



## **KEYSTONE ACADEMY LANGUAGE POLICY**

*“Language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge...”*

Michael Halliday: Towards a Language-based Theory of Learning, 1993

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## Keystone Academy Mission Statement

Keystone Academy is a new model of education in China. It blends distinctive traditions in Eastern, Western, and International education, creating a new world school that is academically outstanding. At Keystone, we embrace a world that is dynamic and ever-changing. We learn from and we learn for this enterprising, global community.

Our keystones are:

- Bilingual immersion in Chinese and English;
- Building character and community in a residential setting;
- Promoting Chinese culture and identity in a world context.

Our students are hungry for opportunity, bold in their thinking, and creative in their instincts. They are encouraged to become expansive in their dreaming, determined in their actions, collaborative in their teamwork, and humble in their achievement. They learn to be stewards of the environment and to be at ease with otherness.

Our teachers are passionate about learning, rigorous in their standards, and inspirational in their methods. They are respectful listeners, attentive caregivers, interrogative thinkers, compassionate mentors, and world-minded citizens.

Our graduates will possess the intellectual, cultural, and ecological fluency to navigate gracefully in any university, any city, and any profession of their choosing. They will know how to apply their emotional intelligence, character, and zest for learning to help develop and improve the communities in which they live.

Our ambition is to share successes generously and to learn from failures bravely, to open our doors to many, and to engage fully with the world of education, and the world at large, beyond our gates.

## Introduction

Keystone Academy offers a Chinese and English language immersion program. We aim to graduate students who are academically proficient in both Chinese and English. As such, they will speak, read and write in both languages at a level comparable to peers in single-language programs, and, as our mission statement affirms, develop the cross cultural competence necessary to navigate fluently in China and around the world.

The commitment to bilingual immersion asserted in the mission statement demonstrates the belief at Keystone that the ability to communicate in more than

one language, in a variety of contexts and using varied modes of expression, is a necessity for global citizens.

The purpose of this document is to inform teaching and learning in the classroom, to guide curriculum and to engage families in our goal to educate children in an internationally-minded environment. This document outlines the vision for language instruction at Keystone Academy and demonstrates how Keystone supports students' acquisition of Chinese and English. Similar support will be provided for other languages offered in the future.

## **Philosophy**

At Keystone, we believe dual language acquisition is fundamental to the school's vision. Our program is designed to allow our students to achieve an advanced level of fluency and grade-level academic proficiency in Chinese and English, as well as an understanding and appreciation for cultures in which Chinese and English are spoken.

Language is a tool for making and communicating meaning, and for making sense of the world around us. Learning, thinking and communicating in a language requires learning about culture and actively engaging with others in that language. The most supportive learning environment is one in which learning language, social interaction and cultural understanding operate together in an authentic and relevant context.

We believe in the idea of inclusivity in culture and language, including the importance of providing mother tongue support and multicultural validation across the curriculum. As a dual-language immersion school, we promote cross-cultural and multilingual integration in our approach to language teaching and learning.

Because language connects to all areas of our community and our curriculum, all Keystone teachers are considered teachers of language and are responsible for language learning. As such all teachers are required to consider the potential role of language in cultivating intercultural awareness and international-mindedness, and subscribe to supporting a pedagogical approach to language learning which is:

- open and inclusive
- affirms each learner's identity and autonomy
- promotes critical thinking.

*(IB Lang and Learning 4)*

To this end, all teachers are trained in language acquisition strategies and best practices of dual language immersion education, including:

- developing programs that promote the teaching and learning of language skills, including reading, writing, speaking and listening, to native and near native levels of both Chinese and English

- establishing and promoting elements of discovery and inquiry-based learning models
- promoting the interdisciplinary nature of language through collaboration across grade levels and content area
- intentionally integrating the teaching and learning of language into core curricular goals
- developing literacy skills that are integrated with media literacy
- providing learning opportunities for mother tongue support within the core curricular objectives
- embracing school standards and research-based practices of instruction in all classes
- providing meaningful co-curricular and experiential learning opportunities in Chinese and English.

