

ICSAtlanta Language Policy

The language policy is a working document developed by ICSAtlanta staff, parents, and administration. It outlines our school's linguistic and academic goals. As language forms the basis of all learning, this policy is critical in helping our school achieve its mission.

A language policy is derived from the school's language philosophy, and is a statement of purpose that outlines goals for language teaching and learning. It is constructed around pedagogical and learning beliefs and is thus a statement of action describing practices for achieving and evaluating goals.

In this document, the terms 'L2', 'target language', or 'second language', is the language learned in the classrooms as the foreign language which consists of French, German, Spanish or Mandarin. When referring to English, this document will use the term 'L1'.

1. Language Philosophy

At ICSAtlanta, we recognize that language is central to learning, and all teachers are language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication. Language learning at ICSAtlanta not only refers to the learning of a second language, but it also includes all activities that engage and nurture the practice of the language. Through the learning of the language, students acquire the ability to think, to develop social skills, and to acquire knowledge. Learning another language is a highly effective way to understand various cultures and ways of life. We aim to nurture an appreciation of the richness and diversity of language. The acquisition of more than one language and the maintenance of the mother tongue enrich personal growth and help facilitate international understanding. At ICSAtlanta, we aim to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination in at least two languages.

2. Second Language Acquisition

ICSAtlanta's mission is to help each student learn a second language to the best of his or her abilities. Each child will learn at his or her own pace and receive every opportunity to be exposed to at least two languages. All students will have the knowledge and the ability to use at least two languages, but not all of them to the same extent. Some students will learn quickly and will be able to reproduce what they hear with ease; others will need more time to feel confident enough to express themselves in the language. After some years at ICSAtlanta, some will have achieved functional proficiency while others will be considered bilinguals with proficiency, knowledge, and literacy in both languages.

The second language acquisition will take place through language exposure, learning concepts in the language, and understanding how the target language is structured (grammar, verb conjugations, etc.).

ICSAtlanta promotes inquiry-based language learning by:

- focusing on the transdisciplinary nature of language.
- incorporating the teaching and learning of language into the program of inquiry.
- developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy.
- promoting consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of both English and the target language.

3. Language Programs at ICSAtlanta

ICSAtlanta provides language instruction in the following languages: Spanish, Mandarin, French, German, and English. It is always the goal of ICSAtlanta's staff to help students improve their language skills. Educators and assistants provide many opportunities to support the second language while maximizing student learning by speaking solely in the target language. Thus, educators and assistants act as 'language modelers' for students.

In kindergarten and first grade, students will be exposed to the target language 80% of their day. Language Arts and Specials (music, art, PE, STEM, etc.) will be taught in English. Students will learn all the concepts and skills of the Georgia Education Standards mainly in their L2, with some connection made by their L1 teachers. This will ensure that the necessary vocabulary is discovered and learned in both languages.

In grades 2-5, students will spend their instructional day equally divided between the two languages. They will become skilled in all subjects areas, (math, science, social studies, language arts) as well as grow in their ability to express their ideas in both languages.

4. Communication

a. Communication with families

Written communication inside the school and with families will be done in English. In the absence of a student, communication with parents will be conducted in English. If the student is present, however, the teacher is expected to speak in the target language. This ensures that the student feels encouraged as early as possible to use the L2 to communicate.

Parents are asked to respect this rule as it will assist with the child's willingness to communicate in the L2.

As each child has a team of two teachers (L1 teacher and L2 teacher), it is in the best interest of all parties that communication be done in the common language of all three parties. Conferences and/or discussions about the student must be scheduled and reported in English.

An exception to this can be seen during student-led conferences, during which the L2 teacher will interact with the student in the L2 exclusively.

b. Communication within the school

Students are not required to speak in the L2 when outside of the classroom (lunchroom, recess, field trips, etc.).

During school-wide assemblies, students are required to speak in English; however, if there is an event prepared in a different language, some translation will be provided to ensure that everyone can participate. In such cases, both languages will be used to communicate.

