



Language Handbook

March 2022

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1. Introduction

JFK Mission

To lead, serve and create beauty.

JFK Vision

To achieve the extraordinary

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 programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

At JFK we strive to be



CARING



RISK-TAKERS



BALANCED



PRINCIPLED



OPEN - MINDED

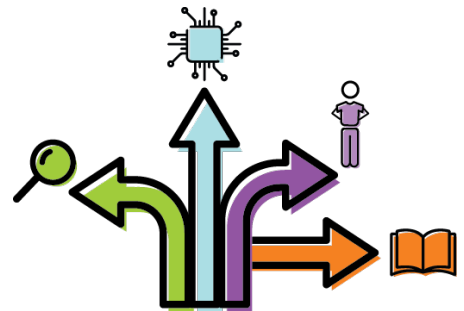


REFLECTIVE

JFK



KNOWLEDGEABLE



INQUIRERS



COMMUNICATORS



THINKER

IB Learner Profile

School Profile:

The John F. Kennedy School, The American School of Querétaro, is a private, non-profit institution that offers a bilingual and IB education to a multicultural community. Situated in Central Mexico, JFK serves over 1400 students from K-12th grade. The student population represents more than 25 countries, 77% of whom are Mexican Nationals. The school also has significant student populations from the United States (9%) and Korea (5%).

At John F Kennedy, The American School of Queretaro, we encourage all students to be the best possible version of themselves. We want to accompany all our students on their personal journey to help them do this, and to therefore achieve the extraordinary. Our commitment to their character development, academic excellence and the nurturing of their social, emotional, and physical needs is demonstrated by the wide range of organizations that we are accredited by.

- Cogna
- Mexican Secretary of Education (SEP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Association of American Schools in Mexico (ASOMEX)
- The Association of American Schools of Central America Colombia-Caribbean and Mexico (Tri-Association)
- The Inter-Regional Center for Curriculum and Materials Development (IRC)

Language Profile:

For students whose first language is English, Spanish or both languages, they are able to learn in their first language and acquire a second language. For students whose first language is a language other than English or Spanish, they become multilingual by learning additional languages. Our youngest students receive most instruction in English, later moving to a 50:50 bilingual model in 2nd grade. Starting in 6th grade, subjects are divided between English and Spanish instruction to ensure a rich learning environment that includes opportunities to interact socially and to construct cognitive and academic skills in both languages.

The John F Kennedy School strives to ensure that all students become highly effective in both English and Spanish. It is understood that students vary in their ability to learn a second language, and there are many factors that will affect the level of proficiency obtained. Such factors may include: exposure to the language in their family environment and outside of the formal school setting, the number of years studying and using the language, and the grade level of entry into the school. Students who attend JFK for all grade levels will be academically proficient in both languages by graduation.