### **Language Profile**

As a Chinese school, the majority of our students are native speakers of Putonghua. A small group of students are native speakers of English. Our goal is to have approximately one quarter of our students as native speakers of English in order to advance the goals of our linguistic and cultural immersion model.

The Heads of Department of Language and Literature and Language Acquisition work closely with the Admissions Department to build up and maintain the language profiles of all students, in the following ways:

- Meeting with parents during initial visits of the school
- Contact by email prior to the start
- Inviting parents to complete a home language survey
- Assessing (formally and informally) the new student within their first few weeks of schooling
- On-going consultation with teachers
- Previous school reports
- Keeping centralised records of students' language profiles

### **Student Placement**

The Heads of Department of Language and Literature and Language Acquisition work closely with the Admissions Department to place new students in language classes. Such placement takes into account:

- Assessment performance in the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, which all new students are required to take
- Language profile information
- Internal assessment instruments as determined by the Language and Literature and Language Acquisition departments
- Previous school reports
- Additional discussion with parents and students

## **Support for Mother Tongue Languages**

The International Baccalaureate program defines “mother tongue” as the language learned first, the language identified as ‘native’ speaker, the language known best and the language used most. When used in this document, the phrase includes all those meanings. Keystone Academy recognizes that a strong level of knowledge and understanding in the students’ mother tongue and culture is vital to the students’ development of an additional language. The majority of students at Keystone have Chinese or English as their mother tongue.

Most school communications such as newsletters, the School website, and other publications are provided in Chinese and English. Reports of student learning are communicated in the language of instruction. Many of the staff are bilingual and can assist parents with translation on occasion. Most parent meetings as well as staff meetings are conducted in both languages, and we seek native speakers of other languages in our community as needed to facilitate clear communication.

Academy libraries include materials to support continued use of Chinese and English as well as other mother tongues represented in the school community. In cases where a student’s mother tongue is neither Chinese nor English, we help find resources to support the continued growth and development of their mother tongue.

## **Support for students not proficient in the language of instruction**

Chinese (Putonghua) and English are Keystone’s languages of instruction. Language instruction is aligned with AERO (American Education Reaches Out), Chinese national and Keystone Academy standards and benchmarks. Other languages follow the World Language Standards.

Keystone Academy supports all students in language acquisition in the following ways:

- Reading and writing strategies across the curriculum
- Selecting and providing access to literature from a variety of cultural backgrounds from all over the world
- Providing multiple opportunities at all levels of instruction for students to write in a variety of genres
- Allowing students ample choice in their reading materials and encouraging reading for enjoyment
- Providing differentiated instruction for students of different language abilities, and students with special needs, including students with learning disabilities as well as students who are academically talented and gifted
- Assessing students formally and informally in the classroom using check-ins, writing prompts, reading comprehension checks and reading skills assessments, speeches and essays

- Participating in an annual international assessment in reading, writing and mathematics.

For students who are not yet proficient in the language of instruction, we use the following strategies to help them access their learning and develop their language skills:

- “Sheltered instruction” in all classes to facilitate acquisition of vocabulary and concepts. For example, providing visual cues, collaborative learning experiences and consistent assessment of prior knowledge
- Language support opportunities through elective classes and co-curricular programs
- Language assistance as needed in order to access all school support services such as gifted, special needs, ESL/CSL etc.
- Teacher aids
- Use of Learning Assistants and Language Support teachers

***Other pedagogical approaches – cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)***

Teachers at Keystone seek to use of the ‘framework for the development of a cognitive academic language proficiency’ in order to promote literacy and thinking skills in students in the target language. This approach addresses the four elements of “the language and learning cycle of good practice”:

- Affirming identity
- Activating and building background knowledge
- Scaffolding learning
- Extending language

*(IB Developing academic literacy 1)*

In this, teachers seek to:

- explicitly value and recognize students’ skills and knowledge in all their languages as resources for exploring new ways of thinking and knowing (affirming identity)
- activate students’ previous background knowledge, either in the target or a non-target language as indicated
- activate current CALP in the target language
- build up any background CALP to a stage that allows for the planned new learning to take place. (Activating and building up background knowledge)
- scaffold as needed to facilitate new comprehensible input, the processing of this, and comprehensible expression of new learning (scaffolding)
- facilitate independent demonstration and application of new CALP in novel and varied situations (Extending language proficiency)

*(IB Developing academic literacy 2-3)*

In using the framework, teachers will:

- plan activities that maximize learning of academic literacy
- differentiate activities for diverse learners
- check that all literacy skills are practised sufficiently
- collaborate with literacy specialists and other teachers.

