



Al Faris International School

Language Policy

A school language policy is a set of guidelines and rules established by an educational institution regarding the use of language within the school environment. Language policy covers various aspects of language, including spoken and written communication, language instruction, and promoting a positive and inclusive linguistic environment.

Al Faris International School-AIULA language policy was developed collaboratively with input from administrators, coordinators, teachers, students, parents, and other relevant stakeholders. It was observed during the school year 2022-2023. The policy helps ensure that it reflects the values and needs of the entire school community.

The PLT and all teachers will frequently update and revise this policy, considering parents' feedback and learners' communicative skills and language development achievement.

Purpose

The purpose of a language policy in FIS is to establish clear guidelines and expectations regarding the use of language within the educational environment. This policy serves several essential functions, contributing to the overall effectiveness and inclusivity of the learning environment.

This policy enables the community to understand the FIS perspective on language and the main understandings, beliefs, practices, and policies we adhere to meet students' needs and reflect the school program's principles. Here are some practices of a language policy in FIS:

Clarity and Consistency - it clarifies the languages of instruction, assessment, and communication within the school, which helps create a consistent and uniform learning environment, reducing confusion among students, teachers, and parents.

Inclusive Learning Environment - this aims to create an inclusive learning environment that recognizes and respects linguistic diversity. It promotes the idea that all students, regardless of their linguistic background, have equal opportunities to succeed in the educational system.

Support for Language Learners - as the language of instruction and communication within the community is not the first language of most students, this bridges the gap by including provisions for language support services, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, to help these students succeed academically.

Effective Communication with Parents - specifies the language(s) for official communication with parents or guardians. It helps ensure effective communication between the school and parents, fostering a collaborative relationship supporting the students.



Preparation for Global Citizenship - as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to navigate and communicate in a multilingual and multicultural context is valuable. Our language policy contributes to preparing students to be global citizens who are satisfied and effective in diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

Alignment with Educational Goals - the policy aligns with the school's broader educational goals, mission, and vision. It ensures that language instruction and use are consistent with the school's pedagogical approach and objectives.

Philosophy

The FIS philosophy of having a language policy is grounded in principles of equity, inclusivity, effective communication, and educational excellence. We strongly believe language is a powerful tool for education, communication, and cultural expression. A thoughtful and inclusive language policy contributes to a positive and enriching educational experience for all students. FIS believes in the importance of supporting the mother tongue and acquiring other language skills to help students

- Communicate confidently
- Respect and tolerate other cultures
- Prepare students to be effective global citizens

FIS recognizes that in a transdisciplinary programme, language is essential to inquiry-based learning and the construction of knowledge. Relevant, authentic, and meaningful contexts, social interaction, and connection to prior knowledge are all essential components to effective language learning; therefore, FIS believes that:

- Acquiring more than one language and maintaining the spoken language (*first language*) enrich personal growth and help facilitate international mindedness and understanding.
- The person's spoken language is a direct link to the person's culture, identity, and heritage.
- The development of the spoken language is crucial to maintaining cultural identity; thus, we encourage using the spoken language as a tool for understanding and sharing knowledge.
- The acquisition of additional languages allows students to reflect on and explore different cultural perspectives.
- Learning language is integral to the development of students' identity as well as making meaning of the world around them.
- Arabic has equal importance with foreign languages; thus, the first language of Arab students is to be supported.
- The development of language is fundamental to the instinctive need to communicate.
- Developing essential language skills – reading and writing, listening and speaking, viewing and presenting – is integral to a student's development.



- The learning process involves learning the language, learning about the language, and learning through the language (*Halliday's Model*).
- Language provides an intellectual framework that supports students' conceptual development and critical thinking.
- Language is an important connecting element across the curriculum.
- Both the form and the functionality of language should be encouraged and appreciated.
- All teachers are language teachers with responsibilities in using language as a tool to facilitate communication.
- The language development of students is a shared responsibility of all community members: teachers, students, and parents.

Language of Instruction

The term "language of instruction" refers to the language in which teaching and learning activities occur. It is the language used by teachers to convey information, facilitate understanding, and engage students in the learning process. It is a foundational element in every educational process. The language of instruction is crucial in influencing students' academic success, cognitive development, comprehension of cultural relevance, and social integration.

