

Sir Wilfrid Laurier C.I.

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LANGUAGE POLICY

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Ministry Documents:

- *English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services, 2007*

TDSB documents:

- *English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services, 2007*
- *Teaching and Assessment Strategies to Support English Language Learners (ELLs), 2001*

IB Documents:

- *Guidelines for developing a school language policy, 2008*
- *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice, “Developing a school language policy” section, (for use from August 2015)*
- *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice, “Language options and language support” section, (for use from August 2015)*

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RATIONALE

The Ontario Ministry of Education and the TDSB acknowledge the need for language policies that focus on the development of literacy skills in the language of instruction and in first and second languages. The foundation of this policy, in Regular or IB programs, is the development of literacy skills in all subject areas and a school team approach to improve reading and writing skills in the language of instruction.

Toronto, Canada is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world, presenting our schools with a unique set of unprecedented challenges and rewards, especially in the area of literacy and language acquisition. The students of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) speak 75 different languages, 44% of the students speak English at home and 35% of the students are born outside of Canada.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI Language Profile

ELL	2%
Speak English and another language at home (according to the 2018 Student Census)	24%
Speak another language at home (according to the 2018 Student Census)	33%

Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI acknowledges the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of our students, the value of supporting language acquisition, the importance of mother tongue in developing literacy and building strong English language literacy skills in all our students.

The primary goals of the language program are to ensure that students:

- Communicate in languages other than English.
- Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures.
- Function as literate and contributing members of the community.
- Participate in multicultural communities at home and within the global community.

These goals include a comprehensive focus for instruction that takes language learners beyond the traditional understanding of language acquisition and literacy in the language classroom, and expands to literacy in various subject areas.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI, with the support of the Toronto District School Board, offers Language A instruction in English and also supports students with formal language instruction in French as a Second Language as well as offering Ojibwe. The Toronto District School Board supports IB and non-IB students with the acknowledgement of formal language instruction in languages other than English by granting international language credits. The goal of the language program of our school is to increase literacy skills in the language of instruction as well as support first

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language literacy where possible. In doing so, we will close the achievement gap for all students, including the under-represented minority population as well as our English Language Learners (ELLs).

The IB program supports the Ontario Ministry of Education's goal that all students will be familiar with the basic French language to support the goal of bilingualism for Canada and Ontario.

LANGUAGE A

The Ontario Ministry of Education and the Toronto District School Board have established policy to outline equitable approaches to meeting the significant challenges presented by increased numbers of students who are ELLs, as well as by the individual socio-cultural circumstances impacting each student's education. Our provincial and district comprehensive, research-driven, and progressive policies inform all policy at the individual school level. Presented here is a general overview of the policy related to language acquisition at SWLCI.

Classroom Practice

At Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute, we operate with the understanding that all future learning of our students depends upon them being literate in the language of instruction - English. For this reason, it is essential to provide students with ongoing frequent opportunities to improve literacy, to read a wide range of texts, to write in various forms and registers, for varying purposes and audiences, to speak both formally and informally on a variety of topics and in registers suited to their contexts, and to engage with and create a wide range of graphic texts. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of providing explicit literacy instruction and modeling, including the use of student exemplars, combined with a gradual release of responsibility ("scaffolding") to facilitate success in all our students, especially those struggling with learning issues related to literacy. In addition, we acknowledge the unique learning profile of each student and encourage the differentiation of instruction so as to provide each student with choices for how best to learn, as well as demonstrate their learning.

Assessment and Reporting

Assessment and reporting are essential aspects of the learning process. At Sir Wilfrid Laurier, we acknowledge the importance of providing our students with frequent, timely, and specific feedback. Assessment is most effective when referenced to specific criteria and against performance standards rather than measured against the performance of peers. We strive to provide a range of assessment for our students that fall into three main categories: assessment for learning (formative), assessment as learning (formative), and assessment of learning (summative). We also use strategies to increase student engagement in the assessment process,

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such as self and peer evaluation, as well as group marking and discussion of criteria found in rubrics, checklists, and other assessment tools. In this way, assessment engages students in an active learning strategy rather than a passive judgmental process.

Research and common sense indicate that parent involvement in their child's education is a deciding factor in the success of students, making it essential to create clear and effective channels of communication between parents, students and teachers regarding student academic performance. At SWLCI we have six mandatory reporting periods a year, and teachers are encouraged to engage in informal reporting to parents as much as possible. The school also facilitates a parent-teacher evening twice a year. Reports to parents generally consist of assessments based on the categories of knowledge and skills; and are varied in nature, administered over a period of time, and designed to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning. They are also appropriate for the learning activities used, the purposes of instruction, and the needs and experiences of the students. It is also important to acknowledge the collaborative learning relationship that exists among teachers and parents and students. Parents and students provide helpful information about educational history, relevant cultural influences, and much more. It is important for the teacher to learn from both students and their parents in order to provide the best possible educative experience.

