



Tohoku International School

Language Policy

Philosophy

We greatly value the ability to speak multiple languages and encourage students to acquire additional language skills. We endeavor to equip students with skills that can be used across languages and cultures.

At TIS English is the language of inclusion – the language cross culturally. The ability to use English well permeates all aspects of learning and life and is a necessary life skill in the 21st Century.

English is the medium of instruction at TIS. The ability to acquire and use academic English is an important and necessary life skill for our students. Successful learners will become confident, competent and fluent, demonstrating a high level of communication skills in both academic and social settings. Acquisition of these skills provides access to the international community and an array of opportunities for each student.

Underlying Principles

Tohoku International School believes that:

- All students need to acquire and maintain a strong foundation in what they consider to be their first language
- The ability to use more than one language has both educational and social benefits
- Command of English is the key to effective global communication
- Every attempt will be made to allow all students to learn, regardless of their English language proficiency
- All students at TIS should learn the language of our host country
- All teachers and assistants are role models of language.

Tohoku International School is committed to:

- Maintaining high quality, enriching instruction in English
- Encouraging all students to maintain their first, and additional language(s)
- Providing support for students who enter with limited English language skills
- Elevating language learning through all subject areas
- Providing the opportunity for all students to study the language and culture of Japan

TIS Language Profile

The School

The language of instruction throughout the school is English. English is the language used in school publications, on the website, on signage, in communication between school and parents and between members of staff. Some portions of the website and some publications are translated into Japanese.

TIS is the only international school in the Tohoku region which offers a Kindergarten through Grade 12 education in English. Many families choose the school for this reason. As all students speak or are learning English, it is our language of inclusion. In light of this, the school values students' mother tongues and permits their use in order for students to access learning. In general, English is expected in the classrooms and is encouraged in social settings in order to promote inclusion.

All full-time teachers are fluent in English. Japanese teachers are expected to be able to communicate with other members of staff in English. The office staff is proficient in both Japanese and English.

Parents

TIS recognizes that not all parents speak or understand English. In some families, neither parent can speak English. Some families are native English speakers or have learned English as an additional language.

For certain important school events, PTA meetings, and Parent-Teacher Conferences, Japanese translation is provided by the school when necessary.

Students

TIS accepts students at all grade levels, at all times of the school year, with varying levels of English in accordance with our [Admissions Policy](#). Upon entrance, their academic level and level of English proficiency are assessed by the EAL coordinator. Support is given to those in need at either an Intensive, Intermediate, or Monitored level. These levels incur an additional tuition fee.

Differentiation by Level of English Language Proficiency

Intensive level of support:

- Modification of the classroom program
- Modification of grade-level expectations
- Support within the regular classroom
- Pull-out classes

Intermediate level of support:

- Support within the regular classroom by a combination of the following: EAL Teacher, teaching assistants, classroom teacher
- Modification of classroom program if appropriate
- Modification of grade-level expectations if appropriate
- Pull-out classes as appropriate

Monitored level of support:

- Full inclusion within the regular classroom
 - No modification of program or expectations
 - Monitored within the classroom to ensure academic potential is being reached
- *This level is a safeguard to ensure students continue to develop their skills

Students' Language Proficiency is reviewed at the end of each semester by the EAL Coordinator in consultation with the classroom teacher. Determinations are based on how the child is functioning in the classroom environment and not on any one test or assessment. Students are evaluated using a 12-point proficiency scale which has been developed by the school. The EAL Teacher works closely with other teachers in classrooms on a daily basis.

Language Teaching

- TIS believes that development of language is best done through a balance of learning language, learning through language and learning about language
- The language of instruction for all subjects is English, with the exception of Japanese class
- All teachers are language teachers, and are qualified and experienced
- The school employs EAL teachers and assistants in order to meet the needs of our students
- The school encourages in-class support, yet provides varying levels of intensive language instruction for students in need
- Staff development of English language instruction is provided on an ongoing basis by our EAL department

Japanese and Additional Language Teaching

- Almost all students participate in Japanese language classes (Some students may choose an alternative language for the Diploma Programme)
- At the Secondary level, additional languages are offered online, on a case-by-case basis, at the request of families
- Japanese classes focus on oral language as well as reading and writing at all grade levels. Students may need additional home or external support to maintain their academic Japanese
- The school employs Japanese teachers and assistants to meet the needs of Elementary and Secondary instruction

Schoolwide Practices

- Student use of English is promoted within the school to foster inclusion, however when appropriate students are also encouraged to communicate in multiple languages.
- All new students are assessed to determine a baseline level of English.
- All classes at the school are multi-aged, combining two grade levels unless overall student numbers warrant a separate class to be formed.
- TIS offers Japanese as a Native Language as well as Japanese as an Additional Language. Class placement is determined by the Japanese language teachers. Classes for DP candidates are described below in “DP Practices”.
- The library houses predominantly English books, however there is a section for non-English books. The Japanese classrooms have a collection of Japanese texts.
- When necessary and feasible, translation services are provided for parents who require support.
- In recruiting full-time teachers, preference is given to those with international school teaching experience and who have taught EAL students.
- All staff are expected to be able to communicate in English.
- Performances often include songs that include various languages, beyond English and Japanese.

PYP Practices

- Language will be taught in an authentic learning environment. Language skills will be taught through explicit teaching and modeling. They will also be acquired implicitly through play and planned activities incorporated into the programme of inquiry.
- Language will be taught holistically, and development of the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy will be incorporated into the language learning programme.
- The ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) English curriculum was chosen to set specific learning objectives for each grade level because it is a continuum from Kindergarten through to Grade 10. The ACARA English curriculum also has a holistic approach and incorporates language development of input skills (Listening and Writing) and output skills (Speaking and Writing) throughout its three interrelated strands, which are Language, Literature, and Literacy.
- Each Unit of Inquiry has at least one focus text genre. Some examples include Biography, Autobiography, Persuasive, Poetry, Informational, Narrative, Opinion Essay, Procedural, and Letter. Students will read these text genres to learn about them, and practice writing these types of texts to improve their writing skills in an authentic context.

- Language will be taught by all teachers, not just the homeroom teachers. Students will enrich their vocabulary and build their language skills in specialist classes (Art, Music, P.E. and Japanese) as well.

DP Practices

- Most DP candidates will take Japanese B as their Group 2 class with the following exceptions:
 - Students may take ab initio classes through Pamoja.com in lieu of the Group 2 Japanese language A mainstream class.
 - Students wishing to take a Group 1 class in a mother tongue (SSST) will be accommodated in lieu of the Group 2 Japanese language A mainstream class.

Acknowledgements

- Canadian Academy Language Policy (2014), Canadian Academy Japan
- Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy (April 2008), International Baccalaureate
- Hiroshima International School (January 2015), Hiroshima International School
- IB PYP Language scope and sequence (2009)

Review:

This document was reviewed in September/October 2020 by Chris Vassbotn and in January 2021 by Elementary Team.

This document is to be reviewed yearly in August, during our school development days, by the whole staff.