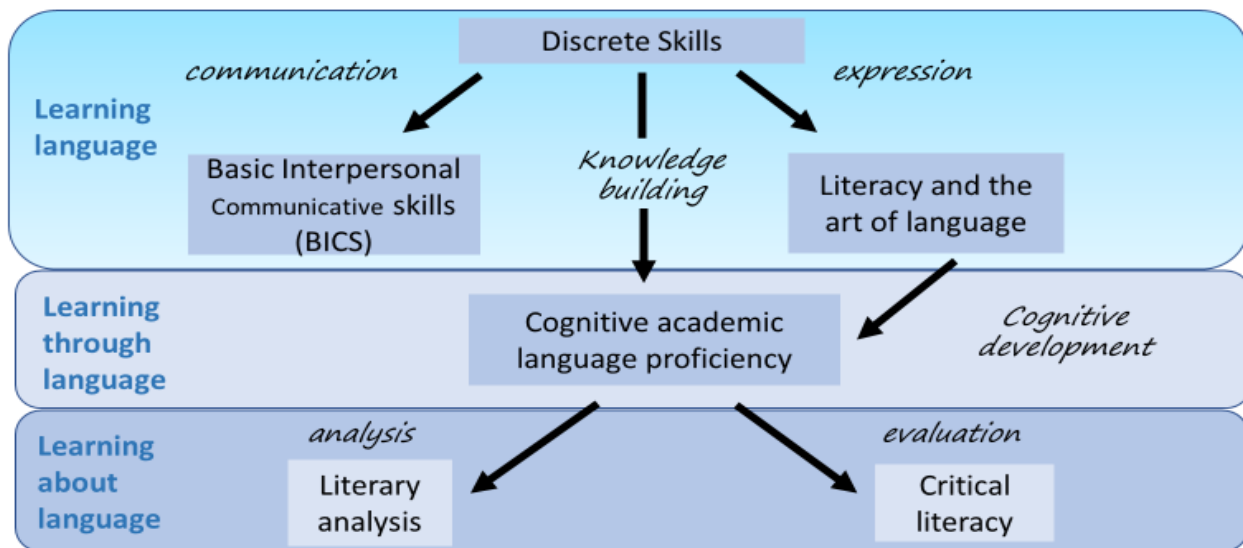
2. Language Philosophy

All learning and thinking are done through and using language. Language is central to all learning and reflects cultural identity, enhances critical thinking, promotes international mindedness, and boosts creativity. Students who are bilingual or multilingual adapt more easily to a variety of cultures, and become internationally minded, making them more equipped to have a shared understanding and respect for all humanity. 21st Century multilingualism captures the idea that using and practicing communication in multiple languages is a dynamic process that integrates with rapid globalization, revolutions in technology and social responses to a pluralistic society.

By nature of the diversity of our community population, all teachers are considered language teachers and work on language acquisition regardless of the subject being taught. Instruction is differentiated in order to address students' specific language needs. Teachers support language learners in the following ways: make meaning, access content, and promote cognitive growth and social-emotional confidence. The bilingual approach to learning at JFK affirms cultural identity and provides the student with emotional and academic support to build confidence and a growth mindset.

JFK students are expected to be able to read, write and communicate fluently in both English and Spanish. Therefore, JFK's academic programs are taught in an intentionally-designed combination of English and Spanish to ensure JFK students are bilingual and biliterate in all academic areas, having a strong command of both CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) and BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills). The attached diagram from IB is instructive to visualize how students learn language, about language and through language

Language domains in the continuum



Next Steps:

Teachers at JFK consciously work to identify the needs of all students in their class to promote diversity and inclusion. To encourage fulfillment of current practices, JFK will provide professional development and training to incorporate a better understanding of translanguaging and how this concept can be included in planning and instruction. Translanguaging is a process that activates prior knowledge, naturally and flexibly, in the known language(s) to promote the understanding of content and cultural contexts in the language of instruction acquisition. Translanguaging affirms cultural identity and provides the student with a comfort zone to use communicative and social constructs embedded in a different language. Teachers will actively seek ways to integrate translanguaging strategies into planning and instruction. Teachers will actively provide resources and opportunities for students to appreciate their native language and culture, whilst also building language skills in English and Spanish.

3. Admission to John F. Kennedy School

Admission is open to students from all socio-economic, ethnic, linguistic and national backgrounds.

For acceptance into the mainstream JFK academic program, students are required to demonstrate proficiency in both English and Spanish according to grade level expectations. Acceptance is determined based on the admissions test result along with personal interviews and other relevant information. International students who are unable to pass the admission tests in English and/or Spanish, but are otherwise candidates who meet the JFK profile, are enrolled into the SWAS program.

Students wishing to participate in the IB DP must enter the school on or before the first day of 11th grade and demonstrate advanced academic proficiency in both English and Spanish.

4. The Development of Language at John F. Kennedy School

Preschool

To meet our goal of bilingualism, linguistic modeling of English and Spanish can be found throughout the Preschool in and out of classrooms. In Preschool, students are supported by bilingual teachers. For the majority of students Spanish is their first language, and thus they continue to build vocabulary, pronunciation and syntax skills while simultaneously developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.

Most classes in the academic program are taught in English, with Music and Physical Education being taught in Spanish throughout the three-year program. Students develop English in the same way that they learned their first language: through play, exploration and guided by the inquiry process. Students learn through transdisciplinary units which provide a natural way for students to make connections across content areas, the real world, and between their emerging language development. In the initial stages of acquisition students develop their listening comprehension, for example to focus on understanding and carrying out a single instruction. Next, they have a growing number of isolated words that they produce intermingled with their native language. Furthermore, students communicate through an increasingly sophisticated level of production. Throughout the program students are allowed to use their first language to support inquiry and additional language acquisition.

