



Homestead Middle School

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme Language Policy



Philosophy

At Homestead Middle School, language is central to learning, communication, and the development of intercultural understanding. As an IB World School, we believe that all teachers are language teachers, with the responsibility of supporting students in developing the academic and communication skills needed to succeed. Our language policy is guided by the principles of the International Baccalaureate and reflects our commitment to equity, inclusion, and the development of principled, internationally minded learners.

Sociocultural Context

HMS is located in the southernmost region of Miami-Dade County, serving a diverse community that includes many bilingual and multilingual families. The majority of our students are Hispanic or Black, with home languages such as Spanish, Haitian Creole, Jamaican Patois, Mam, Achi, and other indigenous and regional dialects. This cultural and linguistic diversity is viewed as an asset and enriches the learning environment for all.

Rights and Responsibilities

- **Students** are responsible for developing proficiency in English as the language of instruction while maintaining and valuing their home languages. They are expected to explore at least one additional language to expand their intercultural competence.
- **Teachers** across all subject areas are responsible for embedding language instruction in their practice by modeling academic language, teaching subject-specific vocabulary, and supporting students' communication skills.
- **Parents/Guardians** are partners in developing their child's language profile. They support literacy at home, provide input on their child's language needs, and participate in family literacy initiatives and language-focused events.
- **Administrators** ensure equitable access to the IB program, allocate resources to support language development, and oversee the regular review of this policy.

Language of Instruction: English

English is the language of instruction at HMS and is used in all subject areas, including Language and Literature classes. Students develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening through the English Language Arts curriculum and cross-curricular learning. Students scoring at Levels 1 or 2 on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) are placed in Intensive Reading courses, which provide targeted, data-driven support. English Language Learners (ELLs) receive additional support through ESOL classes and sheltered instruction, ensuring equitable access to all IB courses.

Language Acquisition

All students at HMS study an additional language as part of the IB MYP requirement. Students may choose Spanish or French, where they develop communication skills across different phases of language acquisition. Instruction emphasizes intercultural awareness, historical context, and real-world applications of language learning. Students are encouraged to explore and use their second language beyond the classroom, developing oral and written skills that contribute to multiliteracies and global citizenship.

Mother Tongue and Heritage Languages

HMS recognizes and values the diverse home languages of our students. Our ESOL program provides targeted English instruction while respecting and celebrating students' home languages. The library includes resources in Spanish, French, Creole, and other languages spoken in our community. Students and families are encouraged to maintain their mother tongue through family literacy practices, cultural celebrations, and access to bilingual resources. Our staff, many of whom are bilingual or multilingual, provide ongoing support to ensure families feel welcomed and respected.

Inclusion and Equity of Access

To ensure equitable access to the IB programme, HMS provides a variety of supports:

- Translating meetings, school documents, and Connect-Ed messages into multiple languages.
- Offering literacy homework that involves parents and family members in students' language development.
- Providing extracurricular activities and community service opportunities connected to language and culture.
- Ensuring ELL students have access to developmental reading courses, Language Arts through ESOL, and additional academic support.
- Providing accommodations such as sign language and other communication supports students with exceptionalities.

Respect for Community Languages

The school values and promotes the languages of the Homestead community, recognizing them as a reflection of our rich multicultural environment. Students explore cultural traditions of Spanish-speaking and French-speaking countries, while heritage languages such as Haitian Creole and indigenous dialects are acknowledged and respected through school events, library collections, and family engagement.

The HMS Language Policy is reviewed every year, or as needed, and it reflects the values of IB philosophy. (Revised August 2025)