



Mar Qardakh School

Language Policy

Developed in February 2014.

Reviewed in December 2021.

Date of next review: December 2024.

Related policies:

- Admission Policy
- Assessment Policy

Mar Qardakh School Mission Statement

Our mission is to empower students for life in the 21st century by providing them with a holistic, international education encompassing academic, social, spiritual and personal development.

I. Philosophy

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this document is to clarify the understanding of the language policy within the school setting. The policy applies to the whole school and is to be communicated to and understood by all teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

Mar Qardakh School seeks to empower the whole person by providing comprehensive educational methods and means for academic, social, spiritual and personal development.

Philosophy and Aims

At Mar Qardakh School, we believe that language is a primary means of communication as well as a vehicle for promoting personal identity, cultural heritage, and overall learning. Language is a symbol of a culture and must be valued as a significant component of a student's identity and personality. The development of the mother tongue language is crucial for maintaining the student's cultural identity and personality. We believe that the acquisition of language is a lifelong process and is a basic component of personal and intellectual growth. It comprises three related aspects: Learning language, learning through language, and learning about language. Gaining proficiency in one language can be reflected in other languages, and gaining proficiency in a language promotes students' abilities to acquire competencies in other curricular areas.

Furthermore, we hold that language learning promotes international awareness and multi-cultural understanding and communication, and is therefore an important part of the mission of an IB World School. Acquisition of language and study of literature develop critical thinking skills which are fundamental to developing an internationally-minded person. Language learning must be fostered in all aspects of the school curriculum: all teachers are language teachers. We affirm that teachers must strive to recognise the language needs of all students and work to serve these needs within and outside of the classroom.

At Mar Qardakh, our language programmes strive to empower students to learn and use language effectively, appropriately, accurately, and confidently. We develop students' oral and written communication abilities, and enable students to develop and use language skills in a variety of contexts and purposes. We promote the appreciation, understanding, and analysis of literature, and encourage students to explore language and literature as a means of understanding the differing perspectives of people from other cultures. We develop students'

awareness of the role of language in all areas of the curriculum and in multiple ways of knowing. We seek to provide opportunities for enjoyment, creativity, and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of language and literature.

II. School Language Profile

The majority of students at Mar Qardakh School have Neo-Aramaic language as their mother tongue, and English, Arabic, and/or Kurdish as additional language(s). A minority of students has English, Arabic, or Kurdish as their mother tongue, alone or with one or more of the above languages as an additional language. The school community recognises and celebrates this linguistic diversity as a resource and a defining characteristic of the local context. It provides a rich foundation for developing students who are open-minded and internationally minded communicators.

III. Language of Instruction

The language of instruction at Mar Qardakh is English. Although not all students have English as their mother tongue, this is the language that unites the entire student population and school community. Furthermore, the community that the school serves has expressed the need and importance of having English as the language of instruction. The English language is acknowledged as a global *lingua franca*, and is associated with increased access to opportunities, information, and employment. Therefore, all courses, with the exception of additional language courses, are taught in English. We provide additional support for the students who do not have English as their mother tongue, as well as support for mother tongue maintenance and development (detailed below).

PYP: All transdisciplinary units are taught in English. Students receive English instruction each day. The English curriculum incorporates the four PYP language strands: Oral Language (Listening and Speaking), Visual Language (viewing and presenting), Written Language (Reading) and Written Language (Writing). English language learning, however, is not learned only during times of English instruction, but is an integral component of the entire PYP. All PYP teachers are language teachers and, as such, are expected to both model correct language skills and to identify and respond to the language needs of their students.

MYP: Language and Literature

English continues to be the language of instruction for all subjects with the exception of additional languages. In addition, all students take English Language & Literature. The Language and Literature curriculum has been developed in continuity with the PYP language curriculum and therefore builds upon the skills and language proficiency students have already developed in PYP.

IV. Additional Languages

Mar Qardakh School offers Kurdish language which is a governmental requirement and assessed by the government.

Student placement, learning and instruction of the additional language are based on the language acquisition phases and strands as defined by the IB. Because each student is a unique learner with a distinctive background and prior learning experiences, we recognize that students develop at different rates and may not always be in the same phase.

Placement of students when they transfer from one programme to another. When students transfer from one programme to another (PYP to MYP), they will sit for a placement test that will determine their phase of language acquisition.