5. Language Requests in Kindergarten through 5th Grade

ICSAtlanta offers instruction in four foreign languages in addition to English. Upon admission to ICSAtlanta, families are encouraged to request one language that will be learned throughout the student's time at ICSAtlanta. The languages offered include: Spanish, Mandarin, French, and German.

Some grade-levels may be provided with more than one class of the same language due to demand; however, all four languages will be offered in every grade. The number of classes may change over the years as a result of attrition or an increase in demand. ICSAtlanta will do its best to accommodate each family's needs.

6. Admissions to ICSAtlanta

ICSAtlanta welcomes students from diverse socio-economic, ethnic, linguistic, and national backgrounds. Upon admission to the school, families will be asked to give their language preferences. If applicable, parents/guardians will indicate any previous foreign language instruction. ICSAtlanta cannot promise that every family will be provided their first choice, even though every effort is made to accommodate the parent's preference. Once the language track has been assigned, parents/guardians can move forward with (accept) the assigned language track, accept the assigned language track but be placed on a waitlist for their first choice language track (*acknowledging* they will stay in the assigned track if they are not able to be moved into their first choice), or decline the language track and withdraw from admission.

ICSAtlanta's goal is for every child to succeed in their language track. Learning another language takes time and effort; thus, all students who re-enroll from one year to the next will stay in their language track. Once placed in a language track,

there are no language track changes (after the first 10 days of school in the first year of enrollment at ICSAtlanta).

Furthermore, students of all linguistic backgrounds are considered for admission. Students with no prior knowledge of the L2 are eligible for enrollment at ICSAtlanta.

7. Language Support

Successful language learning can only be accomplished through an extensive support system within the school and a full partnership between the school and parents.

Parents are encouraged to provide as much support to their child as necessary.

Please be prepared to:

- have regular communication with teachers.
- discuss content learned during the school day with your child.
- establish practice and consistency, creating student proficiency in both languages when it comes to specific academic language (use of school provided online resources, homework, vocabulary list provided by teachers, etc.)
- provide opportunities for language exposure in both languages (DVDs, songs, books, audio books, games online, etc.)
- participate in as many language activities and cultural events organized by ICSAtlanta
- encourage and support your student's efforts and achievements

ESOL

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) will be offered to any student who has been determined to have limited English proficiency. ICSAtlanta is sensitive to the needs of non-native English speakers. ICSAtlanta complies with all federal laws pertaining to screening, identifying, and serving ELL students.

8. Learning support

When a student has been identified with additional learning needs (including language difficulties or gifted and talented abilities), intervention and support are provided through the program within the referral process. The Student Support Team (SST) works with the teachers to help meet the needs of students identified with specific learning needs.

a. In school and afterschool tutoring

To ensure English proficiency on state mandated tests, teachers run tutoring sessions in school and/or after school in order to better prepare for Georgia Milestones testing. Additionally, all language departments have assistants from countries where

the target language is spoken, who support classroom teaching and are also available to help students in small groups.

b. Early Intervention Services

Through our federally mandated Child Find Program, ICSAtlanta employs the Response to Intervention (RTI) process to search for and identify ICSAtlanta students who may need additional support to ensure their success in the regular educational classroom environment. Our Early Intervention Program (EIP) is one RTI strategy employed to serve these students. EIP services allow students to have a more direct, small group instruction with a certified teacher to work on specific learning goals in ELA or math.

c. Special Education Services

When a student doesn't make appropriate progress during the tiered RTI approach, he/she is referred for psychological testing (if the parents agree and sign to allow testing). The psychological evaluation is administered by a certified psychologist. The results of the evaluation, along with previous data already collected, is used to determine eligibility for special education services. The amount of services, as well as the location (inside or outside a general education classroom) is determined based on each student's specific needs as determined by the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) team. Special Education Services are provided by a certified Special Education Teacher, Speech Therapist, and/or related services professionals (Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapy, etc.).

