

Language Policy Statement Gymnasium Bäumlhof

1. General remarks and pedagogical considerations

At the Gymnasium Bäumlhof we aim to enable students to foster and develop their mother tongue whilst also improving and solidifying their second and third language-capabilities in order for them to gain a sense of identity as a world citizen. Through this process we hope to cultivate a sense of respect and deepen the understanding for their own and other cultures and peoples.

At our school we emphasize that language is fundamental to all types of learning as it not only figures as a building block in all subjects but also forms the basis of human communication. Acquiring language is a process and proficiency in a language helps students gain competencies in other areas of their education. Language learning is essential for academic and cognitive growth as well as increasing knowledge. As a consequence of this, every teacher at our school is trained to pay attention to and nurture various aspects of language, e.g. awareness and respect for linguistic differences in the class community with regards to correctness and individual communicational skills.

We live in a highly globalised city. Basel is a melting pot of many cultures and languages and therefore we feel it is our responsibility to deal with these topics at our school, especially as many of our classes contain students from a vast array of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

We hold the view that language is an expression of one's own culture and we therefore believe that it is essential in developing one's own identity. Developing German as a mother-tongue or as a target language is therefore a crucial aspect of maintaining and building students' own cultural identity. We strive to create an atmosphere where students from different cultures and with differing linguistic backgrounds are respected and included whilst creating a stimulating learning environment.

We believe that by learning foreign languages students can gain different perspectives on how language works in different cultures. We therefore recognise that language learning also helps nurture international-mindedness amongst students.

We believe that all teachers at our school are language teachers and are thus required not only to be sensitive to the language needs of the individual students but also to find solutions to these needs.

By supporting students in becoming proficient both in their mother tongues as in two foreign languages, we formulate the following aims:

Our students are able to...

...learn and analyse language effectively, appropriately, accurately, and confidently.

...communicate proficiently and correctly both orally and in written form.

...adapt their written and spoken language skills to different contexts.

...appreciate, understand and analyse literature.

...recognise that language is a vessel through which we can understand the differing perspectives of people from other cultures.

...reflect on their language use in order to improve and adapt it.

...enjoy using language in an engaging and creative way.

2. The language of instruction for the IB Diploma Programme at the Gymnasium Bäumlihof

In our IB Diploma Programme classes, about 2/3 are native speakers of German. As we are also a Swiss state school, it is compulsory for all our students to take the final Swiss Matura exams, most of which will be in German. This is for some a challenge, and the school has a course (Training Deutsch) where the non-native students with insufficient language knowledge can improve their German.

Although using English as the main language of learning and instruction is a new experience for many students, we are confident that so far they have the necessary skills to do so. We also use our pre-IB year (grade 12) to immerse our students slowly and steadily into using English as the main language in their IB subjects.

We wish to cultivate the speaking of English in the classroom as much as possible. All lessons in the subjects Biology, Maths, History and English are taught in English. We expect teachers in these subjects to also use English when explaining things individually both in the classroom and during the students' individual learning time (= InL).

All teachers within the IB Diploma Programme are required to speak English fluently except German A and French B teachers.

3. Language choices in the IB Diploma Programme

Under the existing national regulations, students at the Gymnasium Bäumlihof are required to take the following languages during their whole school time:

German, French, English.

In addition to these mandatory languages, students are able to choose one major subject, which can be either Spanish or Italian. Students also have the opportunity to choose optional subjects in their free time, some of which are languages (Latin, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic).

As these regulations are non-negotiable we have predetermined Diploma Programme students' language choices. Due to fact that students are expected to attain the status of C2 (according to the *European Language Portfolio*) in German by the time they take their final exams, we have chosen German as our Language A, Diploma Programme students will have a breadth of experience in both French (7.5 years) and English (5.5 years) which has led us to choose these two languages as foreign languages in the IB Diploma Programme.

Language A is German (Group 1).

Languages B are English (Group 2) and French (Group 6)

As we expect our students to have a keen interest in improving their English language skills, we offer this subject as a Higher Level subject. Due to the fact that we cannot offer our Group 3, 4 and 5 subjects at HL due to time constraints and also due to the fact that students have a large wealth of experience in French, we also offer this subject at Higher Level.

4. Time allotment

Our IB Diploma Programme runs for a total of 2.5 school years, resulting in the following average weekly lesson dotage:

	German A	English B	French B
Grade 10	3	3	3
Grade 11	2.5	2	2
Grade 12	4.5	3	3
Total	10	8	8

5. Professional Development

Our Language A and B teachers should keep abreast with the latest developments in language teaching and regularly check the IBO resources for updates.

Language teachers work collaboratively, share practices, ideas and material and regularly review the standards and expectations for their courses. They are scheduled to meet on a regular basis within their subject groups throughout the school year.

Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to continue in their language development and to attend language courses and professional development workshops.

6. Admissions policy

After registering for the IB Diploma Programme, the applicants are interviewed by the IB Coordinator. Generally, we feel the IB Diploma Programme should be open for highly motivated students who are willing to tackle the challenge of obtaining both the Swiss Matura and the IB Diploma. The topic of language proficiency is talked about during this interview and the Coordinator will give the student an overview of the language requirements in the IB Diploma Programme.

The Diploma Programme Coordinator voices any concerns he/she has regarding the suitability of candidates in the IB Diploma Programme to the principal of the school who reviews the situation along with the students in question, perhaps even including their parents and their current teachers.

We do not require students to take any form of entrance exam. For further details to the schools general and IB specific admission policy, see *Admissions policy for the IB Diploma Programme at the Gymnasium Bäumlhof*

7. Support services

At our school we have many different opportunities to support our students' endeavours in foreign languages. These are:

a) *Library and media centre*: our library and media centre are equipped with computers (including Internet access) and many foreign language books and other media resources.

b) *Laptops with internet connection / Wi Fi*: We believe that modern language instruction has to be sensitive to modern technological advancements. This is why students bring their own laptops to use in class.

c) *“Individual Learning Time”*: All of our IB DP students have what is called “InL”. This consists of around 15-20 lessons of supervised learning time each week where students can ask various language teachers for support.

d) *Stützkurs/ Training Deutsch*: We offer a course taught by German teachers for students of any grade to improve their German skills, if they do not have German as their mother tongue.

e) *Stützkurs/ Training Französisch*: We offer a course taught by French teachers for students of any grade to improve their language skills if they have knowledge gaps.

d) *Nachführunterricht*: For students from abroad with high deficits in German and French compared to Swiss students, the school organizes external tuition. For more information please read the *Special Educational Needs Policy*.

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