Language Policy at the International School of Iceland

The mission of ISI is to create an adaptive environment that is academically stimulating and supportive. As an international program with an English and Bilingual Stream, we value multilingualism and encourage international-mindedness.

Our vision is to create a dynamic community of confident, creative, and respectful learners.

The International School of Iceland's guiding statements are the foundation for our language policy. As language forms the basis for all learning, this policy is critical for helping the school to achieve its guiding statements.

We believe that:
- All members of the International School of Iceland community are language teachers and learners.
- Language is the principal method of communication and learning, so we encourage language learning as a life-long process, promoting academic and social growth.
- Language helps us develop and value our own identity.
- Language allows us to communicate effectively and be active members of our communities.
- Each student has different language needs, both in and out of the classroom.
- Language learning gives you a new way of seeing the world and can be the basis for global citizenship; it allows students to see other cultures from a new perspective and develop an international mindset.
- Language learning is challenging, requiring students to be willing to make mistakes, persevere and take the initiative.
- Language learning can make you comfortable with failure and can be one more step toward a growth mind-set.

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Language Overview at ISI

Our Story: English Medium School - Bilingual School - IB MYP program

ISI has its roots in the American Embassy School and was originally created to serve the needs of the local diplomatic community. When the school transitioned into an international school in 2004, the student body reflected the small globally mobile community: families working in Iceland for 2-3 years in the foreign service, university or business community. These families were seeking an English-speaking program for their children.

Over the next few years the school grew and the student body changed, with more and more students living in Iceland on a permanent basis. In 2008, to respond to these changes, a Bilingual Stream was created. The Bilingual Stream is based on a dual language immersion model, as developed by Elizabeth R. Howard and Donna Christian at the Center for Applied Linguistics (www.cal.org). The original English medium program remained and was renamed The English Stream.

As ISI transitions to the IB MYP program, curriculum changes will take place in several areas, including language learning, to better reflect the IB program model. ISI will not offer a bilingual option to students in the MYP program. Language A, Language & Literature, will be English and Language B, Language Acquisition, Icelandic. The level of Icelandic will depend on the students´ levels of proficiency. Furthermore, ISI will explore the possibility of offering independent study for those students with different linguistic backgrounds and needs. "A language policy needs to be dynamic and flexible so that it can evolve with the changing needs of the school population." (pg. 1, Guidelines for developing a school language policy).

Instructional Overview

English Stream	Grades K-6	Bilingual Stream
English is the medium of instruction		English-Icelandic. Dual Language Immersion Program
Language A: English		Language A: Icelandic
Language B: Icelandic Language and Culture.		Language A: English

Typical Student Profiles: A Variety of Language Backgrounds

Typical student profiles at our school include:

- Students who come from a third country, e.g. Belgium and arrive at school with little or no English skills. Typically these students are strong in their native language.
- Students who come from the host country, Iceland, with little or no English and are native Icelandic speakers. These students are usually quick to pick up English and will often, as they become more competent, prefer English to Icelandic. This is especially evident in upper primary.
- Students in the English stream who have some foundation in English (BICS) but lack CALP, cognitive academic language proficiency.
- Students in the bilingual stream who speak a third language at home, eg Russian and have limited English and Icelandic skills.

ISI Language Diversity

The International School of Iceland is proud of its diverse student body. This naturally leads to different linguistic needs as students are native speakers, new to the language and with a broad range of linguistic proficiency.

