St. Nicholas Alphaville Language and Literacy Policy--April 2020

INTRODUCTION

St. Nicholas School recognizes that it caters for a wide range of nationalities, cultures and languages, and affirms its use of English as the inclusive language to unite the community and provide a context for language learning. English and Portuguese are languages of instruction and Portuguese is celebrated as the host language. There is a wide range of other home languages which are valued and nurtured as part of our language learning framework.

Families come with a range of linguistic expectations of an international school. For some families who transfer frequently between countries, English provides continuity of learning from one country to another. Some families, although Brazilian, may have lived abroad prior to joining the school and find English the smoothest transition back into their home culture. Most families believe that bilingualism and English competency opens future gateways both professionally and academically for their children.

PHILOSOPHY

St. Nicholas School recognizes the power of language in today's rapidly changing global society and realizes that the ability to communicate in more than one language is highly advantageous. St. Nicholas actively develops proficiency and excellence in more than one language in order to enable and empower students to play a full and active role in a global society. The nature of the curriculum at St. Nicholas involves the transferral of linguistic skills between languages and provides a context for rich cross-cultural experiences and awareness. The learning context provides opportunities for pragmatic language development so that students become effective and compassionate communicators in a range of social contexts. We believe that positive attitudes and respect for all languages must be actively fostered among students and staff, as both competence as well as affective dispositions towards languages form part of the international mindset we value in our school community.

IB STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

Culture 4: The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews a language policy that helps to foster intercultural understanding through communicating in a variety of ways in more than one language (0301-04)
Culture 4.1: The school implements and reviews a language policy that is aligned with IB language policy guidelines.
Culture 4.2: The school describes in its language policy the way that the school recognizes multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource for learning.
Culture 4.3: The school identifies in its language policy a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development.
Culture 4.4: The school clearly describes in its language policy the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community and what constitutes good practice within the school context.
PYP 1: The school ensures that students learn a language in addition to the language of instruction (at least from the age of seven). Multilingual programmes, where students are learning in at least two languages, can but are not required to offer additional languages.
Lifelong learners 7.3: Students take opportunities to develop their language profiles.
Approaches to teaching 5.4: Teachers support language development with consideration for the language profiles of students.

BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

- Language is an instrument for thought.
- Cultural identity is both an expression of language and expressed through language.
- Language for negotiation and social interactions can be a learned skill.

- Bilingualism is beneficial personally, academically and socially.
- Many language skills transfer from one language to another.
- Strong mother tongue language skills enables successive language learning.
- Language learning is best when in an authentic context.
- People learn languages differently and catering to learning styles, readiness and specific language needs is important.
- All teachers in the school community play a role in nurturing the language development of each student

AIMS

- To enable students to express themselves clearly, confidently, and effectively in speech and writing in all areas of the curriculum and in later life

- To use language to collaborate effectively with others, in small group contexts, and for the purposes of decision-making and conflict resolution.

- To enable students to understand and respond appropriately to what they hear, read and experience

- To use critical thinking and reading as well as information and media literacy to evaluate information that they receive, and to develop informed responses and opinions using language

- To encourage students to enjoy and appreciate the variety of language by providing rich, challenging experiences and opportunities for creativity.

- To understand and use technology and visual texts as effective tools for communication

- To appreciate the interplay between different modes of text and use multimodal texts effectively to convey a range of messages to different purposes and audiences

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Language teaching and learning take place throughout the different stages of the curriculum. Lessons across the school are focused on inquiry-based experiences. Our teaching focuses on enabling and empowering students to think critically and should ensure the understanding of concepts so that skills and knowledge can be appropriately connected to the larger picture. Across the school, we draw on a rich set of assessment practices as outlined in our Assessment Policy.

General approach

Inquiry
Language and literacy learning should be taught through an inquiry-based approach. Although there are certain practices that are conducive to inquiry, inquiry goes beyond a set of teaching strategies. The learning environment and classroom ethos are central to authentic inquiry-based learning. Nevertheless, some classroom practices which encourage inquiry include: tackling real world issues, opportunity to question, explore, apply and reflect, collaboration, discussion and debate, and other ways that move beyond simple memorisation.

