



# ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER PRIMARY 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 Language Requirements

Students applying for Kindergarten and first grade are randomly selected from a list of all eligible applicants. Students in second through fifth grade must take an admission test in Language B (Portuguese or Spanish) and demonstrate language proficiency at a level appropriate to that of other students in their grade level.

## School Practices

While the school language of instruction is English (Language A), 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). Ada Merritt K-8 Center offers students the opportunities to pursue a dual language IB Education in English/Portuguese or English/Spanish. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade spend sixty percent of their day in English language instruction (Language A) and forty percent of their day in the other language of instruction Portuguese or Spanish (Language B). The focus of language is its application across the subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary program of inquiry. Language provides a vehicle for inquiry. The program of inquiry provides an authentic context for learners to develop and use language.



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## Language A-English Language Arts Instruction

PYP students take a Language A class of 90 minutes every day. English Language Arts teaching, however, is not limited to that block of time because additionally the students participate in writing instruction for a period of 150 minutes weekly.

### Language A support:

- **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** receive differentiated instruction within 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 receive additional small group intervention from trained specialists during their regular Language Arts class.
- **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.
- **Reading Coach** plays an important role in providing teachers support in implementing the program by locating and providing needed resources, and conducting in-school workshops. The Reading Coach also assists teachers and administration in testing students and monitoring their progress. She distributes, collects and analyzes district-mandated assessments and provides data chats to tailor instruction to students' needs (Interim Assessment, SAT, and FCAT).

## Language B-Portuguese/ Spanish Language Instruction

PYP students take a 90 minute Language B class of either Portuguese or Spanish every day. During this time students are exposed to the different components of the selected language: grammar, language development, listening, reading, writing, speaking and culture. The Spanish and Portuguese language teachers follow an inquiry-based transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. Both the English teacher and the Spanish or Portuguese teachers coordinate so skills and concepts taught in one language support those taught in the other language. Collaboratively, both language teachers review, revise, and update the units of inquiry and make decisions about which lines of inquiry will be covered by each language teacher to promote inquiry-based authentic learning.

All transdisciplinary unit of inquiry are taught in both languages (English/Spanish or English/Portuguese). The Spanish/Portuguese teachers adhere to the PYP Philosophy, include the five essential elements in their teaching, teach through inquiry, and plan collaboratively with the English counterpart teacher.



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Authentic literature to support the units of inquiry are selected and used throughout the year. Students make reflections, complete summative assessments and orally present information using the Spanish/Portuguese Language. In grade five when planning the PYP Exhibition, students are encouraged to select a language of their choice to conduct their investigations, exhibits, and oral presentations. The three languages of instructions English/Spanish/Portuguese are represented in all school activities.

**Language B support:**

- **Mother Tongue Support:** Native speakers and/or students who excel in their Language B class have the opportunity to join the International Studies/International Education strand to preserve and deepen their understanding of their first language. Selected students beginning in grade one attend classes after school four times a week for one hour and fifteen minutes.
- **Bilingual Paraprofessional:** The paraprofessional will assist low language proficiency students within the classroom setting. Instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of these students, allowing them to be valued participants in the classroom.

**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



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- Facilitate grade levels relevant literatures as well as non-fiction texts in support of each unit of inquiry

**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.