English Stream at ISI
English-medium program: All classes, except for foreign language classes, are taught in English. Communication with parents is in English.
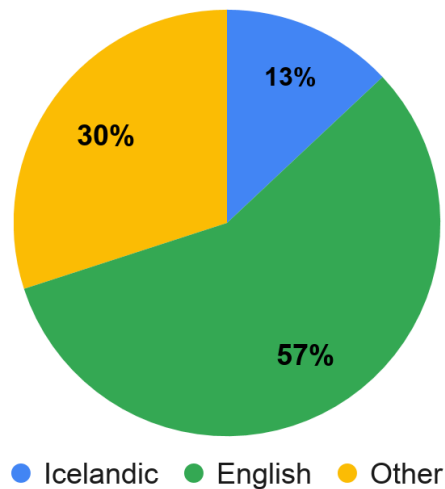
Bilingual Stream at ISI in K-6 grade.
Bilingual program: Core content classes (math, IPC, etc.) are taught in Icelandic and English. Parent communication is in both languages.
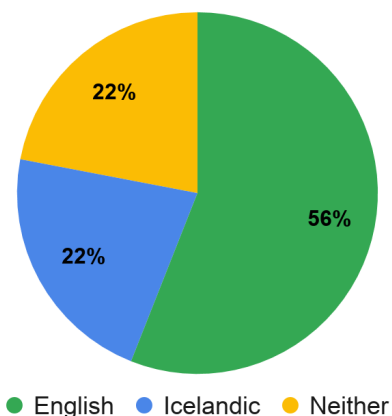
ISI Language Diversity 2020-2021 school year

Grades	Number of students	Primary language is Icelandic		Primary Language is English		Primary language is neither Icelandic nor English	
		total	%	total	%	total	%
Kindergarten	9	1	11%	6	67%	2	22%
grade 1	8	0	0%	5	63%	3	38%
grade 2	5	0	0%	2	40%	3	60%
grade 3	10	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%
grade 4	8	3	38%	3	38%	2	25%
grade 5	11	0	0%	5	45%	6	55%
grade 6	13	2	15%	8	62%	3	23%
grade 7	12	3	25%	9	75%	0	0%
grade 8	5	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%
grade 9	11	1	9%	6	55%	4	36%
grade 10	12	1	8%	6	50%	5	42%
	104	**14**	**13%**	**59**	**57%**	**31**	**30%**

Primary languages at ISI

- Icelandic 13%
- English 57%
- Other 30%

Bilingual Stream

- English 56%
- Icelandic 22%
- Neither 22%

English stream

- English 57.4%
- Other 42.6%
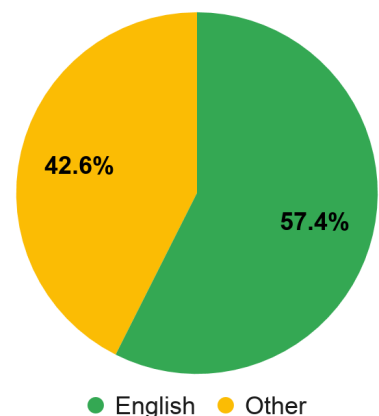
Language Learning for MYP students

Language Profile

Student language profiles are created for all students in the IB MYP. Various assessment tools are used to create a language profile, including parent surveys, MAP scores, student interviews and other formal and informal assessments. Upon entry to ISI, parents/students are required to complete a language profile form to indicate the student's proficiency levels in English, Icelandic, the student´s mother tongue and any additional languages. If needed, the school´s language teachers and speech & language pathologist are consulted to determine correct placement.

Progression of Language Learning

While Language Acquisition follows distinct phases, students' rate of acquisition varies greatly from individual to individual. Therefore, language teachers assess all language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) regularly. Teachers differentiate through scaffolding or task extensions as required in order to help the students reach the Language Acquisition objectives in the appropriate phases. Formative and summative assessments in the classroom provide information on language development and are modified and differentiated as appropriate.

English Language Acquisition

Placement tests consisting of written and oral tasks are used to determine the correct phase. Transition to the next phase is based on the teacher's judgment, in consultation with the school´s language specialist . Students who obtain a proficiency level beyond the proficient phase, make a transition to the English Language Literature course. Students may be placed at a different level course, at any point in the school year, at the teacher's discretion.

Icelandic Language Acquisition

Icelandic, the language of our host country, is compulsory for all students in MYP. This helps our students to integrate into the local community and to develop their understanding of Icelandic culture.

Phases emergent to proficient are offered for Icelandic in all MYP year groups. Placement tests, consisting of written and oral tasks, are used to determine the phase. The school will utilize [ACTFFL´s inquiry-based](#) framework and units.

