



Rockridge Secondary Language Policy

"Language plays a vital role in the construction of meaning and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development. It is imperative for the development of literacy and multiliteracies, and is linked to empowerment through success in school and subsequently society."¹

Philosophy of Language Learning

At Rockridge we recognize that multilingualism opens the world for students, exposing them to opportunities and relationships beyond what one language can provide. We believe that "[l]earning to communicate in a variety of ways in more than one language is fundamental to the development of intercultural understanding", and allows students "to explore human commonality, diversity, personal identity and interconnection."²

With a diverse school population, the multilingual classroom is the norm at Rockridge.³ Because language is integral to personal, interpersonal and cultural development, all Rockridge teachers are language teachers. Ideally, the acquisition of language is an active process that is taught through authentic experiences, with the goal of developing the six language domains (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and visually representing) through a culture of inquiry.⁴ The ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language is essential to the concept of an international education that promotes intercultural understanding.

Teachers value and promote understanding of students' cultural identities and backgrounds. As such, students are provided with opportunities to maintain or obtain language skills, be it in English (the school's language of instruction), French or Spanish (as in Language Acquisition courses), or in their mother tongues.

Language and Literature: English

Understanding a language at a fluent level empowers students to take ownership of their thinking, and to communicate it clearly to others. As such, the BC provincial curriculum requires all students to take an English course from Grades 8 to 12. These courses are academically rigorous and are designed to equip students with linguistic, analytical and communication skills that can be used in an interdisciplinary manner across all other subject areas.

Students may choose from the following English courses:

- **Language and Literature Year 3:** English Language Arts 8
- **Language and Literature Year 4:** English Language Arts 9
- **Language and Literature Year 5:** English First Peoples (EFP) Literary Studies and Writing 10, EFP 10 Enriched (Pre-AP)
- **Grade 11:** Literary Studies 11, AP Seminar 11

¹ "Language and learning in IB programmes." *International Baccalaureate Organization*, 2022, p. 3.

² "MYP: From principles into practice." *International Baccalaureate Organization*, 2022, p. 12.

³ At the time of this policy update (2024/25), Rockridge has ELL and International students from the following countries: China, South Korea, Brazil, Spain, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Iran, Ukraine, Philippines, Mongolia.

⁴ "The Six Language Domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Visually Representing)." *SAGE Publications, Inc.*, 2022, p. 21.

- **Grade 12:** English Studies 12, English First Peoples 12, AP Language and Literature 12

Language Acquisition: French and Spanish

Students are required to choose either French or Spanish as their Language Acquisition course for the duration of their MYP years (i.e. Grades 8 to 10). Because we recognize the need to experience sustained language-learning in order to benefit from the exposure, students will not be permitted to switch out of their original Language Acquisition course unless they demonstrate a proficient level of acquisition. In this case, students may choose to begin another language.

There are three levels of Language Acquisition courses available to students:

- **Emergent Level:** French 8; Spanish 8, Spanish 9
- **Capable Level:** French 9, French 10; Spanish 10, Spanish 11
- **Proficient Level:** French 11, French 12; Spanish 12

Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) may be exempt from taking a second language course. This is in accordance with the BC Ministry of Education's Language Education Policy,⁵ as articulated in Section 5 of the BC School Act.⁶ Please refer to our separate Inclusion Policy for further details about this language exemption.

English Language Learners (ELL)

At Rockridge, we "have a responsibility to ensure that all students reach their full potential," which means being able to "provide for the language needs of such students so that they can participate fully in the programme."⁷ As English is our language of instruction, this means that all teachers share the responsibility of supporting the needs of English Language Learners in their respective subjects. This can involve incorporating universal design for learning (UDL) practices that will not only benefit ELL students, but all learners.