9. Mother Tongue Support

ICSAtlanta places great importance on supporting the development and/or preservation of a person's first language (mother tongue). Parents are encouraged to read and converse with their child in their mother tongue. Utilizing a student's classroom newsletter will allow parents to better understand how to engage with their child in fun activities, discussions in their mother tongue, and what is being learned in the classroom. Families have the opportunity to borrow books, in their mother tongue, from the school and classroom libraries.

10. Guiding Principles about Language Learning at ICSAtlanta

A family commitment to language acquisition and immersion is necessary to help each child progress and acquire the necessary language skills to thrive in tomorrow's world.

- We use language as a medium of inquiry, providing opportunities to challenge first language models and to develop second language learner skills. Each student will be offered opportunities to progress at his or her own pace, while accounting for previous exposure to the L2.

- We view L2 development as the shared responsibility of all teachers, parents, and students. Parents are considered partners in their child's learning and education. Open communication between parents and teachers is viewed as the best way to support students.
- We understand that our students come to our school from many different language backgrounds and will all progress at a different pace. A language immersion school is very different from a standard school and students might first appear to progress more slowly than their monolingual counterparts.
- We teach language through context, as well as relate new information to existing knowledge. Students have the opportunity to learn through inquiry-based units where they ask questions, find the information they need, and build upon what they already know.
- ICSAtlanta provides for language support in all languages taught. Teachers and teacher assistants present work and materials in whole group and small group settings. We encourage parents with particular L2 knowledge to get involved in classrooms to encourage learning.
- We accommodate different learning styles by differentiated instruction to address individual needs. Our teachers differentiate to accommodate our diverse students. Different mediums and supports are utilized in the classroom to help each student progress appropriately.
- We strive to keep abreast of the most current research regarding dual-language acquisition. Regular professional development for our teachers helps them stay knowledgeable of educational research and best classroom practices. Our teachers visit other schools to learn from other educational leaders. ICSAtlanta also invites immersion specialists to our campus to provide our teachers with the tools necessary to perfect their immersion teaching skills.
- We give ongoing feedback regarding student progress in all languages of instruction. The students are assessed regularly; teachers track student language acquisition as well as the acquisition of concepts taught (see *Assessment* below). Parents have many opportunities to meet their child's teachers: open house, curriculum night, and fall conferences. Should issues or questions arise during the year, the teachers are available by appointment to meet with parents.

11. Language Proficiency Assessment

While language acquisition follows distinct stages, student rate of acquisition varies greatly from one child to the next. L2 teachers, therefore, assess all language skills regularly (reading, listening, speaking and writing). Formative and summative assessments in the classroom provide information on language growth throughout the year. The results of these assessments are communicated to parents on the report cards using the following levels: 'N' (not meeting), 'S' (Satisfactory), and 'E' (Exceeding Expectation).

Students are evaluated at the beginning and end of kindergarten and first grade to measure language growth. Second and fifth graders will be assessed at the end of the school year, using a standardized L2 proficiency test, to determine growth.

12. Language reward program

To encourage all of our immersion students to speak only in their target language during instructional time, we use a *language expert award system*. In order to receive an award, students have to stay in the assigned language for the language *instructional* part (e.g. recess, lunch, hallways, dismissal, arrival are not included) of the day for the amount of days indicated (vary by award level) to receive an award.

In the L2 classrooms, each teacher will keep a poster with all student names. Every day that a student speaks only in the L2, he or she will get a star/sticker. After a certain number of days of speaking only in the L2, students receive a ribbon award that lists the country or symbol from each of our language tracks.

13. Professional Development

As it is an expectation for all teachers to be language teachers, on-going training focused on integrated language instruction will be offered throughout the year. The school is committed to providing embedded professional development for language learning across the curriculum. Teachers have the opportunity to travel or to receive in-house, regular training in immersion, classroom strategies, and best pedagogical practices and methods. ICSAtlanta will continue to encourage all teachers to participate in immersion trainings offered by the Georgia Department of Education to support the sharing of best practices and teacher networking.