*(IB DP Principles into practice 28)*

### **Co-Curricular Opportunities in Language and Culture**

Keystone has a variety of opportunities that enrich experiences in Chinese and English with the aim of developing first and second language competencies. The Keystone Activities Program (KAP), school clubs, personal and community projects and experiential trips provide opportunities for increasing language development, social interaction, cultural awareness and international-mindedness.

### **Primary School Program: Foundation Year (FY) to Grade 5**

Language learning in the Primary School takes place in authentic contexts and is dynamic, challenging and relevant. Through the integrated IPC units and conceptual learning, students are encouraged to construct linguistic meaning using a range of strategies, make connections across content and make ongoing cultural discoveries. Through a literature-rich environment with numerous experiences in language learning the curriculum builds on students' prior knowledge and understanding.

### **Language and Curriculum by Grade**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Language Emphasis</b>		<b>Curriculum</b>
	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>English</b>	
<b>FY through 1</b>	70%	30%	Literacy (US Series), IPC, Chinese national and Keystone developed
<b>2 through 5</b>	50%	50%	

*Note: Percentages presented above are approximations.*

Language learning is continually supported by daily instruction in Chinese and English in all content areas. Keystone Academy will use Chinese and English Language Arts standards, an integrated reading series from the United States and the Chinese national curriculum.

Language instruction is tied to the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), with students learning vocabulary and academic concepts connected to their current integrated IPC unit.

Heads of Department support classroom teachers, helping them apply effective second language acquisition strategies and methods. This is especially important as teachers work with students who are English as Additional Language (EAL) learners, English Language Learners (ELLs) or Chinese Language Learners (CLLs). Methods include:

- assessing individual students through both standardized and informal language assessments in consultation with mainstream classroom teachers
- providing in-class support to students through co-teaching and collaborative planning of curricular content and instruction
- providing both push-in and pull-out support to ELLs/CLLs, according to individual needs, through one-on-one and small group inputs, in and out of the classroom
- promoting the integration of language into the curricular goals and objectives across the curriculum and grade levels
- offering professional development learning opportunities to teachers in language acquisition strategies.

### **Middle School Program (Grades 6-10 )**

The nature of a dual language immersion program is the use of both languages as a medium of instruction. As students enter the Middle School program, they will transition into a higher percentage of English instruction than they experienced in the Primary School. Through language, students are able to access knowledge and see it as an interrelated whole. We encourage students to make links within and across discipline areas. As students mature and gain a greater awareness of themselves and the world in which they live, their language development is supported through an increasingly sophisticated engagement and appreciation of world literature.

### **Language and Curriculum by Grade**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Language Emphasis</b>		<b>Curriculum</b>
	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>English</b>	
<b>6 to 10</b>	30%	70%	Keystone developed based on MYP framework

*Note: Percentages presented above are approximations.*

Language teaching in the Middle School and in the later years at Keystone builds upon the competency and fluency of the primary immersion program with rich language experiences of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and presenting through a range of media and information technologies. Clarity and accuracy of language as well as confidence of self-expression continue to be fostered through the program. Reflective practices are modeled and encouraged. In all discipline areas, communication is both an objective and part of assessment



criteria, and plays a significant role in facilitating understanding and student self-reflection.

The performance of students through the Language and Literature and Language Acquisition courses is regularly monitored to ensure that courses have appropriate rigor to develop students' language skills, and to ensure that individual learning styles and paces are factored into the program. This process of monitoring is also used in recommending further language courses at the conclusion of Middle School.

Students who enter the Middle School are placed in either Language and Literature or one of six phases of Language Acquisition courses. Language placement will be determined by student proficiency and performance observed through a battery of assessments. The middle school provides additional support (in and out of class) for students in phases 1-3. Student placements are reconsidered and adjusted as needed during the school year.

