



Language Policy

**Prva gimnazija Varaždin
International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme**



**Diploma Programme
Language Policy**

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IB mission statement

The international Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

PGV mission statement

We aim to provide students with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills according to contemporary educational practice.

We want to develop curious, inquiring and knowledgeable young people who will understand, respect and care about others.

Our goal is to produce future citizens of the world who will know how to accept challenges, how to act in global reality, be active lifelong learners and competitive collaborators within international society.

IB LEARNER PROFILE

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet help to create a better and more peaceful world.

<p>INQUIRERS We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.</p>	<p>OPEN-MINDED We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.</p>
<p>KNOWLEDGEABLE We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.</p>	<p>CARING We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.</p>
<p>THINKERS We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.</p>	<p>RISK-TAKERS We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATORS We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.</p>	<p>BALANCED We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives-intellectual, physical and emotional-to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.</p>
<p>PRINCIPLED We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and right of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.</p>	<p>REFLECTIVE We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.</p>

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Introduction and Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to present the language teaching and learning philosophy as incorporated in principles and practices at Prva gimnazija Varaždin (hereinafter as PGV). This policy will start with a brief presentation of PGV with a special emphasis on the language component that is inherent to the education principles pertinent to the school philosophy. After that, a set of ideas and practices governing the language philosophy at PGV and IBDP at PGV will be presented, in line with the following IB documents: *Diploma programme: From principles to practice*, *Academic honesty*, *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* and *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in the IB programme*. The document will conclude with a clear outline of the PGV language policy provisions.

PGV – general description

Prva gimnazija Varaždin is a state-owned school which offers three national curriculum programs (general, science and language program), bilingual program in English/Croatian and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP). In terms of language learning, students can also take the German language diploma exam and OSD (Austrian Language Diploma) exams. Students of the school achieve excellent results in regular programs as well as in national and international sports and science competitions, including the Olympiad in mathematics, physics, informatics, chemistry and German. The students also regularly take part in language competitions in modern (English, German, French, Spanish) as well as classical languages (Latin), with excellent results on local, regional and state levels. Besides activities performed through regular programs, there are extracurricular activities and various learning groups which enable students to express their talents and creativity, and to develop communicative and interpersonal skills, such as Music Group, Theatron Drama Group, Journalists, Literary Group, Debate Club, Sprachdiplom Workshop, Cultural Heritage Workshop, Protection of School Heritage Workshop, Protection of Natural Heritage Workshop, Ecology Group, Exploration Groups, Photography Group, Film Group, Sports Clubs, etc.

The school has been involved in a number of projects under the aegis of the Council of Europe (e.g. Education for Democratic Citizenship) and European Commission (e.g. Comenius, Erasmus+ etc.). Furthermore, PGV is a member of the UNESCO's *Associated Schools*, working on projects dedicated to the promotion and protection of both national and global cultural and natural heritage, as well as projects leading towards intercultural education. Through mentioned programs, language-related activities are one of the key elements, as will be shown in the following section of this document. Prva gimnazija Varaždin became an IB school in April 2006 and started teaching in September 2006. Currently it offers IBDP only. This Language policy will mostly refer to and discuss the language philosophy pertinent to the IB section of our school, while drawing parallels with the state program where needed.

PGV and language teaching philosophy

According to *The Diploma Programme: from principles to practice (2005: 82)*, "All teachers are language teachers. Each subject has a specific vocabulary and requires language both as a tool for understanding the subject and for communicating ideas. Students have to learn to be precise in their use of language. Assessments in all subjects require students to express themselves in written form. Additionally, groups 1, 2 and 6 all have oral assessment practices. Schools need to have a language policy that identifies the principles and practices teachers are expected to adopt... Teachers need to provide additional support for students who are working in a language of instruction that is not their best language"

This is the principle that PGV – IBDP tries to incorporate in the teaching activity of all IB subjects. As teachers of their particular subjects, all teachers from the IB cohort give their best to discuss the issues, as well as subject-specific terminology, in the language of teaching, which means that all

teachers are language teachers as well. The official IB language in the school is English which functions as the language of teaching of all subjects except for Croatian language which is the language of teaching Croatian A.

