



SOPHIA
MUNDI

The Inner City Steiner School P-12

LANGUAGE POLICY

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Purpose of the Language Policy

This Language Policy will make explicit the language philosophy of Sophia Mundi Steiner School (SMSS), a Rudolf Steiner day school, offering an education to children from Prep through to Class 12. It outlines the school's linguistic and academic goals and defines how its students will attain them. This document will inform teachers about the teaching and learning practices in language and in the process of shaping language development in students.

Foreword

The Philosophy and Aims of Sophia Mundi's Language Policy have been developed by a working group representing all year levels from Prep to Year 12.

Sophia Mundi is committed to Language learning and the Early and Middle Years Literacy program. Its Language Policy and Program reflect this.

Sophia Mundi's commitment to the home/school partnership is fundamental to our Policy and Program.

The Language Policy and Program has its basis in Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Waldorf Schools, the National Statement, the Curriculum and Standards Framework and the Victorian English Profiles.

This Policy and Program will be reviewed and evaluated regularly in order to meet the changing needs of the school and wider community.

Rationale

Language empowers each of us. Our future is largely determined by our success in acquiring language.

Language serves as a means of expression and communication and has a variety of functions which include making choices, decision making, problem solving, critical appraisal, expressing ideas, feelings, beliefs and creativity.

Language is an instrument of thought which is important in all areas of the curriculum. It is required for developing, extending and enriching life skills and experiences.

Confidence and competence in using language are important in personal and social development.

As a leisure activity, language provides enjoyment and pleasure.

The opportunity to use the five language modes (speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing) is essential to produce a balanced education.

Language Philosophy

Sophia Mundi Steiner School recognizes the study of language as the foundation for all learning, and is the basis for communication. Language study, including English, other Modern Languages and Mother Tongue Languages, develops international understanding, reinforces understanding of cultural identity, enhances personal growth and promotes effective communication.

Sophia Mundi views **all** teachers as teachers of language, and all parents as contributors to the language learning process. The School understands that the most conducive environment to language learning is a positive and encouraging one, where students have the opportunity to engage in authentic and meaningful learning experiences. The strategies for language instruction which integrate the essential language skills of listening, speaking, viewing, reading and writing take into consideration the different learning styles of students, and aim to make learning effective for each individual through differentiation. Sophia Mundi recognises the value of language

- As knowledge as well as a means of constructing knowledge
- As a means of social interaction and fostering intercultural understanding
- As a way of expressing creativity
- As an indicator of the learner's thought development

Language Terms

The Language of Instruction is the language in which most of the curriculum is taught, which in this case is English.

Additional Language Study refers to the languages that the School offers in addition to the language of instruction. At Sophia Mundi, French is a second as well as a compulsory language.

Mother Tongue refers to the native language of an individual. Whilst this generally describes the language most frequently spoken at home, there may be occasions where more than one language is used comfortably and interchangeably within home and community settings. Mother tongue language at times is referred to as Home Language or Heritage Language.

English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to the teaching of English to students from a language background other than English who are learning English as a second or subsequent language. At the present time no student at the School fits this category.

SMSS understanding about children’s Language development

From birth, children are learning language through a wide variety of experiences. We must ensure that, for each child, continuing developmental language learning recognises and builds upon this prior knowledge. Children develop and learn at different rates and have different learning styles. We must acknowledge, support and cater for these individuals.

When children arrive at school, the time they have spent learning language will be equal to the time they will spend in Primary school. A positive self-esteem is necessary for all learning. As children experience success this fosters self-esteem and promotes language and other learning.

The contributions made by the home are recognised as being important to children’s language development. Therefore the home – school partnership is critical for the continued growth of the children.

Language is learned through use:

Listening to learn is learning to listen
Speaking to learn is learning to speak
Writing to learn is learning to write
Viewing to learn is learning to view
Reading to learn is learning to read

Assumptions about Language - Teaching and Learning

In order to achieve our goals it is assumed that:

1. Understanding is fundamental to the learning of language in all modes.
2. As students move through the years of schooling, their teachers ensure that the language curriculum includes:
 - A full body involvement in language learning; through action or making things.
 - A broad and balanced variety of media such as books, magazines, newspapers, theatre arts and music.
 - A range of purposes and multi-media contexts for using language
 - The sociocultural and situational context inclusive of non-English-speaking, culturally diverse students.
3. The School Community makes judgements about what is culturally appropriate and in line with the philosophy of the school.

4. Students will receive support and guidance from their teachers, parents and peers.
5. The language modes of listening, speaking, reading, writing same here, writing, reading and viewing are interdependent
6. Students' individual differences and experiences with language within and beyond the school need to be considered when constructing programs
7. The focus of our teaching and learning strategies is on the process of gaining literacy
8. Language learning occurs in context
9. Parents are an integral part of the teaching and learning team
10. Teachers adopt sound teaching principles.
 - a) Developing in students
 - *positive attitudes towards their learning of language
 - *confidence and competence in themselves as users of language
 - *the ability to reflect on and evaluate their progress in learning and using language
 - *a sense of enjoyment and challenge in learning tasks.
 - b) Constructing developmentally based teaching and learning programs that recognise the learning needs of individual students in order to make the learning outcomes as achievable as possible by all students as stated in the school philosophy and aims
 - c) Reviewing and evaluating teaching and learning programs, methodologies and strategies regularly.

