



Language Policy

Platon school



"One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way."

Frank Smith

1. LANGUAGE POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of the Language Policy is to outline the school's philosophy on language teaching and learning. It states our main beliefs on how we view language in our school community and how language should be used. The language policy is used as a tool to explain how language teaching and learning is achieved according to each student's needs and individuality.

2. LANGUAGE POLICY MISSION

Platon School's mission is to support students' academic journey from childhood to adolescence in a safe and nurturing environment empowered by modern technologies, designed to accommodate different learning styles. The policy follows the principles and practices of the IB, defining the linguistic and academic goals of our school.

Our goal is to cultivate international mindedness and a sense of global citizenship by building national and international curricula in a truly bilingual environment which fosters academic freedom, intellectual diversity, experimentation and technological advancements. We aspire to develop inquiring life-long learners who search and define their own identity, pursue their dreams guided by values, becoming knowledgeable, yet caring and balanced individuals so as to experience personal success and help create a better world. We believe that through the teaching of more than one language these attributes can be cultivated in conjunction with fostering the student's individuality and cultural background.

The PLATON WORLD SCHOOL mission statement itself forms the foundation for our language policy. Language, being the basis for all learning, will play an important role in helping the school achieve its mission in inspiring and challenging the thinking skills of the students, providing a caring and committed international community. Platon

World School seeks to expand the language and literature skills of the students as well as ensure lifelong learning and help students fulfil their potential.

3. AIMS

The aim of language teaching is linguistic proficiency and the development of the student's ability to effectively communicate in a social context. The concept permeating our policy is that everything the students learn in the context of language teaching at school must find its application in a field outside the school as well. Thus, language teaching must hone the student's ability for critical thought, expression, and creativity in all fields. It is imperative that the students comprehend and have sufficient knowledge of language as a system governed by grammatical and syntactical rules as well as by principles allowing for the unencumbered creation of numerous sentences and texts, to use it to communicate in the appropriate context and circumstances.

4. OUR PHILOSOPHY ON LANGAUGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Platon World School is an International Baccalaureate (IB) Bilingual World school supporting and enhancing the acquisition of more than two languages. At Platon World School we build a challenging yet rich multilingual environment. The main language of instruction is Modern Greek, adhering to the laws and regulations provided by the Greek Ministry of Education and Lifelong learning, fulfilling the requirements for the National Curriculum.
- English is compulsorily taught as a second language across the curriculum, from Pre-K up to grade 12. The students also have the choice to learn a third language, either French or German, from Grade 3 onwards. In order to provide our students with a language-rich environment, our library offers a wide variety of Greek, English, French and German books and our librarian often invites authors to share with students, parents and teachers their writing process and experience.
- At Platon World School all teachers are considered language teachers, as language is the basic tool through which we teach all of our curricula. In collaboration with coordinators of other departments, we seek to overcome difficulties pertaining to the comprehension of special scientific terminology or to further elucidate instances of overcomplicated phrasing in certain sections of the curriculum. We actively encourage coordinators from other departments to forward such requests to our

department as the target of linguistic proficiency is vital, especially in the context of interdisciplinary assignments. The familiarization of students with techniques of oral presentations to fellow students, parents and the wider community can only enhance communication and build students' confidence.

- The aim of our school's language programme is to develop students into assertive, inquisitive, reflective, highly skilled and enthusiastic readers, writers, speakers, listeners and presenters; that is to say, individuals who can function in highly challenging environments and contexts. For this reason, we promote experiential learning, and our native speaker teachers teach language in meaningful and realistic contexts through real life scenarios, rehearsed discussions, discussions in a social context, and a wide variety of text types that might encourage students' active participation and involvement in a student-centered classroom environment. Our aim is to get our students involved in probing, investigative, and inquisitive activities with the express purpose of making their educational experience more holistic and constructive and the students themselves more communicative and collaborative. Additionally, through teaching language skills, we aspire to develop our students' personal knowledge and nature to help them evolve as individuals, as suggested by the IB Learner profile and evidenced via their portfolios.
- As a World School situated in Athens Greece, we strongly encourage our students to consolidate their native language skills and develop a profound understanding of their native language, while simultaneously exposing them from a very young age to the English language; from Grade 3 onwards students are exposed to a third language, either French or German, receiving four (4) hours of instruction on a weekly basis. We also offer extra afternoon language classes in Chinese, Spanish, Arabic or Russian, to those students aspiring that one day they might become proficient trilingual speakers, or to students hoping to take one of these languages at B level in the Diploma years. Our teachers strive to create students that can communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language, since this is essential to the concept of an international education that promotes multilingualism and intercultural understanding, both of which are central to both the IB's and Platon World School's mission.

