

LANGUAGE POLICY



SUMMERHILL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Summerhill Draft Language Policy

Policy Statement

The Summerhill language policy is a working document developed by staff and administration and input from the Summerhill community. The policy is consistent with the stipulated principles and practices of the IB. This policy is intended to provide an overview and guiding principles for language learning at Summerhill which permeates the entire school curriculum through authentic contexts in a culturally rich and diverse environment. Our policy is a statement of agreement—one to which the staff and the Summerhill community are asked to commit to so our school can achieve its mission of empowering children to become confident, global, compassionate and respectful young people while ensuring a nurturing environment that is safe and happy.

1. Language Philosophy

At Summerhill International School, English is our language of instruction and therefore the language of inclusion. To this end, students, teachers, administrators and parents are encouraged to converse in English whenever possible to ensure a sense of community and belonging.

Summerhill International school shares these common beliefs about language teaching and learning.

- Language is central to all learning. It is used to construct meaning, engage with and deepen our understanding of the world.
- Language is best learned in an authentic context and is part of the children's daily lives.
- All teachers are language teachers. As such, language learning is a shared responsibility of all teachers, educational assistants, parents and students.
- We value the mother tongue of our students and recognize that a solid foundation and continued development of all other languages is crucial for maintaining identity, cultural understanding, and empathy.
- The acquisition of more than one language and maintenance of the mother tongue enrich personal growth and help facilitate international understanding.
- Whilst English is the language of instruction, the language policy allows for students to inquire in their mother tongue to assist with understanding, inclusion and multilingualism.
- We value the importance of learning the host country's language and culture. This is reflected through offering opportunities to integrate Japanese cultural celebrations, stories and songs.
- Differentiation of tasks and expectations to suit students' language levels assists students' ability to access the curriculum

2. Language Profile

A) Language Profile

The Summerhill community is made up of a very diverse cultural population. Approximately half of the student population consists of host country nationals and the other half consists of many different countries. The main language of instruction is English. The majority of families at Summerhill have at least one parent who can communicate in the English language in addition to another language. Summerhill teachers also come from all around the world and many can speak a language in addition to the language of instruction.

B) Admissions

As English is the language of instruction, it is necessary for at least one parent to be able to communicate in English. Students who are complete beginners in English will be accepted.

3. Practices

A) Mother tongue and supporting English language learners

In keeping with the IB philosophy, appropriate use of the mother tongue is encouraged, valued, and supported at Summerhill.

Summerhill recognizes the need for students to use their mother tongue language to translate and clarify when the language of instruction is not clearly understood. The continued promotion of mother tongue languages is encouraged in the home environment; parents are informed of the necessity to continue the development of their native language(s). Supporting mother tongue languages provides an emotional component as the child maintains links to their own culture and their native language is valued. Academic benefits include the transference of linguistic structures and thinking skills from one language to another providing essential links and scaffolds for language proficiency.

English language learners are fully integrated into the classroom with an aim to acquire the language necessary for developing social relationships and accessing our curriculum. Students' learning needs are supported through differentiated learning engagements and groupings, whole school approach to language development, the use of students' mother tongue language to support learning and maintaining a low teacher to student ratio.

B) Pedagogy and the Environment

Teachers support language learning of varying levels of proficiency by:

- Using a range of strategies, tools, resources and assessments to support individual learning needs
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- Providing effective and timely feedback about language development to students and parents
- Incorporating the teaching and learning of language within the program of inquiry
- Providing opportunities for students to explore language through a variety of print and digital resources
- Committing to ongoing professional development in the teachers' own personal knowledge of language learning
- Promoting language development through a transdisciplinary curriculum
- Scaffolding learning to support students with building on their own learning

C) Language of host country

Summerhill supports the development of the host country language and culture by offering a Japanese culture programme for all year levels. Additionally, books in Japanese are available to all students in the library.

4. Roles and responsibilities

It is recognized throughout the language policy that each facet of the community holds responsibilities in the development and use of language and in the support of student learning.

To support the Summerhill language policy:

Students will

- Take an active role in language learning that is outlined in the Summerhill language policy.
- Be encouraged to seek a wide range of language opportunities.
- Do their best to develop a second language if appropriate.
- Have an opportunity to learn the language of the host country.
- Be responsible for using the language of inclusion.

Teachers will

- Be aware of the Summerhill language policy.
- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Model effective communication.
- Help students find appropriate language resources.
- Differentiate between student's language needs in planning, teaching and assessing student work.
- Provide timely and effective feedback about language development to the students and their parents.
- Use a range of assessments and teaching strategies.
- Understand their role that all teachers are teachers of language.
- Engage in active communication between students and their family.

Parents will

- Be aware of the Summerhill language policy and support it.
- Encourage, provide and support opportunities for their child to maintain their mother tongue.
- Provide resources and support for all areas of language learning both at school and at home.
- Monitor their child's progress and communicate concerns initially through the classroom teacher.

Administration will

- Ensure all parents have access to the Summerhill policy and practices
- Provide adequate resources and staffing for the school's language programmes.
- Ensure consistency across all sections of the school in the delivery of language instruction, assessment and reporting.
- Instigate a regular review of the language policy.
- Ensure that teachers are supported with professional development opportunities to keep abreast of current practices in the teaching of English as an additional language.

References

Primary Years Program: Guidelines for Developing a School Language Policy

Making the PYP Happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education

Acknowledgements

Aoba Japan International School

Adopted: December 2017

Reviewed: September 2025