Additional Supports

Language is central to all learning and therefore, in practice, all teachers are language teachers and all students are language learners. Furthermore, all secondary school students in Ontario are required to complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the equivalent Ontario Literacy Course in order to graduate. Therefore, teachers at Sir Wilfrid Laurier focus on language and literacy development in all courses. To encourage and support all teachers, SWLCI and the TDSB seek to facilitate professional development and leadership opportunities in the field of literacy for all subject areas.

Opportunities for cross-curricular collaboration are also provided and may involve such practices as whole school literacy activities and moderated marking. The school also has a literacy committee that addresses pressing issues surrounding literacy and facilitates and encourages activities promoting language proficiency in the school. Such activities include an after-school literacy course (open to students of all levels) with a focus on activities used to strengthen literacy skills, a literacy "Blitz-day" during which time teachers of students writing the OSSLT deliberately focus on aspects of the OSSLT in class to prepare them for the test, a grade 9 practice version of the test (including moderated marking by the entire staff), and some individual interventions for students who are most in need of literacy support.

The library is also an important resource to support classroom instruction. Teacher librarians in our school offer opportunities for team teaching as well as provide specialized lessons on

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research skills and essay writing. New acquisitions are chosen collaboratively with teachers and students ensuring that they relate to and support classroom instruction, and also reflect the genuine interests of the students. The library is also an important resource for technology, providing students with access to up-to-date educational and presentation software, as well as instruction in the effective use of rapidly emerging technology. Communication is evolving and we must keep pace with change.

ESL and ELD

The Ministry of Education has laid out a clear and comprehensive policy regarding English language learners in Ontario. The document, *English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services*, covers policy around board planning, reception and orientation of English language learners and their families, and initial assessment, placement, and programming. The document also outlines specific adaptations made for ELLs in graduation requirements, substitutions for compulsory courses, as well as methods of ongoing assessment, evaluation and reporting. Furthermore, ESL teachers have specialized qualifications and are positioned as valuable resources for supporting students and helping teachers to support students, as they transition from ESL/ELD programs.

In 2017-2018, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's student population spoke almost 50 different mother tongues. Other than English, the dominant primary languages spoken at home were Tamil, Urdu and Bengali. Laurier's ESL/ELD instructional program ensures that while ELLs are learning English, they are also able to "value and maintain their own linguistic and cultural identities, so that they can enter the larger society as bilingual and bicultural individuals." Curriculum materials and methodology reflect diversity, multicultural experiences and multilingual capabilities. At school, ELLs have access to a newcomer conversation club, specialized workshops, a variety of tutoring opportunities, and library-supported cross-curricular programming. Parents of ELLs are encouraged to participate in their children's education, by attending an ESL Parents' Night and by accessing a variety of community-based services. The strategies set out in provincial policy documents and employed by the school ESL/ELD department embody an equitable and effective approach to the pressing challenge of developing competent, literate citizens and ultimately creating a strong future for Canada and the world.

LANGUAGE B

Requirements

Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute offers International Baccalaureate (IB) Language B instruction at the Standard Level (SL) in French. Learners of Language B French develop

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language skills in four areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing, which is consistent with the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) requirements.

Students coming from an Ontario Elementary School will have had prior exposure to the French language before entering the IB program at the Secondary level. Generally students have participated in Core French (40 mins a day at the elementary level), unless they have opted to follow the Extended French or French Immersion programs at the elementary level (which provide additional hours of French instruction). Students who come from outside of Ontario must demonstrate an equivalent French skill level to that of their peers in order to participate in the program.

Classroom Practice

In order to create an authentic environment that is conducive to language learning, teachers of Language B French at Sir Wilfrid Laurier C.I. establish an encouraging and predominantly monolingual environment within the classroom. These teachers also employ French with their students outside of the classroom (e.g. in the schoolyard, the cafeteria or the hallways). Having students use French in a variety of authentic situations, allows them to develop autonomy as language users. Furthermore teachers aim to provide students with useful vocabulary that will allow them to use the language in these everyday contexts. In addition, grammatical forms and structures are not taught in isolation, but are incorporated into these authentic environments. This approach allows students to become active users of the language.

Language B French teachers at Sir Wilfrid Laurier also employ a variety of ‘authentic’ written, visual and aural texts in the classroom to expose students to different forms and uses of the language. Examples include L’actualité, L’Express, La Presse, Le Monde, audio and video recordings from CBC.ca, as well as music, film and poetry spanning the Francophone world.

Additional Supports and Activities

At Sir Wilfrid Laurier, we have a student-run ‘Club Français’ which meets once a week at lunchtime. All students are welcome to attend the club, during which time students play French games, watch French movies and speak with their peers in French.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier French students also host a ‘French tutoring club’ where senior French students are available to tutor students who seek additional help in the language. This club also runs once a week.

In addition to the lunchtime clubs, we offer a variety of field trips to French students (including films, restaurants and the theatre) allowing learners to experience the language in authentic environments.

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Finally, Sir Wilfrid Laurier also offers a yearly ski trip to St. Donat, Quebec during which time students are immersed in the language and culture of Quebec and are thus able to use the target language in a genuine setting.