

## **IB Mission Statement**

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

## **L'École Française du Maine Mission Statement**

L'École Française du Maine offers an educational experience entirely in French, instilling in our students a constant curiosity towards foreign languages and the world's diverse cultures. We believe that through play, actions, and the search for independence, each child discovers his/her unique path to learning and obtains the necessary tools for development. The children are encouraged to express themselves freely in French and through various art forms, boosting their confidence and knowledge. Through this commitment to language and culture, we're able to provide a diverse, mind-opening educational experience in an atmosphere of understanding and discovery.

# Language Policy

## **1. Philosophy**

Language is at the heart of our teaching philosophy and the core of our school mission. In our unique immersion setting, language learning is naturally transdisciplinary and provides the perfect basis for the development inquiry and communication focused learning.

Since the creation of our school, the world has continued to change dramatically and is rapidly moving closer towards becoming fully interconnected. Children will require new ways of thinking, strong language skills, and an open mind to succeed. Learning another language is a step towards joining the global community. Today, as more than half of the world's population is bilingual, mastering a second language is an increasingly important way of interacting with the world.

At L'École Française du Maine, learning goes beyond simply learning language but learning through language and about language (Halliday 1985). As we operate in a French immersion setting with key English speaking components, each part of our teaching staff is a language teacher. This philosophy and cohesion develops globally literate, multicultural lifelong learners through a unique academic program that is rigorous and challenging, adhering to both traditional American and official French curricula. Our balanced curriculum including: oral, visual and written language builds language learners who are continuously immersed in a diverse range of learning experiences. This setting informs how students see themselves as language learners and deepens their understanding of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Researchers agree learning several languages develops better cognitive skills, including enhanced creativity, adaptability, analytical skills, and multi-tasking abilities. These abilities help explain why these students typically score better in verbal intelligence, conceptualization, and global thinking and more easily discover creative solutions to problems.

It is a core belief of our school that each student brings their own language portfolio and prior knowledge to our learning community. This language identity is integral to how we are able to build upon our greater learning community. We believe that attending class in a diverse cultural and socioeconomic environment positively affects relationships, attitudes, and behaviors. Students gain an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures.

Many bilingual students show not only the capacity but the desire to learn a third language. In addition to being a valuable résumé builder and competitive edge in the academic and

professional markets, recent research demonstrates that bilingualism may also improve early brain development, the ability to focus in distracting environments, deciding between competing alternatives, and help disregard irrelevant information.

Our diverse language learning environment builds active learners who are eager to become internationally minded and responsible global citizens.

## **2. Objectives of the Language Policy**

This language policy establishes our philosophy and beliefs regarding language, language learning and teaching at L'École Française du Maine. Language learning is at the center of our curriculum planning and professional development. This policy highlights our strategy in the development of French language learning while also ensuring the advancement of the English language skills all while supporting the diverse mother tongues spoken in the school community.

As an IB World Candidate School, this document strives to ensure that the IB PYP Standards and Practices are in alignment with those of our school. We are committed to the following standards, practices and cultures. This Language Policy is in accordance with the Culture 4 of 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. (0301-04-0100)*

*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. (0301-04-0200)*

*Culture 4.3: The school identifies in its language policy a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development. (0301-04-0300)*

*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. (0301-04-0400)*

### **3. The Language Learner**

#### **Student Language Portrait**

The Student Language Portrait is a fundamental tool which allows us to better understand the background and specific needs of a student's language learning journey. At EFDM, we are conscious of the complex and diverse language portraits among our students who speak 5 different languages and represent at least 5 different countries.

We are also aware this may mean that students may be learning in a different language than that of their home, family, or prior educational experience. Each child who arrives in our school has a unique background which influences how many languages they have encountered or acquired before admission along with their familiarity of our school's values, beliefs and behaviors around language and literacy.

