



**Cypress Park Primary School  
IB World School**

**District 45 (West Vancouver)**

**Language Philosophy and Policy  
2010**

**Updated and Revised by School Staff  
2014**

## Philosophy Statement

At Cypress Park, our motto is to *Live, Laugh and Learn*. As such, language is built into everything we do at our small school to celebrate, create and foster a love of learning. Early literacy experiences are rich, meaningful and authentic. They provide students with opportunities to share, talk, explain, question, debate, and teach one another in order to develop, practice and enhance both their written and oral skills. Language is fundamental to learning, thinking and communicating. “We believe the children learn best when school literacies are connected to the lives of children and that a child’s preferred ways of knowing should serve as a vehicle to uphold meaning and understand the world around him/her. Integrating the curriculum into the classroom should be done in such a way that it connects to the lives of students and is an authentic experience for all the children.”<sup>1</sup>

Our goal is to develop confident language learners in “authentic contexts...that are a reflection of, and relevant to, the community of learners and to the educational theories underpinning the programme”.<sup>2</sup> This means students are immersed in language throughout their day both inside the classrooms and out on the playground.

At Cypress Park, our strong fine arts program, encompassing art, music, dance and drama together with our multiage activities, provide students with a variety of creative and interactive modes of expression that encourage imagination and self-expression. Such creativity is celebrated and respected throughout our school community in the form of art shows, musicals, poetry, sharing days and student author events. Students have also had the opportunity to work closely with professional artists to compliment and enhance their learning during units of inquiry through our various Artist-in-Residence programs.

Language enables our children to interact in socially responsible ways and develop into respectful, globally minded citizens. They learn to use language as a peaceful mode of problem solving and conflict resolution. Through principled interaction with each other, they learn to apply and interpret this developing skill set beyond the school setting. Our current school goal, to improve students’ skills in the area of social responsibility, reflects this focus. Using the lens of the trans-disciplinary skills we teach and support our students to caring community citizens.

Children at Cypress Park learn to assume responsibility for their own learning in an environment that is inclusive, collaborative and encourages risk-taking. Students use language to coach, assess, support and celebrate the learning successes of one

another. Through language, students deepen their understanding by making connections and building on prior knowledge.

In their final year as IB PYP learners at Cypress Park, students will communicate their cumulative knowledge through the experience of planning and presenting “Exhibition” to the entire learning community. This process will require learners to draw upon, formulate, and represent their language learning in a formal presentation using written, creative, technological, and oral components. The action they choose to take as a result of their learning becomes the catalyst for understanding their role as global citizens. “This progressive conceptual development, together with an enjoyment of the [language] process, provides the foundation for lifelong learning.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Moving Across Sign Systems: Learning to Write in a Multimodal Classroom*, a graduating paper, Anderson, 2008

<sup>2</sup> “IBO PYP Language Scope and Sequence”, 2009 Page 2

<sup>3</sup> “IBO PYP Language Scope and Sequence”, 2009, page 2.

## **Ministry and District Language Requirements**

Cypress Park Primary School follows the mandated British Columbia Provincial Curriculum.

**West Vancouver School District** requires literacy testing at various grade levels to be completed in the fall and again in the spring. These have included:

- **K-Screener** and the **Grade One and Grade Two District Literacy Screener** – these are assessments of readiness skills and provide identification of students requiring early literacy intervention;
- **DART** (District Assessment of Reading) for students in Grades Two and Three. This data provides staff with progress made according to the Reading Performance Standards for their grade level, demonstrating students’ ability to read for understanding and respond to informational text. The data from these assessments is used by our educators to plan for learning.
- **RAD** (Reading Assessment) for students in grade three. This assessment provides teachers with information about students’ reading and comprehension abilities.

There are many other assessment tools that teachers use to gauge students language skills and to plan for learning. Some of these tools include:

- PM Benchmark Reading Assessment Resource
- The Edmonton Spelling Test
- Cold-write writing assessment and the BC Performance Standards
- Teacher generated assessment tools

Cypress Park also works closely with district professionals. There is a Speech-Language Pathologists who consults and works with students and staff. In addition to this support, we also have access to support from a deaf and hard of hearing teacher.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education has developed a set of core competencies that are central to the development of educated citizens. The core competency of communication encompasses the set of abilities that students use to impart and exchange information, experiences, and ideas, to explore the world

around them, and to understand and effectively engage in the use of digital media. Communication competency provides a bridge between students' learning, their personal and social identity and relationships, and the world in which they interact. This ties in with our IB philosophy and the work we do at Cypress Park.

## Language in the Classroom and Language Support

The *primary language of instruction* at Cypress Park Primary is **English**. All classroom and all support teachers are *language teachers*, as language provides a vehicle for inquiry and promotes early literacy development.

As all learners acquire language skills at different rates, teachers provide individualized language and literacy instruction to meet the needs of all children.

Meta-language (using language to learn about language) is demonstrated in the classrooms through a variety of instructional activities. Some of these activities include story writing, journal entries, sharing days, formal and informal oral presentations, guided and buddy reading, peer coaching and multiage groupings.

Trans-disciplinary language (learning through language) is demonstrated across the curriculum in all classrooms through the use of content specific vocabulary and symbolic representations of language. In Math, language explains and helps students understand symbolic terms. The equals sign is taught using the language "*the same as*" and in Science, the scientific method vocabulary such as *predict, observe, and explain* is used to provide a realistic framework for understanding. The language of the I.B. Learner Profile Traits and Attitudes is used in a cross-curricular manner as well as during reflection and assessments, including those within students' I.B. portfolios and report card reflections. In addition, these traits are embedded in our essential agreements and in the Rights and Responsibilities outlined in our Code of Conduct (**Safe, Caring, Open-minded, Respectful, Enthusiastic**). Teachers and students have also been engaged in self-regulated practices throughout the school. They have been using language to label feelings, emotions, to recognize and discuss strategies for stay calm, alert and focused at school.

