

Language Policy

ESCOLA **CANADENSE**
DE BRASÍLIA
we love • we care • we share

THE MISSION of the **Escola Canadense de Brasília**

We transform young students into global citizens with the skills and knowledge to succeed in their lives and exercise leadership in their communities through world-renowned educational projects of excellence.

The Escola Canadense de Brasília is one of the biggest and best bilingual schools in Brazil and has an engaged, dedicated, experienced, knowledgeable and creative faculty, which are necessary to provide extraordinary learning.

Our methodology encourages active learning, considers the individual and group rhythm of students, respects the BNCC, favors a culture of collaborative learning, empathy and respect for differences, and aims to develop global values and the full academic potential of each student to Brazil and the world.

School Motto:

We Love, We Care, We Share

About the Language Policy of the Canadian School of Brasilia

The Canadian School of Brasilia is a Brazilian bilingual school that works in line with strong Canadian educational practices and is in the process of implementing the PYP - IB program as a candidate school.

Our language policy was developed taking into consideration the IB Standards and Practices, and in collaboration with our educational team. However, as education is in constant development, we understand that this is a living document that consolidates our educational vision, understanding that language is the basis of the students' education.

Philosophy and Practices associated to Language

We start from the understanding that language is the basis for learning, as well as the tool for teaching and strengthening personal development, cultural identity and world perception, and, in this way, we work with the intention of the actions of all parties involved in the school context.

At Escola Canadense de Brasília we believe that language is learned in a meaningful context and through communication in a way that students feel comfortable and supported. Throughout this document we will explore the understanding that there are three ways of thinking about the relationship between language and learning:

Learning through language: learners use language as a tool to listen, think, discuss and reflect

Learning about language: learners grow in their understanding of how language works

Learning language: learners listen to and use language with others in their everyday life

Bilingualism at the Canadian School of Brasília

"The holistic understanding of bilingualism is based on the idea that what is known and understood in a language contributes to what is known and understood in the other, and that all languages contribute to a single, universal, accessible linguistic and cognitive system."

Hopewell, S. & Escamilla, K. (2014). Biliteracy development in immersion contexts. *Journal of Immersion and Content-based Language Education*

We are a bilingual school, Portuguese/English and we believe that a solid language skill is the basis for educational achievement.

Escola Canadense de Brasília believes that a solid program connected to language learning is the foundation for student success. In order to achieve a solid language program, the school works with a balance between learning about the language, learning through the language and learning the language.

At Escola Canadense de Brasília we offer a language rich environment that is intentionally designed to support students learning and communicate with confidence, respecting students' own pace so they feel cared for and a strong sense of belonging. We also believe that this learning should be meaningful and use real-world context as it is the foundation for all learning to take place.

We promote the use of the target / additional language by creating a community to encourage the staff and prioritizing English immersion. With students, we will reinforce projects (sister classrooms, word of the week, and others) that could encourage them to use the language.

We offer an English immersion program at Early Years, from Toddler to Junior Kindergarten (3 to 4 years old) and we start a Portuguese language program at Senior Kindergarten (4 to 5 years old), still maintaining English as the majority of their time at school. When students start in Elementary years our program shifts to half in English and half of their instructional time in Portuguese having a specific teacher in each of these

languages. This organization supports the school to create consistent learning in both languages.

We recognize that all students need to feel comfortable in our school environment and so we recognize their language needs and support students' mother tongues by getting to know them before enrollment in order to offer any necessary accommodation and to work in collaboration with families.

As most of our students are native Portuguese speakers we offer English as an Additional Language Program on their after classes for new students starting from Grade 1 up. Those students are assessed on their English proficiency before starting classes so they can be supported in this program that will give them a supportive foundation on the language. We also work with Support Teachers that visit students during their classroom regular schedule in order to support their learning and make any necessary accommodations with the classroom teacher.

We offer Portuguese language support for new students who are not native speakers or do not have a background knowledge in that language. For those students the support program is called tutoring. This can be in a one to one setting or with a small group of students.

Home language program starts from Kindergarten up. The initial focus is on oral language and the beginning process of literacy and it evolves during the grade levels in a balanced program to support all areas of development (oral, visualization, written, and reading).