- To this end, students are encouraged to participate in educational trips abroad and international student exchange programmes such as the COMENIUS educational project, equipping students with the necessary multiliteracy skills and attitudes, enabling them to communicate successfully in various global contexts and build intercultural awareness.
- In addition, our school involves students in the *Model United Nations Conference* which our school has been successfully hosting annually since February 2011. This conference brings students in close contact with students from both home and abroad affording them the opportunity to use the English language in order to debate and decide on multiple issues of global significance for the international community.
- We strongly believe that it is equally important to nurture and develop the students' mother tongue as well as it is for them to acquire additional languages that will help them reflect upon and explore different cultural perspectives. In the case of foreign students, we strongly encourage their parents to either play an active role in the teaching of their mother tongue to their children or to seek extra help from private tutors. To further enhance learning, our library provides our students with a wide selection of Modern Greek, English, French and German books and our classroom environment is enriched with print tables, teacher and student writings, posters, labels, instructions and many more.

5. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE METHODOLOGY

Language teaching follows a text-based approach where all units of oral or written discourse is part of the curriculum. We use original texts from various genres and cultural contexts which showcase a number of communication purposes. The texts chosen come from a pool of texts either prescribed by the Greek Ministry of Education or texts especially chosen by our teachers; these texts are topical pertaining either to current or global issues or offer a retrospective of earlier methods that can apply to today's needs. These diverse choices broaden our students' experience with a variety of texts and perspectives thus enhancing intercultural understanding through the study of various historical periods, places, and contexts. Our teaching material and evaluation criteria differ to those of the National Curriculum, as we follow the IB Philosophy, practices and continuum outlined by the IB requirements.

6. Language and Literature as Part of a Bilingual Programme

- All students at all grades throughout the school can attend bilingual classes. In 2011 Platon World School implemented bilingual programmes throughout Pre-K, Kindergarten, PYP, MYP and the IB Diploma, where the language of Instruction is solely English. The bilingual programmes, along with Modern Greek, teach students the English language 12 to 15 hours per week. Students who do not wish to follow the Bilingual programme, get instruction in the English language 5 times weekly and are also given the opportunity to choose between French or German from Grade 3 onwards, where they get 4 hours of instruction on a weekly basis. All six IB units of inquiry are completed both in Greek and English. The aim of the bilingual programme is to offer a high level of education in both the Greek and the English language.
- The Bilingual Programme is implemented both by learning *the* language and learning *with* the language. The former involves learning grammar, structure and vocabulary. These basic skills lead to oral communication, written expression and listening and reading comprehension acquisition. The later involves leaning disciplines such as Social Studies, Mathematics, Sciences, Geography, Physical Education, Information Technology, Performing and Visual Arts. Learning is accomplished through hands on activities, group work, songs, games and constructions for the younger students. The older students learn through engaging themselves in projects and working with the community.
- All students learn to read, write and communicate in English as if it were their mother tongue. To complete the units of inquiry, students work individually and in groups in the school's library and present their work to their classmates and the school community. Apart from teaching language, the bilingual programme aims at promoting the culture and traditions of the English-speaking world such as Halloween, St Patrick's day, International Language Day, Health and Nutrition Day, International day of people with Special Needs. Through these activities our students learn to be more respectful and appreciative of other cultures and differences.

7. ADMISSIONS POLICY – LANGUAGE LEARNER REQUIREMENTS

The bilingual program of our school is offered from the pre-K to High School and runs along with the national curriculum program, having English as its official language.

Since most students are of Greek background, English language competence at this level is near identical among students. However, as the bilingual program develops, students are provided with ample opportunities to broaden their knowledge and communication skills in the English language at a very quick pace.

Therefore, admission in these groups at a later stage is only allowed after the prospective student has taken an oral and written test in English and has gone through an interview session with the program administrator and/or other teachers in the bilingual program. Parents are made aware of these procedures and of the results of the assessment. If the newcomer student has the prerequisites to attend the bilingual class, then, they are admitted and, if necessarily, support classes may be arranged until it has been decided that the student has fully adapted.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

As stated in our assessment policy, assessment is continuous and systematic. We use various tools and strategies throughout all assessment stages (pre-assessment, formative, summative) in all 3-language scope and sequence strands, catering for all student's learning needs and styles, both within or outside units of inquiry. In this way, we ensure that assessment will enhance each student's language profile and further learning needs.

