

Language Policy for the IB DP at AYA

Background & Introduction

The American Youth Academy (AYA) is an independent, private school which serves students from PreK-2 to Grade 12. The school accepts students from all nationalities and religions, but is an Islamic school.

AYA's student population comes from over 25 countries throughout the world, with the major languages spoken at home being English, Arabic, Urdu and Spanish.

As a school in the United States, whose goal it is to produce academically strong students, who can be successful at any institution of higher learning in the United States, AYA's 1st language is English. As an Islamic school, AYA's second language is Arabic, since Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, Islam's divine text.

As a school in Florida, where Spanish is the unofficial 2nd language, it is also AYA's goal to provide each student with a working knowledge and fluency in Spanish. AYA currently offers Spanish as a Middle School and High School Elective, but, with the introduction of IB DP, all students graduating from AYA will be required to take Spanish Ab Initio.

Urdu is not taught at AYA; however, the students whose mother tongue is Urdu are encouraged to prepare and deliver presentations, both oral and written, in Urdu at regular school assemblies and functions.

Philosophy

AYA's stakeholders believe that:

- Developing strong language skills in its students will allow them to communicate well with those around them; will allow them to reach their highest academic goals; and will open doors of opportunity for them throughout their lives.
- Developing strong language skills is an on-going process and is one that all stakeholders should take ownership of.
- Language is acquired and strengthened optimally when all teachers and staff-members reinforce the required skills in all aspects of the educational process.
- Strength in one language can lead to strength in a second language; and strength in a second language can lead to strength in a third language.
- Students should be able to communicate proficiently and effectively in the languages of greatest importance to AYA's immediate and extended communities.
- If students become fluent in English, Arabic and Spanish, they will be able to communicate at some level with almost 40% of the world's population. This will expand their ability to successfully interact with people on a truly global level.
- Students whose mother tongue is not one of the three taught at AYA should be encouraged to hold onto their mother tongue and should be asked to present/perform in their mother tongue at school events. These other languages at AYA are: Urdu, Pashtu, Bengali and French.
- Language is a reflection of culture, and it is important to maintain students' identity with their respective cultures through preservation and strengthening of their mother tongues and of their acquired languages.
- All students should have access to language acquisition through the IB courses taught at AYA.

Goals

- To address all students' backgrounds and needs in the area of language development and acquisition.
- To ensure that all faculty-members support and reinforce AYA's language philosophy actively and consistently.
- To develop and strengthen students' understanding of the power of language and its ability to help them bridge differences and cross cultural boundaries to increase cooperation and collaboration locally and globally.
- To ensure that all students graduating from AYA have reached a certain level of oral and written proficiency in the three languages offered them.
- To encourage students to maintain and strengthen their mother tongues, even if they are not among the languages taught at AYA.
- To develop in the students an appreciation and understanding of the literary works of different cultures and written in or translated from different languages.
- To develop in the students an understanding of the connection between the literature of a certain country and/or time period and events that took place in history in that region/time period.
- To develop in students a true love of learning that stems from a stronger grasp on languages and their role in acquisition of knowledge.

IB Language Offerings

- Language A - English Language & Literature - HL
- Language B - Arabic SL
- Language B - Arabic Ab Initio
- Language B - Spanish Ab Initio

English Language Learner (ELL) Accommodations

As part of its Admissions Process, AYA requires that all of its students are proficient to a certain level in English. For those students for whom English is not their mother tongue, this proficiency may not be high enough for them to master English HL.

AYA will offer two options for these students. They may either enroll in English HL but receive modified assignments and then sit for the English SL exam; or they may take the non-IB English courses that will be offered for students in Gr. 11 & Gr. 12 at the school.

AYA also liaises with an off-campus language institute where students can go for additional assistance in English, until they reach a level where this additional assistance is no longer needed.

In class, teachers may direct and encourage ELL students to use any of various translation software, or dictionaries (hard-copy or electronic), in order to strengthen their English proficiency. Teachers may also utilize vocabulary development techniques and may pair the ELL students with English-fluent students who are also fluent in the ELL students' mother tongue.

Reflection & Revision of AYA's Language Policy

As with any policy, AYA's Language Policy must be reviewed and analyzed on an annual basis by a committee of teachers and administrators to determine if any changes are needed. This analysis will be

based on implementation of current policy, assessment of student and teacher success, demographics of the school, and other variables which may influence the policy's success.

If changes are found to be warranted/needed, they will be made and implemented and again reviewed after a one-year cycle.