



ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME LANGUAGE POLICY



School Context

Ada Merritt K-8 Center serves students from Kindergarten to 8th grade. The school's international curriculum was designed to expand multilingual education across a culturally diverse community, to increase opportunities for students to become bilingual and bi-literate, and to nurture and develop their mother tongue in a multicultural, sustained language learning context. All students at Ada Merritt participate in the International Baccalaureate program. In addition, they have the opportunity to pursue dual language mastery at a higher level of fluency by participating in the International Studies (IS) Spanish program or the dual language International Education (IE) Portuguese Program. All language skills are reinforced throughout the curriculum as a vehicle for learning in all subjects and for developing internationally minded life-long learners and communicators.

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. To be eligible for the program students must take an admission test in their chosen Language and demonstrate language proficiency at a level commensurate to that of other students in their grade level. Students applying to enter middle school must demonstrate world language mastery at the level of the students in the 5th grade at the school.

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 English and in their chosen language (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 eight classes are taught in the target language: Spanish or Portuguese language class and one Humanities class in the second language.

The additional language class allows our students not only to reach a higher level of fluency in their target language but also to explore in depth the culture, history, geography and political context of countries speaking their chosen language, and to gain a greater understanding of global issues.



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English Language

MYP students take a language and literature class of 85 minutes every other day at a standard or advanced level based on teacher recommendation and on their score on the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) 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.

English support:

- **Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** receive differentiated instruction within their language and literature class to develop proficiency in reading, writing, and listening in the English Language. In addition, they must take an ESOL class until they reach the ESOL level 5 and are able to exit the support program.
- **Low proficiency students** who score of 1 or 2 on the FSA in reading are required by the school district to take an additional **intensive reading** class. This class provides targeted instruction of specific language arts skills to improve reading proficiency.
- **Web-based support and resources:** students have access to a number of web-based programs that support instruction in English. The programs provided by the school district are accessible from both home and the school. Programs such as Accelerated Reader, IReady, and BrainPop, support and complement classroom instruction.

Language Acquisition

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 second language is also their home language. Many are able to converse but lack the literacy skills needed for native proficiency. More advanced students in the language acquisition class have opportunity to join the International Studies (IS) strand of the language program, which culminate in 8th grade with an Advanced Placement (AP) course in Spanish and Culture. It allows them to study the language at a high level of proficiency. Our students' 100% success rate on the AP end of course exam is a tribute not only to the rigor of the middle school language program and the additional humanities class in Spanish, but also to the entire language program of the school, which provides extended language instruction in the target language.

Language Phases:

The MYP language acquisition builds upon language skills acquired in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) following a dual language instructional model. The MYP offers two levels of Spanish instruction:

- **Standard level** for less fluent students. They follow phase 3 objectives in year 1, then phase 4 in year 2, and 5 in year 3.
- More advanced students, those in the **IS program** will progress from phase 4 in year 1 to phase 6 in year 3.

Portuguese students follow phases 3-5 from year 1 to 3 with differentiated instruction within the classroom for more advanced students.



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Mother tongue support: Ada Merritt K-8 Center students receive extensive support in their mother tongue in several ways:

- Rich selection of books in Spanish and Portuguese in the Media Center and in the classroom
- Our partnerships with the Spanish and Brazilian educational offices and parent groups provide many opportunities for our students to use and reinforce their language skills: Festa Junina (Brazil), Focus Brazil events, Hispanic Heritage activities, visits from authors, artists, and athletes from Spanish or Portuguese speaking countries, plays and movies in the languages, etc.

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. Students also have access to broader and richer M-DCPS online resources available from school and from home.

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 with feedback from teachers, to reflect changes in district requirements and in the needs of the local community. It is shared with the school community on the MYP page of the school website at <http://adamerritt.dadeschools.net>.