With the understanding that reading comprehension and writing (ideas communicated through written communication) are processes done by the brain and not by the hand or the eyes, students are encouraged to read through an adult's voice and write their ideas with the teacher's support.

Elementary School

The Elementary School at John F. Kennedy embraces a bilingual education program model that develops students' skills in English and Spanish simultaneously. The result of early immersion in English in Pre-First and first grade in Elementary transitions to a balanced language environment in grades 2-5 (50% English, 50% Spanish).

The JFK Primary Years Program places high value on learning through inquiry which engages students to participate actively in the learning process and provides students with a challenging and rewarding experience that enriches their daily life and prepares them for the future. Students practice their language skills in a lively, interactive and "playful" environment that is supportive of both their cognitive and emotional development. Integrating innovative, challenging and enriching transdisciplinary learning, students leave the Elementary division as bilingual students who have a love of learning, confidence and a firm value system that promotes inquiry and critical thinking. Students and teachers work together to foster listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presentation skills in English and Spanish.

The PYP years have an emphasis on the teacher and learner partnering together to develop intentional strategies for reading. Students move through developmental stages very quickly in the early elementary years; therefore, it is imperative to have on-track indicators to identify reading and language fluency, proficiency and comprehension. In K2 and K3 phonics instruction focuses on sound-spelling relationships, and phonemic awareness is primarily focused on oral learning. Phonics is taught through play-based learning situations and in explicit phonics lessons. Students learn about the sounds of the letters, the formation of these letters, sight words and blended sounds.

As students progress through K3 and into Pre-first, they use their knowledge of letter sounds to blend (read) words and use their knowledge of graphemes to move beyond inventive spelling to using conventional spellings to write words within meaningful contexts. Teachers target reading fluency with strategies to build reading comprehension. Through inquiry, observation and analysis of grammar and spelling conventions and patterns are fostered as an important part of learning to read and write with precision.

In the PYP grades 1-5 students will read a variety of narrative, informational, and argumentative texts.

Teachers incorporate inquiry-based approaches to scaffold learning and to target individual learning needs. JFK Library resources, and other carefully selected resources, are used to ensure students can locate, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to transfer information and create new knowledge.

Feedback is an essential part of the reading and writing process and will be used to promote growth in an environment where risk-taking and learning from mistakes is encouraged. Teachers will focus on the positive aspects of student literacy while using strategies to provoke improvement, for example using editing symbols to help them through inquiry. Teachers allow students to develop ideas and improve their conventions of writing by focusing on the process of writing, including collaborative and independent writing. Focusing on a positive process with continual feedback increases the likelihood of student growth and independence in the process of writing.

JFK encourages the exploration of language as another means towards deepening and broadening the students' perspectives and points of view during the PYP Exhibition. Students display their knowledge and ability to communicate through written, oral and visual language during the preliminary stages and the PYP exhibition itself.

Middle School

The Middle School continues to immerse students in both English and Spanish by providing daily instruction in both languages. In the MYP, subjects are intentionally scheduled between English and Spanish to ensure students have a strong command of subject-specific academic vocabulary. The intersection of skills, abilities and relationships leads to a perception of the world that encourages students to utilize their bilingualism to merge understanding of our global context with the ability to take action. The curriculum is intentionally developed to promote skills in the areas of reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, oral communication, presenting and independence. Within the MYP criteria, students and teachers work together to foster listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presentation skills in English and Spanish. Students continue to develop depth in their literary analysis, close reading and textual annotation to improve comprehension.

Instruction is differentiated in order to address students' specific language needs. In the MYP, reading is treated as an interactive process that requires the student to read for purpose, engage with prior experience, and evaluate the author's intent, techniques and effect. The MYP intentionally encourages the usage and exploration of different types and styles of language as the students choose, develop, and present their Personal Projects in grade 10. In this context, language (writing, reading, oral presentations, music, etc.) is a means to explore and communicate findings. Furthermore, students are

provided with opportunities to interpret and extract mathematical, scientific and technological information from written sources that include graphical representations of data, raw data and primary documents.

