

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor



II. gimnazija Maribor

International Baccalaureate

Language Policy

for the IB Diploma Programme at II. gimnazija Maribor

A policy for the teaching, use and support of languages in the IB Diploma Programme at II. gimnazija Maribor

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Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

Table of Contents

1. IB Mission Statement	3
2. IB Learner Profile	4
3. The Purpose of this Document	5
4. Language Philosophy	5
5. School Language Profile	6
6. Intercultural Awareness and Cultural Identity	7
7. Mother Tongue Support, Maintenance and Development	7
8. Students Learning in a Second Language	7
9. IB Language Learning Requirements	8
10. The Teachers' Role in Language Learning in the Classroom	8
11. The School's Role in Language Learning	9
12. Language Teaching Resources	10
13. Review Process and the Areas of Development	10
14. Resources	11

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

1. IB Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organisation works with schools, governments and international organisations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

2. IB Learner Profile



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.



Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

3. The Purpose of this Document

The language policy for the IB Diploma Programme at II. gimnazija Maribor supports students' language development, promotes multilingualism, and fosters an inclusive learning environment. It details how the school addresses diverse linguistic needs by supporting the development of the language of instruction, additional languages, and students' mother tongues. The policy aims to enhance cognitive and academic skills, encourage cultural understanding, and prepare students to become effective global communicators.

4. Language Philosophy

In an increasingly globalised world where proficiency in multiple languages is essential, II. gimnazija Maribor, as an IB school, aims to foster a supportive environment that encourages students to go beyond using just their mother tongue. To achieve this, the school:

- Implements, communicates and regularly reviews a language policy aligned with IB guidelines to promote intercultural understanding through communication in various languages;
- recognizes multilingualism as a reality, a right, and a resource for learning;
- specifies diverse physical and virtual resources within its language policy to facilitate language development.

English is the primary language of instruction throughout the IB Diploma Programme curriculum. Language learning at II. gimnazija Maribor is considered the responsibility of all teachers, not just language specialists, as every teacher plays a role in language education. We acknowledge that language is deeply connected to identity, culture, and power, shaping pedagogical approaches.

A positive, inclusive environment where students feel culturally and linguistically valued is critical for effective language learning. Language is a fundamental tool for intellectual, social, and emotional development, central to all areas of learning, and closely tied to self-esteem and cultural identity. It allows self-expression, idea formation, perspective-building, and cultural awareness and understanding.

Recognising that all IB teachers contribute to language learning, regardless of subject, and that parents play a role as well, the school aims to nurture students' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). By integrating language use across subjects, we encourage students to become thoughtful, empathetic global citizens and effective communicators in a multilingual world.

Our language programme addresses diverse learning styles and individual development needs by offering differentiated and varied instruction, incorporating skills like listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing. This enables students to learn language both through and about language.

For the purpose of this document, we use "mother tongue" to describe a student's dominant language. A student whose mother tongue is not English (the language of instruction in the IB DP at II. gimnazija Maribor) is described as a "student who learns in a language other than their mother tongue". In the IB DP at II. gimnazija Maribor, English is the language of instruction for all IB Diploma Programme students.

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

5. School Language Profile

II. gimnazija Maribor recognises that language development is essential for communication and plays a crucial role in personal growth and identity. Language evolves through social interactions and shapes how we connect with others and understand cultural norms, ultimately forming our cultural identity. It influences how we think, learn, and process information through specific communication patterns. Therefore, the school aims to create a linguistic environment that:

- is open and inclusive,
- affirms the identity and autonomy of both students and teachers,
- encourages critical thinking.

At II. gimnazija Maribor, all IB DP students participate in a comprehensive language programme. English is the primary language of instruction and a mandatory subject for all IB DP students, while German and French are offered as optional additional languages (Language B). Slovene (Language A: Literature) is mandatory at a higher level for all Slovene students who attended a Slovene grammar school before enrolling in the IB Diploma Programme. Similarly, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, or Macedonian Language A: Literature is obligatory for students from those linguistic backgrounds either as a regular Language A: Literature course or as a self-taught Language A: Literature course, which depends on the number of students taking the language. The government provides funding for the taught course with a minimum of 4 participants.

Exceptions are made for students who attended international schools where English was the language of instruction and who feel more comfortable taking English A rather than a Language A course in their mother tongue. The school also offers self-taught Language A courses, such as Ukrainian, and tries its best to find tutors for requested languages.

The school provides and covers the costs of a supervisor for self-taught Language A courses. However, the government does not cover the expenses for individual language tutors, which must be paid by the students and their families.

