



# Language Policy

2023 - 2024 Academic Year

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## **Mission and Purpose Statement**

The Split International School aims to create a world-class educational community where students can excel intellectually, feel safe to take academic risks, learn to celebrate cultural differences, and are well-prepared for engagement in the broader international community. Language development is an integral part of this mission, as language is central to all learning and communication. As such, all teachers at the Split International School are in effect language teachers, and responsible for supporting each student's language growth and development.

## **School Language Philosophy**

Our school language philosophy is one of inclusivity. We strive to create a community where linguistic and cultural differences are accepted and celebrated, and students of all backgrounds can feel welcome regardless of their linguistic history and mother tongue. Our school's language policy aligns with our mission statement, our school's inclusion and tolerance policies, and will be reviewed every two years by the Education Committee.

Although English is our school's primary language of communication and instruction, our multicultural and multilingual teaching staff aims to meet students where they are, and help them develop the necessary English language skills to achieve academic success. Our school also encourages the development of Croatian language skills and a connection with local culture and history, as well as the continued exploration of additional languages and a connection with each student's own cultural and linguistic heritage.

## **Language of Instruction**

English is the primary language of instruction at the Split International School, and is utilized in all classes and family communications. Students of all English-level backgrounds are expected to work to develop their English fluency and literacy skills to ensure their ability to communicate and learn effectively. The school will help facilitate additional English language support for students and parents whose native language is not English as the needs of the students and families dictate. This additional support may take the form of modified assignments, communication and ESOL assistance both inside and outside the classroom, and additional English language courses offered in collaboration with local language schools.

All students are required to learn the Croatian language and culture. In addition, students are encouraged and supported to explore their native tongues and other additional foreign languages as student and family interest dictates.

## **Language Access and the Admissions Process**

The Split International School aims to create a true international community, and as such our admissions policy encourages students of a variety of language backgrounds to join our program to learn and grow with us. The required level of English language for admission and integration into our program varies depending on the student's grade level at the time of admission.

Early elementary students (grades 1st - 4th) are not required to have an externally tested level of English proficiency and may learn the English language as they develop through our program. Entry into first grade however is based on a screening process that checks a student's understanding of the English alphabet and phonetics. As students continue through elementary school, some level of conversational and written English is preferred to allow students to more easily engage with their peers and age-level appropriate content.

Upper elementary students (grades 5th - 8th) must be able to communicate in English at a level sufficient to facilitate their educational development and meet the academic challenges of their classes. This includes basic reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. As an approximate guideline, an English language level of B1 as defined by the CEFR language framework is encouraged before enrollment. Younger students with an A2 level proficiency may be admitted to the school program, with a language development and support plan for the student to help them improve their proficiency.

For students entering high school, a language level of B2 is recommended, with a language level of B1 considered for freshmen admissions in addition to a language support and improvement plan.

Students in need of additional English language support will be identified during our student screening process, and accommodations will be provided to help families support them throughout the process in the form of an individualized student support plan.

Through our school policies and language programs, we also support students' continuing growth and development of their mother tongue. Throughout the school day students during social times, students communicate in their mother tongue. At times, they may collaborate with their peers in class in their mother tongue as well. Split International teachers support students to draw connections to the vocabulary and concepts in English with other languages and their mother tongue. Students also have the option to continue their mother-tongue education through participation in additional and external courses, or through online means or guided independent study when suitable local options are not available. Currently we offer German mother tongue support on-campus with a native German-speaking instructor. Based on the needs of our school community, additional on-campus language support will be recognized for French and Ukrainian studies through online studies.

## **Differentiated Learning for Croatian (Host-Country) Language**

It is a legal requirement in the Republic of Croatia for all students to learn Croatian. Our school community welcomes students with a wide array of Croatian language backgrounds. We aim to provide differentiated instruction based on prior language knowledge to allow each student meaningful opportunities for development and growth.

Split International School has developed a Croatian language program that aligns the IB requirements and stages of language development with the Croatian National Curriculum. The language phases, evaluation process, and placement procedures are important aspects of our program that will support the development and growth of our students throughout their years with us.

### **Language Phases**

We have Emergent, Capable and Proficient classes, and students are grouped and given tasks based on their placement into one of six leveled groups. Emergent class offers Phase 1 and 2 in the same class, and Capable class offers Phases 3 and 4. In phases 5 and 6, instead of proceeding with Language Acquisition classes at a proficient level, these students are given an opportunity to progress into Croatian Language and Literature. This is the level where native speakers are placed and are provided instruction on the grade level material from the Croatian National Curriculum.

1) Emergent language learners - Students who have just recently moved to Croatia and have effectively no prior knowledge of written or spoken Croatian.

