

The Philosophy of Language Policy

Okinawa Shogaku strongly believes that language education, both as one's mother tongue and as a foreign language, provide the fundamental tools for expression, transmission, and creation of all subjects not only in school, but in life as well. We place the highest value on giving our students the best opportunity to maximize their language ability.

A special emphasis is placed on foreign language education as a tool for success in a rapidly globalizing world. We see foreign language education not only as a tool to understand foreign cultures, but more importantly, a tool to understand one's self, and one's own country. We believe it is through understanding one's self that the path to success in a global world begins.

Application of Language Policy

In application of our language philosophy, we have closely followed the IBO principles and guidelines for language policy that states that a language policy must:

- recognize that, since language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication
- outline how students are to learn at least one language in addition to their mother tongue
- describe how the development and maintenance of the mother tongue for all learners is to be supported
- ensure that there are practices in place to provide inclusion and equity of access to the IB programme(s) offered by the school for all learners, including those who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue (the document Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes provides further details on these practices and should be read when a language policy is being compiled)
- describe how the language of the host country is to be promoted
- recognize that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff will require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching, and on how to make sure the language policy becomes a working document
- consider what resources and practices are to be used to involve parents in planning their children's language profile and development.

-Guidelines for developing a school language policy, IBO, Feb. 2014

Our language policy at Okisho seeks to integrate language learning within the larger perspective of applying language in order to increase the student's understanding of not just the language being studied, but the broader application of using language as the keystone of communication across disciplines.

Aims and Goals

- To emphasize that language learning occurs when students make mistakes.
- To emphasize that accuracy is not necessarily an indicator of competency
- To understand that students use language to clarify and extend their experiences.
- To understand that all the skills used in language are interdependent.
- To appreciate the richness and variety of language.
- To understand that language changes according to context, style, audience, and purpose.
- To share the responsibility for students' language learning and evaluation.
- To develop language to support student reflection.
- To be aware of and respect differences and similarities between languages.

Description of School

Okinawa Shogaku is a combined junior and senior high school. The IB Diploma Programme accepts students from both internally and externally. Additionally, our students and their families' backgrounds are diverse and varied:

- English background student (both parents)
- English background students (both parents) with some target language proficiency either as a result of an extended stay in target language country or attendance at a target language school
- Japanese background student (both parents)
- Japanese background students (both parents) with some English language proficiency either as a result of an extended stay in target language country or attendance at a target language school
- Multiple language backgrounds (both parents) "international" students who are English proficient as a result of living abroad
- Multiple language backgrounds (both parents) "international" students with no English language proficiency
- Multiple language backgrounds (both parents), and no English, "international" students with no English language proficiency
- Bilingual students (one English speaking parent and one other language speaking parent) who have acquired both languages simultaneously from birth
- Students (one English speaking parent and one other language speaking parent) who have acquired only one language at home but who want to become proficient in both languages
- Students (both parents speak a language not offered by the school) with some English language proficiency as a result of attendance at an international school

Admission to Okinawa Shogaku IB Diploma Programme:

Okisho seeks students from diverse socio-economic, ethnic, linguistic and national backgrounds, who will benefit from the challenging academic program and who will contribute to the life of the school and its community. However, in order to ensure a candidates success, we require that students be proficient in English to begin the DP program in eleventh grade.

Full Diploma students must take one subject from Language A as well as at least one additional language. The choice of language level depends upon the student's preference, level of proficiency and literacy in that language and his/her overall DP program.

Okisho IB DP Language Program

Okinawa Shogaku strives to make every student proficient in two languages. All students will have the knowledge of and the ability to use two languages, but not all of them to the same extent. Students vary in their ability to learn a second language; some will achieve functional proficiency in the target language while others will become truly bilingual. The acquisition of language must be seen as a continuum along which each individual student progresses at his/her own speed. As such, students will be encouraged to complete Step Eiken grade 1, and required to take the IELTS and the SAT exams to measure their progress.

All languages are equally valued. A large percentage of our teachers speak more than one language although Japanese is the common language used for all collaborations, planning meetings and communications within the school.

MOTHER TONGUE

In accordance with our language philosophy, we believe in 'Additive Bilingualism.' Rather than replacing the mother tongue with English, we strive to add English by valuing and supporting the continued development of the mother tongue.

Collections of books in foreign languages are available in the library for check out. Our librarian welcomes book donations as well as recommendations of book titles to be added to the foreign language books selection.