In some cases, ELL and International students may require additional services in order to succeed within the British Columbia (BC) school system. Should an ELL or International student require further support, they may be referred to ELL courses by counselors, teachers or parents. Ongoing assessment of acquired English fluency will determine when a student may exit these courses and enter into the provincial curriculum-based academic courses. To this end, each ELL and International student will have an Annual Instructional Plan (AIP) that is developed and implemented by the Rockridge ELL Department to ensure that progress is made towards their language goals. This structure aims to create equity between students whose mother tongue is English and those for whom English is not their mother tongue.⁸

ELL and International students will be assessed so that they can be placed into appropriate ELL classes that will meet their needs. Administered by the ELL Department, a student's assessment will indicate their level of language competency. This competency will designate the type of instruction the student receives.

⁵ "Language Education Policy." *BC Ministry of Education*, 2024.

⁶ "BC School Act." *BC Ministry of Education and Child Care Governance, Legislation and Workforce Branch*, 2024.

⁷ "Language and learning in IB programmes." *International Baccalaureate Organization*, 2022, p. 17.

⁸ "English Language Learners." *Rockridge Secondary School*, 2024.

There are five levels of competency:

- **Level 1 — Beginning:** The student is a beginner with little English language proficiency in the given area (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- **Level 2 — Developing:** The student is able to understand and use simple English words and phrases in the given area.
- **Level 3 — Expanding:** The student is able to understand and use an expanding amount of conversational English in the given area.
- **Level 4 — Consolidating:** The student is able to understand and use varying amounts of conversational English, and some academic language, in the given area.
- **Level 5 — Bridging:** The student is approaching grade-level proficiency in the given area. May need support with nuances of language.

Based on their assessment (and grade level), ELL and International students may then take one of the following supportive English courses:

- **Transitional English 8/9:** In this course, materials and tasks are adapted for ELL students to enable them to meet the learning outcomes of the BC provincial curriculum English Language Arts program. Literature will include short stories, novels, poetry, plays and non-fiction texts. Enrolment in the transitional class is based on the assessment of the student's abilities in English (from beginning to bridging, as outlined above).
- **English Language Development 8/9:** This course is designed to support students with the acquisition of academic language. Students will concentrate on learning strategies and skills to further develop academic literacy. The focus of this course is on building vocabulary, improving grammar, developing paragraph structure, and improving speaking and listening skills in order to collaborate with others.
- **Academic Writing 11/12:** This course is intended for students who wish to enhance their writing skills in order to write effectively at the level expected of them in senior classes. Students will review the major components of the writing process, various essay types and essay-writing.

Library Learning Commons

The Rockridge Library Learning Commons recognizes the importance of language to the personal, intellectual, creative and ethical development of students. Therefore, our Teacher-Librarians work in collaboration with language and ELL teachers to ensure that a wide variety of texts are available to meet the needs of all learners, whether in English (our language of instruction) or in students' mother tongue languages. ELL and International students are also encouraged to recommend stories and authors from their home countries, which we can add to our collection.

The prospect of meeting the needs of our ELL and International students is exciting because it presents an opportunity to embrace an international spirit that values diversity. Our librarians regularly invite these students to explore the Learning Commons, where they are shown how to access both physical and digital resources. Many of our library volunteers are also ELL students who find a sense of belonging in this supportive environment, and are thus compelled to give back to the Rockridge community through their connection with the Learning Commons.

Policy Review Process

Our Language Policy is a living document. We will review the framework annually to ensure that the policy continues to reflect current IB standards and practices, as well as any updates to the BC provincial curriculum. The review process will involve Administrators, MYP Coordinators and Teacher Leaders; departments and district leaders may also be consulted.

Last updated October 2024 by Administrators and MYP Coordinators, with feedback from Teacher Leaders, Teacher-Librarians and departments.

References

- "BC School Act." *BC Ministry of Education and Child Care Governance, Legislation and Workforce Branch*, 2024, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/legislation-policy/legislation/schoollaw/revisedstatutescontents.pdf>. Accessed 30 October 2024.
- "English Language Learners." *Rockridge Secondary School*, 2024, <https://westvancouver.schools.ca/rockridge-secondary/english-language-learners-ell/>. Accessed 30 October 2024.
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- "The Six Language Domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Visually Representing)." *SAGE Publications, Inc.*, 2022, https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/121323_book_item_121323.pdf. Accessed 30 October 2024.