

Language
and learning

Inclusive
education

Global
engagement

Multiple
programme schools

Learning stories from the IB continuum share examples of good practice from IB World Schools in order to promote inquiry, action and reflection by educators and school learning communities. School samples in this series represent a range of development and application of IB programme standards and practices.

A learning story about how a school's language policy supports multilingualism in a culturally diverse community

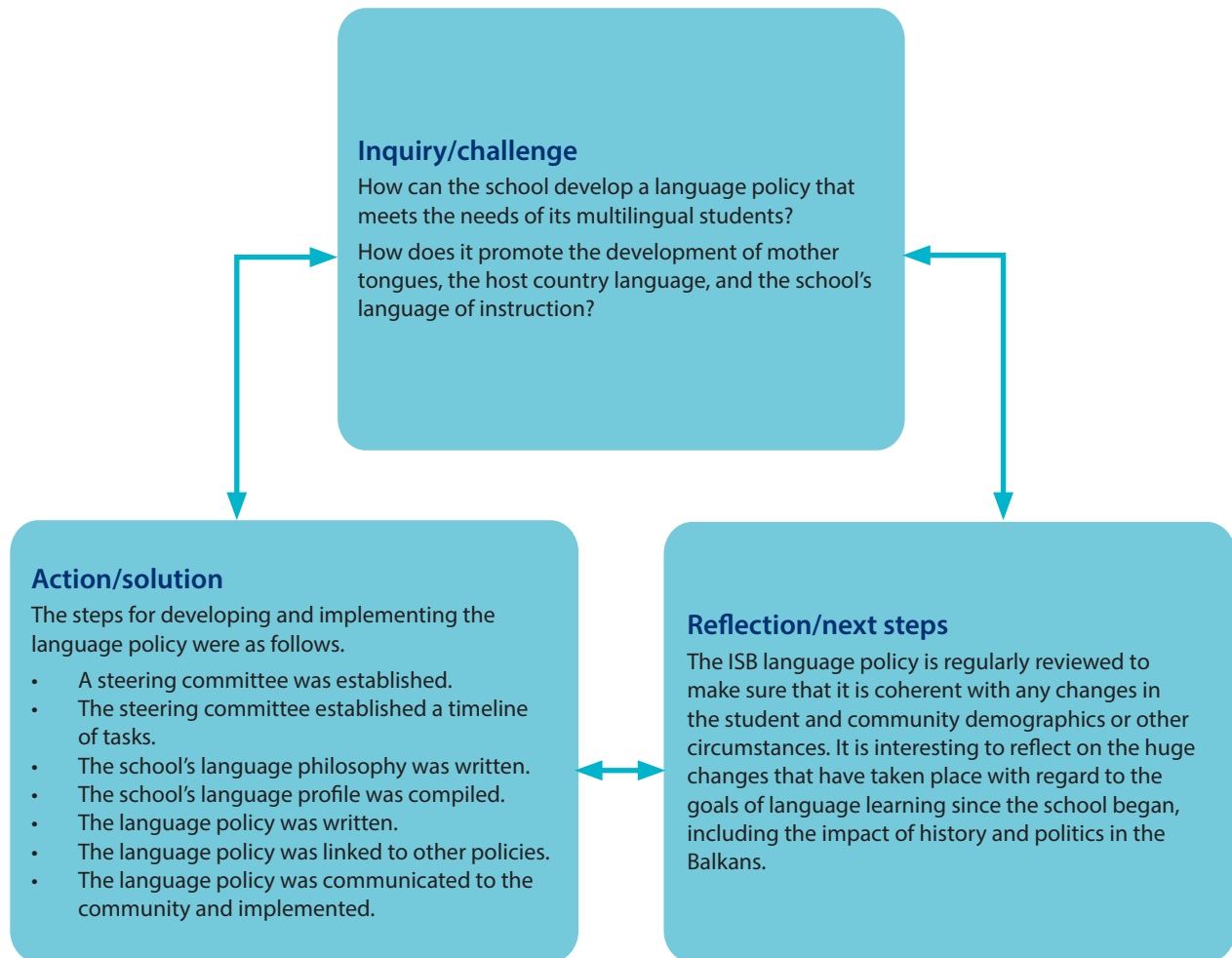
Background information

The International School of Belgrade (ISB) was founded in 1948 in the former Yugoslavia by the wife of the British Ambassador, Lady Peake. The "Foreign Colony School" was housed in two rented rooms at the American Mission; there was one staff member, assisted by mothers, who taught elementary children using British texts. ISB has since evolved to become an independent, co-educational international day school that enrolls students from ages 3 to 18. ISB became an IB World School in 2005 and offers the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP). The school now aspires to create a "collaborative learning community that inspires and empowers its members to discover their passions to be global innovators".