Practices of the Language Policy

Every teacher is a language teacher. The practices are agreed upon collaboratively by all teachers and considered from the perspectives of both teachers and students in the school. Shared reflection is intended as an integral part of the process. It ensures the quality of the language provision, and the degree to which it meets the language needs of the students in the school. Teachers also are to be encouraged to view the planning, teaching and assessing of language as interconnected processes.

Organisational Structures

Primary

The organising structure and guiding focus of language teaching at SMSS is based on Steiner's philosophy, and whilst incorporating traditional approaches, particularly in the secondary school, these principals are still at the core of our approach.

Giving the students a rich and varied experience of language is at the core of our teaching methodology.

School wide achievement testing and diagnostic assessment are combined with teacher observations to identify the language needs of students. Language support teachers and language teachers then collaboratively plan a range of differentiated learning experiences to meet student needs. Where required, students are grouped into reading, writing tasks suggest – writing tasks, reading and spelling groups. These are designed to support and scaffold students to strengthen their capacities/abilities.

Language support is provided for students at risk. The Support Education Staff work with at risk students either in class or withdrawn from class. Teachers work with year levels to bring language resources into the curriculum. Curriculum has been developed and is used by all staff to ensure connections from P – 6.

Consultation with Learning Support staff regarding appropriate programming and activities for at risk students enables modification to occur. Provision of adequate resources in library and classrooms also provides opportunities for integration.

Secondary School

The Support Education Staff assist teachers in identifying the language needs of individual students by consulting with Primary staff, by drawing upon the data handed on from the Primary Faculty and information derived from norm-referenced tests. Among the norm-referenced tests that the Support Education Staff draw its data from are the ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) test, NAPLAN (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy TORCH (Test of Reading and Comprehension), PAT (Progressive Achievement Test in Writing , Reading, Vocabulary and Mathematics). Other tests such as WRAM (Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning) and WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) are used for diagnostic purposes.

The Language of Instruction (English)

Students learn to appreciate, enjoy and use language and develop a sense of its richness and its power to evoke feelings, to form and convey ideas, to inform, to discuss, to persuade, to entertain and to argue.

The teaching and learning of English is centered on the study of language in the variety of texts and contexts in which it is spoken, read, viewed and written in print and electronic forms. The study involves students in viewing, reading, listening to, writing, creating, comparing, researching and talking about a range of text types from the simple to the complex. Consider – listening to, writing, viewing, reading creating, comparing, researching and talking about a range

English teachers

- Encourage students to explore the meaning of texts and how meaning is conveyed.
- Introduce critical approaches to the ideas and thinking contained in texts
- Support students in the development of critical understanding about the ways writers and speakers control language to influence their listeners, readers and viewers.
- Support students in exploring, discussing and arguing life's challenging issues as depicted in various forms of text.

In the study of language students

- develop an understanding of the way purpose, audience and situation influence the structures and features of language and learn to apply their knowledge in their reading, writing, and viewing, speaking and listening.
- come to understand that different kinds of texts are appropriate for different occasions and learn to appreciate the variety of English usage in different times and places.
- learn about the ways language shapes and reflects attitudes in different times and places.
- gain opportunities to use language effectively in a range of contexts from informal to formal.
- learn to control language by applying their understanding of the grammatical structures of Standard Australian English, by learning to spell accurately and use punctuation effectively, as well as by imitating good writers and speakers.
- acquire the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that enable them to read, view and listen critically and to think, speak and write clearly and confidently.

The School's LOTE

The LOTE offered at Sophia Mundi is French. French is a compulsory part of the curriculum up to Year 8, after which it becomes an optional language subject.

LOTE teachers

- present language through images, gestures, mimicking, games, comparisons, translating to and from English
- present language through meaningful tasks and in authentic contexts
- integrate the learning of language into the program of inquiry through exercises/projects that engage different modes of thinking and different learning styles.
- endeavour to integrate language into other subject areas through cross-curricular project work
- assist students in discovering language structures. They encourage students to reflect on language and develop language awareness
- acknowledge previous language experience, recognize and respect the different ways in which students express themselves
- provide students with a physical environment which enriches language development
- use a wide range of strategies to teach language through programs that encourage listening, reading, speaking and writing
- differentiate to support the learning of language by varying the content and length of set tasks, providing various additional exercises, allowing for tasks to be presented according to the students' choice, using different audio visual and electronic learning aids when appropriate.
- extend the learning of language outside the classroom through co-curricular activities and activities during Bastille Day.

French as the Second Language

From Prep to Class 6, French is taught through the Steiner Curriculum.