For students in the emerging phase, lessons are designed to provide an enjoyable introduction to the language and culture. Students also learn the basic language necessary for simple day-to-day communications. Students who are capable and/or proficient in Icelandic study Icelandic at a higher level. .

Support for students who are not proficient in the language of Instruction

ISI takes various measures to accommodate the needs of students who are in the process of acquiring a new language. Students who are ELL may be identified prior to admission or once admitted.

Teachers and support staff utilize good ELL practices and differentiated approaches. This begins with the development of basic interpersonal communication skills. Teaching is targeted to support the development of language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Teachers monitor and track the progress of students over time. The goal is to increase students´ academic language development so they can fully access the curriculum.

Examples of practical language support measures for students developing their basic interpersonal communication skills:

- Drawers and resources are labelled in multiple languages. Daily routines, like the date and weather, are in multiple languages. Visuals are used to communicate ideas through pictures.
- Students and teachers utilise the support of Google Translate.
- The teacher works with students daily on phonics and simple comprehension activities.
- Student vocabulary books are used at home and at school.
- Involving students in the class novel study by working with home.
- Teachers make recommendations for useful language learning websites to use at home.
- Use of native speakers (staff, students) to assist in communication and to check for comprehension
- One-on-One or small-group pull out for younger students; teacher conferences with older students.
- Use of curriculum which has been designed for language learners, eg Letterland, Total Physical Response, games, etc.

Support for Mother Tongue Learning.

ISI provides information on their website about Mother Tongue teaching groups.
We recommend that families with plurilingual children make use of the resources.

In school: We encourage children to read for pleasure in their mother tongue.
Students are encouraged to lead student-led conferences in the home language.

Key Definitions

Primary language: the language most used, most native tongue like.

Bilingual: ability to receive and communicate ideas in two languages, and switch between both in a seamless manner, *without translation.*

Bi-literate: ability to read and write in both languages to an approximately equal degree of proficiency.

Bi-numerate: ability to perform mental calculations in the language being used.

Whole School Language Learning

Early and Upper Primary Years

English Language Learning in K-6 Grade

Standards based: AERO Common Core Plus

Our English program aims to help students master the skills of communication while learning to value the cultural heritage of the language in a multicultural setting. ISI adopted the AERO Common Core Plus standards in English Language Arts in August, 2013. The standards and benchmarks for each grade level can be found here. In 2016, ISI formally adopted the World Language Standards for emergent bilinguals, including English.

Icelandic Language Learning in K-6 Grade

Bilingual Stream: Icelandic as a Mother Tongue (Íslenska sem móðurmál)

Students in the bilingual steam study Icelandic as set by the Icelandic National Curriculum. Students who do not have Icelandic as a primary language receive in-class support. In addition to Icelandic language classes, there is an emphasis on language acquisition in IPC in the primary years.

English Stream: Icelandic Language & Culture (Íslensk tunga og menning)

Students in the English stream take courses in Icelandic language and culture. Icelandic language and culture follows the World Languages Standards.

Middle Years Program

English Language Learning in 7-10 Grade.

In 2021 ISI will transition to the International Baccalaureate, Middle Years Program. English will be the language A and taught following the program outlined as Language & Literature.

World Language Learning in 7-10 Grade.

In the Middle Years Program(MYP) Language A will be English and Language B will be Icelandic.The medium of instruction for all other classes will be English. In the MYP program, the AERO World Language Framework, which aligns with the European World Languages Standards and the American Council of Teaching of Foreign Languages, provides a framework from which to build conceptual, inquiry based curriculum units.

Currently, Danish and Spanish are offered in the Bilingual Stream as an optional third language. Other languages, such as Chinese and Spanish are offered as after-school activities.

Assessments of World Languages in the Middle school are connected to the following areas of expertise.
-    Communication skills - 30%
-    Presentational skills - 30%
-    Interpretive skills - 30%
-    Participation and assignments - 10%

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