

Language Policy

Philosophy

At Gymnasium Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj, we view the on-going language development for our students as the shared responsibility of all teachers, parents, and students, understanding that all students progress at different rates. We all are responsible for supporting language acquisition and ensuring that all students use the English language responsibly. We teach language through context and relate new information to existing knowledge. We recognize that language acquisition and development play a crucial role in each student's personal development. In addition to promoting cognitive growth, language is an important factor in sustaining a student's cultural identity and intercultural understanding. Therefore, GJJZ promotes foreign language learning and mother tongue learning in addition to English.

English is the language of instruction at Gymnasium Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj, and admissions requirements and assessments are conducted to ensure that the student can access the curriculum delivered in English. To that end all students in the IB Diploma Programme are required to take English A1 Standard Level as their Language A, or Serbian Literature Higher Level.

Further, we believe that all students should have the opportunity to experience learning a second language, which provides significant experience in international education, enabling students to understand the thinking and culture of others. Through effective communication in another language, students are sensitized to cultural diversity and better able to understand the global world in which they live, preparing them to be active participants in multilingual communities at home and around the world. To that end, we require that all IB Diploma candidates take one of the three courses of Group 2: Language B, where we offer Language B Standard Level French, German or English.

Diploma Program (Years 1 and 2)

Group 1:

English A1 (SL)

Serbian A1 (SL)

Group 2:

English B (SL)

French B (SL)

German B (SL)

The English A1 IB course is intended for pupils whose mother tongue is English, or the students who can demonstrate near-native proficiency in English.

All students enrolling as candidates for the IB course are required to study a Language A1. In the terminology of the IB, a Language A1 is the student's "best" language; it will usually be the language in which the student pursues his/her course of studies: the language in which all teaching is given in the school; the language normally used for written and oral work.

Grades and Grading Systems

Students entering GJJZ in grade 11 or 12 are required to take the GJJZ English admissions test. The English admission test is based on a written response to literature, which is assessed based on the Language A English rubric. Tests scored at 5 (good) or below are re-assessed by the A English teacher. Students who score 4, (satisfactory), are tested by the DP Language B English teacher to determine whether or not the student is capable of successfully meeting the high school diploma requirements. Students who must continue to 'learn' English, but will likely succeed in the mainstream programme are placed in Language B English, and where possible are provided with additional EAL support (Academic Writing) during an elective time slot. Students who score 3 (mediocre) or below on the admission test are not enrolled in GJJZ.

Content area teachers should make accommodations in instruction and assignments based on student fluency levels, and assessments should be based on these accommodations. Grades should reflect students' participation, effort, and progress. Teachers are encouraged to confer with ESOL teachers about specific students. Decisions such as grade retention or failure in classes should be made in conference with ESOL teachers, the principal, guidance counselor, and other professionals. Whenever possible, students should be promoted along with age-level peers.

Traditional procedures for assigning grades to students may not be appropriate for ELL students. The same methods and criteria applied to their English-speaking age and /or grade peers cannot always be used to assess students who lack English language proficiency. Teachers should be encouraged to maintain high expectations for student learning and should accommodate and adapt lessons and assignments so that ELLs can progress. Likewise, assessments should be modified so that students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Even non-English proficient students can learn content while acquiring English. If content teachers are unsure how to accommodate ELLs, they should seek in-service or other training. A student may not be assigned a failing grade in a content area on the basis of lack of English language proficiency.

English Proficiency Levels

1—Beginning

The student demonstrates few literacy functions, performs significantly below grade level, and/or requires extended time at the beginning and intermediate levels.

2—Lower Intermediate

The student comprehends simple material written for informative or social purposes; understands the essential content of short, general public statements, environmental texts and formulaic messages; reads short texts or trade/pattern books independently; and/or guesses the meaning of unfamiliar words through the use of cognates and text context, though may be misled by false cognates.

3—Upper Intermediate

The student understands more complex narrative and descriptive authentic materials and edited texts with a familiar context; uses contextual and visual cues to derive meaning from texts that contain unfamiliar words, expressions and structures; makes informed guesses about meaning from context; and/or reads a broader range of genres.

4—Advanced

The student comprehends the content of most texts of interest to students at his/her grade level and, with support, the majority of grade-level academic content area texts; understands most factual information in non-technical prose; interprets texts more accurately and utilizes more sophisticated cohesive devices; and/or reads excerpts from literature for pleasure.

5—Fully Proficient

The student understands and obtains meaning from a wide range of texts available to native English speakers; reads at the appropriate level extended academic texts that contain multiple perspectives; reads and comprehends complex grammar and rhetorical features, including the meaning of varied text structures; and/or visualizes meaning as intended by the writer.