Language Policy

Escola Beit Yaacov

April, 2025

SUMMARY

Beit Yaacov **- Language Policy**

How to use this policy

This language policy serves as a guide for all members of the Escola Beit Yaacov school community, including students, teachers, administration, and parents. It articulates the principles and practices that underpin language teaching and learning at the school, aligned with the International Baccalaureate (IB) philosophy. By understanding and applying this policy, the school community can work together to promote multilingualism, intercultural awareness, and the development of international-mindedness. This policy should be used as a living document, being consulted to guide pedagogical decisions, curriculum planning, and communication with parents and the community.

1. Purpose

At Escola Beit Yaacov, language is central to all learning. It is through language that students construct meaning, express ideas, develop thinking, and engage with others and the world around them. Guided by the school's mission, language plays a vital role in connecting local and global values. It enables learners to explore their heritage, express their Jewish identity, and engage respectfully with diverse cultures and perspectives.

As an IB World School, Escola Beit Yaacov recognizes that language is more than a tool for communication; it is a key component of identity, culture, and belonging. Aligned with the IB Mission and the attributes of the Learner Profile, multilingualism is viewed as essential to the development of

international-mindedness. By valuing and promoting the use of Portuguese, English, and Hebrew, the school fosters intercultural understanding and respect, supporting the development of internationally minded learners.

This policy reflects the belief that every teacher is a language teacher and that language learning occurs across all areas of the curriculum and in every interaction within the school community. It guides the development of language instruction and support throughout the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP), ensuring that all students have equitable access to learning in a rich, multilingual environment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Escola Beit Yaacov community — students, teachers, coordinators, school leaders, and families across all programmes and grade levels. It encompasses every situation in which language is used for learning, communication, and community life within the school.

The principles outlined in this document guide practices in the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP), as well as in the Brazilian National Curriculum. They inform curriculum planning, assessment, family communication, and the creation of a linguistically inclusive environment where all languages are valued as resources for learning.

This policy also aligns with and supports other whole-school policies, ensuring coherence in how the school community approaches learning and teaching, communication, and academic practice.

3. Policy Statement

Language is the foundation of learning at Escola Beit Yaacov. It enables communication, supports thinking and understanding, and contributes to the development of international-mindedness, cultural identity, and belonging.

As a trilingual Jewish school, Escola Beit Yaacov promotes the development of Portuguese, English, and Hebrew through intentional and balanced approaches that reflect the school's mission and values. Portuguese, the mother tongue of the majority of students, serves as a bridge that promotes understanding while connecting to the national and cultural context; English provides access to global perspectives and academic communication; and Hebrew strengthens cultural identity and connection to the Jewish heritage.

Language learning at Beit Yaacov is grounded in the understanding that every teacher is a language teacher. All members of the faculty share responsibility for supporting students' language development, ensuring that language learning is integrated across all subjects and experiences. The school's practices are designed to make language accessible to all learners through differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and collaborative planning.

Through these principles, Escola Beit Yaacov fosters a learning environment in which multilingualism is valued as a fact, a right, and a resource for learning. The policy ensures that students have equitable access to the curriculum, that their linguistic identities are respected, and that language serves as a bridge between local and global understandings.

3.1 Language as Central to Learning

At Escola Beit Yaacov, language learning is integrated throughout the programmes and supported by intentional teaching practices that build both language and conceptual understanding. Classroom interactions, collaborative

inquiry, and reflection all provide opportunities for students to learn language, learn through language, and learn about language.

Every teacher is responsible for supporting language development. Through differentiation, scaffolding, and the use of varied resources, teachers ensure that all students can access the curriculum and express their ideas with clarity and confidence. The school values and supports the continued development of each learner's languages, recognizing them as powerful resources for learning and for building intercultural understanding.

Language learning begins in the early years through meaningful experiences such as play, storytelling, songs, and conversations that nurture curiosity and expression. As students progress, language continues to be integrated across all subjects and disciplines through authentic contexts, promoting conceptual understanding and communication in multiple languages.

Portuguese, as the mother tongue of most students, anchors learning in the local and national context. English, as the immersion language, expands access to global perspectives and academic dialogue. Hebrew, as an additional language, strengthens students' connection to Jewish culture and heritage. Together, these languages provide a foundation for multilingual literacy and for developing empathy, respect, and intercultural understanding.

