

Downtown Family of Schools

Elsie Roy Elementary
Lord Roberts Elementary
King George Secondary



LANGUAGE POLICY

Collated November/2023

School Language Philosophy

At the **Downtown Family of Schools** we believe that all education is language education and that all teachers are language teachers. Language is an essential element of self-expression and provides us with the means to communicate ideas and to process the world around us. The acquisition of language is an active process taught through authentic experiences with the goal of developing listening, speaking, reading, writing, presenting, and viewing skills through a culture of inquiry.

We believe it is important to acknowledge each child's cultural identity and background, to provide opportunities for students to maintain or obtain language skills, and to help students create a foundation of learning upon which to expand their language abilities in the future.

The Downtown Family of Schools' language philosophy and policy align with its statements on mission and international mindedness. The school applies its language policy with flexibility and empathy.

School Community Language Profile

The Downtown Family of Schools is an ethnically diverse community. Although English and French are the official languages of Canada, English is the predominant language of communication for Downtown Family of Schools families. Additionally, there are at least 37 other languages spoken as the first language in the homes of students - mostly Asian and Eastern European languages. The language profile of the school community is, however, much broader than the enrolment data on first languages indicate. Many students have complex individual language profiles and speak several languages, although they are often not fully fluent or functionally literate in these additional languages.

Language Curricula

Language of Instruction

English is the first language of instruction at the Downtown Family of Schools. As any other public school in British Columbia, the Downtown Family of Schools follows the provincially prescribed curriculum in English Language Arts from kindergarten to grade 12. The provincial English Language Arts curriculum for grades kindergarten to twelve (see Appendix A) contains a list of big ideas and core competencies at each grade, forming a scope and sequence for the teaching and assessment of reading and viewing, writing and representing, and oral communication.

Language of Acquisition

French is the language of acquisition from grade 6 to grade 10. The Downtown Family of Schools follows the provincially developed curricula in French from grades 6 – 10 (see Appendix B).

Mother Tongue

Mother tongue languages are critical in the language development of students and should be honoured. Where possible, opportunities are given for students to develop their mother tongue. The school practices an open-minded, flexible approach to students using a common mother tongue in cooperative activities and research. The library is also working to improve the selection of books in different languages to support students in their mother tongue.

Spelling and Referencing Protocols

Students and staff are encouraged to use Canadian (British) spelling conventions. MLA is the most commonly used system of referencing, though other referencing systems may also be used on occasion. School wide use of the on-line site MyBib allows for consistency in expectations around citations.

The Downtown Family of Schools makes adaptations for students with IEPs who have difficulty spelling due to dyslexia or other learning disabilities. These students are not penalized for spelling errors and may receive additional supports, such as the use of a dictionary or spell check program.

Assessment

In the MYP, the IB Subject Guides and their rubrics are used to assess language learning. Teachers provide students with task-specific clarifications and standardize assessment through collaborative planning. Students are assessed through both formative and summative assessment and are given regular opportunities to self-assess.

The Downtown Family of Schools reports to parents on the progress of students, including their language learning, a minimum of six times per year.

Standardization of Assessment (Not currently happening due to lack of Collaborate Time permitted by the District Standard Schedule)

All teachers in the DFS participate in standardization of marking. This on-going work allows teachers to identify common areas of weakness and develop sequential plans to help students master the needed skills. In year 1-2, teachers meet in grade groupings to standardize marking. In year 3-5 the standardization is done by subject area. All teachers of all subjects are actively involved in teaching language skills.

Provisions for Inclusion

English Language Learners (ELL)

Students for who English is not their first language and who are in the process of developing proficiency in English are considered ELL. ELL are included in regular classroom activities.

Also in high school, if a student's English skills are significantly limited the student is placed in 2 English Language Learner (ELL) classes in place of English and French. These students are evaluated throughout the year and placements are adjusted to move the student toward full integration when they are proficient.

ELL in the MYP:

At the school's discretion, ELL students new to the MYP may be exempt from Language B (French). Students are expected to use their extra time to further their studies, work on their mother tongue language, and improve their English.