Literature (language as an art) encompasses oral, written and visual elements, which is demonstrated in the classrooms through a variety of instructional activities. Some of these include role-play, Reader's Theatre, puppet shows, school musicals, play and song writing, storytelling, collaborative group work, poetry, literacy celebrations, and experts-in-residence. The students also receive instruction in digital literacy and information technology. They use these tools to write stories, create pictures, take photos, and create video representations.

Furthermore, specific resources that assist the planning and creation of the above activities are:

- Maureen Auman, Gwen Karas, Peg Sage and Caela Tyler, Step Up to Writing, 2003
- Lucy Calkins and Leah Mermelstein, Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum, 2003
- Adrienne Gear's, Reading Power, 2006
- Itchy's Alphabet
- The McCrackens, Spelling Through Phonics, 1996
- The Daily Five by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser
- The Literacy Café by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser

Our Teacher Librarian supports language through direct lessons that encompass research skills, technology, and literature. In addition, she collaborates with teachers to provide thought-provoking connections and materials that support and enhance the current units of inquiry taught in classrooms, as well as, to provide enrichment activities for our learners.

The Learning Support Teacher is responsible for supporting the primary language of instruction (English) ensuring that all students who require extra support feel successful. Working with classroom teachers to providing tools and strategies to support the needs of diverse learners, the Learning Support Teacher works within a Response-to-Intervention framework.

## English Language Learners (ELL)

**We feel strongly that:**

**Students learn in social settings where they feel successful and have the opportunity to connect with teachers and other students.**

- ELL students of all levels are immersed in English speaking classrooms
- Students are provided with a safe, caring environment where they feel supported as they learn a new language and become connected to the school community
- Classroom teachers use scaffolding to ensure ELL students feel successful
- The culture and language of ELL students is recognized and valued throughout the year particularly when it is connected with the units of inquiry
- The school's commitment to developing a '*learning commons*' supports the diverse needs of our learners, including ELL students

**Content-based instruction is an effective approach to teaching English.**

- ELL students have ongoing English instruction provided by the English Language Support teacher. The English skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are taught through the content of the Units of Inquiry
- The English Language Support teacher and classroom teachers collaborate closely; varied materials are provided to meet the needs of all learners Support takes place both in the classroom, one to one and in small group settings. This ensures that learning experiences for our young students are meaningful and authentic

**The culture and first language of ELL students is highly valued and supported.**

- ELL learners provide their peers with the opportunity to interact with students of other cultures, increasing inter-cultural understanding and respect, ultimately leading to a greater sense of international-mindedness
- Language is a major connection between home and school; parents are welcome to have a translator accompany them to meetings if needed (translators are only provided when there is a settlement issue)
- The district has SWIS workers who can provide community resources to newly-arrived landed immigrants
- B.C. Ministry of Education and School District #45 resources are available in various languages when necessary
- First language development is strongly encouraged and supported:



- A collection of books in different languages is being developed in the school library
- New learners of English are encouraged to read and, if required, research in their first language
- ELL students are encouraged to share aspects of their culture with their peers

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## **French as a Second Language (FSL)**

The purpose of learning an additional language in all grades at Cypress Park is to explore language through active participation in a fun, supportive and meaningful context. French is taught in our primary school as it is one of Canada's official languages. Learners communicate purposefully in French and are provided opportunities to develop openness to cultural diversity.

Students learn to communicate in a variety of ways, in the additional language, to promote intercultural understanding. Cypress Park students explore communicative and experiential language. Our focus is to explore real language situations through songs, games, stories and class plays during their twice weekly classes.

Our French program makes links to students' classroom experiences and to the units of inquiry, where natural. In order to fully understand their own culture, their own language and to be internationally minded, students explore aspects of language that allow them to develop an understanding of how other cultures communicate. Our additional language teaching challenges our learners to join the worldwide community and to participate peacefully through intercultural understanding and respect.

Students communicate their language learning and share it with their family and friends. Parents value the language experiences our students have in the early primary years. Parents and children feel pride in learning a second language and value it as a component of being a principled inquirer.

## Conclusion

The *Cypress Park School Language Philosophy and Policy* was created collaboratively by all teachers. It is a flexible document; it is a work in progress. It is expected that this document be reviewed and modified as our learning community evolves.

This document was developed and compiled by Andrea Anderson, Judy Duncan, Meredith Fenton, Krista Koke, Chrysta Millhouse, Sean Moores, Darcey Riley and Tara Zielinski. The committee made use of the following documents and resources:

### **IBO World School Documents:**

- “Making the PYP Happen”
- “Learning in a Language Other Than Mother Tongue in IB Programmes”
- “Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy”

### **West Bay Elementary IBO World School**

- “Language Philosophy and Policy, 2009”

### **MEd Graduating Paper**

- Moving Across Sign Systems: Learning to Write in a Multimodal Classroom, Andrea Anderson, 2008

### **Revised**

This policy was updated and revised by Darren Elves, Kim Grimwood, Andrea Anderson, Judy Duncan, Bea Sedgwick, Krista Koke and Heidi Visona in December 2013.

The following additional resource was consulted:

### **British Columbia Ministry of Education**

Transforming Curriculum and Assessment, <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca>

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