The school was founded in 1950 and has offered the DP since 1990. Since its beginnings, the school has maintained a diverse and multicultural community. Since 2000, we have enrolled students from former Yugoslav countries, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, in the IB DP. The number of international students has increased in the last few years. According to national legislation, all international students must take free Slovene language lessons in their first year in Slovenia. We organise the lessons for them.

The candidate's previous exposure to the language of instruction is considered part of the admission process. In the selection process, students are assessed on their level and ability to use the English language of instruction. We advise families on the procedures for best supporting their children linguistically.

The school offers a variety of language courses as extracurricular activities. In 2024-2025 school year, we will provide courses to prepare students for CAE, DELF, or DSD. Additionally, we offer Latin, Croatian, and Chinese

6. Intercultural Awareness and Cultural Identity

The school uses language to promote key IB Diploma Programme concepts: holistic learning, intercultural awareness, and communication, reaching beyond the individual and their immediate community.

Recognising that language shapes cultural identity, II. gimnazija Maribor values both the mother tongue and additional languages in forming a person's worldview. We encourage students to express themselves in their mother tongue whenever possible, as it is a vital part of their identity. The school supports self-esteem through additive bilingualism, ensuring that learning new languages and cultures complements, rather than replaces, the mother tongue. We celebrate cultural diversity and view language as essential for developing international-mindedness, a core IB principle.

Our language programmes foster the qualities of the IB learner profile, encouraging responsible global citizenship. We aim to empower students to confidently and creatively express themselves in multiple languages and through various forms of communication.

7. Mother Tongue Support, Maintenance and Development

The school actively promotes mother-tongue development as essential to students' cognitive growth and academic performance. We also prioritise students' social and emotional well-being by fostering an environment where they can freely express themselves. To support this, we encourage students to maintain a positive connection with their mother tongue by accepting their cultural identity and promoting the continued development of their language skills.

Each September, we organise a Freshman Week for new IB students, primarily focusing on team-building. One highlight of the week is a bonfire event, where students read poetry and listen to music in various languages, embracing their cultural diversity. In March, our IB students participate in the IB Community Day, where they introduce themselves as a class and present a cultural program in different languages for teachers and parents.

Students are also encouraged to use their mother tongue during school events, such as concerts or assemblies, and to form enrichment groups to teach their peers their native language.

8. Students Learning in a Second Language

The school recognises that all students in the IB DP learn in a second language and will understand the difficulties this can occasionally cause in expressing and/or accessing information.

We begin courses by introducing subject-specific English vocabulary to ease the transition. Furthermore, in line with our Assessment Policy, we adjust the language of assessment instructions and ensure that students are not penalised for language-related errors. If the language barrier presents a significant challenge, students are entitled to inclusive assessment arrangements as outlined in the IB's Access and Inclusion Policy (2023).

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

9. IB Language Learning Requirements

Diploma Requirements at II. gimnazija Maribor

Students in the IB DP at II. gimnazija Maribor study at least two languages. English is an obligatory subject for all IB DP students at II. gimnazija Maribor. Students can study English as a Language A or a Language B course.

LANGUAGE A

Language A: Literature (Group 1) is the study of literature in the student's first language, including the study of selections of world literature and allows the close study of literary texts and their varying contexts. The Language A courses are offered as taught or self-taught courses depending on the number of students. Language A: Literature courses currently offered are Slovene, Serbian, Macedonian, and Ukrainian.

English A: Language and Literature (Group 1) is offered to students with a high level of English proficiency. The language and literature course focuses on critical literacy and how meaning in texts is constructed by, among other things, the contexts of production and reception. They include the study of both language and literature and are available at higher and standard level.

LANGUAGE B

The second language course, Language B (Group 2), can be studied at various depths.

Language B is offered to students with previous experience in learning the language and is available at either higher or standard level (HL or SL).

Language B courses emphasise the importance of understanding language acquisition as a process that involves recognising and understanding another culture. The Language B Courses are currently offered at II. gimnazija Maribor are English, German and French.

10. The Teachers' Role in Language Learning in the Classroom

The head of the school will keep language profiles updated for second-language students.

