

LANGUAGE POLICY

St. Thomas High School

Introduction

The language curriculum at St. Thomas is grounded in the belief that Language is central to every learning project, for language is an essential aspect of communication and the means by which learning is achieved in all subjects as well as in the development of interdisciplinary skills. Given this fact it is our common belief that language can no longer be seen as the responsibility of the language teachers alone. We as a school community are aligned with the IB organization's belief that;

“In the case of IB programmes, the role of language is valued as central to developing critical thinking, which is essential for the cultivation of intercultural awareness, international-mindedness and global citizenship.”(IBO, 2011)

Language enables students to organize their thoughts, to express themselves clearly and accurately, and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing in various situations. (QEP, 2004) It is also a medium for involving individuals in the life of the pluralistic communities of the modern world. Language is a major representation of one's culture, values, history and thinking. Learning additional languages allows one to understand others; it is a statement of respect.

Definition of Language

Language is defined (QEP, 2004) as the representational systems of spoken, written, and media discourse. Language includes words, images, signs, symbols, sounds, gestures, and body language. Discourse is language in use. It arises out of the social context in which it is produced.

Philosophy of Language Learning

Language study promotes international mindedness, reinforces cultural identity, contributes to personal growth, and allows for effective communication. It is important that students learn languages, learn through languages, and learn about languages.

Language learning encourages the development of a repertoire of essential strategies, processes, skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will make it possible for all students to become life-long learners and to flourish in a world of rapid social, cultural, and technological change. (QEP, 2004)

Guiding Principles of Language Learning at St. Thomas High School

- Language is central to learning. **All teachers are language teachers with equal** responsibility to support growth in effective communication (oral, written or in other media).
- It is important to provide clear expectations about style, purpose, audience and form for each assignment or project in any course, as language changes in response to these factors.
- Language develops through constructive feedback by peers, teachers, and parents.
- Written reflection is an important tool for learning.
- Students need a non-threatening environment of respect and open-mindedness to grow as language-learners and to use language to grow as people.
- Literacy skills should be taught in context.
- Students learn language best when they are exposed to good modeling in a rich language environment.
- Students should explore language through the Arts.
- Students need an opportunity to interpret and develop their understanding of mathematical, scientific, and technological information with their specialized vocabulary and symbolic systems.
- Integrating the common IB command terms allows students to have the firmest grasp on the expectations with each subject and across subjects.

Language Profile of St. Thomas High School

St. Thomas is a public high school of approximately 1300 students in the province of Quebec in Canada. The province offers linguistically-based school boards in either French or English. St. Thomas operates within the English system.

French is the official language of the province of Quebec. In order to attend English school students must obtain approval under the Charter of the French Language and receive a Certificate of Eligibility. The criteria for eligibility are outlined in sections 73, 76 and 86.1 of the charter.

The vast majority of our student body consists of students who have been in the English system in Quebec from kindergarten. These students have generally followed a French Immersion programme within an English school. Studying French as a second language has always been required and students have also been required to complete content-courses in French prior to arriving at St. Thomas.

St. Thomas has a number of international students who may not have been exposed to French before and are therefore placed in the regular programme with the added support of our Francisation programme.

Language Programmes offered at St. Thomas High School

St. Thomas currently offers three programmes: English Immersion, French Immersion, and the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. The same language philosophy underlies the three programmes, but the amount of instruction time in each language varies by programme.

- **English Immersion**

Approximately 10% of our student body follows the English Immersion Programme

- All courses are offered in English, except for second-language instruction and some art or music classes which are offered in French.
- Second- language instruction in French is offered for a 50 minute period each day of the 6 day cycle.

- **French Immersion Programme**

Approximately 40 % of our student body follows the French Immersion Programme

- While most courses are offered in English, second-language instruction and some of the content courses are offered in French
- Second language instruction in French is offered for a 50 minute period each day of the 6 day cycle.
- The list of content courses offered in French varies by grade level
 - In Secondary 1 (grade 7), in addition to the French second language course, the student will receive the following content courses in French: Science and design, History and Geography, Art or Music. 60% of the curriculum is offered in French.
 - In Secondary 2 (grade 8), in addition to French as a second language, the student will receive the following content courses in French: History/Geography, Art or Music.
 - In Secondary 3 (grade 9), in addition to French as a second language, the student will receive the following content course in French: History and Citizenship.
 - In Secondary 4 (grade 10), in addition to French as a second language, the student may opt for History and Citizenship in French.
 - In Secondary 5 (grade 11), French as a second language is the only course offered in French.

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- **International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme**

Approximately 50% of our student population follows the IB MYP.

- In years 1 & 2 of the programme the majority of the course are conducted in French
- From year 3 onward the students take fewer and fewer courses in French, culminating in only Language Acquisition being offered in French.
- Second language instruction in French is offered for a 50 minute period each day of the 6 day cycle.
- The list of content courses offered in French varies by grade level
 - In Secondary 1 (grade 7), in addition to the French second language course, the student will receive the following content courses in French: Science and design, History and Geography, Art or Music. 50% of the curriculum is offered in French.
 - In Secondary 3 (grade 9), in addition to French as a second language, the student will receive the following content course in French: History and Citizenship.
 - In Secondary 4 (grade 10), in addition to French as a second language, the student may opt for History and Citizenship in French. The ethics course is also taught in the same language as history.
 - In Secondary 5 (grade 11), French as a second language as well as the Ethics course are offered in French.
- All students following the MYP are automatically placed in the Proficient level of Language Acquisition.
- Students complete an entrance exam prior to year 1 in order to be placed in French Language & Literature (one section per grade). Following year 1 some students transition out of French L & L and move into Language Acquisition and some students move into French L & L. This movement is based on evaluation by coordinator, teachers and the administrators.

Support for Language Learning

Successful language learning can be enhanced through a support system within the school. Currently four forms of support are offered at St. Thomas:

- Tutorials offered by classroom teachers at lunch hour or after school in any course.
- Francization sessions:
 - The Quebec government provides a subsidy for the school to be able to offer additional language instruction for recent immigrants (from other countries or other provinces) who do not speak French or whose command of French is weak. This extra instruction is offered outside of the regular timetable.
- Literacy Programme (annex)

- Additional basic literacy skills are offered in English to Cycle I students (grades 7 and 8) in small group settings within the student's regular timetable. This support is offered to students who are experiencing academic difficulty, and is in addition to the regular English Language curriculum.
- The Learning Center
 - This center offers academic support in small group settings to students who are experiencing difficulties. The focus is on organizational skills and study skills. The service is scheduled within the student's timetable.

Sources

Quebec Education Program. Secondary School Program. 2004. Quebec, Quebec

International Baccalaureate Organization. Language and learning in IB programmes. 2011. Cardiff, UK.

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