This information helps us in designing unique and specialized support to students joining our community who may be new to learning in French or English. This information is also crucial as we endeavor to provide many opportunities for students to share home spoken mother tongues at school.

#### **Expressing Language Identity**

We encourage the unique language identities of each of our students and celebrate the diverse cultural and language backgrounds of our students in our learning community and through our language learning curriculum. Language identity is forged by the interactions and relationships we build not only with our families but in our cultures and with the wider world.

The continued development of home spoken and family languages are key to healthy cognitive growth and in preserving cultural identity. In order to encourage this celebration, we will continue to provide opportunities for students to express and share their unique language identity with fellow students and the wider learning community through events and activities such as World Book Day. This event ensures that our library represents all spoken languages in our school community.

#### **Becoming Confident Communicators**

At our school, we acknowledge that language learning is a skill which is essential in supporting communication skills. As our students become confident in their communication in French and

English they deepen their understanding of the power language has and the impact it can have on others. This allows our students to be more knowledgeable and reflect on their language choices in style, tone, words, expression and gesture when communicating with those in and outside our school community.

Students understand the differences between language spoken at home and at school. Depending on particular learning contexts, teachers and students are aware of the choices they are making in the use of language and understand how language influences relationships and meaning.

### **Developing International-Mindedness**

In an immersion setting, international-mindedness is the essence of our entire philosophy. As everything is taught through the insight of a second language and culture, students naturally develop the thinking skills and perspectives of the self and others. As language is a key part of a student's development of empathy, compassion and respect, we are adamant in our mission to provide an educational environment which responds to this need. This setting contributes enormously to the ongoing exploration of the definition of international mindedness and our student's ability to use and understand language is essential in the development of the attributes of the learner profile.

### **Language and The Learner Profile:**

Language learning directly supports the development of the Learner Profile Attributes in our students. These attributes, which promote global thinking are essential for developing communication, empathetic and critical language skills.

Language is used:

- to be an Inquirer and seek and probe,
- to be a Communicator, and compare, explain and influence,
- to be Caring, and reach out to a friend
- to be Reflective, and gain perspective
- to be Risk Takers, and test boundaries and limits
- to be Principled in standing up for others,
- to be Knowledgeable, and share valuable information
- to be Open Minded, and ask difficult questions

### **Language and Literacy:**

Literacy is a key step in language learning and allows for a whole new exploration of language through the written word. From the Early Years Programme, students are exposed to literacy and continue to develop their skills throughout the Primary Years Programme.

When reading skills are put into practice in the Primary Years Programme, this discovery is conducted firstly in French, the primary taught language, and is later introduced in English in order to ensure a smooth transition into the mother tongue language schools outside our community.

Through literacy in any language, students uncover new perspectives and deepen their understanding of the power of communication. Literature also becomes a source of pleasure as it allows students to expand their imaginations and explore new ways of seeing and understanding the world around them. This discovery of language through multiliteracies where words and images collide to inform the reader and the interpretation of language is also a key part of the learning process.

