



# ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME LANGUAGE POLICY



## School Context

As the region's only tri-county "commuter" school, Ada Merritt K-8 Center serves students from Kindergarten to grade 8 from across the culturally diverse communities of Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties. Ada Merritt K-8 Center's international curriculum is designed to expand multilingual education and to increase opportunities for students to become bilingual and bi-literate. All students at Ada Merritt participate in the International Baccalaureate program, and students have the opportunity to pursue dual language mastery by participating in the International Studies (IS) Spanish program or the nation's only dual language Portuguese Program.

## School Language Philosophy

Language instruction plays a crucial part in supporting the school's mission statement: *"a place where the study of languages and international perspectives are embraced and promoted."*

With a focus on preparing students to become caring world citizens as well as independent thinkers and learners, the school strives to nurture and build upon the existing cultural diversity of its population. Providing quality language instruction for children from a variety of cultural backgrounds requires from the school a strong commitment to foster internationalism and multicultural awareness, and to recognize the important role teachers play in developing language.

All teachers are language teachers. They provide students with learning opportunities that promote language development and the development of the whole child. Reading and writing are incorporated throughout the curriculum in order for students to flourish as literate individuals. Students see writing and reading as integral parts of their education, and not as isolated skills only used in the language arts or reading classes. The incorporation of writing and reading across the curriculum offers students ongoing opportunities to apply both skills in real-life situations.

## Admission Requirements

Since entry level into the school is in Kindergarten, very few openings are available in other grades. Students applying for those few openings are randomly selected from a list of all eligible applicants. In order to be eligible for the program students must take an admission test in Language B and demonstrate language proficiency at a level commensurate to that of other students in their grade level.

## School Practices

While the school language of instruction is English, we aim for each student to reach the highest level of literacy and proficiency in both Language A (English) and Language B (Portuguese or Spanish). MYP students have eight 85-minute classes in a four by four block schedule, taking four classes one day and four the following day. Two of those classes are taught in Language B: one Spanish or Portuguese language arts class and one Language B Humanities class.



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### **Language A**

MYP students take a Language A class of 85 minutes every other day at a standard or advanced level based on teacher recommendation and on their score on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in reading and writing. Teachers align the district-mandated objectives with the IB MYP objectives. They use their professional judgment as well as data collected and analyzed from district-mandated assessments to tailor their instruction to students needs (Interim Assessments, FCAT, Midterm and Final Exams)

#### **Language A support:**

- **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** receive differentiated instruction with their Language Arts class in order to develop proficiency in reading, writing, and listening in the English Language. ESOL students exit the ESOL program once they have reached a level 5 on the ESOL test.
- **Low proficiency students** who obtain a score of 1 or 2 on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Reading assessment are required by the school district to take an additional intensive reading class. This class provides targeted instruction of specific language arts skills, including instruction through the Achieve 3000 and Journeys web-based programs, to improve reading proficiency and support these students in the Language A curriculum.
- **Web-based support and resources:** students have access to a number of web-based programs that support instruction in Language A. The programs provided by the school district or purchased by the school are accessible from both home and the school: Accelerated Reader, Riverdeep, BrainPop, FCAT Explorer, and Reading Plus.
- **The MYP Coordinator** plays an important role in providing teachers support in implementing the program by locating and providing needed resources, and conducting in-school workshops.

### **Language B**

Most MYP students come from the school's PYP after receiving dual language instruction since Kindergarten in a 60/40 dual language instruction model (60% Language A/40% Language B). For many students, the MYP Language B is also their mother tongue. Native speakers and/or students who excel in their Language B class have the opportunity to join the International Studies strand of the language program and take an additional hour of language instruction in the PYP.

The MYP Language B courses allow students to further develop their language skills. Students who have reached a high level of fluency in the PYP International Studies strand follow an advanced Spanish Language B strand in the MYP, which leads to an Advanced Placement test in Spanish Language in grade 8. Other students follow a standard Language B level in Spanish or Portuguese.

The mandatory Language B Humanities class allows students to explore in depth the culture, history, geography and political context of countries speaking the language of their study.



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## Media Center

The Media Specialist provides assistance to teachers and students in the form of resources and help in the media center, which is increasingly well stocked with resources in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, as well as magazines, periodicals and audio-visual resources. The library serves as a hub for language resources, researching, information literacy, and classroom support and extension. PYP and MYP students have access to the library during and after school. Students are taught the importance of the library as a fundamental aspect of independent learning, and how to use it properly. Students are taught information literacy skills, including instruction on avoiding plagiarism and following the school's Academic Honesty Contract.

## Parents

The role of parents is vital in ensuring a positive approach and outlook to the study of languages. Parental awareness of the challenges their child may face and the support that they can offer is essential to the success of their child in the program. Parents are also encouraged to promote language learning at home and, if possible, engage with them in the various languages being taught. The parent body at Ada Merritt K-8 Center is very supportive of the entire school in implementing the IB programs.

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) takes an active role in supporting and promoting language skills by:

- Providing funds towards a reading incentive plans aimed at motivating students to read through the Accelerated Reader program
- Organizing book fairs with print material in all languages studied at the school
- Sponsoring multicultural events and field trips

## Review Process

The school's language policy is reviewed annually by the leadership team to reflect changes in district requirements and in the needs of the local community. All changes or revisions are shared with staff and parents as needed.

Ada Merritt K-8 Center offers a unique dual language program that provides students with an opportunity to become bi-lingual and bi-literate and to nurture and develop their mother tongue in a multicultural, sustained language learning context. Skills in Language A and B are reinforced throughout the curriculum as a vehicle for learning in all subjects and for developing internationally minded life-long learners and communicators.