



Language Policy

2021 - 2022 Academic Year

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.

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 and our school's inclusion and tolerance policy.

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. All students will be offered the opportunity to learn Croatian language and culture, as well as 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 years students are not required to have English proficiency and may learn the English language as they develop through our program. 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.

MYP Students must be able to communicate in English at a level sufficient to facilitate their educational development and meet the academic challenges of the MYP. This includes basic reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. As an approximate guideline, a minimum English language level of B1 as defined by the CEFR language framework is encouraged before enrollment in our elementary school MYP program. For students entering high school, a language level of B2/C1 may be more appropriate to facilitate a smooth transition.

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.

Through our school policies and language programs, we also support students' continuing growth and development of their mother tongue. Students 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.

Differentiated Learning for Croatian (Host-Country) Language

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. Our students typically fall into one of 3 categories, as described below.

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

- 2) Partial-native speakers. 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.
- 3) Fully native speakers. Students who are fluent in both oral and written communication in Croatian and have previously been in the Croatian educational system.

Students in the first two categories will undertake a Croatian-based Language Acquisition program (consistent with the MYP *Language Acquisition Guide*). Native speakers will follow a Croatian Language and Literature Course (consistent with the MYP *Languages and Literatures Guide*). 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.

Croatian as a Foreign Language for Novice Learners and Partial-Native Speakers

Students will follow a language learning program as outlined in the MYP *Languages and Literatures Guide*, developing competencies in 4 key objective areas and their strands:

- A. Comprehending Spoken and Visual Text
- B. Comprehending Written and Visual Text
- C. Communicating in Response to Spoken and/or Written and/or Visual Text
- D. Using Language in Spoken and/or Written Form

Novice learners and partial-native learners differ substantially in background, particularly in some strands of objectives A and D, with regards to their listening comprehension and spoken communication. As such, our school differentiates instruction between these two groups to provide each group with meaningful opportunities for growth and progression.

Croatian for Novice 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 (Strand Ai)
- Extra emphasis placed on verbal communication (Strand Dii)
- Reading, writing and all other objectives and strands are addressed as required

Croatian for Partial-Native Speakers

- Primary focus during the first year is improvement of reading, writing, and grammar skills to more closely match their level of spoken language and listening comprehension
- Extra emphasis placed on reading comprehension (Strand Bi)
- Extra emphasis placed on written communication (Strands Di and Dii)
- Speaking, listening, and all other objectives and strands are addressed as required

Regardless of their initial category, all students are expected to experience meaningful growth and development in their language learning, as categorized by the 6 phases of language development outlined by the *MYP Language Acquisition Guide*. Students will likely not be in the same phase of each objective and strand simultaneously, but must work towards higher phases in each strand in a progressive manner.

Croatian Language and Literature for Native Speakers

Native Croatian speakers are expected to follow an MYP Croatian Language and Literature that closely follows the Croatian national curriculum for language level, writing, and grammar. Although the course content will primarily be determined by Croatian national curricular standards, the course will be structured and taught in accordance with the objectives and strands as outlined in the MYP Language and Literature guide. The 4 main objective areas are Analyzing, Organizing, Producing Text, and Using Language. Each of these objectives has their own specific strands, and a progression of learning pathway will track progress in Years 1, 3, and 5 of the program by the metrics described in the MYP Language and Literature guide.

Third-Country 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. The school recognizes many formal and informal opportunities as outlined below to respect and support different modes of language learning.

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

Language in the Classroom

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;

- ATLs for communication (e.g. critical literacy)
- Learning IB terminology (e.g. command terms)
- Developing an appreciation for different cultural and linguistic contexts
- Learning academic language (e.g. discipline specific terminology)
- Applying and reinforcing skills and knowledge acquired through language acquisition and language and literature courses

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.

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 the standards of the IBO. As a living document, this policy is regularly updated to ensure that it continues to meet the evolving needs of our students and community, and remains in compliance with national and local legislation, as well as the guidelines of the IBO. This policy has been developed in compliance with IB Standards A7 and B1.5a, and has been implemented by our teachers and staff in accordance with IB Standards C1.8, C2.10, and C3.8.

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 e-mail) to our Educational Committee.