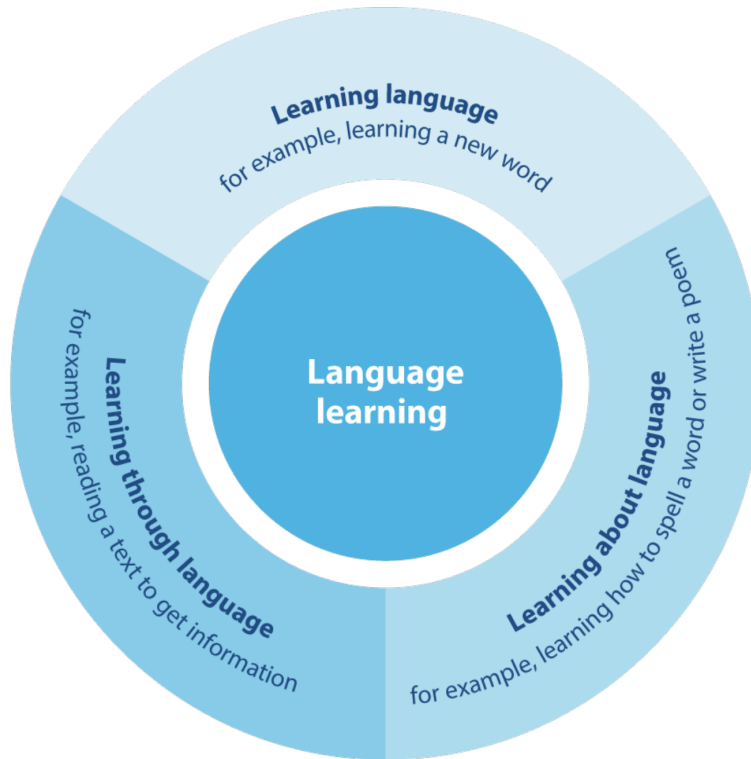
### **The Learning Continuum:**

The five key phases of the IB Language Continuum are best represented in our DELF/DALF (Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française/Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française) programme where students leave our school with an internationally recognized language diploma valid for life. This programme, which encompasses our students, is open to the larger learning community as alums and outside students flock to our testing center to make the most of this unique opportunity.

Each level of the Learning Continuum corresponds to the criteria of the DELF/DALF language proficiency levels. (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). This programme ensures that our learners are recognized for their ability to communicate in their taught language outside of our school community and that they are able to take the skills they have acquired with us into their lifelong learning.

## **4. Language Learning And Teaching**

*The learning process simultaneously involves learning language—as learners listen to and use language with others in their everyday lives; learning about language—as learners grow in their understanding of how language works; and learning through language—as learners use language as a tool to listen, think, discuss and reflect on information, ideas and issues (Halliday 1980). – Language Scope and Sequence, IBO*



*-Learning and Teaching IB*

*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. (0301-04-0411)*

Every student brings their own body of language knowledge to our school community; their understanding about how it works, how language is taught along with the role of language in our relationships and in our society. This understanding, first developed at home, is expanded through language learning and teaching which immerses students in the interplay between learning language, learning through language and learning about language. These understandings are not mutually exclusive and play a key role in the development of language acquisition and are the foundation for a better understanding of the necessary skills needed to communicate in our internationally minded community.

French is the primary language of instruction at L'École Française du Maine. Taught in an immersion setting, it is the principal language of instruction and communication between teachers and students, and amongst students themselves. This taught language provides the lens through which students learn about relationships, empathy and communication. During our Early Years Program, La Maternelle, L'École Française du Maine provides a full immersion environment. As English, the mother tongue in most cases, is introduced as a taught language

half-way through the Primary Years Programme, it allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences not only in language but in culture, values and ways we communicate and respect one another. ATL (Approaches to Learning) skills in Communication, Writing, Reading and Social Skills are developed through this international educational experience as each moment is an opportunity to reflect and to gain new understandings about those living outside our school community.

French or English may be used regarding communication with other staff members, with parents and in other events including the greater school community.

### **Learning Language Through Inquiry**

Through the units of inquiry, students engage in spontaneous verbal exchanges and express themselves in multiple situations such as dialogue, story, explanation, justification, and summary. Teachers prompt and encourage them to provide oral accounts of their experiences. By interacting with the children, teachers encourage them to progress and apply new language constructions. Students improve enunciation, research and use vocabulary appropriate to purpose, and progressively learn a complex syntax structure through language games.

Inquiry based learning and teaching is the keystone of our curriculum as it provides the opportunity for students to be researchers in their journey of language learning. This agency based learning process allows students to deepen not only skills in language but also attributes of the Learner Profile.

## **5. Learning Through Language**

Our inquiry based curriculum taught in French follows not only the requirements of the IB Organization but also those mandated by the French Ministry of Education, with some contextual adaptations. As part of our Programme of Inquiry, our English curriculum follows the best practices of American independent schools. The transdisciplinary harmonization of the French and American curricula provides for an ideal bilingual learning experience.