2) Capable language learners - Typically children of the Croatian diaspora who have returned recently to Croatia and are able to understand or speak Croatian somewhat fluently, but lack a formal grammatical and written foundation and are unable to read or write, or foreign language students who are entering phases 3 and 4 of the MYP language acquisition framework.

3) Proficient language learners / Native speakers - Students who are fluent in both oral and written communication in Croatian and have previously been in the Croatian educational system, or have reached phases 5 and 6 of the MYP language acquisition framework.

Students in the first two categories will undertake a Croatian-based Language Acquisition program for Croatian as a foreign language. Native speakers will follow a Croatian Language and Literature Course, consistent with the Croatian National Curriculum. Although partial-native speakers will begin their study in a specialized track of the Croatian as a foreign language pathway, they may transition to the Croatian literature for native speakers pathway as their competencies develop and improve should they reach the level of a native speaker. Students in phases 5 and 6 of the language acquisition pathway will benefit from their immersive experience with native speakers, but may be provided with differentiated assignments suitable to their language level.

## Grades 1-4 ESOL Support with Croatian Language Learning

Student between 1st- 4th grade entering the school in September with limited English proficiency, or a student who is more than two grade levels below reading in English, these students will attend a combined class for English Language Support and Croatian language learning. A teacher will provide both ESOL support and Croatian language/ culture classes. The ratio of English and Croatian will change throughout the year, initially providing more intensive English support, but slowly decreasing into the second semester to include more hours of Croatian. This will support student success at transitioning to academics in English and slowly meeting the goal of teaching the language and culture of the host country.

September - December	3 hours ESOL : 1 hour Croatian
January - March	2 hours ESOL : 2 hours Croatian
April - June	1 hour ESOL : 3 hours Croatian

## Croatian as a Foreign Language for Emergent and Capable Phases

Students will follow a language learning program through developing competencies in 4 key areas:

1. Comprehending Spoken and Visual Text
2. Comprehending Written and Visual Text
3. Communicating in Response to Spoken and/or Written and/or Visual Text
4. Using Language in Spoken and/or Written Form

### Emergent Phase Learners

- Primary focus during the first year is practical vocabulary and language use in daily life and to support integration and relocation to Croatia
  - Extra emphasis placed on listening comprehension
  - Extra emphasis placed on verbal communication
- Reading, writing and all other objectives are addressed as well

### Capable Phase Learners

- Primary focus is improvement of reading, writing, and grammar skills
  - Extra emphasis placed on reading comprehension
  - Extra emphasis placed on written communication
- Speaking, listening, and all other objectives are addressed as well

Regardless of their initial category, all students are expected to experience meaningful growth and development in their language learning as time progresses. Students over time move from the beginner to the intermediate Croatian designation, and continue to receive differentiated instruction.

## **Croatian Language and Literature for Proficient and Native Speakers**

Native Croatian speakers are expected to follow a Croatian Language and Literature that closely follows the Croatian national curriculum for language level, writing, and grammar. These courses will include reading required texts and authors, which will be taught in a discussion-based and inquiry-driven manner consistent with the Split International School's teaching philosophy. Students will analyze, organize, produce text, and use language throughout the course.

## **Croatian Culture through Language Study**

Our school recognizes the invaluable role that language plays not only as a medium of communication but also as a carrier of culture. In our commitment to fostering international-mindedness alongside deep respect for local heritage, our language classes specifically incorporate cultural elements that are unique to Croatia and the Dalmatian region. These elements are woven into the curriculum of both language acquisition courses and native speaker courses, ensuring that all students, whether they are learning Croatian as a new language or delving deeper into their mother tongue, are exposed to the rich tapestry of Croatian literature, art, traditions, and societal norms. This inclusion manifests through the study of Croatian poets and authors, exploration of historical texts that shaped the nation's identity, engagement with traditional music and folklore, exploration of Croatian culinary traditions, as well as the analysis of contemporary Croatian media. By integrating these cultural dimensions, students not only enhance their linguistic proficiency but also develop a profound understanding of the cultural nuances that define and distinguish the Croatian spirit, particularly the unique characteristics of the Dalmatian region, known for its vibrant history, distinctive dialects, and cultural customs.

## **Language Evaluation Process, Placement, and Reassessment Procedures**

All students are assessed on their existing knowledge of Croatian at the beginning of each school year. It is common for language loss to occur over the summer holidays if Croatian was not used, or rapid growth if an immersive environment is provided. In some grades these assessments are done subtly, by the teacher reviewing for the first two weeks of school in order to be informed of the instructional groupings within the class. This is particularly important for our younger students, where holistic and slower reviewing is beneficial.

Across all grade levels, students are tested with different tasks reflecting what was covered the year prior if they are returning students. Some of the new students who demonstrate higher levels of knowledge are encouraged to attend both Level 4 and 5 classes, and are assessed by the teacher in those environments. All this is a part of our soft September start that allows us to test the students' knowledge and approach them holistically.