Concepts
Both key and related concepts should be identified in medium term and short term planning.

Skill integration
Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and media literacy should not be taught in isolation, but interwoven into the planning and learning. Approaches to learning similarly play an important part, and although they should not

be taught in isolation, they are taught explicitly and intentionally so as to allow students to gain informed mastery of these skills in conjunction with the development of their language and communication skills.

Language integration
English and Portuguese instruction work in conjunction as a single language and literacy programme in the Primary Years Programme. All planning should be carefully coordinated to ensure a cohesive curriculum across both languages. We recognise that English is an additional language for most of our students, and so although the literacy programme is carried out in part in English, the curriculum will allow for students to engage with it on their own terms as fits their language profile, and additional support will be provided as per our Personalised Learning/Inclusion policy.

In the middle years programme, Portuguese will be taught as language A (language and literature) and English as Language B (language acquisition), although English will be taught at a level advanced enough to allow for students' full participation in the programme of instruction at the school. Students who have alternative language needs (native English speakers, or those needing support in Portuguese) will benefit from a program tailored to suit their needs, while meeting all the aims of language and literature and language acquisition. Further information on this can be found in the *Planning* section of this guide.

Transdisciplinarity
There should be evidence of language and literacy learning in the programme of inquiry in the Primary Years Programme. Practices which support integration include, but are not limited to:
- genre study/text work that supports research and inquiry. For example, non-chronological reports create an avenue for research
- literature study, exemplifying themes, issues and dilemmas that help with the understanding of the central idea
- conceptual connections to the central idea, for example, pattern (poetry), cause/effect (reading comprehension), conflict (story structure)

Interdisciplinarity
In the Middle Years programme, interdisciplinary inquiry should lie at the heart of collaborative planning, and the taught and written curriculum as a result. In addition to providing at least one interdisciplinary unit per year, where languages will play an important role, other actions to support interdisciplinarity may include, but are not limited to:
- Interdisciplinary threads through discipline-specific explorations that seek to enhance understanding by incorporating elements, themes, or skills from language A or B in their unit planning and teaching.
- Personal projects that may involve an interweaving of the use of language and language learning with other disciplines
- Service learning projects that may involve the objectives of language learning in order to raise awareness, organise campaigns, or facilitate communication and organisation
- Conceptual challenges that bring into play the power of language as part of a solution, product, or action

Early Years Practices (Tiny Tots-Nursery)

Language immersion
An immersion experience creates an authentic context for learning. Teachers should use English as the classroom language, however, sensitivity to emotional needs, safety and specific thought processes may create situations in which the use of the child's most proficient language is necessary. English use should be encouraged and celebrated. Use of a child's home language should not be prohibited or responded to negatively, and all language profiles are welcomed and nurtured. Grouping of children with a range of home languages is an effective way to encourage the use of English, as English may be the common language amongst them.

Literacy

A literacy-rich environment must be in place, with books, labels, and opportunities for viewing print in a range of ways and purposes. Children should be read to daily. The phonemic awareness programme should begin in Nursery, following Phase 1 of the *Letters and Sounds* programme*.*

Primary Practices (Kindergarten-Grade 5)

Language use
Teachers should use the language of instruction in which he/she teaches with children both inside and outside the classroom.   For example, the Portuguese teachers use Portuguese when communicating with children at all times and classroom teachers and specialists use English with children at all times. Nevertheless, demonstrating bilingual skills in appropriate situations is a good model for children, and common sense should prevail when deciding what language to use when communicating with children in atypical situations.

Portuguese/English Integration
Portuguese lessons begin as of Kindergarten 1 and by Grade 1, Portuguese and English literacy lessons receive the same curricular weight. The literacy process is begun first in English and subsequently Portuguese is introduced as a written language, relying on the transfer of decoding skills and the teaching of unique characteristics of the Portuguese language. Integration and links within literacy programme are essential, as we strive to have one literacy programme divided into two languages.