Within the context of the JFK educational experience, students study both English and Spanish as Language A in the MYP and in the DP.

High School

In High School, Students receive instruction in both English and Spanish in different subjects in each grade level to prepare students to achieve the IB Bilingual Diploma at the end of 12th grade. To be awarded a bilingual diploma, the completion of two languages selected from group 1 with the award of a grade 3 or higher in both languages is needed. All students entering the full DP will study:

- Language A: Literature (Spanish) at High Level
- Language A: Language and Literature (English) at High Level

Language is a key factor in determining student success in the IB Diploma program. Student proficiency in language allows students to: express opinions, access research material, actively participate in class, think critically, and to achieve their potential in all academic disciplines.

Students are encouraged to research and work independently in their language of choice to deepen their understanding and appreciation of their own language while actively pursuing reading opportunities in their second language.

Students will partner with the teacher to gain explicit understanding of literary genres and the importance of critical reading skills and comprehension. The students will also actively engage in writing exercises that demonstrate an understanding of the skills inherent in the various forms of composition. The main writing genres are: instructional/procedural; narrative; explanations; information reports; persuasion; and recounts.

Feedback is an essential component of developing purposeful speakers, readers and writers. During the process of developing literacy skills, timely and actionable feedback will ensure student understanding and growth. Teachers emphasize to students that organizing and planning leads to a refined product, thus adequate time needs to be scheduled for students to review and edit their written work. Teachers receive professional development on effective feedback and, as a result, they conference with students, and provide opportunities for self, peer and teacher assessment.

SWAS

The SWAS (School Within a School) program is a sheltered language program where international students learn academic English and/or Spanish. The program supports students who are new to Mexico by acting as a safe place to explore language as they learn academic content. SWAS serves as a temporary support, with students joining the mainstream classes as soon as they demonstrate the necessary level of language proficiency.

The SWAS program ensures all of its students have access to the IB by aligning itself with JFK's vision for learning. SWAS teachers implement lessons based on the unit planners from the mainstream classes to allow students to learn language, about language, and through language. Newcomer students access the rigorous academic programs by using their first language and through scaffolding and differentiated instruction in the target language. A strong emphasis is placed upon monitoring student progress in the four areas of language: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

While enrolled in SWAS, students are integrated into the regular classes by attending all Specials classes (Art, Music, P.E., etc.) with their groups. A co-teaching model is employed in first grade so that SWAS students can be completely integrated into all core classes. For social and integration purposes, all Elementary SWAS students attend Morning Meetings with their groups.

In some cases, for High School foreign students, SWAS offers the *SWAS Online Program*, which is an all-English hybrid language program that provides instruction in core academic courses in English. The instruction is either in the mainstream classroom or online.

The SWAS Program has created a transition process to determine when a student is ready to exit the SWAS program. The decision of when to begin a student's transition process is determined on an individual basis by looking at the whole student. Both their language proficiency level as well as their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are taken into account as indicators of likelihood of academic success in the mainstream classes.

5. Individual language support and progress

JFK students are required to take standardized tests in both English and Spanish at given times throughout all grade levels. JFK continually monitors the efficacy of standardized tests in relation to the data gathered and the value of those tests for the JFK population. Currently, the Stanford Achievement Test is used to measure academic preparedness. The results of these tests provide data for teachers

to manage and adapt programs to suit the language needs of groups, and provide data to monitor progress for each individual student. These tests include tests required by the Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico in grades 1-9, the ITP TOEFL in 10th and 12th grades, and the PSAT in 10th grade.

Teachers use differentiated instruction within their classrooms to address identified needs of students. The vast majority of JFK teachers are bilingual and can use both English and Spanish to best support students when needed.

6. Library Media Center

The school has a well-equipped Library Media Center. The library staff provides support in both English and Spanish. It is a priority of the school to offer access to its collection of print and digital support materials in English, Spanish, and other languages, and all digital resources are available 24/7 both off and on campus. There is a growing selection of home language books in the collection and access to world news in native languages online. The library staff actively monitors admissions to ensure that there are books and materials available for students who speak a language other than English or Spanish. The staff is available to offer expert advice on book selection for leisure and school use, and for any other information needs.