Language in Early Childhood Educatio

The early years of school are focused on an immersion English program, understanding that students at this age level are in a great learning gap and by offering a language rich environment we allow them to explore new settings and motivate them to

try and learn new things. The target language is supported through discoveries during the interaction with the teachers and adults in charge, and among themselves. We can see that most of our students will interact in Portuguese since it is their mother tongue language for the majority of our students and we respect each student's process and knowing them individually we are able to support their oral communication by prioritizing their expression in any way they feel most comfortable.

When they start Senior Kindergarten (5 years and older) we add a Portuguese language block into their routine, with a stronger focus on early literacy skills and strategies, by incorporating lots of written clues in the room and exploring the alphabet with many hands-on opportunities. This is the age when they start with the true focus of bilingualism.

The activities in early years are connected to their program of inquiry. This integration allows learning to be meaningful and authentic, so many of their explorations, read alouds and representation of learning allows students to make connections and consistently learn new vocabulary that integrates to the central ideas and explored concepts. We can see that this organization gives strong support for students learning an additional language.

The classes are organized in daily blocks, being some of them:

- Whole group where they can share prior knowledge and experiences as well as learning reflections that they could do during their play blocks. These moments are rich to promote a group learning experience as well as oral language and student action. We also use these moments to integrate the skills (ATL) they experience and develop, connected to intentional teaching.
- Play blocks (uninterrupted time of play) where students can go to classroom stations that are rich with tools and toys that are an invitation to

inquiry for groups and individually, supporting their symbolic learning, choices and agency.

- Read aloud sessions using a variety of titles that are organized with the support of our librarian and teachers from the same grade level, as well as students' choices of books.
- Starting in Kindergarten, teachers also work with a mini lesson framework targeting specific literacy skills.

In the Early Years, the balance of language learning is key to our program so students can learn through language: learners use language as a tool to listen, think, discuss and reflect; learn about language: learners grow in their understanding of how language works; and learn the language: learners listen to and use language with others in their everyday life.

During this stage at our school, students also have specific classes such as physical education and music once a week with a specialist teacher, but integrated into their program of inquiry.

The methodology we use is organized with important elements, such as:

- Play-based: social interactions and play is at the core of our early years program. We offer a range of possibilities for our students to develop and learn while playing and interacting with other children and adults, as well as the environment.
- Active learning strategies - Students are building their learning by a range of interactions, inquiring and scaffolding opportunities;
- English immersion / bilingual program: in a way that students develop their communication skills both in English and Portuguese through a meaningful, real-world context and a language rich environment;

- Transdisciplinary intentionally planned stations and activities: students are introduced to the content through contextualized activities involving language, mathematics, science, information technology, social studies, music and the arts;

Children during the early years communicate in a variety of ways, and we know that communication skills are essential to develop a safe and caring environment for the learning and holistic development of students. In order to achieve that we use a range of strategies and a flexible routine that supports children exploration:

- We work with a gradual adaptation process at the beginning of school for students up to 3 years of age, in which parents or guardians are invited to participate in open classes to establish a connection with the school and for the student to feel safe in the new environment. During the adaptation process, teachers interact with students in both languages and slowly shift to full immersion.
- The classrooms are full of language cues and anchor charts. We believe that those visual elements are an important part of the classroom since it reflects students and teachers' thoughts which connect to the central idea they have been working with, as well as their wonderings, reflections and routine. At this age level we use both words, drawing and pictures of the students to illustrate their learning.

Senior Kindergarten

Senior Kindergarten establishes the beginning of their literacy process connected to early reading and writing skills. Even before Senior Kindergarten students were exposed to the alphabet, some high frequency words, building the understanding that there is a writing representation of the language, but at this age level that we start to

have a more formal approach to writing with consistent opportunities for students to explore their hypothesis regarding the written language.

Literacy in Portuguese focuses on how students learn and starts from their wonders and hypotheses about language. Slowly students will understand the nature of language and the alphabetical system, establishing a connection between the written form of the letters and its phonics. The literacy will be developed by the exploration of authentic writing and a rich collection of texts and stories organized in a structured routine (Daily 5), where students will be able to develop their reading and writing skills.