All assessment documents related to language learning, abide to our scope and sequence criteria, outlining their importance to the students. Feedback from pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment tasks, including students' self-assessment and reflection, are collected to evaluate both student and teacher development.

At Platon World School we are committed to giving equal chances and opportunities to all of our students, to become active learners through the IB programme by providing them with the following language competencies:

- All students learn their mother tongue (Greek or otherwise), English to native speakers' level and at least one more language.

- Students are provided with a diversity of teaching and learning language environments for their mother tongue, learning English and other languages.
- Students with learning differences are supported by developing individualized language programmes for them. These individualized language programmes are supplemented by special allowances when it comes to extra time during test and exams, provided that assessment certificates verified by speech pathologists are provided. These allowances mean that spelling and errors in expression are disregarded and do not count towards the student's final mark.

Our objective is for the students to be able to accomplish the demands of the assessment criteria, which are as follows:

- Analyzing texts** in terms of context, language, structure, technique, style, authorial intent, audience, purpose, opinions, explanations, terminology, features.
- Employing structures** which serve the context and the intention of the students' written and oral work; these structures allow students to express their views and arguments in a sustained, coherent and logical manner.
- Producing texts** which demonstrate insight, imagination, sensitivity, critical thinking, creativity and development of thinking.
- Using language appropriate** to the themes of text; the vocabulary employed is varied, the sentences are structured cohesively, the correct register and style is produced according to the context and intention. Finally, correct grammar and syntax are employed and proper pronunciation is encouraged.

In the process of fulfilling the above assessment criteria, the students are simultaneously being trained and prepared to sit for all levels of the University of Cambridge language acquisition exams, according to the CERF (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), ie: Starters, Movers, Flyers, PET, KET, FCE, CPA, CPE and IELTS Academic.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ASSESSMENT

Our school values the use of a variety of assessment strategies, such as selected response, open-ended tasks, performance, process journals, essays, investigations,

research etc. When it comes to testing knowledge and proficiency, a series of written, spoken and visual tests are put together which assess a variety of linguistic modes. Furthermore, students are required to acquire a variety of literacy skills to gradually develop an awareness of diverse linguistic and cultural contexts in which to communicate and negotiate meaning. In these groups, English is not a linguistic system which students have to conquer but rather a channel of expression, communication and global understanding.

During student evaluation, we seek feedback on the teaching process and the detection of learning deficiencies. The aim of evaluation is not just the examination of knowledge as a result unto itself but chiefly the examination of the processes of knowledge acquisition and management. In order for the evaluation to succeed, we pay a great deal of attention to the student comprehension of the IB evaluation criteria which we try to combine with considerable success with respective criteria of the national curriculum. In addition to evaluation, we also encourage self-evaluation, that is to say the frequent involvement of the students in the implementation of the criteria used.

CLASSICAL GREEK

It is important to underline the importance of the teaching of Classical Greek during the Middle Years programme. We seek to highlight the historical continuity of the Modern Greek Language through the teaching of Classical Greek by imparting etymological knowledge, translating ancient texts in Modern Greek and appreciating the cultural value of Ancient Greek, a language which has seeped through in international scientific terminology; indeed, Classical Greek has played a significant part in transmitting important political and philosophical concepts to world thought, most notably the concepts of democracy and rationalism.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OBJECTIVES

- **Comprehending spoken and visual texts** that encompass aspects of listening and viewing for specific purposes, so that the students learn to

interpret and construct meaning from spoken and visual texts and understand ideas, values, attitudes and cultures from other countries.

- **Comprehending written and visual text** that encompass aspects of reading and viewing for specific purposes, so that the students learn to interpret and construct meaning from written and visual texts and understand ideas, values, attitudes and cultures from other countries.
- **Communicating in response to spoken, written and visual text**, so that the students can interact in various situations on a range of topics for specific purposes of personal, local and global interests and significance, and responding to spoken, written and visual texts in the target language.
- **Using correctly and appropriately the target language in spoken and written form**, and recognizing audience, purpose, formal and informal register, social and academic language, so that thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information is expressed in both spoken and written form using a variety of structures, grammar, spelling, punctuation, narrative voice and pronunciation.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION ASSESSMENT

Placement of students is organized according to their linguistic profile, adhering to the regulations imposed by the Greek Government legislation and the IB programme. The language continuums and the global proficiency tables are used as tools for assessing students' progress and grouping them into the appropriate language courses. For newcomers, a written test along with an interview with both student and their parents are used in order to collect the necessary data for their successful integration into the programme.

