

Language Policy*

A GUIDELINE AND POLICY DOCUMENT, 2019

Grassroots School

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Grassroots was established in 2011 as a Reggio inspired school, with its focus on holistic education provided within an inclusive set-up. Grassroots aims to be a warm, welcoming, and encouraging environment, in which all concerned share solicitude for the needs of the child. This in turn is the best motivation for any child to attend school and learn.

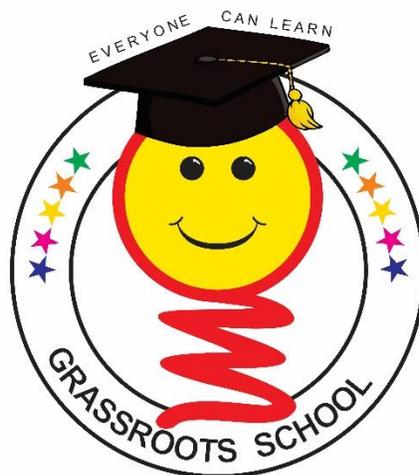
Our Vision

"Everyone can learn - just not in the same day or same way".

Our Mission

Grassroots believes education is a lifelong journey. The organisation aims to spark curiosity, imagination and love for lifelong learning whilst nurturing young minds to be caring, empathetic and responsible citizens of the global world.

To this end we prepare our children to meet 21st century challenges with creativity and confidence thereby building a peaceful and sustainable community through international mindedness.



Philosophy

Grassroots School, much like the IB, believes language is key, and the foundation to all learning. As such all teachers at Grassroots are language teachers and all students are language learners. Through language, our students acquire the ability to think, to learn, to develop social skills and values, and to acquire knowledge. It allows us to connect to one another, seek solutions to problems, resolve differences, and cooperate towards building a better community. Through language we appreciate the importance of culture, diversity, and sensitivity toward others, which in turn enhances individual growth and development. Language makes it possible for us to inquire, communicate, share and truly maximize our learning experiences.

Objective of the Language Policy Document

The language policy document endeavours to consolidate the philosophy and beliefs at Grassroots School regarding language and its implementation in teaching. It also aims to outline systems and strategies in place to support the development of English as well as advance and uphold the use of mother tongue in the school community. The main objectives are to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of adult and working life and to celebrate and communicate their achievements in the best possible manner.

Language: an overview

The main aim of the school language policy is to enable students to study in the language of instruction along with the regional and national language. The school has English as the medium of instruction, Hindi as the host country language, and Tamil as the state language that are part of the curriculum. The students inducted in the school come with a background of English language. From Grade 1, they learn and familiarize themselves with Hindi and Tamil and then study the language according to the ability and age level specifications. This is also mandatory as per the requirement of the state and national language policy. The school's language policy along with the inclusion of second language teaching and mother tongue language support, meets the needs of the student and reflects the principles of the IB-PYP programme. (As per the Programme, Standards and Practices of the PYP - organization section B1 20).

The overriding aim of the English language curriculum is to enable all students to develop an ability to use and understand English language. Since language is spoken and written, this means the fullest possible development of capabilities in speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are developed. English contributes to the personal development of the individual child because of the cognitive functions of both spoken and written language in exploratory learning and in organising and making sense of experiences. The language skills are integrated within the Unit of inquiry. There are fixed times in the schedule to learn the host country language and regional language, in this case Hindi and Tamil.

Additionally, the school provides support to students and their families to enable them to adjust to a new language, learning environment and culture.

- We promote maintenance and enrichment of the mother tongue by encouraging families to continue speaking, reading, and writing the language at home. We also recommend that families take advantage of the many mother tongue instructional opportunities available in our community.
- All aspects of our language programme require formal as well as ongoing informal assessments. These assessments are used to plan appropriate instruction and to evaluate student progress.

School language profile

To compile the school language profile, Grassroots School identifies the diversity of language needs for all learners across the school and this includes information on the languages of teaching and learning, the languages of communication used in the school and outside the classroom, and the range and types of mother tongue in the community.

Medium of instruction- English is the primary language used across all subjects as the medium of instruction. Nevertheless, the school hopes to support all children, specifically:

- a) Inside the classrooms/home rooms –English will be used as the medium of instruction within all Units of Inquiry and across all subjects. The exception will be in the pre-primary & Kindergarten classes where the students can use speak in their mother tongue and teachers can facilitate learning by translating into the mother tongue to help comprehend and express their understanding. The teachers can further use technology as well as print media to bridge and facilitate the understanding through a universal visual language of a concept, or sharing their understanding. These students will also be given the opportunity to use their mother tongue to demonstrate understanding during an assessment task.
- b) Outside the classrooms / home rooms- Students will be and are encouraged to communicate in the language that is comfortable to them. This will help us to create an environment, which will foster the development of Mother Tongue and to foster a multilingual community.