The Downtown Family of Schools will make *adaptations* (the learning outcomes remain the same as for other students at the same grade, but assignments and instruction are adapted to help the student be successful) and *modifications* (the learning outcomes are modified to be different than for other students at the same grade level) on an individual basis based on the best interests and learning of the student. *Adaptations* and *modifications* are documented and reassessed on a yearly basis. These decisions are made in consultation with the student resource department.

Learning Differences

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed to assist students whom have been identified by school based team and deemed to need extra support to succeed. Please see the special education policy for a full explanation of this process. IEPs include a summary of strengths and challenges, a set of goals, a set of indicators by which the goals are measured, and a timeline for periodic review.

Acquisition of Language Resources

The Downtown Family of Schools designates funds each year to continually expand the language resources in the school. These resources incorporate a variety of languages taught in the school. Language resources are not limited to books or texts, and include digital formats. All students have access to language resources for school and personal use.

There is a written Selections Policy for all the librarians to consider, a brief summary of which can be found in Appendix C.

Vancouver Board of Education Policy on Language

The Vancouver Board of Education recognizes the role of language in learning. The Vancouver Board of Education values language learning opportunities and affirms the importance of the learner’s first language. The Board also recognizes the power of language to create inclusion or exclusion.

The Vancouver Board of Education is committed to creating a climate of respect for the linguistic diversity of the community and language that honours and creates inclusion of all and shall:

- continue to recognize and value the importance of first language(s) and prior educational experiences of students;
- support the development and implementation of additional language programs;
- develop communication strategies that will assist and inform parents in their first language about their children’s progress;
- ensure that all efforts are made to use inclusive and welcoming language that respects the racial, cultural and religious diversity of its communities.

Language Policy Review

The language policy of the Downtown Family of Schools must be dynamic and therefore needs regular review. It is intended to be a living document that “can evolve with the changing needs of the school population.” As such, the policy will be reviewed and updated regularly and as the needs of the school community change over time.

The review and revision of the language policy will be a collaborative effort that involves different groups of stakeholders, including but not limited to teachers, teacher-librarians, counsellors, coordinators, and heads of school. The views and input of students, parents and other important members of the school community will be valued and used to steer the revision of the language policy.

Communication of the Language Policy

The language policy will be published on the school websites of the Downtown Family of Schools.

Appendices

Appendix A – British Columbia Ministry of Education English Language Arts Curriculum

English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade :

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/english-language-arts>

Appendix B – British Columbia Ministry of Education Core French Curriculum

Core French Grade 5 to Grade 12

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/languages/courses>

Appendix C – Selections Policy for Library/Learning Commons

Guiding Principle of the Downtown Family of Schools Library

The philosophy of the Downtown Family of Schools' Libraries is to provide students with the human, print and non-print resources they need to become informed, knowledgeable young people who are globally aware.

To achieve this, the research/resource specialists, who are trained both as teachers and librarians, support and assist teachers and also teach students, equipping them with skills to locate, evaluate, transform and communicate information effectively and efficiently. By providing a rich variety of literature with an international perspective, they seek to foster an enthusiasm for inquiry, a love of reading for enjoyment, an ability to think critically, and a passion for making a difference as global citizens.

Considerations for Selection and Acquisition:

In selecting/acquiring material for the library, the following are taken into consideration:

- an ongoing evaluation of the needs of both teachers and students
- cognizance of the changing nature of the delivery of information
- the age of students, their maturity, their abilities, their differentiated learning styles, and their interests
- the various ethnicities, political views, religious views, and cultural beliefs held by the school community
- resources recommended by the selection tools available to librarians

Selections must:

- be of good quality
- be current and accurate, and of a variety of formats
- be balanced (maturity levels, genre, interest, point of view etc.)
- be appealing to readers
- satisfy the needs of teachers
- be supportive of IBO program and pedagogy
- be reflective of the characteristics of the Learner Profile
- contain Language A and B literature
- work toward including material which is in the first languages of our students
- include materials which have a global as well as a local perspective