### **Home and School Partnership**

In support of students language acquisition, all Keystone Academy teachers, staff, parents and students will work to:

- Enable students to learn and use language confidently in a variety of contexts and become bilingual and biliterate in Chinese and English
- Increase students' ability in written and oral communication through intentional assessment
- Promote student understanding and enjoyment of literature
- Allow students to explore different perspectives through language
- Encourage students to have fun and express themselves through language.

### **Language courses offered in Middle School**

#### ***Language and Literature***

All students in Middle School must take two language courses, which will usually be in Language and Literature, and Language Acquisition, respectively.

The Language and Literature courses are for native or near-native proficiency in the language, and are typically taken by students for whom the language is their mother-tongue. As the overwhelming majority of students have Chinese Putonghua or English as their mother tongue languages, Chinese and English are the mainstream Language and Literature courses offered to students at Keystone Academy, and all of the students in the Middle Years take one or other of those courses.

Where students possess sufficient proficiency in both languages, they may adopt from the start the bilingual approach of taking two Language and Literature courses in two different languages, instead of one Language and Literature and one Language Acquisition course.

#### ***Language Acquisition***

Language Acquisition, as its name suggests, is aimed at students acquiring a language which is not their mother-tongue language, at increasing levels of proficiency, from a possible starting point of their having no prior knowledge of the language at all. Students then move through classes organized in ‘Phases’, which reflect different levels of proficiency in the language. There are six language acquisition phases, with Phase 1 being aimed at complete beginners, and Phases 5 and 6 representing levels of proficiency at which students may consider moving into a Language and Literature class for that language. Once they do so, however, it should be noted that initial levels of achievement, which would have been relatively high in the Language Acquisition class, are likely to be average in the Language and Literature class, where assessments are aimed at and based on much higher levels of language proficiency.

MYP Language Acquisition courses at Keystone are offered in English and Mandarin Chinese.

Scope exists throughout the Middle School years for students taking either English or Chinese as a Language Acquisition course to be assessed for readiness to transfer to the corresponding Language and Literature course, where progress and proficiency in the language indicate that any such students could be successful in the latter course, and that it would represent a more appropriate challenge at that stage. For such a transfer to be considered, students must reach Level 5 proficiency in the Language Acquisition course.

**Diploma Program (Grades 11-12)**

Students at Keystone Academy will take most Diploma examinations in English, as one of the official languages of the International Baccalaureate (English, French, and Spanish) in which examinations are available. In view of this, and in consequence of the overall language immersion practices at the School, which see students gradually transitioning to an increasing use of English as the language of instruction over the Middle Years, English will largely be the language of instruction used in Diploma courses. This will accord with the fact that, as noted in the *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice* guide, ‘Many DP students complete their Diploma in a language that is not their best language for academic work.’ (27)

Some exceptions in the language of instruction may be made, as student interests may indicate, in Theory of Knowledge, for instance, where final written and presentation assessments may also be taken in Chinese. This may also form the language of instruction, whether momentarily or for a longer time, where it is felt that more effective learning may result, and that this approach will better address ‘the language needs of their students who are studying DP subjects in a language other than the mother tongue’ (*IB DP FPiP 27*).

**Language and Curriculum by Grade**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Language Emphasis</b>		<b>Curriculum</b>
	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>English</b>	IB Diploma courses

<b>11 &amp; 12</b>	20-30% (largely Group 1 language courses, and TOK).	70-80%	
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*Note: Percentages presented above are approximations.*

Multiple opportunities will once more be available to students to continue building upon the competency and fluency of their previous language learning, though rich language experiences of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and presenting through a range of media and information technologies, across all of their Diploma courses. Clarity and accuracy of language as well as confidence of self-expression will continue to be fostered through the program; while reflective practices form a substantial element in a number of areas of the IB Diploma, including Creativity, Activity and Service. Communication will be a prime focus in all discipline areas, not least due to the varied demands made in this regard by all Diploma assessments. Meanwhile students will again see their language development being supported through an increasingly sophisticated engagement and appreciation of world literature, as contained in the mandatory Group 1 Language A courses in the Diploma.