In Al Faris, the language of instruction is English, except for our French and Arabic classes, where instruction is delivered in the target language. Arabic language is delivered during Arabic, Islamic, and History & Geography of the Kingdom (*requirements of the Ministry of Education*), and French language is during the French classes.

Language of Communication

Oral Language – Listening and Speaking

Oral language is vital in various aspects of life, including interpersonal interactions. It is a fundamental aspect of human communication.

"Oral language encompasses all listening and speaking aspects—skills essential for ongoing language development, learning, and relating to others. Listening (*the receptive mode*) and speaking (*the expressive mode*) work together in a transactional process between listeners and speakers." (*PYP Scope and Sequence, page 16*) Oral language skills are deemed the 'building blocks' for students' future language development and developing community relationships. Furthermore, the thinking process is further enhanced by consolidating listening and speaking skills.

Visual Language - Viewing and Presenting

Visual language involves more than just the creation of images; it also includes the skills of viewing and presenting visual information. Viewing and presenting in the context of visual



language are interconnected skills that involve interpreting and creating visual content. Developing proficiency in both areas enhances communication, critical thinking, and creativity in various personal, academic, and professional settings.

The receptive (*viewing*) and expressive (*presenting*) processes are connected and allow for reciprocal growth in understanding; neither process has meaning except for the other. These processes involve interpreting, using, and constructing visuals and multimedia in various situations and for various purposes and audiences. They allow students to understand how images and language interact to convey ideas, values, and beliefs. Visual texts may be paper, electronic, or live, observable forms of communication that are consciously constructed to convey meaning and immediately engage viewers, allowing them instant access to data. Examples of visual texts include advertisements, brochures, computer games and programs, websites, posters, maps, charts, graphs, etc.

“These processes involve interpreting, using, and constructing visuals and multimedia in various situations and for various purposes and audiences. They allow students to understand how images and language interact to convey ideas, values, and beliefs.” (*PYP Scope and Sequence, page 18*). It is essential to note the connectedness of language development's visual and presentation aspects, which integrates technology into this medium. It is acknowledged that in contemporary society, visual language underpins a significant portion of the language development of three individuals, for example, through cartoons, graphic organizers, electronic mediums (e.g., iPads and eBooks), illustrations, and websites.

Written Language – Reading

In the context of written language, reading is a fundamental skill that involves interpreting and understanding written text. It goes beyond simple word recognition. It is a critical component of written language development, influencing various cognitive, academic, and personal growth aspects.

Reading is a developmental process that involves constructing meaning from text. The interactive process involves the reader's purpose for reading prior knowledge and experience and the text itself. Enthusiasm and curiosity are essential ingredients in promoting the desire to read. Children of all ages must experience and enjoy various interesting, informative, intriguing, and creative reading materials.

The written text is fundamental for developing the concept of reading for meaning, whereby experiences and knowledge of events surrounding the given text are highly valued. In turn, the expressive nature of this medium is appreciated as individuals learn to use it as a means to communicate identity. Notably, ‘accuracy and skills grow from producing meaningful communication’ (*PYP Scope and Sequence, page 19*).

Children learn to read by reading. To develop lifelong reading habits, learners need extended periods to read for pleasure, interest, and information, experiencing an extensive range of quality fiction and non-fiction texts. As learners engage with exciting and appealing texts appropriate to their experiences and developmental phase, they acquire the skills,



strategies, and conceptual understanding necessary to become competent, motivated, independent readers.

Written Language - Writing

In the written language, writing is a skill that involves the creation of text to convey ideas, thoughts, and information. Writing is a complex process encompassing various components, and it is a fundamental aspect of communication, education, and self-expression. Writing is a versatile and essential skill that goes beyond basic communication. It is a tool for creative expression, critical thinking, and effective communication in various personal, academic, and professional contexts. Developing strong writing skills empowers learners to articulate their ideas clearly and persuasively. It is primarily concerned with communicating meaning and intention. When children are encouraged to express themselves and reveal their “voice,” writing is a genuine expression of the individual. The quality of expression lies in the message's authenticity and the desire to communicate.