Cultural context

In 2012, ISB enrolled 365 students, about half of them in the lower school. Together the students represent 42 nationalities with a wide range of mother tongues, including the official language of the host country (Serbian). The school's language of instruction is English. The linguistic diversity of the community is a rich resource for developing the IB's mission to promote multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement. To ensure the potential for such development is maximized, the school has developed and implemented an effective language policy with clear learning goals and established pathways for the study of language.





Standards and practices

ISB's inquiry, action and reflection on multilingualism demonstrates growth toward the following IB *Programme standards and practices* (2010).

Standard B1: Leadership and structure

5. The school develops and implements policies and procedures that support the programme(s).

This is further defined by the following requirement for the PYP, MYP, DP and IBCC.

The school has developed and implements a language policy that is consistent with IB expectations.

Additional IB resources on the OCC:

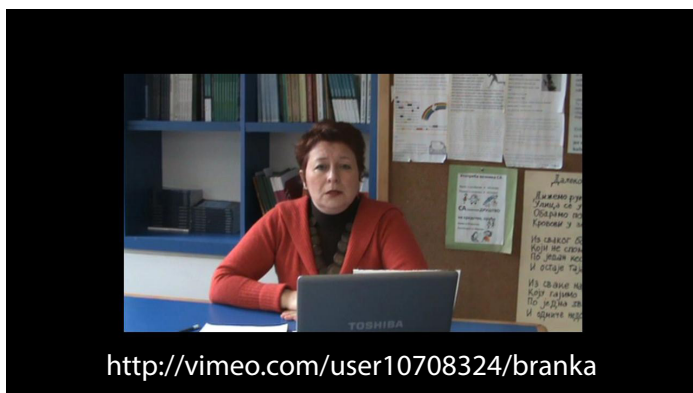
- *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* (2008)
- *Language and learning in IB programmes* (2011)
- *Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy* (2012)

On their IB journey, schools reflect and report on their implementation of these standards for programme authorization and ongoing programme evaluation.

Highlights

ISB staff talk about the development and implementation of their school language policy.

Branka Sreckovic-Minic is the IB MYP and DP coordinator.



The International School of Belgrade is a PYP, MYP, DP school of 374 students from early years to grade 12. Our school language policy covers the needs of all three programmes. In the process of creating this policy, we formed a steering committee which included language *A* teachers, mother tongue teachers, foreign language teachers and EAL teachers, plus an administrator and IB coordinators.

We came up first with an agreement about the timeline and steps to follow. We established the language policy steering committees in which we have continued to do the work. We wrote the school's language philosophy and we reviewed the current language situations and practices to compile the school's language profile. We wrote the language policy and finally we made the language policy a working document. We reviewed the whole process and linked the language policy to other documents like entrance procedures and exit procedures. We finally communicated the whole language policy to the community.

As for the host country language and its instruction at the PYP, MYP and DP levels, the instruction is built into the regular school day and is taught by full-time, qualified employees. MYP and DP students have 85 minutes of block class every other day and for those a mother tongue students, this is not an optional class. These students therefore have two *A* classes at the MYP and DP levels. The government legislation on language was never a dictating factor in our situation. But it took us some time to build up the culture in our student and parent population about the importance of maintaining the students' mother tongue. So in a way we can say the guiding idea was not the legislation but the alignment of the school's educational belief with the IB philosophy.



As for the other mother tongues, at the PYP and MYP levels this is not part of regular timetables and instruction is organized after school. At the DP level, besides the English and host country A courses, we organize either another A course taught by part-time teachers and funded by parents or self-taught languages. The part-time teachers participate and contribute to curriculum planning and have [access to all] school in-service professional development. Self-taught tutors are either hired by the school or by the families, and they are coordinated by a self-taught coordinator and the DP coordinator.

Divna Stakic is the PYP EAL (English as an additional language) teacher and mother tongue coordinator.

