

# Language Curriculum

**Al Jazeera Academy**  
**Doha, Qatar**  
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## **Forward**

This document was created by the PYP Coordinator and the Acting Head of Primary at Al Jazeera Academy during the academic years 2009-2011.

The primary sources used for the Standards and Benchmarks were:

- McREL (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning) Standards and Benchmarks (2010)
- UK National Strategies Standards – Primary Framework (2010)
- AERO (American Education Reaches Out) Standards (2009)
- Singapore American School Language Arts Curriculum (February 2010)
- IB Publications – PYP Language Scope & Sequence (2009)
- Developmental Continuums by Bonnie Campbell Hill (2001)

The curriculum is aligned with the PYP language overall expectations in Preschool through Grade 5.

## **Statement of Beliefs about Teaching and Learning**

The need to communicate is instinctive. The development of language is fundamental to that need to communicate; it supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. Language permeates the world in which we live; it is socially constructed and dependent on the number and nature of our social interactions and relationships. Language plays a vital role in the construction of meaning. It empowers the learner and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking. In the PYP, it is recognized that the teaching of language should be in response to the previous experience, needs and interests of the student, rather than the consequence of a predetermined, prescriptive model for delivering language. Fragmenting learning into the acquisition of isolated skill sets can create difficulties for learners—for example, learners may be able to read, write and spell words correctly in isolation but may not be able to read, write or spell those same words in other contexts. Learners’ needs are best served when they have opportunities to engage in learning within meaningful contexts, rather than being presented with the learning of language as an incremental series of skills to be acquired.

### **Good Language Practice**

Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. Therefore, in a PYP school the focus is not only on language for its own sake, but also on its application across the subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. It also facilitates connections with the wider community. Language provides a vehicle for inquiry. In an inquiry-based classroom, teachers and students enjoy using language, appreciating it both functionally and aesthetically. The love and enjoyment of language through the integration of literature into student inquiry is an indicator of good practice in a PYP classroom. For example, this may include: a series of books read as an author study; regional fairy tales as part of a unit of inquiry with a particular social studies emphasis; discussing a scientist’s biography or a newspaper article to front-load a science investigation; early years counting stories as reinforcement for mathematics development; and the comparison and practice of illustration techniques to encourage the development of art skills.

Effective language teaching and learning are social acts, dependent on relationships with others, with context, with the environment, with the world, and with the self. Such learning is relevant, engaging, challenging and significant. Exposure to and experience with languages, with all their richness and diversity, creates an inquisitiveness about life and learning, and a confidence about creating new social interactions. Language provides a vehicle for learners to engage with the world and, in an IB World School, to relate to, and accept, responsibility for the mission of the IB to “help to create a better and more peaceful world”.

### **Instructional Approaches**

Teachers will employ a variety of developmentally appropriate and differentiated teaching strategies, providing a balanced literacy programme which is student centered and optimizes learning.

### **Assessment**

Summative and Formative assessment of students will employ a relevant range of strategies and tools to inform instruction and measure student learning. Authentic assessment will be an active collaboration between teachers, students and parents.

## PYP Language Overall Expectations (by the end of Grade 5)

The student will participate in a *Balanced Literacy Program* while he/she has the opportunity to identify and reflect upon “big ideas” by making connections between the questions asked and the concepts that drive the inquiry. He/she will become aware of the relevance these concepts have as they relate to his/her learning.

### Oral Language—Listening and Speaking

**Phase 1:** Learners show an understanding of the value of speaking and listening to communicate. They recognize that sounds are associated with objects, or with symbolic representations of them. They are using language to name their environment, to get to know each other, to initiate and explore relationships, to question and inquire.

**Phase 2:** Learners show an understanding that sounds are associated with objects, events and ideas, or with symbolic representations of them. They are aware that an object or symbol may have different sounds or words associated with it in different languages. They are beginning to be cognizant about the high degree of variability of language and its uses.

**Phase 3:** Learners show an understanding of the wide range of purposes of spoken language: that it instructs, informs, entertains, reassures; that each listener’s perception of what they hear is unique. They are compiling rules about the use of different aspects of language.

**Phase 4:** Learners show an understanding of the conventions associated with speaking and listening and the value of adhering to those conventions. They are aware that language is a vehicle for becoming knowledgeable; for negotiating understanding; and for negotiating the social dimension.

**Phase 5:** Learners are able to understand the difference between literal and figurative language; how to use language differently for different purposes. They are aware that they are building on their previous experiences and using language to construct new meaning.

### Visual Language—Viewing and Presenting

**Phase 1:** Learners show an understanding that the world around them is full of visual language that conveys meaning. They are able to interpret and respond to visual texts. Although much of their own visual language is spontaneous, they are extending and using visual language in more purposeful ways.

**Phase 2:** Learners identify, interpret and respond to a range of visual text prompts and show an understanding that different types of visual texts serve different purposes. They use this knowledge to create their own visual texts for particular purposes.

**Phase 3:** Learners show an understanding that visual text may represent reality or fantasy. They recognize that visual text resources can provide factual information and increase understanding. They use visual text in a reflective way to enrich their storytelling or presentations, and to organize and represent information.

**Phase 4:** Learners show an open-mindedness about the use of a range of visual text resources to access information. They think critically, and are articulate about the use of visual text to influence the viewer. They are able to use visual imagery to present factual information, or to tell a story.