Reading
Reading instruction should include the goals of decoding, reading for comprehension and learning, and reading for pleasure.   The Individual Reading Programme, with the use of Oxford Reading Tree and StoryWorld collections can be used as of Kindergarten 1 to meet these goals. Both Fiction and Nonfiction books should be used. Home reading should focus on fluency and comprehension. Guided reading should be a regular feature in the curriculum as of Kindergarten 2.   Authentic literature must be integrated into reading instruction, in the beginning as read aloud books and then in group and guided reading.

Phonics
Letters and Sounds is used as of Kindergarten 1 for phonics teaching, but is adapted so that the pace of instruction meets the needs of each group of students. Jolly Phonics materials are compatible with our programme of instruction.

Spelling
Spelling involves both auditory skills (generally acquired through phonics), visual skills and internalisation of rules. Spelling teaching should involve all these skills. Spelling tests are permitted, however, can not be the primary focus of the spelling programme.

Handwriting
Further information concerning the teaching of handwriting can be found in our Handwriting Policy, which uses The Nelson handwriting style as its focus. Children are taught correct letter formation, with specific, focused practice in order to develop good habits early on. Joined handwriting is introduced when the child is ready, which is generally in Grade 1. Note of caution: handwriting is only a tool, and although it is important to develop good handwriting habits, undue attention to the reto can detract from communication skills, and so moderation and balance is what guides our instruction on handwriting.

Grammar
Grammar is a tool for effective communication. When possible, it should be taught within the context of application of good reading, speaking and writing skills and not for its sake alone. First language and second language learners often require different approaches, and so the school will draw on a range of resources and approaches in order to allow students to acquire grammatical knowledge in an engaging way. Where possible, an inquiry-based and deductive approach will be used.

Library
Children receive regular library lessons once a week through Grade 2, and as necessary and practical in the upper primary years. The school's library policy states that: "The library is both a teaching and working centre. It actively promotes reading: learning to read as well as reading for a range of purposes. It should lead the school community in creating life-long readers. The library also actively engages children in research and teaching children to use available sources of information, with a particular focus on digital resources and online databases. Librarians teach children how to find and select appropriate sources of information, both on- and offline. They also teach children how to read, understand and use information." Further information can be found in the school's library policy.

Transdisciplinary Opportunities
Language is naturally used in every area of the curriculum. In accordance with the IB, St Nicholas firmly believes that each and every teacher in the school is a language teacher. The skills students will learn in their language lessons (reading, writing, speaking and listening) should be transferred across the curriculum. Likewise, language, by its very nature, is social and therefore a part of learning in every other context.

Planning
What informs our planning
Depending on the stage of the curriculum, the following documents will inform planning: The Brazilian national curriculum, or *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC), PYP scope and sequence. British National Curriculum (both foundation stage, KS1 and 2) can be used as resources to further develop specific areas. Planning should:
- Differentiate for individual needs and learning styles of students
- Provide learning engagements that are purposeful and relevant
- Make transdisciplinary links when relevant
- Further the understanding of the essential questions when relevant
- Use a range of assessment strategies
- Provide opportunities for reflection for students and teachers
- Use collaborative learning opportunities
- Promote and use inquiry
- Integrate technology where appropriate
- Allow for the use of a range of resources

Planning is demonstrated and recorded through:
- The PYP Planner (Primary)
- Medium-term unit plans on Atlas
- Language weekly plans that include the following elements: learning objectives (of concepts, understanding and skills), success criteria, differentiation, sequence of learning steps and learning activities, and assessment.
- Weekly teaching and learning plans that are a collaborative document for each year group

Middle Years Programme (Grades 6 to 10)

Language use
Teachers will use the language they teach as the means of communication inside and outside the classroom, except in cases of cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary activities or occasions, where English will be the preferred means of communication. All teachers, regardless of subject, must consider their role in the students' language development, and should therefore aim to model appropriate language use and provide support with developing fluent and spontaneous communication through respectful interaction with students in the languages of the school.