In terms of precision, through various in-class and out-of-class activities, students are encouraged to practice oral and written language in all possible forms, in line with the special requirements of particular subjects. A special form of expression is the assessment component of the curriculum, where written expression is practiced and tested by the educators. Also, those groups that have oral assessment practices work extensively on developing the necessary communicative skills that are required for various forms of oral examinations.

According to IB learner profile, the component that is most closely linked to the linguistic component seems to be the following:

„Communicators - They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others“. (Academic Honesty, 2011:5)

In line with the mentioned quality required from IB students, our schools strives to provide the students with a plethora of activities and tasks where the described personal quality may be developed to the fullest. Some activities that may lead to the development of such a quality are working in group projects, developing team spirit through working in pairs and in groups, working in class and outside class, and promoting communication not exclusively with their peers but also with teachers, family members and members of a wider community. Through such activities not only English or students' mother tongue is promoted but the usage of other languages as well. It is a consequence of the fact that through various activities students may come in contact with individuals that do not have a shared first or second language, thus paving a way to the communication in languages other than Croatian or English.

As this policy cannot be separated from a wider context of IB program at the school, a link to the PGV Admission Policy seems as a legitimate component of this Policy.

PGV Admission Policy entails the following section on languages at PGV:

“Language

IB DP in PGV is provided in English language. This language has the internal status of the official language, both for delivering as well as assessing programme materials.

Final exams are provided in English language.

The exceptions are mother tongue (Croatian in the majority of cases at our school), and another Language B (in our case, German language).” (Admission Policy, 2016: 3).

As can be seen from the quoted paragraph, at present the IBDP section of PGV relies on English and the dominant language as well as Croatian as the mother tongue. A vast majority of PGV students are of Croatian origin so Croatian A represents a logical preference for almost all of them. Because of that so far the school has not recognized the need for an additional effort to promote the learning and usage of the mother tongue, as it has been a general preference for all IBDP students so far. Also, almost all students that enroll to IBDP come from Croatian national program where Croatian language and literature is extensively taught with a significant proportion of teaching hours.

In the past the school had few students from foreign countries who opted for English A, while at the same time taking German as language B, which points to the fact that PGV is flexible and can adapt to the emerging needs in terms of offering various languages at various levels.

In terms of language B, the preferred option is English B, and some students choose German as their language B. Regarding the levels chosen, almost all students take language B at higher level, with only few students taking that language at Standard level. It is a logical consequence of the socio-cultural context in which the school functions.

The town where the school is based is a relatively small town with predominantly Croatian population whose native tongue is Croatian. Due to historic and cultural reasons, preferred options for second and third language learning from a general educational perspective have been German and English. Since those are the foreign language that the school offers through IBDP, it is a proof that PGV gives its best to meet the needs of the local community.

Nevertheless, PGV is flexible enough to meet any potential, emerging needs of its students. Whenever a potential student inquires about the possibility of taking another language at level A, B, or *ab initio*, the school has several teachers of other languages (more specifically, French, Spanish and Latin) that are ready to acquire a license for teaching in the IB and provide the students with the language education that they require.

Regarding the Language *ab initio* or a self-study option, so far PGV has not received any interest in learning a foreign language at the mentioned levels. However, should the need arise to teach future students at the mentioned levels, PGV Language B teachers of all the mentioned languages are constantly educated and up-to-date with the Language *ab initio* level and self-taught language particularities, and they are ready to start teaching it in case there is interest in it.

Further to the languages taught and offered in IBDP, the school offers its students (both coming from the national program and IBDP) to take language classes in optional language groups. In that way multilingualism and multiculturalism are promoted, as the students are able to learn to express themselves and think in other foreign languages (such as French, Spanish, Russian or Italian). During the process of third or fourth language acquisition students learn about the cultures of those communities as well, thus promoting international-mindedness and multiculturalism.

A link with the school community

PGV recognizes that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching. This need is accomplished through various methods. For example, all IBDP teachers are regularly sent to local and international seminars and PD workshops, where they are exposed to an international setting which naturally promotes foreign language usage and proves to be beneficial for their language proficiency. As PGV does not have a separate cohort for national curriculum and IBDP, all IBDP teachers teach in national curriculum as well or hold an administrative function (such as the school psychologist). Because of that, teachers, librarians and administrators use all the acquired knowledge and skills in their everyday work, both in IBDP and other realms of school activities.