Over time, writing involves developing various structures, strategies, and literary techniques (*spelling, grammar, plot, character, punctuation, voice*) and applying them with increasing skill and effectiveness. Children learn to write by writing. Acquiring a set of isolated skills will not turn them into writers. It is only in the process of sharing their ideas in written form that skills are developed, applied, and refined to produce increasingly effective written communication.

The four language continuums in the **Language scope and sequence (2009)** have been organized into five developmental phases, each building upon and complementing the previous one. These phases have not been named in order to avoid the value judgment implied in labeling a learner as “developing” or “proficient,” for example. The continuums make explicit the conceptual understandings that must be developed at each phase. Evidence of these understandings is described in each phase's behaviors or learning outcomes.

Oral Language - listening and speaking

Phase 1	Learners show an understanding of the value of speaking and listening to communicate. They recognize that sounds are associated with objects or with symbolic representations of them. They use language to name their environment, get to know each other, initiate and explore relationships, and question and inquire.
Phase 2	Learners understand that sounds are associated with objects, events, and ideas or with symbolic representations of them. They know an object or symbol may have different sounds or words in different languages. They are beginning to be cognizant of the high degree of variability of language and its uses.
Phase 3	Learners show an understanding of the wide range of purposes of spoken language: that it instructs, informs, entertains, and reassures that each listener's perception of what they hear is unique. They are compiling rules about the use of different aspects of language.



Phase 4	Learners understand the conventions of speaking and listening and the value of adhering to those conventions. They know that language is a vehicle for becoming knowledgeable, negotiating understanding, and negotiating the social dimension.
Phase 5	Learners can understand the difference between literal and figurative language and how to use language differently for different purposes. They know they build on their previous experiences and use language to construct new meanings.

Visual Language - viewing and presenting

Phase 1	Learners show an understanding that the world around them is an entire visual language that conveys meaning. They can interpret and respond to visual texts. Although much of their visual language is spontaneous, they extend and use visual language more purposefully.
Phase 2	Learners identify, interpret, and respond to various visual text prompts and show an understanding that different types of visual texts serve different purposes. They use this knowledge to create their visual texts for particular purposes.
Phase 3	Learners show an understanding that visual text may represent reality or fantasy. They recognize that visual text resources can provide factual information and increase understanding. They reflectively use visual text to enrich their storytelling or presentations and to organize and represent information.
Phase 4	Learners are open-minded about using various visual text resources to access information. They think critically and are articulate about using visual text to influence the viewer. They can use visual imagery to present factual information or to tell a story.
Phase 5	Through inquiry, learners engage with an increasing range of visual text resources. As well as exploring the viewing and presenting strategies that are a part of the planned learning environment, they select and use strategies that suit their learning styles. They can make connections between visual imagery and social commentary. They show more discernment in selecting information they consider reliable. They can use visual imagery to support a position.

Written Language - reading

Phase 1	Learners show an understanding that print represents the real or the imagined world. They know that reading gives them knowledge and pleasure, that it can be a social or individual activity. They have a concept of a “book” and an awareness of some structural elements. They use visual cues to recall sounds and the words they are “reading” to construct meaning.
Phase 2	Learners understand that language can be represented visually through codes and symbols. They are extending their data bank of printed codes and symbols and can recognize them in new contexts. They understand that reading is a vehicle for learning and that the combination of codes conveys meaning.
Phase 3	Learners show an understanding that text is used to convey meaning in different ways and for different purposes—they are developing an awareness of context. They use strategies based on what they know to read for understanding. They recognize that the structure and organization of text convey meaning.



Phase 4	Learners show an understanding of the relationship between reading, thinking, and reflection. They know that reading is extending their real and imagined world and that there is a reciprocal relationship between them. Most importantly, they have established reading routines and relish the process of reading.
Phase 5	Learners show an understanding of the strategies authors use to engage them. They have their favorite authors and can articulate reasons for their choices. Reading provides a sense of accomplishment, not only in the process but in the access, it provides them to further knowledge about and understanding of the world.