PYP:

Mar Qardakh School incorporates Arabic as its language acquisition course in PYP, Arabic learning through stand-alone units of instruction and, when possible, connects the Arabic language curriculum into the POI and transdisciplinary units.

MYP:

Mar Qardakh School offers Arabic as its Language Acquisition course in MYP.

V. English Language Learning Support

As mentioned in the language profile, the majority of Mar Qardakh School students do not have English as their mother tongue. English, however, is essential for a student to access the academic curriculum and many elements of the extra-curricular program. In order to foster inclusion and equal opportunity, Mar Qardakh School offers various means of extra support and services to students at different stages of learning the English language.

- Pull-out classes – Mar Qardakh School provides an English Language support teacher that offers pull-out classes to small groups of students in need of added support.
- Differentiated resources and materials – Mar Qardakh School provides students with a variety of resources, including simpler texts as scaffolding for students not yet proficient in English.
- Language breaks – teachers utilize the language diversity present in the classroom by giving periodic “language breaks” throughout each class. During this time, students may

communicate with other students in the language of their choice to discuss any directions, information or lines of inquiry in order to ensure comprehension.

- Visual aids – teachers use visual aids to further reinforce key concepts. This helps all students, but particularly keeps in mind those students who are still at varying stages of English language acquisition.
- Supplemental language acquisition resources are provided to any students interested in more opportunities for English language learning.

Additional language and literacy instruction is arranged on a case-by-case basis for students with special educational needs or language learning difficulties.

Students are assessed by teachers twice a year, at the beginning of each semester, using the Mar Qardakh School English Language Proficiency Rubric. The result of these assessments, together with feedback from the students' teachers or, in the case of new students, feedback from the former school, is used to determine the extent of services offered to this student. Some of the language learning opportunities, like "language breaks" and the use of visual aids involve all students, regardless of their level of English proficiency. Students that are fluent in English can avail of these opportunities to help classmates still acquiring English proficiency, and/or to further practice acquisition of their additional language.

VI. Language Learning and the School Community

The great majority of Mar Qardakh School staff and faculty are multilingual in various combinations of Neo-Aramaic, Arabic, Kurdish, and English. The school recognises the value of multilingualism in our staff and its potential in developing international-mindedness in our students and teachers.

We believe that all teachers are language teachers. Therefore, Mar Qardakh School provides annual professional development to all members of our teaching staff in methods of differentiating and modifying instruction to support a range of language abilities.

To encourage clear communication among all members of the school community, Mar Qardakh staff members often fill the role of translator between the school and members of the school community, including parents, board members, and representatives of the local educational authorities.

Appendix I: Glossary

Additional Language(s): One or more languages learned in addition to the mother tongue.

Core Classes: In the PYP, the core classes of math, science, social studies, and the language of instruction must be taught by a single teacher (the homeroom teacher).

Levelled Reading Materials: Reading materials which increase incrementally in difficulty and skills. Students are given the reading level which best matches their abilities and progress.

Language Break: A classroom routine used by all Mar Qardakh teachers in which students are time to discuss directions or information with each other in any language they want, in order to ensure comprehension for all students.

Language of Instruction: The language in which all classes are taught with the exception of additional language classes. The language of instruction at Mar Qardakh is English.

Language Proficiency: Degree of competence or skill in a language.

Lingua Franca: A common language shared by a large number of people. English is currently the dominant global *lingua franca*.

Mother Tongue: The language learned first; the language spoken in the home; and/or the language identified with as a “native speaker.”

Multilingual: Knowing two or more languages; having any degree of proficiency in multiple languages.

Phases: Mar Qardakh School adheres to the phases of language development defined by the IB in reference to the language continuum for both PYP and MYP.

Program of Inquiry: In the PYP, the Program of Inquiry forms the core of the written curriculum, specifying which units of inquiry will be studied at which year level.

Pull-out Support: Providing individual tutoring to a student in lieu of all or part of a regularly scheduled class.

Scaffolding: A temporary strategy which allows learners to accomplish a task which would otherwise be impossible or much more difficult to accomplish.

Strands: In both PYP and MYP, strands refer to specific aspects, or components, of language learning. In PYP, there are three strands (oral, visual and written language), represented by four continuums (listening and speaking; viewing and presenting; reading; writing). In MYP, strands fall under four objectives: oral communication, visual interpretation, reading comprehension, and writing.

Appendix II: References

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Approved by:



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