***Group 1 courses: Language A: Literature / Language A: Language and Literature***

All students taking part in the Diploma Programme must take at least one course from Group 1, which includes Language A: Literature and Language A: Language and Literature courses designed primarily for mother tongue speakers. Keystone offers both courses for both Mandarin Chinese, and English.

As Chinese mother tongue speakers, most students at Keystone Academy will take either Chinese A: Literature, or Chinese A: Language and Literature.

Students who have English as their mother tongue will choose from English A: Literature, or English A: Language and Literature, both of which are also offered in the school.

Students with sufficient proficiency in both languages may take both a Chinese and an English Language A course, which would bestow eligibility for a Bilingual Diploma. In such cases the second course is taken in place of a Group 2 Language Acquisition course.

Where students may have a different mother tongue language, the possibility of embarking on a self-taught Language A: Literature course in the language can be explored. The feasibility and advisability of this will take into account the availability of a particular language for this, the suitability of Literature as the only option for the self-taught pathway, the status of the self-taught Group 1 Language A: Literature pathway only as a Standard Level course, and consideration of prognoses for success in other possible alternative Group 1 courses.

***Group 2 courses: Language Acquisition***

Unless students take two Group 1 Language A courses, all students must take a Language Acquisition course, at Higher Level or Standard Level for languages they

have studied previously, or at *ab initio* level where they are beginning the language for the first time.

Keystone Academy offers Language Acquisition courses as follows:

- English B – Higher Level
- English B – Standard Level
- Mandarin Chinese B – Higher Level
- Mandarin Chinese B – Standard Level
- Mandarin Chinese *ab initio* (Standard Level only) – for students entering Keystone for the first time in Grade 11 with no previous experience of the language.
- Spanish *ab initio* (Standard Level only). Studied online through Pamoja.
- French *ab initio* (Standard Level only). Studied online through Pamoja.

The suggested pathways into DP language courses from where students end their MYP language acquisition studies are as follows:

	<b>MYP</b>	<b>DP</b>
Phase 1	Or where the student has not studied the language in MYP and is starting it new in DP.	<i>ab initio</i>
Phase 2		<i>ab initio</i> (in rare cases) Language B SL
Phase 3		Language B SL / HL
Phase 4		Language B SL / HL
Phase 5	It is recommended the student has at least one semester in MYP language and literature before starting these DP courses.	Language A: Literature SL Language A: language and literature SL
Phase 6	It is recommended the student has at least one semester in MYP language and literature before starting these DP courses.	Language A: Literature SL / HL Language A: language and literature SL / HL

**Group 3 to group 6 subjects**

The language of instruction will mainly be English, which will not be the first language of many of the students. Emphasis will thus be placed by both students and teachers on developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and promoting familiarity with subject specific language and technical terminology.

Students will also be allowed, where needed, and in accordance with IB guidelines, make use of a translating dictionary for various purposes.

**Extended Essay**

Students will be made aware that ‘Extended essays in a group 1 or group 2 language subject must be written in the chosen language’, allowing for extended

essays in group 1 and 2 subjects to be written in Chinese if wished, in addition to the official languages of the IB, which include English.

### ***Theory of Knowledge***

Students will be made aware that Chinese is one of the response languages available to theory of knowledge candidates; along with the requirement that both the presentation and essay must be completed in the target response language. Keystone's hiring, planning, and professional development practices will be designed to take into account the language needs of students in TOK.

Given the demographic makeup of our student body, ToK will be offered in Chinese for the first couple of years.

### **Communicating the Language Policy**

Keystone Academy makes this Language Policy available to all stakeholders in the following ways:

- ensuring it is translated into both English and Chinese
- posting versions in both languages on the school website
- ensuring all staff have an opportunity to provide input as part of the process of annual review
- using it as a tool in new staff induction
- making copies available to parents upon request
- discussing its contents with parents at information sessions, coffee mornings
- discussing its contents as relevant with students in assemblies etc

### **Ongoing Review of the Language Policy**

Keystone Academy's Curriculum Committee formally reviews this policy on a regular basis — to adapt current practices and the needs of our learning community. A report from the committee will be given to the School Leadership Team (SLT) annually.

This policy is available to all participants in the Keystone Learning Community, and the school leadership welcomes comments and recommendations.

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