

# Millbrook High School

## Language Policy

Millbrook High School's Language Policy is an opportunity to articulate what we do to promote language development and honor the native language of English Language Learners (ELLs).

### **Philosophical statement regarding language policy:**

Written and spoken language is the primary means of communication. It is also a gateway into understanding other peoples and cultures around the globe. This understanding is integral to achieving a level of collaboration, which can lead to peace across borders and cultures.

### **Understanding that all teachers are “language teachers:”**

All MHS teachers are language teachers. As teachers of specific content courses, regardless of the discipline or IB “group,” these courses have unique languages that reflect a fluency necessary for academic mastery of that subject. Teachers understand that one barrier to understanding the content is a lack of understanding of the language of the course. This proves particularly impacting to ELL students who might understand the language of the content in their native language but struggle with the language of the content when studying it in English. Thus it is incumbent on all of our teachers to pay close attention to language mastery of the course for all student with particular attention to ELL students.

### **Expectations for English proficiency:**

At Millbrook High School the primary language of instruction is English. It is critical to assist all students in their ability to develop a working knowledge of spoken and written English to minimize the barrier that language creates in the pursuit of knowledge across disciplines. Millbrook does not restrict access to the Diploma Programme based on levels of English proficiency. In fact, on more than one occasion students who started at Millbrook in grade 9 in the Middle Years Programme with no ability to speak English later joined and finished the Diploma Programme, some earning their IB diplomas and others not.

### **Expectations for study of second language:**

Second language study at Millbrook considers both groups of students, those whose mother tongue is English and those whose mother tongue is a language other than English.

For students for whom English is their mother tongue, Millbrook offers several options for second-language study. With choices including Spanish, French, Chinese and Latin, students have a number of options to match their interests. Several students come to Millbrook already having begun the study of a second language. Others begin their study of a second language in high school. It is expected that all students study a Language B in grade 9, or MYP Year 4 and that that same Language B will continue in MYP Year 5 (a few exceptions to this standard are made for Exceptional Students and students who are documented level 1 and 2 per state and federal requirements). This planning/schedule/implementation will give students the opportunity for four years of second-language study before leaving high school. Additionally, this plan of concurrent language learning will serve as a foundation for pursuing the Diploma Programme.

For students whose mother tongue is a language other than English, Millbrook has an identified program where students study English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The program explores the English language through vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics and culture. Students begin the program at the appropriate proficiency level, which is determined through a formal language assessment, and then follow the program (Intensive - Level IV) through completion. This gives students a more tailored opportunity to study the English language at Millbrook. Millbrook also offers students' whose native language is Spanish to take one or two years of Spanish for Native Speakers.

### **Support for development and maintenance of mother tongue:**

Millbrook's population is made up of native speakers of many languages from around the world. While it is critical to ensure that the language of instruction does not serve as a prolonged obstacle to learning, it is equally important to support the development, maintenance and fluency of the international students' mother tongues. Millbrook strives to achieve this end in a number of ways. The Language B department we offer a course designed specifically for native Spanish speakers, as they are the largest demographic. Millbrook has clubs and events that highlight and honor the native languages of our student population. These include the Hispanic Leaders of Tomorrow and our French and Spanish clubs, all of which are open to both native and non-native speakers. Students also have the opportunity to join the Spanish and French National Honor Societies. Finally, our annual International Festival and Hispanic Heritage Day are both school-wide opportunities for students to celebrate and showcase their native languages through music and cultural presentations.

### **How language will not be the barrier that keeps a student from access to educational opportunities (IB):**

Language acquisition assistance is available through formal instruction and informal support from qualified faculty with background and degrees in second language acquisition. Students

who are identified as needing assistance attend English language classes where the focus is on the language of social interaction, science, math, language arts and social studies while concurrently attending classes within the MYP and state curriculum. As they move through English language classes, they continue to receive language support from faculty as needed.

Personal Project can be assessed in mother tongue as long as we have the ability and resources to assess the project in that particular language of choice.

### **Language profile of the school (what does our language situation currently look like?)**

The primary language of Millbrook High School is English. Our population of students receiving ESOL services generally ranges between 2.5% – 3% of our student body. Beyond that we have one of the largest ELL (English Language Learners) populations in the county, therefore Millbrook offers direct language instruction or consultative support to over 150 students. As such a number of languages are spoken at Millbrook as first languages for students. The most prevalent of these is Spanish, followed by French and Vietnamese. Other mother tongue languages spoken at Millbrook include: Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, Arabic, Lingala (spoken in the DRC), and Tagalog.

### **How will language policy relate to MYP learners (Language A and Language B) and the DP (Language A, Language B, Ab Initio)**

The IB's Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP) promotes the attention to language learning at Millbrook High School. It is a stated expectation that all students in 9th grade, i.e. MYP year 4, will begin, or in some cases continue, the study of a second language. While not all students will continue from the MYP to the DP, all students have the opportunity to continue their study of language acquisition through four or five levels, with the goal of linguistic and cultural fluency.

Millbrook's Language B program provides opportunities for all students beyond the first two years of study through the Diploma Programme. Millbrook's DP will deepen opportunities for students with an emphasis on learning for cultural fluency. The Language B program at the Diploma level emphasizes communication in multiple cultural contexts, thus allowing students to learn language specifically for the goal of global communication and cultural understanding.

Students who continue in the Diploma Programme will continue to study their MYP languages of choice. Appropriate preparation for DP SL exams requires a minimum of four years of study and HL exam preparation requires a minimum of five years of study. DP students will be required to continue their study of the target language through their senior year unless a) their

schedule prohibits the ability to continue the study of the target language and b) they will have completed a minimum of four years of study prior of the start of their senior year.

Students who are not able to study their target language for a full four years will have the opportunity take the DP exam in the target language at the ab initio level, assuming they are able to take a minimum of three levels of study through their senior year.

Students who join the Diploma Programme already fluent in a language other than English are given the opportunity to study that language as a literature course in the IB Self-taught Language A category. If these students are currently studying a third language offered by Millbrook in the language acquisition department, they are encouraged to continue and to possibly test in that language.

### **How will the language policy be communicated?**

Millbrook High School's Language Policy is published internally on our school's Canvas system accessible by all Millbrook faculty. The policy is also published on the IB section of our school's website, thus accessible to all IB stakeholders in the Millbrook community.