Multiple languages exist at Okisho. With the advent of the IB Dual Language Diploma Programme here in Japan, we are able to open the IB DP to even more students. For required courses in a language that we are unable to offer, we will provide institutional support for students who wish to take on-line courses to meet their DP requirements. It is extremely important to maintain mother tongue. While it would be impossible to support all languages, we strongly encourage learning in the mother tongue outside of the school setting. Whenever possible, Okisho will assist parents in securing a mother tongue tutor or program.

Student Progression

Matching a student's ability with their program of education is key to improving their language acquisition outcome. As such, we begin with an assessment of their current language level. For assessment we use:

- Junior high school grades

- STEP Eiken
- Okisho entrance examination results
- Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JPLT) (for students whose mother tongue is not Japanese)
- School entrance interviews
- IELTS
- SAT

For students whose mother tongue is Japanese and did not attend Okinawa Shogaku Junior High School, we require a STEP Eiken grade pre-1 or higher in order to start the IB DP in the 3rd semester of the 10th grade. For students who have completed junior high school at another school, we required STEP Eiken grade 2 or higher. We have no language requirement for Japanese for students whose mother tongue is not Japanese, but in order to be successful in the courses offered in Japanese at Okisho, they will need at least the equivalent of Level 2 on the JPLT.

Okisho International Baccalaureate Curriculum

A. Japanese

1. Native speakers of Japanese:

For native speakers of Japanese, the standard progression of courses will be Japanese for native speakers during the pre-IB period, and ***Japanese Language A (IB Category 1)*** during the IB DP. Candidates will choose higher or standard level based on consultation with their homeroom teacher, Japanese subject teacher, and their guardians.

2. Non-native speakers of Japanese with some Japanese ability (students who are not pure beginners):

For candidates who are not native speakers of Japanese, but have some level of Japanese ability, the standard progression of language courses will, in place of Japanese for native speakers, Japanese Kumon classes. At the end of the pre-IB period, their Japanese ability will be evaluated. After consultation with their home room teacher, Japanese subject teacher, and guardians, if it is decided they will be able to successfully challenge Japanese Language A, they will take ***Japanese Language A (IB Category 1)*** during the IB DP. If it is determined they cannot, currently, we are unable to offer take ***Japanese Language B (IB Category 2)***.

Currently, it is impossible for our students without the level of Japanese ability to pass ***Japanese Language A (IB Category 1)*** to complete the requirements for the IB Diploma Programme. This does not preclude these candidates from attending Okisho and receiving IB Certificates for courses they complete. These students will also receive a Japanese Graduation Certificate (Diploma).

3. Non-native speakers of Japanese with no Japanese ability (students who are pure beginners):

Currently, we are unable to offer Japanese Ab Initio for pure beginners of Japanese. As such, it is impossible for our students with no Japanese ability to complete the IB Diploma Programme at this time. This does not preclude these candidates from attending Okisho and receiving IB Certificates for courses they complete. These students will also receive a Japanese Graduation Certificate (Diploma).

B. English

1. Native Speakers of English:

Currently, we are unable to offer **English A (IB Category 1)** for native speakers of English. As such, it is impossible for our students with native English ability to complete the IB Diploma Programme at this time. This does not preclude these candidates from attending Okisho and receiving IB Certificates for courses they complete. These students will also receive a Japanese Graduation Certificate (Diploma).

It is important to note, however, that being in a bilingual household does not mean that a candidate is automatically a native English speaker. Our experience has shown that most students in this situation benefit more from taking **English B (IB Category 2)** than the category 1 class. Candidates in this situation will consult with their homeroom teacher, English subject teacher, and their guardians to determine the most effective course for their studies.

2. Non-native speakers of English with some English ability (students who are not pure beginners):

For non-native speakers of English with some English ability, the standard progression of courses will be English for non-native speakers during the pre-IB period, and **English Language B (IB Category 2)** during the IB DP. Candidates will choose higher or standard level based on consultation with their homeroom teacher, English subject teacher, and their guardians.

3. Non-native speakers of English with no English ability (students who are pure beginners):

Currently, we are unable to offer English Ab Initio for pure beginners of English. As such, it is impossible for our students with no Japanese ability to complete the IB Diploma Programme at this time. This does not preclude these candidates from attending Okisho and receiving IB Certificates for courses they complete. These students will also receive a Japanese Graduation Certificate (Diploma).

Acknowledgements:

Guidelines for developing a school language policy, IBO, U.K. 2014

Canadian Academy Language Policy, Canadian Academy, Japan, 2011

Atlanta International School Language Policy, Atlanta International School, USA

Hiroshima International School Language Policy and Programme, Hiroshima International School,
Japan