Languages A and B (Portuguese, English, Spanish)
In the middle years, Portuguese will be taught as Language and Literature, although English will be the medium of instruction for all other subjects, except Spanish as and when appropriate. English will be taught as Language

Acquisition, together with Spanish, although the progression of English will aim to prepare students to work at a proficient level by MYP Year 4 (Grade 9), and eventually be able to choose English as their Language and Literature course in the Diploma Programme. Spanish will be offered at an emergent to capable level throughout the MYP, with the aim of students eventually being able to choose Spanish as their Language B (SL or HL) in the Diploma Programme.

Library and media center
The library plays a central role in language learning in the Middle Years Programme, as it will be a repository of literary works and reference books in the languages taught in the Middle Years, but also a center for research as well as a creative hub where linguistic endeavours are encouraged and eventually published. All languages will have regular library lessons in their timetable, where they will be supported in developing research and information literacy skills with the help of librarians who are proficient in all the languages of the school, and they will be encouraged to make independent use of the library to further strengthen their language and communication skills, for example through reading for pleasure or creative writing initiatives.

Planning
A variety of documents will be used to inform the curriculum in the Middle Years, which draw on both documentation designed for the Middle Years Programme as well as established national or international curricular documents. This includes (but is not limited to) the Language and Literature and Language Acquisition subject guides, IB standards and practices, the Teacher Support Material available in the Programme Resource Center, as well as the BNCC, the British National Curriculum for KS3 and KS4, the Ontario K-12 curriculum, and the Irish junior and senior cycle curriculum in order to ensure that factual and procedural knowledge is in line with internationally recognised standards. Planning will be recorded in unit planners on Managebac, as well as in minutes from collaborative planning meetings over the course of the school year.
Planning in the middle years should:
- Aim to meet students' individual needs and language profiles for both first and additional languages
- Aim to prepare students for assessments and projects in the Middle Years (including personal project) as well as build up to the Diploma Programme
- Be based on the learning objectives for each subject
- Ensure progression as per the assessment criteria for MYP 1, 3, and 5
- Incorporate Approaches to Learning in a purposeful and explicit manner
- Provide learning engagements that are purposeful and aim to develop a rich conceptual understanding
- Make interdisciplinary links and create interdisciplinary explorations when relevant
- Use a range of assessment strategies
- Provide opportunities for reflection for students and teachers throughout units, and allow for different forms of expression and communication when it comes to sharing reflections
- Use collaborative learning opportunities to foster communication skills and use of language
- Promote and use inquiry
- Integrate technology where appropriate
- Integrate service learning opportunities or links

INCLUSION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
St Nicholas strives to remove barriers to learning and participation by providing support for those students learning English and/or Portuguese as another language or who require reinforcement in their language and literacy skills. All students are entitled to a language curriculum which caters for their individual needs, offers equal access and opportunity and enables them to participate fully in all areas of the curriculum.

Additional support is provided in both English and Portuguese when necessary. Differentiated classroom instruction, small or individual group work, and in class support are all options in meeting language needs. Our PL/Inclusion policy offers further information on how this is carried out in practice.

The school encourages the development of students' mother tongues and endeavors to provide this support when possible. In many cases the school seeks to work together with the family to provide on-going

development of the mother tongue, using resources, expertise, time and space from school, in conjunction with the home and the parents to ensure adequate development and nurturing of the mother tongue.

OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS
- St Nicholas Alphaville Assessment Policy
- St Nicholas Alphaville Personalised Learning/Inclusion Policy
- St Nicholas Alphaville ICT policy
- St Nicholas Alphaville Library policy

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be subjected to a regular and official review which will take place every two years, as per the school's policy review cycle. The next scheduled review will take place in April 2022, and will include all relevant stakeholders including:
- Senior leadership team, including all programme coordinators
- Representative for the school's language teachers
- Student representative
- Parent representative