Written Language - writing

Phase 1	Learners understand that writing is a form of expression to be enjoyed. They know that how you write and what you write conveys meaning and that writing is a purposeful act with both individual and collaborative aspects.
Phase 2	Learners understand that writing is a means of recording, remembering, and communicating. They know that writing involves using codes and symbols to convey meaning to others and that writing and reading use the same codes and symbols. They know that writing can describe the factual or the imagined world.
Phase 3	Learners understand that writing can be structured differently to express different purposes. They use imagery in their stories to enhance the meaning and make writing and reading more enjoyable. They understand that writing can produce a variety of responses from readers. They can tell a story and create characters in their writing.
Phase 4	Learners show an understanding of the role of the author and can take on the responsibilities of authorship. They demonstrate an understanding of story structure and can make critical judgments about their writing and the writing of others. They can rewrite to improve the quality of their writing.
Phase 5	Learners show an understanding of the conventions about writing, in its different forms, that are widely accepted. In addition, they demonstrate a high level of integration of the language strands to create meaning that suits their learning styles. They can analyze the writing of others and identify common or recurring themes or issues. They accept feedback from others.

Language Practices

Language practices encompass how language is used, maintained, and evolved within a community or society. These practices can be observed in both formal and informal settings, and they play a crucial role in shaping linguistic norms, cultural identity, and communication. Here are some of the language practices observed at Al Faris:

- All teachers use various strategies to balance the student's first language and second language of instruction.
- Students can appreciate language as a tool, so emergent writing must be encouraged.
- Conventional writing will not be emphasized in preschool. It will be emphasized gradually, starting with age 5-7 years.
- The early emphasis will be on the sounds of the letters. Students will then move to relating sounds to letters and conventional language.



- Conversations will be emphasized, so students are given chances to build their vocabulary and become good readers and communicators. Students will be encouraged to ask their own genuine questions to promote critical thinking and communication skills.
- Students will be encouraged to express themselves in various forms of communication, whether oral or written.
- Students will be encouraged to comprehend language through listening, reading, and viewing and to express language through speaking, writing, and presenting. The school promotes integrated language development since all these language areas go hand in hand.
- Language is integrated into the programme of inquiry. Students use language throughout the units of inquiry by asking questions, researching, presenting research findings, etc.
- Students engage in inquiry-based authentic language learning engagements. Thus, language experiences are relevant, challenging, significant, and engaging.
- Bilingual labels will be used while designing learning environments.
- Preschool and elementary publications and notices to parents will be written in Standard Arabic, English, or French.

Language Support at FIS

The language support at FIS aims to enhance the language development of every learner, particularly in the context of second language acquisition or support for students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. These objectives are designed to provide a structured framework for language support initiatives. Our objectives are:

Language Proficiency - improve overall language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Cultural Competence - foster cultural awareness and competence by understanding and appreciating diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Academic Language Skills - develop academic language skills necessary for success in subject-specific content areas.

Bilingualism/Multilingualism - to support students in becoming proficient in more than one language.

Reading Comprehension - improve reading comprehension skills in the target language.

Writing Skills - enhance writing skills to communicate ideas and information effectively.

Listening Skills - strengthen listening skills to understand spoken language accurately.

Speaking Skills - to develop oral communication skills for effective expression and interaction.

Grammar and Syntax - improve grammatical and syntactic proficiency in the target language.

Vocabulary Development - expand and strengthen students' vocabulary in the target language.

Self-Advocacy and Independence - empower students to advocate for their language needs and develop independent language learning skills.



Cross-Cultural Communication - enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts.

Assessment Literacy - develop students' understanding of assessment and target language evaluation criteria.

Parental Engagement - involve parents in supporting their child's language development.

These language support objectives provide a foundation for designing targeted interventions, programs, and instructional approaches to meet the diverse linguistic needs of the learners. It contributes to creating inclusive learning environments that value and support language diversity.

Support for First Language (Mother Tongue)

Supporting the mother language (*also known as the first language or home language*) is key for fostering a positive learning environment and promoting the overall development of students. Here are several strategies and practices that FIS employs to support the mother language:

- Acknowledge and celebrate linguistic diversity by recognizing and celebrating the linguistic diversity within the school community. Highlight the value of different languages and the cultural richness they bring.
- Provide multilingual resources by offering learning materials, textbooks, and resources in multiple languages, and ensure that the school library includes literature in various languages. In addition, FIS offered digital libraries such as Follet and إقرأ بالعربية to enrich the school library and support the units of inquiry.
- Bilingual education programs are implemented by providing instruction in both the mother language and the language of the broader community.
- Maintain a balance between promoting proficiency in the mother language and acquiring proficiency in other languages.
- First language instruction is practiced by offering formal instruction in the mother language as a subject or language arts component. We provide opportunities for students to develop their language skills in reading, writing, and speaking in their mother language.
- Cultural inclusion is observed by integrating cultural content related to students' mother languages into the curriculum, including literature, history, and other subjects that reflect the cultural diversity of the students.
- Design a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable using their mother language. Allow students to use their mother language in casual communication, especially during breaks or informal settings.
- Multilingual staff is ascertained by hiring educators and staff proficient in different languages represented in the school community. Foster a diverse teaching staff that reflects the linguistic backgrounds of the students.
- Parental involvement is encouraged by providing information and resources in the parents' mother language. Conduct parent-teacher conferences and communicate in a language that parents are comfortable with.



- Language support services are offered through tutoring or additional language classes for students who need extra help with their mother language or are learning a new language.
- Teachers are provided professional development to enhance their understanding of language acquisition and strategies for supporting students with diverse language backgrounds.
- Cross-cultural learning is observed by incorporating activities that promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation among students.
- Encourage students to share aspects of their culture and mother language with their peers.
- Maintain open and regular communication with parents and guardians, using their preferred language whenever possible. Ensure that information about school activities, academic progress, and important events is accessible in multiple languages.
- Recognize and celebrate language and cultural events within the school community. Organize language weeks, cultural festivals, or other events highlighting linguistic and cultural diversity.
- Create a language-rich environment by displaying signage and information in multiple languages throughout the school.
- Foster an environment that values and promotes language learning and appreciation.

FIS believes implementing these strategies can create an inclusive, comprehensive, and supportive environment that values and supports students' mother languages, contributing to their overall academic success and cultural identity.

Language Support to Children with Special Needs

Supporting children with special needs in the context of language involves providing targeted assistance to address their unique linguistic challenges and promote effective communication. Individualized and holistic approaches are necessary for language support for children with special needs. Collaboration among teachers, specialists, and parents, focusing on each child's unique strengths and challenges, can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive language learning environment.

Here are some strategies that FIS applies in providing language support to children with special needs:

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) - develop and implement IEPs tailored to each child's specific needs. An IEP outlines goals, accommodations, and strategies to support the child's language development.

Speech and Language Therapy - recommend access to speech and language therapy services.



Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) - introduce and support the use of AAC systems for children who struggle with verbal communication. AAC includes tools such as communication boards, picture symbols, or electronic devices to assist in expressing thoughts and needs.

Visual Supports - use visual supports, including visual schedules, charts, and cue cards, to enhance understanding and communication—using visual aids is beneficial for children with autism spectrum disorders or communication challenges.

Structured and Predictable Environment - create a structured and predictable environment to support language development, like consistent routines and clear expectations, to help children with special needs feel secure and understand the context of language use.

Social Skills Training - implement social skills training programs to help children with special needs develop communication and interaction skills. This includes understanding social cues, turn-taking, and appropriate conversational behavior.

Adapted Curriculum - modify the curriculum to meet the child's learning style and pace. Provide engaging materials and activities that cater to their strengths and challenges.

Collaboration with Special Education Professionals - foster collaboration between regular classroom teachers, special education professionals, and speech therapists to ensure a coordinated approach to language support.

Small Group Instruction - offer small group instruction to provide more personalized attention. Small groups can facilitate peer interaction and allow for targeted language interventions.

Inclusive Practices - foster an inclusive classroom environment where children with special needs actively participate in language-rich activities alongside their peers.

Technology Integration - incorporate educational tools and apps to support language development. Offer interactive games and activities targeting specific language skills.

Encourage Peer Interaction - facilitate positive peer interactions to promote language development. Encourage peer buddies, cooperative learning, and inclusive play activities.

Regular Communication with Parents - maintain open and regular communication with parents to share progress, strategies, and ways to reinforce language development at home.

Use of Multisensory Techniques - incorporate multisensory techniques to engage different senses in the learning process.

Emphasis on Strengths-Based Approaches - focus on identifying and building on the child's strengths. Celebrate achievements and encourage positive self-esteem.



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Professional Development for Educators - provide ongoing professional development for teachers to strengthen their knowledge and skills in supporting children with special needs, especially in language development.