

Sturgis Charter Public School
Language Policy

Philosophy:

What do we believe?

Sturgis Charter Public School believes that language acquisition plays a vital role in the educational lives of our students. Language provides students with an opportunity to access and understand different perspectives of the society under study. Although an understanding of vocabulary and syntax are crucial, a great deal of emphasis is spent on the cultural aspects of language learning. Our philosophy recognizes that language has larger implications beyond a systematic means of communicating; language greatly reinforces critical thinking skills and provides an avenue to explore the mindset of people from around the globe.

Purpose:

Why do we teach language?

Language appreciation and skills are taught across disciplines and this dramatically impacts and enhances student understanding of subject content knowledge. At Sturgis, we understand that learning multiple languages provides our students with skills necessary to thrive in the 21st century. Language acquisition reinforces cultural awareness and international-mindedness.

Whole School Guiding Principles:

What must we bear in mind when designing and implementing language policy?

A great deal of emphasis is placed on giving Sturgis students the tools to access language learning. The study of foreign languages, both written and spoken, allows students to approach language learning in a variety of ways. For example, the study of African writers in English A1 and French B, Greek mythology in Latin or an investigation of modern art and music in Spanish B. *Teachers want to encourage students to investigate not what is being said, but how.* Guided by the need to give a rich and deep understanding of the material, an appreciation of the perspective of the writer is critical. Language, both foreign and mother-tongue, plays a significant role in all courses at Sturgis. For example, in Theory of Knowledge and History courses, students are asked to reflect on the deeper meaning of words and phrases.

In English, interpretive techniques are employed to allow students the means to understand setting, characterization, action, style and ideas of the works studied. Students are asked to continually analyze plays, poetry and literature in subjects from French and Latin to Theatre and Theory of Knowledge.

Students also master vocabulary and symbols that allow them to comprehend scientific research and develop skills for discussing and critically evaluating data. This development of scientific and mathematical literacy is essential for completing Group 4 work and even Math projects in Group 5.

Latin is also significant because it allows students to excel in the vocabulary of other languages and it assists them in their Group 4 subjects as well. We continually ask students to be not only communicators and thinkers, but also to be risk takers and open-minded, all characteristics from the IB Learner Profile.

Although the written word is essential, rhetoric and the power of active listening are reinforced across disciplines through oral presentations, Socratic seminars and the use of persuasive argument in class discussions.

Requirements:

At Sturgis, students must complete two years of both Latin and one of the other two languages (French and Spanish), even though they may not have had any language classes prior to entering our school. Then, the student must continue with Latin, French, Spanish or Portuguese for an additional two years to fulfill the Sturgis language requirement. There are no grade achievement requirements for attempting a Language course at the Higher Level, but grades, work ethic, student interest and teacher recommendation are factors considered when selecting an HL or an SL course. Students do need to complete a level 2 course before continuing on to an SL Language course.

Current Language Situations and Practices:

In order to maintain and develop the mother tongue, all pupils are required to begin with the same grade 9 English course. Conversely, students are placed in a second language class based on an entry exam. By graduation, Sturgis students are required to have passed six years of a foreign language (Sturgis mandates that all students take Latin for two years while simultaneously learning another foreign language). When Sturgis first opened 10 years ago, French and Latin were the only foreign language options available. Our language program added Spanish five years ago and Portuguese A2 tutorials just two years ago which was an act that required the school to revise its charter. The evolution of our language program emphasizes the value Sturgis places on language learning and is evaluated using the assessment policy. We recognize that the needs of our students will change in the future and we are committed to accommodating the development of their mother tongue. *We will adapt as changes are implemented in the IB program in relation to Language A1 and Language B arise.*

Mother Tongue Development and Maintenance

At Sturgis, the maintenance of the mother tongue language is mainly through practice. Students are required to take 4 years of English at Sturgis. During that time, students read a variety of fiction and non-fiction works (written in English and in translation), write on a regular basis (essays, journal entries, written responses to essay questions and prompts), engage in public speaking (oral reports, class participation) and study vocabulary. All of these tasks (reading, writing, speaking) reinforce the skills necessary to develop a broader knowledge of the English language.

For the other 1% of the population, for whom English is not their primary language, we encourage them to excel in their mother tongue. Sturgis implemented Language A programs for Portuguese, French and Spanish in 2008.

English Language Learner (ELL)

Sturgis Charter Public School actively seeks to identify limited proficient students through a home language survey. This survey is administered when a student registers at Sturgis and is reviewed by the ELL Program Coordinator. Based on the survey results, Sturgis will assess a

student identified as ELL using the oral IPT (English Language Proficiency Test) and reading/writing LAS (Language Assessment Scale). Sturgis has not had any students enrolled that are identified as LEP (Limited English Proficient) in the past 4 years. If an LEP student does enroll, Sturgis will annually assess the English of all limited English proficient students through the use of the following tests:

- MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) tests, as determined by grade level and subject areas;
- MEPA and MEL-O (Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment and Massachusetts English Language Oral Assessment).

The Special Education Coordinator, who serves as the ELL Coordinator, will oversee that staff are trained each year by contracted state providers. In order to comply with state mandates Sturgis continues to send teachers to Category 1 and Category 2 trainings bi-annually. Category training is a series of professional development workshops for teachers with the objective of providing skills and knowledge to work with English Language Learners (ELLs).

Special Education Needs (SEN)

Sturgis provides all students equal access to academic programs and services. Many special education students choose to enroll in second language classes; however, some students may be exempt from language requirements if their educational plan stipulates. A student on an IEP may have one or both language requirements waived, depending on their disability, although a student attempting the full Diploma must take four years of language. These decisions are made in the Special Education team meetings.

After School Programs

The acquisition of language and an appreciation of the cultural elements are not confined to the school day, but are integrated into a variety of after school programs and excursions. For example, the Arabic club, the Greek club, the French club, Mock Trial, MUN, the Newspaper club, the Reading club and the drama group S.T.A.G.E., as well as teacher chaperoned trips to Quebec, Germany, France, Spain, Honduras, Costa Rica and Italy allow students to touch the culture of the language curriculum at Sturgis while reinforcing international-mindedness.

Massachusetts School and District Profiles

Sturgis Charter Public (District)

Selected Populations (2009-10)

Title	% of District	% of State
First Language not English	1.2	15.6
Limited English Proficient	0.0	6.2
Low-income	6.5	32.9
Special Education	12.2	17.0
Free Lunch	3.5	27.4
Reduced Lunch	3.0	5.6

Communication

This document is available to all segments of the Sturgis community via the school’s website. The document will also be highlighted at parent information evenings.

Revisions

Revisions to this document will occur bi-annually or as the need arises based on changing student populations. The revisions will be made by the Language Document Committee.

