australian Curriculum notes that, "Success in any learning area depends on being able to use the significant, identifiable and distinctive literacy that is important for learning and representative of the content of that learning area." (General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, page 6) As a

mandated component of the Western Australian Curriculum, all learning areas are tasked with supporting students through the literacy continuum. This involves embedding subject-specific literacy activities in relation to the following areas:

- Comprehending texts through listening, reading and viewing
- Composing texts through speaking, writing and creating
- Text knowledge
- Grammar knowledge
- Word knowledge
- Visual knowledge

To this end, St Brigid's College will continue providing staff with professional development workshops which serve to equip them with an increasing repertoire of literacy strategies to use in their learning areas.

Assessment

Assessment across learning areas follow the principles and guidelines as established by the IBO as well as complying with the College's Assessment Policy. All Middle and Senior school assessment task sheets include a literacy section in a stipulated format whereby students' spelling, grammar and punctuation and appropriate application of terminology are ranked. In the MYP, task specific clarifications should clearly explain what students with varying language backgrounds are expected to know and do.

Development of Mother Tongue

Mother tongue development is supported directly for students whose first language is English. For students with other mother tongues, language development is encouraged through:

- Participation in culturally specific events such as Indigenous students' involvement in NAIDOC Week
- The borrowing of mother tongue resources from the Learning Plaza i.e. texts written in the student's mother tongue
- Families being encouraged to develop the student's mother tongue
- Where viable, College publications will include sections written in one of the College's mother tongues
- Signage at the College becoming inclusive of mother tongues.

Students at Academic Risk

All students who are referred, or who are suspected of being 'at risk' in terms of their language development, are subsequently assessed and the data collected provides a profile of the students and helps to diagnose their particular language needs. From this information the relevant stakeholders work collaboratively with the Curriculum Team Leader-Learning Differences (and Team) to determine what strategies can be implemented to best address each student's needs.

A databank of the names of students recognised as being 'at risk' will be maintained. This includes anecdotal and test results, which will be used to support the planning of literacy learning for those students. Relevant information will be routinely disseminated to classroom teachers, the Curriculum Team Leader-Learning Differences, the parents and any other person involved in the literacy learning of the student. Regular meetings and case conferences will be held with the Head of Sub-School, classroom teachers, parents and others in order to address the specific needs of identified students.

It is critical that teachers of specific subject groups be aware of the needs of second language students.

These teachers will be provided with professional development opportunities in the strategies that give second-language students access to the content of the subject groups, and should allow content to be used as a vehicle for language instruction.

Extension Opportunities

The St Brigid's Language Programme offers a number of extension opportunities to enhance student learning of their language of instruction or second language:

- The Extension Writers' programme is offered to students in Years Four and Five
- Students have access to electronic media which will assist in the development of language skills
- Students are able to attend English tuition each week to develop their English ability
- Students in the Junior and Middle School have the opportunity to be involved in Optiminds and Da Vinci Decathlon
- In Years Ten to Twelve, the Altiora programme allows for students to extend their language development in their language of instruction
- Students are given the opportunity to travel to a number of countries such as England, Italy, Cambodia, New Zealand and Mala or a North-West Immersion (Western Australia). This makes it possible for students to truly immerse themselves in an alternative culture and, in some cases, a different language
- Tutoring offered to students as a means to clarify, reinforce and challenge language skills in interested students
- Language Acquisition students are offered a number of excursion opportunities throughout the course of their study. All of these opportunities enable students to more fully immerse themselves in their second language and to achieve a richer degree of intercultural understanding.