3.2 Language Support and Integration

Students who join Escola Beit Yaacov after preschool (from Grade 1 to High School) undergo an initial assessment to determine their proficiency in English, Portuguese, and Hebrew. When language support is required, assistance is provided during the school day for up to one academic year. The

Language Support Teacher (ELS – English, PLS – Portuguese, HLS – Hebrew) defines the frequency and focus of instruction according to individual needs and collaborates with classroom teachers to align language and content learning. Progress is monitored continuously, and adjustments are made to ensure consistent development.

When grade-level learning indicators exceed a student's language proficiency, adaptations may be implemented through parallel indicators or additional instructional support (extensores). These adaptations are documented in report cards to maintain transparent communication with families.

Language learning is embedded across the curriculum and approached through authentic, meaningful contexts. Students learn language, through language, and about language within transdisciplinary (PYP), interdisciplinary (MYP), and disciplinary (DP) frameworks.

In the early years, language develops naturally through play, storytelling, music, and daily routines that create a rich and immersive linguistic environment. As students progress, language learning becomes increasingly integrated into all areas of school life, supported by diverse print and digital resources.

Through purposeful learning engagements, such as reading and writing workshops, inquiry projects, debates, and presentations, students use language as a tool to think, explore, and communicate across languages and disciplines.

3.1.1 PYP

In the PYP, language learning is integrated across all areas of the curriculum through inquiry, play, and authentic communication. Students develop language naturally as they engage with meaningful contexts that

connect listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Portuguese, English, and Hebrew.

Language is both a focus and a vehicle for learning. Portuguese and English teachers plan collaboratively to ensure that students meet age-appropriate standards in both languages while engaging with the Units of Inquiry. Hebrew is introduced from the early years and developed progressively, allowing students to understand and communicate in the language while deepening their connection to Jewish identity and values.

In the Elementary years, students experience a balanced exposure to all three languages, reflecting the school's trilingual commitment: approximately 43% of instruction is in English, 33% in Portuguese, and 23% in Hebrew. This distribution ensures that learners develop strong academic and cultural proficiency in each language. English is the main language of instruction for transdisciplinary subjects such as English Language Arts, Science, History, and Geography; Portuguese supports biliteracy and connections to Science, History, Geography, and meets the national curriculum expectations for language A and Mathematics; and Hebrew combines language acquisition with cultural and religious learning (Tefilah).

Instruction in the early years emphasizes oral language, phonemic awareness, and early literacy through songs, storytelling, dramatization, and daily routines. Hebrew learning in these years focuses on authentic, contextual experiences that build vocabulary and comprehension. As students progress through the primary grades, they expand their literacy, fluency, and conceptual understanding through reading and writing workshops, guided inquiry, and interdisciplinary projects.

Across the PYP, classrooms reflect a multilingual environment where students are encouraged to make cross-linguistic connections, use their full

linguistic repertoires to express understanding, and view all three languages as living expressions of identity, community, and international-mindedness.

3.1.2 MYP

In the MYP, language learning remains central to intellectual and personal development. Students use language to inquire, think critically, and express understanding across all subject groups.

Courses are distributed among the school's three languages of instruction. English is the medium for selected subject groups, such as Design, Science, Physical and Health Education, and English Language Acquisition, promoting academic communication and global perspectives. Portuguese remains the primary language for core subjects, including Language and Literature, Humanities, and Mathematics, ensuring mastery of the national curriculum. Hebrew is taught with differentiated instruction to accommodate varying levels of proficiency, supporting both conversational fluency and cultural understanding.

Language development is supported through explicit attention to vocabulary, text types, and academic writing within each discipline. Teachers collaborate across subject areas to ensure consistency in expectations and to integrate language objectives into unit planning. Cross-linguistic connections are encouraged to reinforce conceptual transfer and to strengthen students' multilingual competence.

Students requiring additional support receive assistance through the Special Needs Department (NPI - Núcleo de Práticas Inclusivas), which coordinates individualized support plans (ISP/IEP) and language interventions (EAL, PAL, HAL). Adaptations may include differentiated materials, small-group instruction, or extended assessment time to ensure equitable access to learning.

Students who join the school after preschool undergo proficiency assessments and receive specific language support (EAL, PAL, HAL) according to their needs. Classes are held in Portuguese and English as language instruction in the classroom.