Furthermore, despite the fact that current economic situation is far from favorable and resources have to be distributed with extreme care, PGV strives to provide the staff with all the necessary up-to-date scientific literature related to language teaching and learning. Wherever an opportunity is given, PGV organizes lectures delivered by foreign lecturers or public figures, thus proving an opportunity to both teachers and students to participate in an international setting.

Erasmus + and Comenius programs have proved to be an excellent method of promoting international-mindedness of PGV students, with one of the major benefits being the language and cultural learning that takes place during every mobility. So far PGV has participated in several EU mobility programs, and IBDP students have been active in almost all of the past and active projects.

In terms of parents' inclusion, PGV strives to include parents to the school educational process, both in case of national program and IBDP. Parents are regularly contacted by the school administration and teachers and PGV has always emphasized the role that they play in the overall development of their children. Parents are regularly present on school events, PTA meetings, they are consulted for all major decisions that entail an implication for their children's education, and they are acknowledged as one of the key factors in the education and development of PGV students.

Taking all of the mentioned factors in consideration, it is clear that PGV puts a great emphasis on language learning and teaching. By means of the mentioned methods the IBDP section, as well as the school in general, has produced several extremely successful classes that have continued their education both on Croatian universities and abroad, where they keep achieving superb results. Because of that PGV takes pride in its current practices and activities. Nevertheless, the school is aware of the fact that we live in a dynamic environment where new needs may arise at any given time. Because of that, our educators and administration keep track of all the mentioned activities and practices and try to identify those elements that may need to be adapted or modified.

Language policy

The school agrees to:

- Set up a steering committee responsible for putting this Policy into practice. The committee shall consist of members of both the school administration as well as members of the school cohort
- Harmonize the school language teaching philosophy with the this Policy in all respects
- Keep track of language teaching and learning practices through all means available in order to work permanently on improving school teaching and learning philosophy and amending this Policy
- Provide for all the language needs of its students, in accordance with the national and IB legislation
- Acknowledge English as the working language of the IBDP, while promoting the usage of the mother tongue(s) of its students, as well as other languages taught at PGV, through all viable in-school and out-of-school activities and practices
- Promote language teaching and learning that is harmonized with the contemporary pedagogical standards and theoretical tenets
- Provide regular PD to all of its staff on effective teaching and learning strategies and practices
- Provide the students with clear instructions on how to use language in an academic context (academic language practices)
- Keep track of language teaching and learning practices through various methods of data gathering, such as informal discussions, interviews, conferences and observations
- Keep track of language teaching and learning development in order to work on necessary improvements and future planning
- Promote library –based activities that lead to language teaching and learning
- Monitor potential needs for providing education on another L1 other than Croatian, as well as supporting students that need to learn in a language other than their L1. Also PGV shall analyze previous experiences and practices in order to make necessary improvements and adjustments
- Keep track of language development of their students (through regular observation by their language teachers and other members of the cohort)
- Keep track of IB documents that may lead to an improvement of school policies and practices
- Promote inquiry-based authentic language training
- Make an effort to promote language learning as an interdisciplinary activity spanning over several subjects at IBDP
- Put an emphasis on integrated process of learning and teaching all 4 language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) with a development of international-mindedness, interculturalism and media literacy

- Make an effort to provide for all educational needs of its students in terms of offering various languages at IBDP levels A, B, *ab initio* or self-taught level, as well as additional (optional) language instruction (languages such as Spanish, French, Italian etc.)
- Monitor the teaching process of various languages in order to make sure that consistent methods are used, in line with contemporary theoretical, pedagogical principles
- Periodically perform a review of the language practices pertinent to this Policy in order to keep track of its efficiency. In case improvements are needed, the steering committee will try to reach an optimal solution and implement the necessary modifications in accordance with the defined timeline and procedures.

References:

- *Language Policy (IBO, 2014)*
- *Programme standards and practices (IBO, 2014)*
- *DP: From principles into practice (IBO, 2015)*
- *Handbook of procedure DP (IBO, 2016)*
- *General regulations: Diploma Programme (IBO, 2014)*
- *Programme evaluation guide and self-study questionnaire: Diploma Programme (IBO, 2010)*
- *Approaches to teaching and learning in the Diploma Programme (IBO, 2015)*