## Graphical Overview of Croatian Language Levels

Emergent Level 1	Emergent Level 2	Capable Level 3	Capable Level 4	Proficient Level 5	Proficient Level 6
Learning Croatian as a Foreign Language	Learning Croatian as a Foreign Language	Learning Croatian as a Foreign Language	Learning Croatian as a Foreign Language	Croatian Language and Literature	Croatian Language and Literature
Basic introduction to practical language usage	Usage and expansion of the language, development of speaking and writing fluency, and range of vocabulary and grammar.	A level of intermediate language knowledge, usage, and fluency.	A level of intermediate language knowledge, usage, and fluency.	Croatian National Curriculum is utilized by grade level	Croatian National Curriculum is utilized by grade level
<p>At the end of the <u>emergent level</u>, students should have been exposed to a wide variety of simple authentic spoken multimodal texts and be able to:</p> <p>A: Listen            i. <b>identify</b> explicit and implicit information (facts and/or opinions, and supporting details)            ii. <b>analyze</b> conventions            iii. <b>analyze</b> connections</p> <p>B: Reading            i. <b>identify</b> explicit and implicit information (facts and/or opinions, and supporting details)            ii. <b>analyze</b> conventions            iii. <b>analyze</b> connections.</p> <p>C: Speaking            i. <b>use</b> a wide range of vocabulary            ii. <b>use</b> a wide range of grammatical structures generally accurately            iii. <b>organize</b> information effectively and coherently in an appropriate format using a wide range of</p> <p>D: Writing            i. <b>use</b> a wide range of vocabulary            ii. <b>use</b> a wide range of grammatical structures generally accurately            iii. <b>organize</b> information effectively and coherently in an appropriate format using a wide range of simple and some complex cohesive devices            iv. <b>communicate</b> all or almost all the required information with a clear sense of audience and purpose to suit the context.</p>		<p>At the end of the <u>capable level</u>, students should be exposed to a wide variety of simple and some complex authentic spoken multimodal texts and be able to:</p> <p>A: Listen            i. <b>identify</b> explicit and implicit information (facts and/or opinions, and supporting details)            ii. <b>analyze</b> conventions            iii. <b>analyze</b> connections.</p> <p>B: Reading            i. <b>identify</b> explicit and implicit information (facts and/or opinions, and supporting details)            ii. <b>analyze</b> conventions            iii. <b>analyze</b> connections.</p> <p>C: Speaking            i. <b>use</b> a wide range of vocabulary            ii. <b>use</b> a wide range of grammatical structures generally accurately            iii. <b>use</b> clear pronunciation and intonation in a comprehensible manner            iv. during interaction, <b>communicate</b> all or almost all the required information clearly and effectively.</p> <p>D: Writing            i. <b>use</b> a wide range of vocabulary            ii. <b>use</b> a wide range of grammatical structures generally accurately            iii. <b>organize</b> information effectively and coherently in an appropriate format using a wide range of simple and complex cohesive devices            iv. <b>communicate</b> all or almost all the required information with a clear sense of audience and purpose to suit the context.</p>		<p>At the end of the <u>proficient level</u>, students should be exposed to a wide variety of complex authentic spoken multimodal texts and be able to:</p> <p>A: Listen            i. <b>identify</b> explicit and implicit information (facts and/or opinions, and supporting details)            ii. <b>analyze</b> conventions            iii. <b>analyze</b> connections.</p> <p>B: Reading            i. <b>identify</b> explicit and implicit information (facts and/or opinions, and supporting details)            ii. <b>analyze</b> conventions            iii. <b>analyze</b> connections.</p> <p>C: Speaking            i. <b>use</b> a wide range of vocabulary            ii. <b>use</b> a wide range of grammatical structures generally accurately            iii. <b>use</b> clear pronunciation and intonation in a comprehensible manner            iv. during interaction, <b>communicate</b> all or almost all the required information clearly and effectively.</p> <p>D: Writing            i. <b>use</b> a wide range of vocabulary            ii. <b>use</b> a wide range of grammatical structures generally accurately            iii. <b>organize</b> information effectively and coherently in an appropriate format using a wide range of complex cohesive devices            iv. <b>communicate</b> all or almost all the required information with a clear sense of audience and purpose to suit the context.</p>	

## **Additional Foreign Languages and Mother-Tongue Support**

In addition to providing English and Croatian language support, the Split International School is committed to encouraging language learners to pursue additional language educational options, in particular in the area of their mother tongue. Native language information is collected during the admissions process, and families are supported on an individual basis to ensure that each student's language needs are being met. The school recognizes many formal and informal opportunities as outlined below to respect and support different modes of language learning. Mother-tongue language connections are encouraged in the classes and through various activities.