Language of communication a) Official language for written and spoken communication by all staff and management will be English b) Language of communication in classroom will be English with mother tongue support where needed (for young learners and children with special education needs) c) Language of communication outside the classroom- English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu or other applicable Mother Tongues (wide range of mother tongue languages identified)

Other language needs of the community. a) Interacting with support staff-Most of the support staff comes from local community. The mode of communication with them will generally be in Tamil. b) Interacting with visitors-Visitors in school come with diverse language

backgrounds. English will be used as the language of Communication. But we may also use other languages based on the needs and availability. c) Interacting with parents- Most of the Communication with parents will be in English. The school will also communicate in Hindi and Tamil based on the need of the situation.

Language Learning

Language embodies a complex web of connections that transcends the artificial separations of disciplines. When the three integral aspects - learning language, learning about language and learning through language, function together in a relevant context, they provide the most supportive learning environment for learners. It is the responsibility of the school to develop students' use of language, appreciation of language, awareness of the nature of language, of the many influences on language, and of the variety in and between languages and dialects. Students should recognize the transdisciplinary nature of language—they use language within and across the subject areas and in a way, that transcends them, both inside and outside the classroom. They should be encouraged to recognize that competency in language—and in more than one language—is a valuable life skill, a powerful tool both in societal communication and as a means of personal reflection. Furthermore, students should appreciate that language and literature are creative processes that stimulates the development of imagination and creativity through self-expression.

All students will learn subjects in the medium of instruction-English. Additional Languages are offered from Grade 1 and the students have to choose between the additional languages (Hindi, & Tamil). The teaching and learning of additional languages revolve around the planning, which in turn is based on the Language scope & sequence. The importance of concept over content and application of language is more important in the curriculum. However, if a student exhibits higher applicability/ understanding / recall of the fundamentals of the language, then he / she will be challenged accordingly. The students listen, speak, read & write in the language. The Language of instruction is a part of the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry because the school firmly believes that students learn language, learn through language and learn about language.

Support for students not proficient in the language of Instruction

Differentiation in language lessons is based on the requirements of the learners. All teachers respond to students' needs and may therefore provide individualized instruction guided in some cases by specific learning goals and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Teaching strategies may include working in small groups, using different resources with different levels of language complexity, as well as changing the level of questioning and tasks for individual students. Students may also have choices so they can follow their own interests or use a preferred learning style. The School also follows the IB recommendations on student placement.

Supporting Mother Tongue

The school recognises that mother-tongue development is crucial to a students' cognitive development, and general performance. The school aims to enable students to retain a positive attitude towards their mother tongue by showing acceptance of cultural identity, and encourages students to continue developing their own knowledge and fluency in their mother tongue. The school will recognise various mother-tongue languages by displaying the languages spoken by the student population, and in turn ensuring languages and cultural backgrounds are known and used as beneficial resources throughout school life and curriculum teaching.

The school will nominate mother-tongue teachers (or students where possible) to buddy-up with new students in the initial settling in process. These teachers will act as a resource for students, parents and teachers to allow the student to be as knowledgeable and confident as possible about their new surroundings and routine. The school will work closely with families to support and advise assistance for language needs faced by students leaning in a different language to the mother tongue. Students will be encouraged to demonstrate their mother tongue in school events such as concerts and assemblies, and to establish enrichment groups where they can teach their peers mother-tongue languages. The library personnel recognize the need to provide literature, both fiction and nonfiction, for non-English speakers, and this area will continue to be developed with the help and support of our parent body.

Implementation of the Language Programme

School-wide recommended practice:

- 1) We model metalinguistic learning strategies.
- 2) We encourage methods of teaching and assessment that enable students from diverse backgrounds to develop and demonstrate fully their language proficiency (see also Grassroots Assessment Policy).
- 3) We give ongoing feedback to students on their linguistic and cognitive development through observation and measurement strategies.
- 4) We hold high linguistic and academic expectations for all students.
- 5) We involve parents in the linguistic and academic development of their children.
- 6) We recognise and support students' linguistic and academic needs and strengths.
- 7) We create heterogeneous class groupings to ensure a broad language and cultural mix and to facilitate language learning.
- 8) We refer students who require additional support in their learning.
- 9) We encourage dispositions needed for life in an international world (e.g. empathy, flexibility, respect for others' languages and cultures through ongoing language study).
- 10) We nurture a global perspective of cultural events not only in our language classes, but also throughout our academic programmes.
- 11) We appoint staff from various cultures.
- 12) We address multi-cultural themes.