Hebrew instruction in the MYP focuses on meaningful communication, reading comprehension, and understanding of Jewish culture and tradition. To provide inclusion and equity of access to the Hebrew language, students can learn at a different pace and with differentiation in instruction. Students are grouped by proficiency levels, allowing personalized progress and fostering confidence in using the language for authentic purposes.

3.1.3 DP

In the IB DP, the language of instruction is English. Students have the opportunity to choose from a variety of possibilities as far as languages are concerned:

Portuguese A: Language and Literature HL and SL

English A: Language and Literature SL

English B HL and SL

Hebrew B SL

French *Ab initio* SL

As almost all students are native speakers of Portuguese, they choose Portuguese A: Language and Literature HL as a Group 1 language and English B as a second language. A few students will choose both Portuguese and English as languages A. In both cases, students qualify for the bilingual Diploma.

Depending on the students' linguistic profile and university plans, it is common that some students will choose to do a third language in Group 6, either French *Ab initio* or Hebrew B.

Another common configuration is that some students who want to keep their cultural and linguistic traditions take Hebrew B as a seventh subject, which will not be part of the six mandatory subjects contributing to their Diploma.

In case the school admits a student whose mother tongue is not Portuguese or English, the school will make an effort to offer the students' mother tongue as Language A, either taught by a teacher of the school - French A or Spanish A, for example. Other languages will be dealt with as the need arises.

3.2 Language Placement

Language placement at Escola Beit Yaacov is guided by the principle of equitable access to learning. All students are supported in developing proficiency in Portuguese, English, and Hebrew according to their individual profiles and academic needs.

Students who join the school after preschool participate in a language placement assessment to determine their proficiency levels in the three instructional languages. The results inform placement decisions and identify the type of support required for successful integration.

Students identified as needing additional support are enrolled in one or more of the school's Language Support Programmes:

- ELS (English Language Support)
- PLS (Portuguese Language Support)
- HLS (Hebrew Language Support)

Support is provided during the school day and may include small-group or individualized instruction. The frequency and duration of support are determined by the Language Support Teacher in collaboration with classroom and subject teachers. Student progress is monitored through formative

assessments, and adjustments are made to align language development with curricular goals.

Language learning is continuous and integrated across all subjects, ensuring alignment between language growth and content learning. To facilitate this process, the school provides a range of physical and virtual resources, including trilingual collections in the library, iPads, computers, and digital learning platforms. Many book titles are available in Hebrew, Portuguese, and English to promote connections and access to diverse perspectives.

For students who do not yet speak Portuguese, a teacher provides in-class assistance to ensure full participation and prevent pedagogical loss. Assessments are adapted when necessary, and each learner's progress is monitored over time until language proficiency is no longer a barrier to learning.

Family partnership is recognized as essential to language development. The school engages families through workshops, take-home activities, translated communication, and the lending of trilingual books. Communication channels such as newsletters, emails, Instagram, and the official school app are maintained in the three languages of the community, ensuring inclusion and accessibility for all members of the school community.

International-mindedness is further cultivated through visits from guest speakers who present in Portuguese, English, and Hebrew, promoting knowledge-sharing, cultural understanding, and mutual respect across the school community.

Placement decisions are reviewed regularly to reflect each learner's growth and readiness. As students develop proficiency, language support is gradually reduced, fostering independence and full participation in the school's multilingual learning environment.

3.3 Rights and Responsibilities

All members of the school community have rights and responsibilities regarding the language policy, promoting a culture of respect and appreciation for linguistic diversity. By recognizing and valuing the multiple languages spoken within the community, the school creates an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and empowered to express themselves.

Students

Rights:

- To have equitable access to learning and to receive support in the languages of instruction.
- To have their individual learning pace, language background, and cultural identity respected.
- To maintain and develop their mother tongue while learning additional languages.
- To engage in meaningful experiences that expand their ability to communicate in Portuguese, English, and Hebrew.

Responsibilities:

- To act as active and respectful communicators, using the language of instruction in class or the language appropriate for the situation.
- To participate fully in learning engagements and take responsibility for their own progress.
- To demonstrate open-mindedness and appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity.