**Phase 5:** Through inquiry, learners engage with an increasing range of visual text resources. As well as exploring the viewing and presenting strategies that are a part of the planned learning environment, they select and use strategies that suit their learning styles. They are able to make connections between visual imagery and social commentary. They show more discernment in selecting information they consider reliable. They are able to use visual imagery to support a position.

### **Written Language—Reading**

**Phase 1:** Learners show an understanding that print represents the real or the imagined world. They know that reading gives them knowledge and pleasure; that it can be a social activity or an individual activity. They have a concept of a “book”, and an awareness of some of its structural elements. They use visual cues to recall sounds and the words they are “reading” to construct meaning.

**Phase 2:** Learners show an understanding that language can be represented visually through codes and symbols. They are extending their data bank of printed codes and symbols and are able to recognize them in new contexts. They understand that reading is a vehicle for learning, and that the combination of codes conveys meaning.

**Phase 3:** Learners show an understanding that text is used to convey meaning in different ways and for different purposes—they are developing an awareness of context. They use strategies, based on what they know, to read for understanding. They recognize that the structure and organization of text conveys meaning.

**Phase 4:** Learners show an understanding of the relationship between reading, thinking and reflection. They know that reading is extending their world, both real and imagined, and that there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Most importantly, they have established reading routines and relish the process of reading.

**Phase 5:** Learners show an understanding of the strategies authors use to engage them. They have their favourite authors and can articulate reasons for their choices. Reading provides a sense of accomplishment, not only in the process, but in the access it provides them to further knowledge about, and understanding of, the world.

### **Written Language—Writing**

**Phase 1:** Learners show an understanding that writing is a form of expression to be enjoyed. They know that how you write and what you write conveys meaning; that writing is a purposeful act, with both individual and collaborative aspects.

**Phase 2:** Learners show an understanding that writing is a means of recording, remembering and communicating. They know that writing involves the use of codes and symbols to convey meaning to others; that writing and reading uses the same codes and symbols. They know that writing can describe the factual or the imagined world.

**Phase 3:** Learners show an understanding that writing can be structured in different ways to express different purposes. They use imagery in their stories to enhance the meaning and to make it more enjoyable to write and read. They understand that writing can produce a variety of responses from readers. They can tell a story and create characters in their writing.

**Phase 4:** Learners show an understanding of the role of the author and are able to take on the responsibilities of authorship. They demonstrate an understanding of story structure and are able to make critical judgments about their writing, and the writing of others. They are able to rewrite to improve the quality of their writing.

**Phase 5:** Learners show an understanding of the conventions pertaining to writing, in its different forms, that are widely accepted. In addition, they demonstrate a high level of integration of the strands of language in order to create meaning in a manner that suits their learning styles. They can analyse the writing of others and identify common or recurring themes or issues. They accept feedback from others.

### **How to Use This Document**

This document has been divided into grade-level components. Teachers are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the objectives required at the grade level they teach and, to allow for differentiation, the grades immediately preceding and following those they teach.

Teachers should therefore ensure their students' continued success by preparing them for future levels of proficiency. Thus the entire curriculum is contained within this single document.

The curriculum consists of five standards, each of which is applicable to all grade levels. Within each standard there are benchmarks.

This curriculum is based on the concept of proficiency. In order for a student to be assessed as having achieved proficiency, that student should consistently be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills, successfully, according to established criteria, and in context.

### **Glossary of Terms as Used in This Document**

**Standard:** what a student should understand and be able to do within a specific content area. Content subject matter is the same for all groups of students.

**Benchmark:** a statement of learning that students will be expected to master by the end of a grade level. They are measurable.

**The student will:** knowledge and skills that the student will know and be able to achieve upon the completion of a particular course of study.

## **Language Standards**

1. Apply reading skills and strategies to comprehend a variety of texts.
2. Apply writing skills and strategies to create a variety of texts.
3. Use conventions to communicate effectively.
4. Apply listening and speaking skills and strategies to communicate effectively.
5. Use viewing and presenting skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

## **Language Benchmarks**

- 1.1 Apply concepts of words and print.
- 1.2 Apply strategies to derive meaning from words and develop vocabulary.
- 1.3 Read fluently for meaning.
- 1.4 Use strategies before, during and after reading to construct meaning.
- 1.5 Apply appropriate skills and strategies to understand different genre.
- 1.6 Demonstrate effective reading behaviors.
  
- 2.1 Plan writing effectively.
- 2.2 Develop drafts.
- 2.3 Revise to improve quality of writing.
- 2.4 Edit writing to enhance readability.
- 2.5 Publish writing selectively and effectively.
- 2.6 Apply appropriate strategies and understanding of texts to write a variety of genres.
- 2.7 Demonstrate effective writing behaviors.
  
- 3.1 Use capitalization and punctuation conventions to clarify and convey meaning.
- 3.2 Apply grammar and usage conventions.
- 3.3 Use correct and varied sentence structure.
- 3.4 Spell accurately.
- 3.5 Apply formatting conventions to enhance communication.
  
- 4.1 Listen actively in a variety of contexts.
- 4.2 Speak clearly and confidently for a variety of purposes.
- 4.3 Demonstrate effective listening and speaking behaviors.
  
- 5.1 Use language to interpret various forms of media.
- 5.2 Understand the characteristics and components of the media.