Students quickly learn that both the English and French curricula overlap, just as subjects are transdisciplinary they begin to see that so is the world around them. French Curriculum guidelines mirror the ATLs (Approaches to Learning) to which we adhere as an IB Candidate School. L'École Française du Maine provides an inquiry based foundation in written and oral expression, allowing students to be successful in either a bilingual or monolingual Secondary School setting anywhere around the world.



## **Translanguaging**

There are also instances where translanguaging is permitted and even encouraged. At the start of units incorporating both the English and French programmes, brainstorming occurs in a bilingual setting allowing each child to express themselves as they feel most comfortable. Projects presented to parents are also done through translanguaging, first in French, then in English, the common mother tongue, and additionally in any other home spoken languages.

Additionally, when we step into our greater learning community in field trip settings, students are thrown into multilingual situations which require them to speak in multiple languages through one activity. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to become global-minded citizens and they see the correlation in the practicalities of language (vocabulary, usage, tone) as well as the overall connectedness of the values and beliefs of our international community.

## **Our Language Curriculum and Daily Functioning:**

### **Early Childhood / La Maternelle (Cycle 1)**

For many students, La Maternelle is their first exposure to a second language. Our early childhood and kindergarten students benefit from plenty of outdoor recreation space and a full-day program. La Maternelle stimulates curiosity, promotes creative thinking, and develops social skills in a caring and nurturing environment. Language acquisition is at the heart of the Early Childhood program and is an integral part of all academic, motor, social, and artistic activities. The curriculum is taught in total French immersion to establish a strong language base.

### **Primary Years/ École Élémentaire (Cycles 2&3)**

Language skills are a priority and, in particular, the acquisition of the French language. During these years, the student builds his or her elementary knowledge, including speaking, reading, writing, and counting. Following the French program and continuing from the material covered in Kindergarten, a student's acquisition of written and oral language becomes natural in the first and second grades.

Cycle 2 is the cycle of Fundamental Learning when all learning is an inquiry into the world. It builds upon the child's natural curiosity fostered and instilled in Cycle 1, and those early experiences shape this next phase of learning.

Students continue to use language to expand their knowledge in all subjects. They reinforce, consolidate, and expand their knowledge gained across the curriculum and apply new rigor and exactitude to their studies. Through presentations, dictation, literature, and carefully planned

projects and lessons language is the means through which students gain understanding of the world around them. In math, students work in French on abstract and concrete problem solving, geometry, and organizing data. Art, music, English Language Arts, and physical education continue to play an important role as students weave the transdisciplinary nature of this educational setting.

In Cycle 3, the concepts learned in Cycle 2 are deepened and nurtured leading to full proficiency of the curriculum at the end of elementary school. In Cycle 3, students can listen, express themselves in front of others, and ask questions using specific vocabulary. There is an emphasis on dictation by memorizing and reciting short texts and poems.

<b>Curriculum in French</b>	<b>Curriculum in English</b>
Mathematics History and Geography Sciences Music (chorus, theory, history) Physical Education Visual Arts French (grammar, conjugation, spelling, literature...)	English Language Arts Music (instrumental lessons) US and Maine History Kindness Programme

## 6. Learning About Language

### Literacy

To solidify reading-acquisition skills, the two sound systems are kept separate. Reading is taught in French first. Building on the phonetics taught in kindergarten and the reading skills initiated in French, children begin formal English reading instruction in the second-grade year.

There are several English levels, including the non-Native ELL (English Language Learners), in each grade. The curriculum is adapted to best suit individual needs. Students are divided into small groups within the class based on their reading level, thereby creating an ideal and natural learning environment for reading skills to develop. For children who have no prior English language skills, we offer an ELL program, whereby students can enter EFDM and learn the

English language and follow the English curriculum as soon as possible according to individual progress.