7. Home Language Support

As a bilingual school, JFK provides home language support to the vast majority of its students through the English and Spanish programs. We recognize, too, that we have a segment of our student population that does not speak English nor Spanish as a home language. JFK teachers appreciate and support the development of a person's home language and culture; therefore, they will incorporate strategies that show acceptance of each student's cultural, social and personal identity. Strategies could include: knowing the student and their interests, modifying speech, ensuring the student has opportunities to collaborate with others, providing opportunities to read, reflect or research in the first language, etc. School-wide, JFK embraces multiculturalism and actively seeks to promote diversity in its clubs, activities and celebrations.

All written formal communication to families is provided in English and in Spanish.

8. Language Handbook Review

This Handbook is reviewed at the end of each school year by the Leadership Team. The changing needs of students, families and the community are to be included in the discussion.

Language for Learning: Best Practices

Common Learning Approaches that Support Multilingual Students

Essential Agreements

1. We believe that all students are individuals who acquire language differently according to their own learning style, ability, and culture; therefore, language acquisition should be addressed to the growth of the whole child, academic, social and emotional.
2. We believe that meaningful relationships form the foundation of successful language experiences. Therefore, we strive to foster cultural awareness among students, teachers and parents, and actively seek opportunities to celebrate international mindedness through language.
3. We believe that all teachers are language teachers who promote communication, integrate skills, and actively involve students in all phases of the learning process.
4. Inquiry is the main vehicle through which students learn language, about language and through language
5. We will value and use the diversity of languages, cultures and perspectives to establish a culture of inclusion and diversity.
6. We will ensure that language learners practice their language skills in a lively, interactive environment that is supportive of both their cognitive and emotional development.
7. We will foster an appreciation of literature and language that promotes critical thinking and encourages open discussions.

8. We will provide learning environments where students are exposed to the communicative functions of the language in a meaningful context with real-life applications.
9. We will respect the home language of each student to affirm identity, promote self-esteem, and enhance international mindedness.
10. We will create an environment where authentic learning experiences are emphasized and a culture of inquiry is nurtured.
11. We will promote listening skills, speaking skills and metacognitive development through targeted opportunities to participate in class and to present projects or assignments.
12. We will provide opportunities for the student to choose to use their first language to support, deepen and extend their thinking with an expectation that the final product will be in the language of instruction.
13. We will develop a culture of collaboration for students to lead class discussions, initiate clubs and/or other opportunities to foster a love for diversity and inclusion of all cultures.
14. We will foster a holistic approach to learning making transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary connections.
15. We will support the learners' cognitive and emotional development and will act as facilitators who guide students to achieve the extraordinary.
16. We will develop and expand our students' ability to express, represent, and understand thoughts, feelings and experiences of self and others.
17. We will encourage students to develop a reading-writing connection by incorporating structures and literary devices from their literature texts to their own writing.
18. We will differentiate instruction and assessments while acting with fidelity to the standards.

19. We will provide opportunities to construct knowledge through exposing the students to different purposes and audiences, as well as through the exploration of various genres.

20. We will consistently apply formal instruction on language and literature use that is progressively sophisticated and is used as a way of understanding self and others.

21. We believe reading has to be viewed as a priority, and this has to be reflected through active participation of staff, parents, students, and our community members at large in the promotion of increased literacy skills.

22. At every opportunity, we will give students choice and voice using multiple means of expression.

23. We will provide opportunities for students to understand and use technical language specific to different subject areas so that students recognize that academic language differs across disciplines.

24. We will develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through constructive and actionable feedback from self, peers and teachers.

25. We will communicate clear evidence that students' writing is highly valued and read through a range of strategies including displaying their work, peer writing conferences, and opportunities to present to various audiences.

26. We will foster the students' intrinsic motivation and natural desire to communicate through writing by focusing on purpose, audience, organization, style and tone.

9. References and Suggested Bibliography

Resources for Developing and Promoting a Culture of Multilingualism

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This version was reviewed and adopted on: March 2022

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**Feedback received from IB Coordinators and teachers from all section*