Since II. gimnazija Maribor's IB DP classrooms are multicultural, teachers find creative ways to support equality for students learning in a language other than their mother tongue. The school recognises that language learning happens in all subjects, so:

- teachers understand that not all students have the same prior knowledge and background;
- teachers support students who bring prior knowledge in their mother tongue;
- teachers use scaffolding techniques like visual aids, graphic organisers, demonstrations, and structured group work to help students become independent learners;
- teachers set high expectations and provide opportunities for engaging, learner-focused practice with rich content;
- teachers support language use for specific curriculum tasks and assessments in reading, writing, speaking, and listening;
- teachers offer meaningful, real-world tasks and encourage both mother-tongue groupings and multilingual collaboration.

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

Additionally, II. gimnazija Maribor:

- ensures communication between DP and mother-tongue teachers (e.g., Macedonian, Serbian) about key concepts, curriculum, and events;
- emphasises that all teachers understand how language and learning connect across the IB DP;
- aims to help students succeed academically, socially, and culturally;
- recognises language as a vital tool for understanding the world and the need for a well-planned curriculum to support second-language learners;
- plans units to address second-language learner needs, activating their prior knowledge;
- creates a safe space for students to take language learning risks and apply their knowledge;
- maintains language profiles for second-language learners;
- acknowledges that second-language students need time to reach native-speaker academic levels;
- offers ongoing professional development for staff in effective language teaching and learning methods.

11. The School's Role in Language Learning

To support the diverse needs of additive bilingualism in the IB DP at II. gimnazija Maribor, the school offers a range of resources and learning options across the curriculum. This approach helps students become highly proficient, literate, and knowledgeable beyond just language skills. The school emphasises learning in the mother tongue, the second language (local language), and other relevant languages.

To foster a strong multilingual environment, the school:

- encourages collaborative planning, recognising that all teachers contribute to students' language development;
- addresses diverse language needs of students;
- emphasises that all teachers support students' language growth through their teaching;
- maintains a language policy steering committee to review and update language policies as needed;
- adjusts and expands linguistic services as necessary;
- provides safe, effective learning environments;
- utilises technology to support effective local, national, and international communication (e.g., Skype lessons, Eduroam);
- promotes lifelong learning, encouraging both teachers and students to build thinking, research, communication, and self-management skills.

The admissions process includes interviews and language screenings, supported by language teachers who assess students' language needs and determine if the school can meet them. When needed, language experts work with learners, teachers, and staff to ensure best practices for teaching students learning in a language other than their mother tongue.

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

Upon admission, a language background profile is created for each student to determine appropriate placement and support. The school works with parents to provide additional support, facilitated by small classes for more individual attention. Student profiles are reassessed at the start of the IB DP to ensure accurate placement, tracking progress in mother tongues and second languages, and exposure to and development of other languages. Where possible, a team of mother-tongue speakers in German, English, French, and Spanish is maintained to enrich cultural diversity.

12. Language Teaching Resources

The school library/media centre will continue to build up resources of texts and other media in all the mother tongues of the student population.

Where possible, the school tries to provide mainstream subject-specific materials, including grammar course books, literary texts, reference books, supplementary publishers' materials, and resources related to the areas of interaction with parallel mother-tongue texts. Also, additional up-to-date literary works in other languages are available.

The school makes every effort to provide information technology resources that enable all students and teachers to access material in their own languages. These resources include the Internet, DVDs, and videos.

The role of the librarian is also to offer students help and support in finding appropriate sources, citing in line with recognised citing conventions and observing academic honesty, especially while writing the extended essay.

The school acknowledges that administrators, teachers, librarians, and other staff may need professional language learning and teaching development to ensure the language policy is effectively implemented.

13. Review Process and the Areas of Development

The IB DP coordinator will take responsibility for reflecting on and observing academic processes (differentiation, assessment and mother-tongue research) in the school throughout the academic year and provide feedback to the head of school.

The IB DP coordinator will take responsibility for reflecting on and observing pastoral issues within the school (communication, socialisation, homework, academic issues, support) throughout the academic year and provide feedback to the head of school and parents with suggested support procedures.

The language policy will be regularly reviewed and/or revised by the language policy steering committee to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme.

As new ideas are developed, the results of research will influence the school's language policy. Proposed ideas and procedures will be reviewed collaboratively by the coordinator, teachers, the head of the school, and parents.

The policy will be available on the school's website and teachers' Google classrooms to keep the whole school community informed of policy developments.

Language Policy: II. gimnazija Maribor

14. Resources

- IBO. 2008. Guidelines for developing a school language policy. Geneva.
- IBO. 2011. Language and learning in IB programmes. Geneva.
- IBO. 2012. Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy. Geneva.
- IBO. 2014. Developing academic literacy in IB programmes. Geneva.
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