In Prep the children begin to learn spoken French. They learn songs, stories and poems by heart through joining in with the teacher. They act these out, learning the names of the objects described, with dolls, toys, objects and actions supporting the language taught.

In Classes 1-6 students learn French and language through songs, poems, games and stories, with writing and reading taking place in connection to these, and therefore in a vibrantly living context created within the classroom. This creative emphasis focuses on the whole development of the child, from their physical and emotional aspect to their growing sense of will (ability to create/make out of themselves) and consciousness of self (ego). The French curriculum also has a focus on teaching French culture, and conveying cultural differences through drama as well as through grammatical analysis in reading, writing and speaking.

From Class 7 to 10, French language is taught utilizing the *Allons-y* language curriculum, a range of authentic resources and interdisciplinary studies. *Allons-y* has been written for an Australian secondary classroom and incorporates intercultural references appropriate to this context. Authentic resources come from across the francophone world, and also include texts produced by French speakers in Australia about local culture.

The four-year curriculum seeks to create a community of French speakers who can enjoy a play or film in French, participate in serious discussion or casual conversation in French, read an article in a French newspaper and write a letter to the editor in French.

At the Senior School level, we offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP) Language 2 French ab initio in 2012-2013, with a view to also offering French B in coming years. The aims of this program are: to develop students' intercultural understanding; enable students to understand and use French in a variety of contexts and for a range of purposes; to encourage, through the study of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of the different perspectives of people from francophone cultures; develop students' awareness of the role of language in relation to other areas of knowledge; develop students' awareness of the relationship between the languages and cultures with which they are familiar; provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language; provide the opportunity for enjoyment, creativity and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of an additional language.

Assessment of Language of Instruction

For both Primary and Secondary, assessment strategies include: formative assessment, self assessment, student reflection, peer assessment, quizzes, group assessment and summative assessment. Teachers utilize the results of assessment tasks to identify the language needs of individual students, and from these design intervention procedures. Assessment of assignments and project work are based on DP criteria and rubrics. Teachers identify the language needs of individual students.

Resources

All teachers have access to a range of resources. Sophia Mundi's library has books, videos and other support materials in French and English.

The language teachers decide on the suitability of resources. Language teachers are also made aware of new resources through emails or letters from suppliers and through visiting language bookshops, as well as when they attend language conferences and workshops.

Professional Development for Language Teachers

Primary

All language teachers attend Steiner Specific language conferences and other relevant PD workshops offered by the AISV or MLTAV.

Time is allocated for collaborative planning during faculty meetings and for sharing of ideas and practices.

Secondary

Professional development for teachers is generally made available through their relevant associations and networks. Teachers will themselves identify the professional development that is relevant to the effective teaching and learning of languages and apply to attend sessions through the Head of School. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to facilitate the registration of teachers for attendance at workshops and conferences. In-house professional development is available and facilitated by faculty heads. Time is allocated for team planning and sharing.

Roles and responsibilities

Heads of School and the IB coordinator will keep teachers informed of and committed to the IBO programme standards and practices in relation to language teaching and learning. They facilitate teacher workshops developed by staff where there is discussion on how people make the standards happen in practice. The Principal or Head of School, with the assistance of the language teachers, will explain the language policy to new teachers as part of their induction process. The language teachers will ensure that the language policy is implemented, understood and supported by all its constituents, including students and parents. The language teachers and support education staff, will ensure that the language policy is reviewed and revised regularly.

New resources and presentations will be made by the language teachers to keep teachers up to date with current research and best practices in language learning. The Heads of School will ensure time is properly allocated for training and team planning.

All staff should share the responsibility of ensuring that the language policy is a working document, which is regularly referred to and cross-referenced with any other working documents in the school. It is the responsibility of the Heads of School to ensure parents are informed of the language policy, of how language is taught at SMSS, and how parents can play a part in students' language development at home. To ensure that the language policy is implemented, understood and supported by all its constituents, the policy is on the website. The policy should be frequently revisited at teacher workshops.

Goals of the Language Curriculum

The Language Policy includes English and L.O.T.E.

Our students come from diverse socio-cultural and language backgrounds. The school curriculum, recognises this diversity and the importance language plays in our students' educational achievements.

The Language curriculum aims to develop the following:

1. The ability to communicate by speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing with purpose, effect, creativity and confidence in a wide range of contexts.
2. A knowledge of the ways in which language varies according to context, purpose, audience and content, and the ability to apply this knowledge.
3. A sound grasp of the linguistic structures and features of standard Australian English and French, and the capacity to apply these appropriately in speaking and writing.
4. A broad knowledge of a range of literature and a capacity to relate this literature to aspects of contemporary society and personal experience.
5. A positive response to, and enjoyment of, language.
6. The capacity to discuss and analyse texts and language critically and with appreciation.
7.
 - a) A knowledge of the ways in which textual interpretation and understanding may vary according to cultural, social and personal differences
 - b) The capacity to develop reasoned arguments about interpretation and meaning.

References

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