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Ponce de Leon Middle School

*International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme*

## Language Policy

### School Overview

Ponce de Leon Middle School is located in the beautiful and very historical city of Coral Gables. Better known as The City Beautiful, the city of Coral Gables and the school are home to a multicultural community and culturally diverse population. Home to more than a thousand diverse students, Ponce de Leon capitalizes on this cultural diversity by providing an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP) to students from grades 6-8. The program's main focus is the development of the student as a whole and the staff strives to create students who exhibit all areas of the IB Learners Profile (thinkers, risk-takers, balanced, reflective, inquirers, knowledgeable, communicators, principles, open-minded, and caring).

The school's international curriculum encourages multilingual education and allows students to become bilingual and bi-literate. The school's culturally diverse student body is testament to the city's rich historical beginnings and formation. Ponce de Leon Middle School is also home to a very internationally diverse teaching staff. Teachers from Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa and Asia strive to provide learners with diverse and unique learning opportunities, while encouraging them to become global citizens. The school aims to develop tolerant, more caring individuals through intercultural understanding.

### School Language Philosophy

Ponce de Leon Middle School recognizes the pivotal role language plays in the development of a global and international minded individual. Therefore, all teachers are language teachers at Ponce de Leon Middle School. Reading and writing are integrated throughout the curriculum in order to provide students with a higher quality of education. Through a rigorous curriculum, teachers prepare students to become global learners ready to take on the challenges of an ever-changing global society.

The school focuses in developing the host language, English, and provides students with the opportunity to study and become fluent in Fresh, Spanish, or Italian. Language learning and acquisition is regarded by both, staff and students, as an integral part of student development.

## **Admission Requirements**

Participants in the IBMYP are randomly selected from a list of all eligible applicants. Upon entry into Ponce de Leon, students select the language track they would like to complete: Spanish, Italian, or French. Moreover, students must also meet the requirements set by Miami Dade County Public Schools.

## **School Practices**

The primary language used at Ponce de Leon is English; we aim for each student to reach the highest level of literacy and proficiency in both Language & Literature (English) and Language Acquisition (Spanish, French, and Italian). For this reason, the school created a language policy committee that includes parents, students, teachers, and administrators. The committee reviews the language profile of the school and the existing programs and makes recommendations to ensure that the program meets the ever-changing language needs of the school and larger community.

## **Language & Literature**

MYP students take a Language & Literature class of 105 minutes every other day at a regular, advanced, advanced gifted, SPED (Special Program for Educational Disabilities) or ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) based on teacher recommendation and on their score on the state standardized test in reading and writing. Intensive reading classes are provided per district requirements to students who score below proficiency in the Florida State Assessment (FSA). The intensive classes provide targeted instruction on specific skills needed to master the Florida State Standards. Through a scripted and rigorous program, students at Ponce de Leon Middle School receive instruction through a plethora of instructional and/or web-based programs (Read180, Systems 44, INSIDE, Achieve 3000, I-Ready) to improve reading proficiency and support these students in the Language & Literature curriculum. Additionally, Teachers align the district-mandated objectives with the IB MYP objectives as well as the Florida Standards. They use their professional judgment as well as data collected and analyzed from district assessments to drive and tailor instruction and address student's needs.

## **Language Acquisition (Spanish, Italian, French)**

The MYP Language Acquisition courses at Ponce de Leon Middle School allow students to further develop their language skills (Spanish, Italian, and French). Language Acquisition classes meet on alternate days for 105 minutes per day and teachers follow the district mandated objectives while integrating the components of the IB MYP. Additionally, in Spanish, the school offers two tracks, depending on the learner's proficiency level, which are native and non-native track. Students who reach a high level of fluency are given the chance to be placed in an Advance Placement (AP) class with the aim of pacing the AP Assessment in Spanish Language in grade 8. Other students follow a standard Language B level in their respective language. Through these courses many students develop their mother tongue and others are given the chance to expand and become more internationally minded learners.

## **Media Center**

The media center serves as a hub of information for the school. It provides students and teachers with resources in English, Spanish, French, and Italian. It provides our learners with a plethora of audio visual resources in all the above-mentioned languages as well as with a variety of magazines, periodicals, and other publications. The media center also

serves as a center for researching, information literacy, and classroom support and extension. Learners and staff have access to the library before and during school hours. A media specialist is always present to assist students when necessary with researching skills and technology needs.

The media center is equipped with over 30 desk-top computers and Wi-Fi connection allows for students to bring their own devices. Moreover, students are taught the importance of the media center as an important component of independent learning and teachers and media specialist teach how to use it properly. Some of the skills taught include instruction on how to avoid plagiarism and how to follow the school's Academic Honesty Policy.

## **Parents**

Parents play an important role in ensuring and fostering a positive approach to the study of languages. Parental involvement is vital to the success of any learner, especially if parents are aware of the challenges their child may face. Parents are also encouraged to promote language literacy and learning at home. The parent community at Ponce de Leon is very supportive of the entire school and understands the IB program.

The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) takes an active role in supporting and promoting language skills by:

- Providing funds towards reading and language incentives and projects to help motivate and cultivate student literacy.
- Organizing book fairs with print material in all languages studied at the school
- Sponsoring multicultural events and field trips

## **Support to the Language Programs**

To provide students with the best opportunities for success, Ponce de Leon Middle School has put in place several programs to better serve the needs of our culturally and ever changing student body. The programs aim to ensure that every child realizes their potential and aims to provide the necessary support to ensure a positive learning experience. Some these programs are:

- The implementation of Saturday schools to further provide struggling learners with an opportunity for remediation in reading and writing
- After school homework help to help students who require extra assistance in completing their assignment. The program is offered 3 times a week and teachers provide extra support in reading and writing
- Home Language Assistance Program it provides home language assistance in content area subjects to intermediate and low level English Language Learners.

## **Review Process**

The school's language policy is reviewed annually by the leadership team to reflect changes in district requirements and in the needs of the student body. All changes or revisions are shared with staff and parents as needed. Ponce de Leon Middle School strives to provide all stake holders with the best opportunities for growth and life experiences.