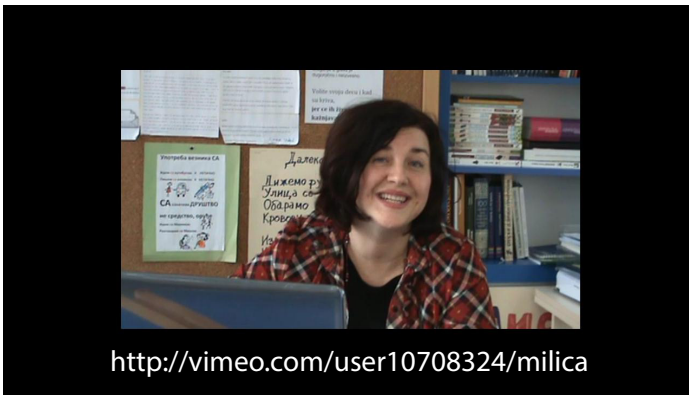


I initiated the after school mother tongue programme in August 2009 and the programme has been continuously growing. Now more than 40 lower and middle school students who do not have Serbian or English as their mother tongue language stay after school once or twice a week and enjoy studying in their native language.

The school provides organizational backup, selects teachers, allocates classrooms and helps deal with any issues or problems that might occur. The mother tongue coordinator offers guidance or assistance in planning the mother tongue curriculum in line with the IB philosophy. Mother tongue teachers are familiar with their national curriculum; however there is no attempt on their side to teach their national curriculum due to the nature of IB programmes and time constraints.

Wherever possible, qualified teachers are employed. The mother tongue programme would not be possible without continued parent support. Many of them are fully aware of the importance of maintaining the first language at home and furthermore are encouraged to buy books and to read with their children in their first language. Parents also strongly support the programme as they provide financial support; mother tongue teachers work privately and are paid directly by the parents.

Milica Jovic is the MYP Serbian A teacher.



The aim of the MYP mother tongue language course is the development of linguistic skills for students whose mother tongue is Serbian. The most common type of student in this course does not come from the national school system so these students' knowledge is generally at a somewhat lower level. Our goal is to raise the language proficiency of these students so that they can take Serbian as an A language in the DP.

The MYP Serbian language teachers teach the language A curriculum and students study language and literature connected to history and cultural studies.

The implementation of mother tongue is significant for the development of a student's personality and identity. It gives the students confidence in using their mother tongue and their overall knowledge of concepts is increased. By learning about local history, they understand the history of the region and the role of their nation in the world community. When studying national music and poetry they can also transfer concepts to other learning. They don't only read and study works of national writers, but also study world literature in translation to gain insight into the interconnectedness of all nations in the world. Especially students in years 4 and 5 or grade 4 and 5 gain insights in to world literature; for example by studying "romanticism" they see how it connects to and influences their own language and culture.

Our experiences tell us that students like learning their mother tongue and about their own culture. They feel fulfilled by being able to communicate in two languages at an almost equal level. The challenge is the amount of work, as these students have more to read and complex tasks to complete in two languages. Particularly challenging is addressing fossilised forms of the language and then developing higher level vocabulary because the students are not sufficiently exposed to academic language in their mother tongue. Families need to take part to help to gradually overcome this difficulty. It is a long term process. There are also extra curricular activities to help students bond with their mother tongue culture. Some of their favourites include theatre visits and and field trips around Serbia.



ISB, in line with the IB, offers an international education that promotes intercultural understanding and the ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language. The rich development of language and literacy for all learners is an essential element of all three IB programmes at ISB.

ISB recognizes that language acquisition and development play a crucial role in each student's personal development. In addition to promoting cognitive growth, language is an important factor in sustaining a student's cultural identity and intercultural understanding. Therefore, ISB promotes foreign language learning and mother tongue learning in addition to English.

English is the language of instruction at ISB, and therefore, has priority in the school's language programme. In order to enable all students in the school to access the curriculum in a manner that allows them to benefit fully from their education and to reach their full potential, ISB provides the English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme for all students for whom English is not their mother tongue.

ISB recognizes that learning a second language is a developmental process that occurs over time.

Mother tongue

ISB introduced the Serbian MT program in 2005, thereby recognizing the importance of maintaining and further developing a child's mother tongue while they acquire a second or third language. ISB contends that a strong foundation in one's mother tongue facilitates success in learning a second language. Serbian MT is mandated as a language choice for all Serbian mother-tongue students (grades 1 through 10), and is strongly recommended as the group 1 course selection in grades 11 and 12.

Additional information

<http://www.isb.rs/isb/>