### **Exploration of Written Language - Early Years Programme (Cycle 1)**

Children enter the world of reading and writing through four key areas: phonology, alphabetic principle, pre-writing skills, and writing. They learn to recognize elements of handwriting in the surrounding environment and practice tracing them while creating art.

### **Reading and Writing - Elementary Years Programme (Cycle 2&3)**

At this stage, the pre-writing “graphisme” activities that inspired their artwork in Cycle 1 now take on a new purpose – moving from practiced gestures to the writing of beautiful cursive letters. What were once lines, humps, loops, and zigzags are now deliberate and purposeful writing.

In first grade, students first learn to read in French. Building on students' graphic skills from Cycle 1, writing skills are taught in conjunction with our reading program. Writing, language skills, and oral expression are integrated as the basis of this Cycle. Areas of study reinforce one another, and class projects are often assigned to support the acquisition of these skills.

In Cycle 2, students begin to read and write in both languages, with skills progressively building in each subsequent grade. This learning cycle teaches children essential reading and writing skills through a phonics-based approach, and upon completing this cycle, children can communicate in both French and English. Reading strategies, skills, acquired knowledge, and new concepts transfer naturally from one language to another. Students enrich their vocabulary and sentence structure and start to apply simple grammatical rules.

In Cycle 3, reading and writing are integral components of all subjects, and students are honing their French and English skills. Students read age-appropriate and carefully selected literary texts. They learn to identify main elements, analyze details, and form and express opinions. Students engage in both creative writing and research-based, non-fictional writing. Students continue to improve their grammar skills, vocabulary, and spelling to enhance their oral, written, and literary comprehension. They learn to differentiate between types of sentences and identify word functions. Students pay special attention to word agreement, conjugating verbs correctly, and lexical spelling.

## **Library**

The library contains an increasing number of French and English books, periodicals as well as audio-visual equipment. Our library includes books suggested by the French Ministry of Education, the Maine Department of Education and the IB Organization. Students have the opportunity to visit the library each week and borrow books to read at home.

During inquiry, library materials are added to our individual classroom libraries and unit specific libraries. These classroom libraries provide a space for our students to conduct research independently or in group settings. Students are also encouraged to visit local libraries and discover the research tools in the greater learning community. EFDM often visits the Freeport Library to conduct research and dive deeper into inquiry.

Additionally, our school hosts a yearly event on World Book Day where we encourage members of our greater learning community to share with us their favorite stories, poems and other literary works in their mother tongue. These works are then incorporated into the School Library in order to continue to represent our entire community's language identity.

## **Academic Language Support**

*Student support 2.1: The school implements and reviews systems and processes to identify the needs of students. (0202-02-0100)*

*Student support 2.2: The school supports the identified needs of students, and evidences this support through planning, policy, and practice. (0202-02-0200)*

As an international school, we are conscious of the fact that each of our students has a unique language profile and background. Because of this, each year, students arrive in our learning community who have very different levels of exposure to each of our teaching languages. In order to support their learning language transition, we offer specialized tutoring in both French and English to students who have had less exposure or who may need additional support. We have trained specialists in FLE (Français Langue Étrangère) and ESL (English as a Second Language) who are available to take students aside for private or small group instruction in order to ensure that they are able to thrive as much as their peers. We are committed to providing this service and strongly believe that education should be available to all despite academic and language learning backgrounds.

EFDM offers academic support when a teacher sees that a student's progress in school is not continuing. We have an OrtonGillingham-trained reading specialist on staff who can provide individual reading support if necessary. The fees for this service are paid directly to the reading tutor.

When we have a concern and believe a child might require special services beyond what we can offer, we seek additional support. We hold meetings that may include the child's parents, his/her teachers, child development services, a child psychologist, members of the administration, a speech therapist, and anyone else working directly with the child. The team develops an action plan with strategies to support the student. If further academic psychosocial evaluation or therapy is necessary, a referral for outside services is made. Outside therapists and learning specialists who work with students are invited to these meetings.

