



Daystar Academy

An IB World School

Daystar Academy PYP Language Philosophy

The mission of Daystar Academy is to empower our students to positively impact the world through a faith-based, culturally-engaged, globally-minded education. Daystar's curriculum is designed to reflect the interrelatedness and beauty of creation. Our learning is multifaceted, as students explore the complexity and diversity of the world. Students explore curricular content through integrated, transdisciplinary themes, and the fundamental skills of reading, writing, numbers and thinking are emphasized throughout the curriculum. Through this approach we seek to develop enthusiastic, joyful and disciplined, life-long learners.

Throughout the language arts program students develop their ability to read, write, speak, and listen. Quality, globally-minded literature is the backbone of the reading program. The language arts curriculum stresses the enjoyment of language and communication. The development of writing skills are taught as a process requiring prewriting, planning, drafting, revision, editing, and presenting or publishing. Students are consistently challenged to discover and challenge their thoughts and to express themselves coherently and effectively. This language philosophy was created utilizing the principles from the IB PYP Language Scope and Sequence which states, "language permeates the world in which we live, it is socially constructed and dependent on the number and nature of our social interactions and relationships."

Language Profile

As of fall 2019, more than 90% of the students at Daystar Academy speak English as their mother-tongue. Mother-tongues and other languages spoken at home include Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Tagalog, Italian, and Arabic.

Language of Instruction

The primary language of instruction at Daystar Academy is English, the exception being our world language classes where instruction is given in the target language.

Second Language Instruction

Daystar's language philosophy aligns with and embraces the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning which states, "To study another language and culture gives one the powerful key to successful communication: knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom. The approach to second language instruction found in today's schools is designed to facilitate genuine interaction with others, whether they are on another continent, across town, or within the neighborhood." It is our belief that language is the primary means by which we express ourselves and communicate with the world around us. Students must be able to use language appropriately, accurately, and with confidence. Additionally, we recognize that language development is a critical component to the holistic growth of our students that allows them to become critical thinkers, risk-takers, inquirers, and to be open to experiencing and appreciating a variety of cultures, including their own.

Units of Inquiry

The programme of inquiry consists of six transdisciplinary units of inquiry. These are the basis for the language instruction for students in Pre-K through 5th grade. The units are “Who we are,” “Where we are in place and time,” “How we express ourselves,” “How the world works,” “How we organize ourselves,” and “Sharing the Planet.” Daystar teachers work collaboratively to plan, teach, and reflect on each of these units of inquiry.

Mother-Tongue Development and Maintenance

Daystar Academy acknowledges and supports the importance for all students to preserve their mother-tongue and cultural identity. At the beginning of every school year, the teaching team reviews their class lists and survey parents to note which mother-tongues and cultures are represented. Teachers use this information to plan their units and areas of study in order to create opportunities for students to practice and celebrate their mother-tongue and cultures. Classroom libraries are stocked with books and classroom decor reflects mother-tongue languages and cultures. Teachers also note whether online translating tools, texts in other languages or similar resources will be useful.

In order to affirm and celebrate our diverse languages and cultures in the larger community, songs and Bible verses shared during events such as all-school chapel or Family Christmas worship are sung and translated into other languages when appropriate. When age appropriate, students are encouraged to take leadership roles to choose, lead and teach these songs and verses in their mother-tongue within the Daystar community. Teachers also use language and cultural information to more effectively communicate with students’ families. When available, translators are used upon request during parent/teacher conferences or school meetings and school documents are made available in other languages, via document translation applications.

Students are encouraged to use their mother-tongue language skills whenever possible. In doing so, they are able to continue to develop their linguistic skills and cultural identity while simultaneously fostering curiosity for other cultures and their unique dialects. For instance, within some of our classes students may read literature in their mother-tongue and then make comparisons with the analogous English versions. Students are encouraged to use references and resources from their mother-tongue to prepare for projects and presentations. Resources provided at school for students include picture books, chapter books, audiobooks, and dictionaries in a variety of languages. PYP students have access to internet resources in other languages via school-supplied technology. Teachers and students also make extensive use of the Chicago Public Library system to attain resources for students in their mother-tongue. Students are encouraged to orally present in both their mother-tongue and English when possible (for example, student recitations during our yearly Recitation night.)

Standards and Assessments

All K-5 PYP teachers utilize the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and the IB Language Arts Scope and Sequence to provide guidelines and expectations in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pre-K teachers use Illinois Early Learning State Standards to provide similar guidelines and expectations. Students are provided access to a variety of genres of literature from many cultural backgrounds. Students are given choices in their reading materials and are encouraged to read various genres for enjoyment. Differentiated instruction is provided for students with special needs, including students with learning disabilities and students who are academically gifted and talented. Students are assessed formally and informally in the classroom using writing prompts, reading comprehension checks, reading skills assessments, speeches and essays. Kindergarten through 5th grade students are assessed with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), which determines students independent and instructional reading levels. Teachers observe students’ reading behaviors one-on-one and engage in comprehension conversations.

Language Acquisition

At Daystar Academy, all K-5 students learn at least one language in addition to their mother-tongue. Language acquisition courses focus on interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational competence while fostering cultural understanding. While developing language skills through the study and use of a variety of written and spoken materials, students explore the culture(s) connected to it. Materials extend from everyday oral exchanges to literary texts which relate to the culture(s) concerned. Through their studies, students build the necessary and appropriate skills to read, write, speak and listen in a second language. During the 2019-2020 school year, Spanish is the current language offered.

Limited English Proficiency

Daystar Academy is a private school which does not receive federal funds in order to comprehensively meet the needs of all learners. Therefore, our school reserves the right to not enroll PYP students who cannot successfully access the curriculum in English (our language of instruction) within the supports we are able to offer. The K-5 admission process includes assessments in English and incorporates speaking, writing, listening and reading comprehension. Results help determine levels of English proficiency and inform the admissions team and the student's parents as to whether a student will be able to successfully integrate into classes where the primary language of instruction is English. When it is determined that said student can successfully access the curriculum in English, a student support plan may be developed in cooperation with the student's teachers, the Director of the PYP Program, and Student Support Services to aid in the student's success. Student support plans are reviewed by the team throughout the school year and modified as needed.

Communication to Stakeholders

The Language Policy is posted on the school website. Hard copies are available through the main office and will be shared on an annual basis with all PYP teachers, students, and parents.

Annual Policy Review

The IB PYP Language Policy will be reviewed by the language policy committee and the education committee annually. The education committee consists of the Head of School, The PYP Director, MYP Director, at least one School Board Member, at least two parents and a minimum of two teaching staff. The PYP Director will ensure that all teachers review their class lists yearly and are intentionally making accommodations for and celebrating the mother-tongues and cultures of all students.

As information regarding various languages spoken at Daystar Academy is gathered each year, modifications will be made to the policy and support services will be adjusted.

Language Policy Committee Members

Tami Doig, Head of School
Paris Williams, PYP Coordinator, parent
Alison Good, MYP Coordinator, parent
Vanessa Espinosa, PYP Teacher, parent
Lisa Peachey, PYP Teacher
Elena Buis, PYP Teacher
Jessica Van Dyk, PYP Teacher
Hallie Beck, PYP Language Acquisition teacher, Art Teacher

Reviewed by the Language Policy Committee August 2019