The use of the target language is always encouraged and emphasized. Exposure to the natural context of the language is constantly enhanced through audiovisual material, projects, research and written journals in the target language. Formative assessment is an ongoing process integrated in the curriculum as a tool to encourage learning, develop learner confidence and inform the teacher on the students' progress. Summative assessment is criterion-related as stipulated in the LA guide, and prior to any assessment task,

students are provided with explanations, guidelines, and clear expectations with direct reference to these assessment criteria.

While fulfilling the above assessment criteria, the students are simultaneously being trained and prepared to sit for all levels of the University of Cambridge English language acquisition exams, according to the CERF (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), DELF Exams for French and for German.

SUPPORT FOR NON-NATIVE LEARNERS

MOTHER TONGUE SUPPORT AND SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Our population mainly consists of students whose mother tongue is Greek. The school, however, has established procedures to support other mother tongues. When a non-Greek speaking student enrolls, the school has designed a programme that ensures the smooth integration of the student in the school community. This is realised in a two-fold manner: the homeroom teacher provides daily support regarding the teaching of Greek Language; additionally, the Foreign Language Department in collaboration with the student's parents, formulate and agree on a program of extra, afternoon classes either on school premises or at home, at an extra cost, ensuring that the student receives age and level-appropriate language level instruction of their mother tongue. In the Diploma years, these students are encouraged to take the Literature self-taught course in their own mother tongue. The same procedure is followed with students who show weaknesses in the acquisition of Modern Greek and English and need extra support during school hours or after school hours. It also bears repeating that in the case of newcomers to the school whose competence in their mother tongue or any foreign language of choice is lower than the one required for their age, the procedure as detailed above is followed.

In addition, students who have difficulties in Language and Speech are supported by the school's SEN team depending on the specific needs of each student. The SEN team deals with any difficulties that influence the student's expression and communication ability as these manifest in the educational process. In our school, the assessment is done upon parents' or teachers' request or when the team detects problems in communication or behaviour.

The SEN team approaches students, as early as from the age of three, by creating an appropriate environment and taking into consideration each child's needs. Cooperation between the child's family and educators is key in every case. It goes without saying that if the student has specific learning difficulties that it is very important for students to be receive the appropriate support from their environment (family, friends and educators) as far as their emotional wellbeing is concerned.

Students with learning differences are supported by the development of individualised language programmes tailored to their uniqueness and suited to their needs. It bears noting that the submission of assessment certificates issued by speech pathologists allows for extra time during exams and special instructions regarding the marking of their exam papers, i.e. disregarding spelling errors and poor expression skills.

RESOURCES

The school library plays an essential role by providing up-to-date and appropriate resources for both teachers and students, which can be used as support material not only for subject-specific and interdisciplinary units of work, but also in the development of information literacy skills. With regards to language and literature in particular, the library is key to connecting readers with works of world literature, works in translation and books in different languages. Information and communication technology are used as an important means of expanding student's knowledge of the world, as these help students to gain access to a broader range of language resources, developing skills and preparing for exams (MYP and IB DIPLOMA). Finally, the use of bespoke iBooks created by the language teachers is essential as it has enriched the teaching material in a student-centered, fun and friendly way. All teachers hold the responsibility of teaching students to use electronic media critically and diligently, so that students are made aware of the responsible use and limitations of data found online.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All language teachers hold a university degree in the language they teach and they attend IB workshops, seminars and conferences on a regular basis, as part of their life-long professional development, along with following the latest trends in language teaching.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND LANGAUGE POLICY REVIEW

The Primary, Middle School and High School Principals, the PYP, MYP and DP Coordinators and the PYP, MYP and IB Diploma educational staff have put together the language policy so it should be reviewed and revised at the beginning of each school year. The Head of the school and the Coordinators, as well as the teaching staff as a whole, are responsible for implementing the language policy across the board at Platon World School. Teachers communicate the policy to both students and parents with the express purpose of receiving the necessary feedback that will allow the school to further review and evaluate its general language philosophy, language profile and language policy.