## **7. The Language Learning Community**

### **Our Multilingual Learning Community**

We are very proud of our multilingual and multicultural learning community. Our school represents *a shared total of 5 mother tongues; the statistically largest group being English at 100%, French 19%, Ukrainian /Russian 3%, Swahili 1%, Armenian 1% and Greek 1%.*

Because of this, we are also conscious that we hold a key role in our community at large as a place of cultural and language exchange, and to foster international-mindedness in the heart of our greater community.

### **Field Trips**

As we step out of our school to conduct research during each unit of inquiry, students are thrown into multilingual environments by encountering our greater learning environment. These research opportunities provide essential experiences which allow students to engage with the greater learning community by taking part in activities and school trips, taking information they learned in their mother tongue and transferring that new knowledge in their language of learning.

### **Lifelong Learning Programme:**

#### **DELF/DALF**

The DELF (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française) exam designed by FEI (France Éducation International) is an official certificate awarded by the French Ministry of Education certifying a level of fluency in French. At EFDM, all non-native francophone fifth grade students take the A2 level of this exam prior to graduation. With a 100% success rate, this official assessment celebrates and rewards students for their progress made in French throughout their education.

To further and maintain their abilities, L'École Française du Maine offers advanced French classes for students who wish to maintain their French speaking, writing and comprehension abilities after completing their immersion education at school. We offer this class primarily to meet our former students' needs, to keep challenging them, and to help them reach a higher level of fluency in French. The goal of this after-school program is to provide an opportunity for our graduates and other members of the school community to converse in French on a regular basis and to keep up with written skills in a fun and challenging atmosphere.

These classes prepare our alumni and greater learning community for the DELF and DALF (Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française) exams. Such certifications are paramount for school records, as well as college and job applications, as most francophone universities and career opportunities require a DELF B2 level.

### **La Maison du Maine**

On our campus, we are thrilled to have La Maison Française du Maine, which is dedicated to promoting cultural exchange, educational activities, and lectures on francophone issues and French-American exchange. It is the foremost Francophone Cultural Centre in Maine and complements and enriches the programs offered by The French School of Maine, which is accredited by the French Ministry of Education, FEI (France Éducation International) the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the Maine Department of Education. The School is affiliated with MLF (Mission Laïque Française), AFSA (Association of French Schools in North America) and AEFÉ (Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger).

### **Adult Education Classes and Cultural Events at La Maison Française du Maine**

In order to make our learning community as inclusive as possible, we offer different options for adults interested in improving their speaking and writing skills in French. These Adult Educational Classes are open to families trying to keep up with their kids, or to other members of our community interested in cultural exchange and other educational activities such as movie nights, book clubs, game nights and wine tastings.

### **Café et Conversation**

As part of our continuous effort to communicate regularly with parents and our greater learning community, we offer regular meetings called Café et Conversation at La Maison Française du Maine and also online. These meetings are designed to educate our learning community in a welcoming and open environment. Topics of discussion include the mission and policies of our school, teacher interviews, presentations and explanations of class work, school wide projects, Units of Inquiry, French Ministry of Education and English Language Arts curriculum, along with the standards and practices of the IB Primary Years Programme.

## **8. Language Policy Revision**

In accordance with IB Standards and Practices, this Language Policy adheres to IB *Culture 6: The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews its IB- mandated policies to ensure they are cohesive and reflect IB philosophy.*

This policy was adapted and expanded from existing school language policies in August 2022. It is reviewed and reflected upon annually by administrative and teaching staff, along with the greater school community.

## **9. Bibliography**

*Learning and Teaching Primary Years Programme*, October 2018

*Programme Standards and Practices*, March 2018

*The Learning Community*, December 2018

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Making the PYP Happen - IB Professional Development Course, Cat. 1

[My IB Programme Resource Center](#)