

Harlem Village Academies High Language Policy

Language Policy Steering Committee

This Language Policy was originally written in September 2020 through an iterative process with HVAH's Language Policy Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consisted of IB Program Teacher, members of our Student & Family Affairs group, an inclusion instructor, and a School Administrator. The Language Policy has been continuously reviewed and edited to reflect the current landscape at HVAH.

Philosophy

HVAH is committed to supporting multilingualism as a fundamental part of increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness and is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

HVAH recognizes that the study of language is central to all learning and that all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with core responsibilities to facilitate written and oral communication skills.

HVAH recognizes that language study (in both English and Language Acquisition) reinforces cultural identity, enhances personal growth, and promotes effective, independent thinking and communication.

HVAH supports the IBO mission of developing global awareness and recognizes that the skills to live and work with others, both locally and internationally, are enhanced by the development of more than one language.

HVAH values differentiated and varied instruction which integrates the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. We encourage authentic and meaningful learning experiences that include cross-curricular lessons (when possible) as well as exposure to literature, non-fiction writing, grammar, and various forms of language. Specific references to language instruction and assessment are extremely relevant, and should be found in both individual scope and sequence curriculum maps and course syllabi.

HVAH recognizes the need to support recognition and appreciation of the eight diverse mother-tongue languages represented within our school community. We provide academic support for ELLs, distinguished separately from students with other academic needs.

School Language Profile

The IB Diploma Program is a building program that functions within the Harlem Village Academies network of schools in New York City. HVAH is ethnically rich, but less diverse than the larger city, as most students are African-American and Latino (using US federal race categories). Due to state high school graduation requirements, very few students request Language A1 self-taught.

The language of instruction is English, and the school offers two Language Acquisition levels: Spanish SL and Spanish HL. IB diploma classes are open to all HVAH students, regardless of race, gender, or access to economic resources. Network students are granted automatic entry into HVAH by choice, and other NYC district students may request a placement into HVAH from any other district middle or high schools.

Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act requires states to assess the English language proficiency of students receiving English language development services at school. New York State uses the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) as the only assessment instrument for measuring the English Language proficiency of students who may be an English Language Learner (ELL). All public and charter schools must follow the steps outlined in the initial and reentry processes prescribed by Commissioner's Regulations (CR) Part 154-2.3(d), which includes administering the Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ) and conducting an individual interview with students who have indicated on the HLQ that a language other than English is spoken at home. Information gathered from the HLQ and the individual interview should be assessed carefully to determine if the student is required to take the NYSITELL.

In addition, New York State uses the "New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test" (NYSESLAT) to determine if an ELL continues to be limited in their English proficiency. This test is designed to annually assess the English language proficiency of all ELLs enrolled in Grades K-12 in New York State schools. The results of the NYSESLAT will determine the levels of services ELLs receive in Bilingual Education and English as a New Language programs for the school year as prescribed in Commissioner's REgulations Part 154-2 and 154-3.

We use multiple criteria to determine when a student is ready to be placed in non-ELL English classes, including scores and class performance. The next placement is IB Language and Literature HL as their primary English class in Grades 11 and 12. When this occurs, they are placed with a support Inclusion instructor for additional support. This teacher regularly collaborates with the IB course instructor on differentiation and support. All of the students who are in the IB Diploma Program have a basic proficiency in English, and most ELL students who are participating in courses at Grade 9 have experience with the English language. It is a core responsibility of each teacher to assess language proficiency needs and to adjust curriculum accordingly.

Overview of HVAH Languages

- English is the language of instruction.
- English, as a subject, is taught through:
 - Language A1
 - Language A2-self-taught (by arrangement, for IB exchange-students)
- Language Acquisition languages (Language B):
 - HL courses: Spanish
 - SL courses: Spanish
- Linguistic Cultural Opportunities
 - The school offers a multitude of opportunities to gain exposure to various languages and cultures through music, art, festivals, assemblies, multicultural clubs and curricular units. Several student groups lead these efforts.
 - CAS opportunities exist within the community that focus on the ethnic diversity of the community and would allow for the practice of world language skills.
 - Students whose fluency in English needs practice may access materials in the school library or request tutor assistance. Teachers differentiate curriculum and learning, as needed.
 - Parent-student-school community evenings are held to celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity and provide school information.
 - The school library has access to public domain articles in a variety of languages, periodicals in Spanish, history videos in Spanish, and literature and poetry in a variety of languages. In addition, our online library (SORA) has books available in both English and other mother-tongue languages. The library has also circulated a variety of resources to the Language Acquisition/World Language department.
- Support for Community / Family Interaction in Mother-Tongue Language
 - Real-time translators are provided by the network for all parent-student-teacher meetings, upon request.
 - All district and school communication is available in English and can be translated using the Google Language plug-in to support all mother-tongue languages for families. Our school website is compliant with state and federal law.
 - The network utilizes ParentSquare, a tool that unifies all teachers/school communication into a single portal that can be accessed by parents in their mother-tongue.
 - All family communication regarding grades and assignment progress are reportable to families in their mother-tongue, using ParentSquare. Other features include:

Classroom Communication

Forms and Permission Slips

Parent Teacher Conferences

Invoices and Payments

Calendar and RSVP

Volunteering and Sign Ups

Polls

Secure Document Delivery

- As all communication is sent across the web, student/parent emails are translatable across the Google platform of supported languages.
- The school and network support live transcription and translation for families in other languages.

Essential Agreements for the Teaching of Language

All students are:

- encouraged to maintain and value their own native language and to respect the native language of other students
- taught language skills (to read, write, analyze and reflect) by all members of the HVAH faculty in each course, regardless of discipline
- encouraged to become fluent in more than one language
- introduced to a variety of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and respond to a variety of media and non-fiction sources
- exposed to a wide range of literature reflecting a variety of cultures
- given time to reflect on their learning and to apply remediation strategies
- encouraged to share and develop their work in a social context
- given constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers
- given access to, and are taught through, a variety of technological and informational sources
- given the opportunity to become active language learners through inquiry and authentic real-life applications
- encouraged to view language as a tool for life-long learning
- encouraged to include parents, peers and the community in their development of language skills

Program Attributes Brought Forth in Self-Reflection of the Language Policy

At present, all 11th and 12th Grade students take Language A in English, and Language B in Spanish. We continue to promote mother-tongue languages while balancing the legal requirements of instruction in the English language.

1. Library and media resources are directly linked to teaching and learning with language as a focus. Additionally, all students are given access and instructed on how to use the New York Public Library system, which has an extensive set of materials in a variety of languages.
2. Incoming transfers and/or exchange students would be counseled towards Language A1 Self Study options, should those students be best suited toward that diploma coursework.
3. As of the Fall of 2021, our school only offers Language A: Language & Literature HL to our students. We have continued vertical alignment from Grades 9 through 12, and all students at HVAH are now enrolled in classes to support success in IB For All.
4. Our Language Acquisition scope and sequence work is exceptionally well developed for Spanish. All Language B instructors in grades 9-10 are IB trained.
5. As our network is focused on Culturally Responsive Teaching, our Scope and Sequence planners explicitly require teachers to develop materials that support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts as a key part of their curriculum.
6. At present, there is limited choice in Language Acquisition courses. However, as a network we are excited to begin working toward offering Latin as another Language B course option.

Communicating Language Policy

A copy of the HVAH Language Philosophy and Language Policy is posted on the main page of the HVAH IB website; all statements of philosophy and policy are reviewed with parents during parent meetings of incoming and existing IB students. Individual course syllabi address language acquisition and curriculum specifics, as needed.

Resources:

As a part of its Self-Study, various IB language policies for regional schools were reviewed, as well as new, relevant studies and literature in the field, including:

“Language Policy.” IBO Publication. <https://ibo.org/language-policy/> Updated: March 2025.

Corson, David. Language Policy in Schools: A Resource for Teachers and Administrators. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999.

Daniels, Harvey, Bizar, Marilyn, Zemelman, Steven. Rethinking High Schools: Best Practice in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2001.

Fee, Liu, Duggan, Arias, Wiley. Investigating Language Policies in IB World Schools: Final Report. Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), 2014.

Freeman Field, Rebecca. English Language Learners at School: A Guide for Administrators, 2nd Edition. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing, 2012.

Gottlieb, Margo & Nguyen, Diep. Assessment and Accountability in Language Education Programs: A Guide for Administrators and Teachers. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing, 2007.

Hammond, Zaretta. Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain. California: Corson Publishing, 2014.

Marzano, Robert, Debra Pickering and Jane Pollock. Classroom Instruction that Works. Alexandria: ASCD, 2001.

New York State Education Department. Bilingual Education & English as a New Language. 2024. <https://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed/>

Shohamy, Elana. Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches. Routledge: London, 2006.

Tollefson, J. (2013). Language policies in education: Critical issues: Second edition. London, UK: Routledge.