



Language Policy

International Baccalaureate

“ The limits of my language are the limits of my world ” - Wittgenstein

1. Introduction

Lab School Paris (short) history and philosophy:

Founded in 2017 by a high-level group of researchers and academics, Lab School Paris has always had bilingual education (French and English) at the core of its project. We made ours a long time ago the mission statement of the IB : “encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right”.

Learning languages is probably the most important means to achieve this goal. More than ever, our globally connected world needs individuals who are able to understand the realities of others’ social, cultural and economic environments. As Ludwig Wittgenstein rightfully said: “The Limits of my language are the limits of my world”. But when the school opened in September 2017, with only 27 pupils from grade 3 to 5 and two teachers, the majority of the students were francophones, with only 4 bilingual students who knew both English and French. In the spirit of IB standards and practices, in order to enable Lab School to secure access to an IB education to the broadest possible range of students, we adapted our objectives to evolve with time. We regularly reviewed our language teaching policy to enable pupils to acquire as quickly as possible a better command of English. This scalable approach, which we continue to apply, led us to opt for a reciprocal immersion setting (see below).

This gradually enabled us to successfully overcome the challenges linked to becoming a bilingual school in a French environment, while maintaining our philosophy of attracting the broadest possible range of students: we at Lab School believe that social and cultural diversity are key to develop student’s empathy and positive approach to understanding and respect each other’s differences and similarities.

2. Values of the school

Lab school Paris aims to support children to become *responsible, enlightened, autonomous, supportive and fulfilled citizens*.

- **to support children** – this is how the members of the Lab School educational team position themselves so that children gradually become the actors of their learning process. Members of the educational team are guides, as well as tutors and benevolent coordinators; they know how to welcome the child integrating where he/she is situated at a given moment, in order to help him/her move forward by relying on his/her abilities, his/her desires, his/her curiosity, their enthusiasm, their desire to surpass themselves and/or their need to be encouraged.
- **to become** – the emphasis is on acquiring inter-personal skills, know-how, but also “know-how to become”, which is so important to adjust to a rapidly changing world.
- **citizens** – school is a place for learning about democracy, through practices such as youth councils, as well as for understanding and respect for the rights and duties of the community. The resources necessary for exercising citizenship are taught there: voting, opposing viewpoints, listening to others, the art of debate, etc.



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- **enlightened** – in French, the word “éclairé” refers to an individual who “through his knowledge, his wise and critical mind, can judiciously give an opinion, pass judgment on people and things”. The Lab School teaches ways to acquire knowledge, to exercise critical thinking and to have sound and discerning judgment.
- **autonomous** – intellectual independence, self-confidence and self-esteem, the ability to assert oneself firmly while showing kindness are cultivated throughout the curriculum, in order to allow young people to take initiatives and to foster decision making.
- **responsible** – children are encouraged to take responsibility, while meaning to make commitments, reflecting on the consequences of their decisions; education in eco-citizenship and sustainable development also aims to develop a sense of responsibility towards the planet.
- **supportive** – openness to the world and to difference takes on its full meaning through projects and commitment to those who need it most.
- **flourishing** – the Lab School also and above all aims to give young people the means to feel well in their minds and in their bodies, by developing positive relationships with others, by learning to take care of their health and vitality, by giving themselves the means to lead a life in accordance with their values, both personally and professionally.

3. Lab School Paris' approach to language teaching and learning: the reciprocal immersion setting

There are various approaches to teaching foreign languages in France and different conceptions of what a bilingual school is or should be. Most schools have classes in each language on alternating days of half days. Few schools choose to have simultaneous teaching in two languages, provided by one or, more often, two teachers. This model is called “reciprocal immersion” (Brohy 2018). It relies, in addition to co-teaching in two languages, on the presence in the classroom of children whose levels of linguistic proficiency in French and English cover the whole possible range: from purely francophone or purely anglophones to fully bilingual pupils, with heterogenous levels of proficiency in one or the other language.