In the classroom:

- 1) Provide comprehensible input within the classroom environment:
 - Relating new material to students' life experiences;
 - Drawing attention to key specialist vocabulary;
 - Using a variety of assessment tools and implementing interactive group activities in an integrated curriculum;
 - Making high-level academic content instructionally comprehensible (through the use of contextualisation strategies such as gestures, visual aids, maps, graphs, manipulatives, drama, and songs);
 - Creating classroom environments that are discourse-rich and process-oriented (plentiful opportunities for students to listen, read, speak, and write through interactive strategies).
- 2) Support content-based language learning through instructional strategies:
 - We teach students to use active and **experiential learning strategies** appropriate for linguistically and cognitively diverse students.
 - We use specific instructional strategies for different kinds of learners and take into account their different backgrounds.
 - We teach and model **language-learning strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, and affective)** to enable students to become self-directed and self-regulated learners.
 - We integrate language instruction with content instruction (explicit attention is given to the **syntactic and semantic** features of language in the design of lessons).
 - We teach aspects of speech, word forms, language structures, discourse and writing conventions explicitly or in the form of **pop up grammar** as outlined in the **language scope and sequence**.
 - We consider **holistic performance** more significant than knowledge of **discrete linguistic items** (i.e. what students can do over what they have memorised).
 - We systematically keep track of the language acquisition of all students and use this knowledge to help students overcome difficulties and facilitate progress.
- 3) Promote inquiry-based authentic language learning
 - Students share and take further what they know, what they experience as well as construct meaning.
 - Students are involved in learning language, learning about language and learning through language
 - They listen and speak the language, look at how the language works and use it to share their understanding with the each other.
 - Students are encouraged to construct, think critically and express themselves in a language they are comfortable & confident in.
 - Students are encouraged to know not only the language skills but its usage, their interests and needs.
 - Students are given opportunities to read books / texts, write, speak and present (using different medias) their thoughts & ideas as well as learning.
- 4) Focus on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning.
 - Language leads to inquiry and in an inquiry classroom

- The teachers & students use language to research, share, present and appreciate learning.
 - The school programme of inquiry looks at giving the students opportunities to exhibit, develop and use language.
 - The students share their prior knowledge, research, reflections and present their understanding of the units through languages and in turn connect to how it works as well as further use it to express their understanding of new situations.
- 5) Incorporate the teaching and learning of language into the programme of inquiry.
- Language learning is a developmental process.
 - The school programme of inquiry gives scope for the strands of Language to be looked at, in the teaching & learning process- listening & speaking, viewing & presenting, reading and writing.
 - Language as continuums are organized into phases in the curricular framework.
- 6) Provide for the teaching of additional languages at least from Grade 1.
- The students have the opportunity to choose any one of the additional Languages offered from Grade 1. Exceptions will be given when children are identified with special education needs warranting an exemption from additional languages.
 - The additional languages offered are Hindi & Tamil, with hope of adding at least two international languages in the future.
 - Students from Grade 1- 5 have Additional Language classes 2-3 times a week of 40 minutes each. The school appoints trained / qualified staff for teaching all the additional languages in the primary school.
 - The pedagogy of the programme, the transdisciplinary connections as well as assessment philosophy is followed by these classes also. These teachers will have access to all IB documents, OCC and are a part of school collaborative meetings.
- 7) Provides feedback to support learning.
- Language (medium of instruction, mother tongue and additional Language) is a powerful tool for providing feedback to parents, students, teachers and administrators of the school
 - Students & teachers may choose to write, draw, use ICT, anecdotes or orally give as well as receive feedback for further learning or making adjustments in their teaching- learning process.

Beyond the classroom:

- 1) Language acquisition is supported outside the classroom in the following ways:
- a. social integration into the school and community;
 - b. the building of a positive self-image for each child;
 - c. practicing English in school and in the local community, for example through field trips, by interacting with guest speakers, and in community service;
 - d. appreciation of mother tongue diversity, exploring similarities and differences;
 - e. promoting awareness of the diverse types of discourse and language varieties found within the community.

In the home

Grassroots has a strong home-school partnership and believe that a number of parental actions will facilitate linguistic and academic success for Grassroots's students, whether or not they come from a bilingual/multilingual background. They are:

1. showing and maintaining a positive attitude towards learning additional languages;
2. developing and maintaining mother tongue literacy skills in the home; associating closely with members of the language groups in community activities;
3. getting together with other parents to exchange ideas and reduce isolation;
4. encouraging and supporting children's additional language acquisition;
5. supplying multilingual materials in the home e.g. bilingual dictionaries;
6. taking advantage of language learning experiences in the community;
7. making use of library resources in English and other languages to support Units of Inquiry/learning as well as multilingual and bilingual books for independent reading;
8. supporting their children's learning, for example through their own language learning experiences and by demonstrating that they value other cultures and languages.

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