- After school language programs or extracurricular activities
- Cross-registration recognition in language at other schools
- Online language courses
- Guided independent study with staff, parents, or other adult speakers
- Student clubs and social activities

The *Language Lab* is an hour a week for 1st- 6th grade students which gives students an opportunity to bring their own reading and assignments to school from their language studies outside of school. For example, some students study French, Ukrainian, or Hungarian after school or on the weekends. These students are welcome to use this time to review their own materials and work on those assignments. Teachers are not responsible for developing these learning materials but will provide a monitored space for them to work. Students will have access to computers but would benefit from bringing their own headphones if their learning involves listening.

Currently the Split International School offers classes in German as a foreign language (high school students only) and German for native speakers (both elementary and high school students). Italian and Spanish as a foreign language are offered as well.

Our school has partnered with a local non-profit French language and cultural center, Bravo, to offer mother-tongue language support to French speaking students.

Our school has partnered with a local non-profit cultural organization CVIT to help provide resources and support to our Russian and Ukrainian speaking students.

The Split International School is committed to offering and recognizing mother tongue study, and particularly supporting the development of mother tongue writing skills through independent study literature courses. As part of the university advising process, during their sophomore year 10th grade US equivalent, 2nd year of high school), students and families are asked to consider different countries where they may be considering university study. University language admissions requirements are reviewed with each student/family, as a customized language support plan is developed for each student to ensure that they are prepared to meet university entrance requirements for their preferred countries of study. Students engaged in independent study literature courses are supported by our school's Language Program Coordinator to ensure regular progress and student growth.

## **Language in Grades 1-4**

Our school supports students in translanguaging and making sense of the world around them in a multilingual environment. Students use bilingual or multilingual resources, converse between themselves about the lesson topics in their mother tongue, and use what they already know in another language to make sense of the concept in the second language. Teachers highlight key vocabulary across numerous languages as evidenced on display boards and mentor texts used in the Inquiry Units. Together the class builds a class community that respects and learns from the other languages and perspectives in the classroom. The diversity is celebrated and encouraged, providing opportunity for continued growth in language development in each student in their verbal, written, and listening skills.

## **Language in Grades 5-10**

All teachers are an important part of the language learning process, and engage with students throughout their subject area courses as well as through extracurricular and co-curricular activities. Teachers make decisions every day that impact student language education and play a crucial role in numerous areas of language learning including; developing student literacy and communication skills, learning subject and program-specific terminology, developing an appreciation for different cultural and linguistic contexts, utilizing academic language with comfort, and applying and reinforcing skills and knowledge acquired through language acquisition and language and literature courses.

## **Language in Grades 11-12 (IB DP Program)**

In the Diploma Programme, language choices are tailored to students' university goals, prior learning, and native languages. Our policy integrates these aspects, fostering both academic growth and personal development to prepare students for higher education. DP language courses are not just about linguistic proficiency; they aim to enhance analytical skills essential for university studies. Students may choose a language acquisition class, or they may choose to study literature to further their mother tongue development (Croatian, German, or self-taught Literature options are available). The curriculum incorporates a diversity of literary and cultural content, supporting a sophisticated understanding of communication. Language instruction is aligned with the academic rigor expected at the university level, equipping students with the skills to excel in complex research and articulate discussions. This approach ensures our DP graduates are well-prepared, culturally competent communicators for the global stage.



## **Language Support, Assessment, and Growth Monitoring**

Both formative and summative assessments, in accordance with our school's assessment policy, are used to determine a students' language and proficiency levels. Formal and informal teacher observations, as well as day to day interactions between students and teachers play a role as well. Continuous assessment is an integral part of our language program as it is critical to check understanding and map progression.

Each year, students are given MAP Growth tests in English to track their language development through the NWEA organization, an international research-based non-profit organization. MAP results are used to inform instruction and provide students with additional language support as needed.

Teachers with language support concerns regarding a specific student document them through our school's "Student Concern Form", and work in collaboration with our Student Support Coordinator to help monitor and support students with additional language learning needs.

## **Language Policy Review Process**

At the Split International School, all of our policies are designed to serve the needs of our students and community, while assuring that our program is in alignment with national and international standards. As a living document, this policy is regularly updated to ensure that it continues to meet the evolving needs of our students and community.

Our school's Educational Committee reviews and suggests updates to this policy on a yearly basis, which are reviewed and approved by the principal and school board for implementation. Students, families, teachers, staff, and other members of our community are encouraged to make suggestions and give feedback regarding this policy via our semesterly community survey forms, or directly in writing (via email) to our Educational Committee via the school office email address.

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## **References**

1. PYP: Learning and Teaching (IBO, 2019)
2. Programme Standards and Practices (IBO, 2014)
3. DP: From Principles to Practice (IBO, 2015)
4. Language Policy (IBO, 2014)