Families

Rights:

- To access school communication, meetings, library, virtual and physical materials in the languages used by the community.
- To be informed about their child's progress and language development.
- To participate in language-related events and initiatives that celebrate multilingualism.
- To communicate with the school community.

Responsibilities:

- To engage in their child's language journey by reading, conversing, and encouraging curiosity about all three languages.
- To participate in school initiatives such as workshops, exhibitions, and cultural events that strengthen home–school connections.
- To provide opportunities at home for exposure to different languages and cultural experiences.

Teachers and staff

Rights:

- To receive professional development and coordination support for effective multilingual and inclusive instruction.
- To have access to appropriate resources, planning time, and collaboration opportunities.
- To be addressed in their language of instruction and to work within an environment that values linguistic diversity.

Responsibilities:

- To plan and deliver learning experiences that make language accessible and engaging for all students.
- To differentiate instruction and provide language support strategies that meet diverse learner needs.
- To monitor student progress in language development and communicate regularly with families.
- To model respectful and inclusive communication across all languages used in the school.

3.4 The Role of the Librarian

For PYP students from early years, the librarian is a storyteller, helping choose books by age group/interest or unit of investigation. The librarian is responsible for building the library archive based on their choices and including teacher suggestions. In the Early Years, literacy is promoted through engaging programs such as “International School Library Month” and “Reading Palooza”, which include activities like professional storytelling sessions; participation in “*Read for the Record*”, and “creative crafts” such as making bookmarks.

For all the school sections, the librarian plays a vital role in supporting both academic learning and the development of a strong reading culture. For the *PYP*, they actively assist students during the research process connected to units of inquiry, helping them locate, evaluate and use information effectively. As part of the *PYP Exhibition*, the librarian offers a dedicated course to Grade 5 students focused on identifying and using reliable sources. As part of Design and Science inquiry classes in *MYP* and to promote good research practices for *DP* internal assessments, librarians, communication staff, and educational technology staff collaboratively extend the course by integrating citation skills

and the use of *Turnitin* software to promote academic integrity and prevent plagiarism.

Additionally, the librarian leads a range of literacy initiatives designed to motivate young readers, including the "Battle of the Books" competition for Grades 3 to 6 and activities celebrating International School Library Month, through the "Reading Palooza" program (just like early years in PYP). These events feature professional storytellers, participation in the global "Read for the Record" event, and engaging literacy-related crafts and games. To support classroom learning, sets of books in Hebrew are provided to enhance language instruction.

In the Middle Years, librarians also guarantee resources on global issues and diverse perspectives, by organizing non-fiction books and updated research articles. Librarians are responsible for ensuring relevant resources to scaffold the MYP 4 Community Project and all inquiry classes.

The librarian is also responsible for curating and maintaining the school's library archive, selecting books based on student interests and teacher recommendations, and managing book circulation from early years to high school, with 4 libraries spread across the school.

4. Review Process

The language policy is formally reviewed every three years by the school leadership team, in consultation with programme coordinators and the language steering committee. Minor revisions or reaffirmations may occur annually as part of the school's professional reflection cycle and the review of faculty essential agreements.

Evidence used to inform revisions includes:

- Feedback from staff, students, and families collected through surveys and focus groups;
- Observation of teaching and learning practices across languages;
- Analysis of student work and achievement in relation to language development;
- Updates to IB publications and requirements;
- Alignment with other whole-school policies (Inclusion, Assessment, and Academic Integrity).

The final draft is shared with the entire community through the school's communication channels and intranet. The leadership team ensures that new staff are introduced to the policy during induction and that all community members are aware of their roles and responsibilities in supporting language learning.

The involvement of all stakeholders in the review process is essential to strengthening community awareness and transparency regarding the school's language practices. The review process is based on comprehensive self-reflection and includes representatives from all segments of the learning community:

- **Leadership:** PYP, MYP, and DP Coordinators; Language/Area Coordinators; Head of School; Heads of Section.
- **Faculty:** Teachers from all disciplines and programmes (PYP, MYP, and DP), including language acquisition teachers and single-subject teachers.
- **Librarians:** Librarians supporting the development and implementation of the programmes across the three school libraries.

Date of last review: April 2025

Date of next review: April 2028

5. References

Allen, K-A, Oades, L. G., Reupert, A. E. *School policy development and creation*. April 2021. Available in: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003025955-40>. Access in: 28/feb/2025.

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