The pedagogy of bilingualism implemented at Lab School Paris is based in particular on the recommendations established by Franco Calvetti (1991):

- a priority given to oral language at the initial stage, so that the pupils quickly understand the usual requests in both languages, especially in routine situations.
- the emphasis on functional communication in authentic classroom situations
- the use of games, proposed by the teachers and created by the pupils, songs, and digital tools and applications (Kahoot, Brain Pop, Duolingo)
- an approach that stimulates comparison between languages, from the point of view of lexicon and syntax

Pupils are encouraged to communicate with each other in both languages. While, as Brohy points out from his literature review, reciprocal immersion cannot reproduce the natural acquisition of two languages in a bilingual family environment, it can be noted that “this form of informal learning, with little or no guidance, which emphasizes more procedural than declarative appropriation, in more authentic communicative situations”.



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4. Languages of Instruction

From grade 1 to 10, Lab School Paris mainly follows the French school curriculum (the “common core of knowledge, skills, and culture”). However, a bilingual approach (French-English) is offered for all subjects and we promote a solid academic education that meets international quality standards English and French as language of instruction for a bilingual environment. Here is the current language proficiency of our students in grades 7 to 10.

- grade 7 12% mainly English; 19% mainly French; 79% bilingual
- grade 8 20% mainly English; 25% mainly French; 55% bilingual
- grade 9 10% mainly English; 10% mainly French; 80% bilingual
- grade 10 100% bilingual

Pupils who are not bilingual are given extra instruction in the language in which they are least proficient. To strengthen English language skills, they are encouraged to take part in immersion language stays with an English-speaking family. For French, there are many opportunities for exposure in Paris, through films or extra-curricular activities.

In the lowest levels (grades 1-6), this reciprocal immersion model is implemented with two co-teachers in the classroom (one French speaking and one English speaking). In the higher grades, about half of the classes are taught in English in the upper levels.

In the French curriculum, the study of a second foreign language starts in grade 7. At the Lab School Paris, Spanish is offered as an additional Language in grades 7 to 10.

In grade 10, English is currently the main instruction language in math and sciences, French is the main instruction language in history and geography. The students are able to follow classes in both languages and there is a lot of variety in daily interactions, with spontaneous switching from one language to another.

As explained in our Admission policy, our aim is to welcome as many nationalities in our school as possible, since for us multiculturalism is key to a successful implementation of IB DP. Our students are able to speak other languages, from Spanish, to Greek or Arabic, Russian. Through our teachers/parents groups, we encourage the parents to help students promote awareness of the diversity of languages spoken in our schools. Because knowing where we come from, helps us better understand who we are, we propose introduction classes to Greek and Latin.



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5. IB Language instruction at Diploma Programme Level

5.1. General principles

As indicated in the IB Language policy guide, “The International Baccalaureate is committed to supporting multilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness, and is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.” The curriculum aims at providing a balanced educational experience with a global perspective. For the Diploma Programme, among each of six subject groups, one subject will be selected. Three, or at most four subjects can be taken at Higher level (HL), while the remaining three are taken at Standard level (SL). The choice between HL and SL is driven by students’ interests and abilities. The field in which they intend to pursue their studies is also taken into account. For languages, students are required to choose one subject from Group 1 and Group 2. The choice of language level in each group will be decided taking into account each students’ programme. At Lab School Paris, for the IB Diploma programme, English will be the main means of instruction in the same way as in grade 10, except for French or Spanish language and literature classes. All the teachers, however, have a very good command of French.

5.2. Language programme

All students enrolled in grades 11 and 12 will follow the programme of IB, as the school does not prepare students for any other diploma.

Group 1 – Language A

Lab School Paris offers Language A courses in English and French.

Group 2 – Language B

Lab School Paris offers Language B courses in English, French and Spanish.

It is to be noted that, for students with bilingual proficiency, a second Language A course may be taken by bilingual students to satisfy the Group 2 requirement. Those students will earn the Bilingual Diploma.

6. Opening to language diversity and opportunities for authentic language experiences

Parents are considered as partners and language acquisition is considered as a shared responsibility of all the stakeholders – teachers, parents and students. Suggestions are offered to deepen language acquisition at home.

Language acquisition can also be reinforced through music and songs. Music classes are intended as spaces for exploration of diverse languages and cultures through practice.

Every year, one day is devoted to the celebration of language diversity, beyond English and French, with presentations by the students and/or their parents who speak different languages.

We reserve the right to modify this policy at any time, without notice.