



## Rockwall High School International Baccalaureate Language Policy

**PURPOSE:** Rockwall High School's Language Policy articulates the ways in which we promote language development and honor the native language of English Language Learners (ELLs).

**PHILOSOPHY:** Rockwall High School recognizes that *all* teachers are language teachers, in that they are responsible for promoting appropriate communication among students, and that it is incumbent upon teachers to provide the language of the course that is necessary for mastery of that subject. This is particularly important for ELL students. As a result, we employ teachers who are excellent communicators with the written and the spoken word.

**INSTRUCTION:** The primary language of instruction at Rockwall High School is English, and the majority of our students and teachers are native English speakers. Rockwall HS does not restrict access to IB courses based on English proficiency. In fact, we have had two graduates matriculate into 9<sup>th</sup> grade with little to no ability to speak/read/write English who later joined our Diploma Programme and earned their IB Diplomas.

**PATH TO IB LANGUAGE B:** The State of Texas requires that all students successfully complete four years of English and two years of a Language Other Than English (LOTE) to graduate. For students for whom English is their mother tongue, Rockwall HS offers two options for second-language study: Spanish B or French B. Students may enroll in Spanish I as eighth graders and continue studying Spanish through the first year in IB as juniors in the SL Spanish course. Conversely, students may take Spanish or French during all four years of high school, culminating in the SL Language B course during the senior year. Spanish Ab Initio is offered for students with no prior Spanish instruction who want to enter the program but cannot earn four language credits to meet IB diploma requirements. This planning gives students the opportunity for four years of second-language study before leaving high school, and this model of concurrent language learning serves as a foundation for pursuing the IB Diploma.

**SUPPORT:** To support students whose native language is not English but who are considering enrollment in the IB program at Rockwall High School, there are several support systems in place. The English as a Second Language (ESL) program is the bilingual support on campus for English Language Learners. The ESL program has one full time teacher with special training dedicated to students who are second language speakers, and multiple teachers on campus who have ESL Certifications through the State of Texas Department of Education. Depending upon the level of fluency of students, they are enrolled in ESL classes that not only address their understanding of the English language, but also provide support for academic learning in all classes. Additionally, the Language B program within Rockwall HS IB program emphasizes communication in multiple cultural contexts, thus allowing students to learn language specifically for the goal of global communication and cultural understanding.

Our school library houses a collection of books written in other languages, primarily Spanish, as that is our largest non-English demographic, and our district invites experts qualified in the linguistics field to provide professional development opportunities (e.g. Teaching ESL students in the mainstream classrooms) for teachers.

We also provide support for college-bound non-native English speakers with the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) courses. Students may enroll in the AVID program beginning in middle school and continue through high school. In AVID, students learn specific study skills that support all content areas as well as college preparation information. Ideally, the students would enroll in AVID in middle school and continue with the AVID program in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade as they transition to high school. As a 10<sup>th</sup> grader, these students would have the study skills and support necessary to enroll in more rigorous coursework advanced academics classes to prepare them for the IB classes as juniors. This important resource provides an excellent conduit for students to enter the rigorous academic preparation expected by the IB Programme.

At the district level, Rockwall ISD provides ESL classes for *parents* four times a week at the RISD Parent Education Center. This opportunity for parents to learn the English language while continuing to provide students a rich environment in their native language is paramount to the success of students.

**CULTURAL CONNECTIONS:** Rockwall High School has several English speaking teachers on campus who are also fluent in other languages including Spanish, French, German, Chinese, and American Sign Language (ASL). These teachers come from diverse cultural backgrounds from around the world, providing a rich learning experience for our students. We recognize that while it is critical to ensure that the language of instruction does not serve as a prolonged obstacle to learning, it is equally important to support the development, maintenance and fluency of the international students' mother tongues. To that end, Rockwall HS strives to achieve this through organizations and events that highlight and honor the native languages and cultures of our student population. These include our French Club and Spanish Club, and their respective National Honor Societies, as well as American Sign Language Club, German Club, Model United Nations, Hispanic Heritage Club, and the International Foods Club, a group that brings together students from various parts of the world through the foods that honor and enrich their cultures.

Rockwall High School recognizes that language learning is imperative in forming students' understanding and interpretations of what it is to be human; language shapes our world view. It is our responsibility as educators to provide opportunities for students to experience the world through language, as well as other areas of knowledge. Rockwall High School will reinforce the values of this collective responsibility in order to develop internationally-minded young adults.