Even Though we start with this formal literacy process, the main focus is the holistic development of the student, supporting them with their expression both in oral language and drawing representations and with the knowledge that we learn through the language and therefore it encompasses all the learning and experience.

Language in Elementary

In the 1st year of Elementary school, our program starts to be divided into approximately 50% of the time in English and 50% of the time in Portuguese, with specific teachers for each of the languages, but both of them aligned with the transdisciplinary units of study.

The head teachers of both languages plan collaboratively, ensuring consistency among learning experiences and the lines of inquiry related to their unit of study.

Within these groups we also work with the support of visual learning, understanding it as a form of expression, which helps students in their communication and celebration of learning, as well as anchor charts to support the students' investigation process and to support their questions and wonders that may appear along the units of inquiry.

At the core of our language program, we worked with balanced literacy activities, as well as spelling, phonics and word study and using the continuum of Fountas and Pinnell. We also work with a balanced literacy model with strategies inspired by the Daily 5/CAFE framework. Daily reading activities take place in both languages.

Fountas and Pinnell in their book *Literacy Continuum* (2017) reinforce some principles related to the idea of balanced literacy that we explore in our school, which are:

- Students learn by talking. Talking represents the student's thinking. We engage students in conversations that is grounded in a variety of texts and that expands to comprehend ideas and use language to share thinking.
- Students need to process a large amount of written language. A dynamic language and literature curriculum provides many daily opportunities for students to read books of their choice independently, to read more challenging instructional material with teacher guidance, and to hear teacher-selected and grade-appropriate text read aloud.
- The ability to read and comprehend texts is expanded through talking and writing. Students need to acquire a wide range of ways to write about their reading and also talk about texts with the teacher and other students.
- Language deepens when students engage in reading, talking and writing about texts across many different instructional contexts. Each model of communication provides a new way to process the ideas learned from oral and written texts and from each other.

The Role of the Teacher

At Escola Canadense de Brasília we believe in the importance of the teacher's support and intentionality when working with some processes within the students'

instructional level. The teacher needs to think about the student's learning process and understand their zone of proximal development in order to offer support and challenges that are manageable allowing students to grow and therefore scaffold their learning. This concept reinforces the idea of support levels for learning. Therefore, teachers work with an assessment binder observing the current level of knowledge and skill from individual students, in order to build the next stage and allow students to reach their full potential.

This means knowing the instructional level of students through formative assessment and constant observation.

It is also key for teachers to acknowledge differences related to learning styles and previous language experiences of their students.

Thus, school work is developed in collaboration with all teachers and related school members, aiming at promoting favorable conditions for the exercise of citizenship, in a democratic, ethical and constructive perspective.

Some strategies used in the classroom that supports language (both Portuguese and English) are:

- Essential agreements based on respect among students and teachers;
- Use of word wall as a supportive tool for students;
- Balanced literacy strategies are carefully chosen in order to support differentiation and different learning styles as well as guided stations where teachers can give them positive and constructive feedback;
- Encourage students to work in different ways (whole group, pairs, individually, as well as small group with different sizes and compositions)
- Teacher shares learning goals and expectations with students;
- Teachers are always encouraging students to express themselves in a variety of ways.

The Role of the Librarian

The school library has a rich and diverse book collection that includes literature and resources in different languages representative of the school instruction and population background as well as titles that allow inquiry, connect to the units of study and reflect a variety of perspectives.

The librarian plays a key role by promoting reading throughout the school, keeping our book collection updated, supporting the school program and encouraging students to develop a love of reading.

The librarian promotes a series of events that supports and encourages students literacy skills such as:

- Home reading program
- Setting yearly goals of book titles to be read per student
- Celebrating Literacy Fair
- Author 's study and inviting some authors to meet with groups of students

English Support Program

Every student that starts at our school from Grade 1 and up, are required to do an admission assessment where the leadership team of the school will be able to identify their level of ability in English. This information will be essential to guide the leadership team for the recommendation of attending our English as an Additional Language (EAL) program that is a part of our new student's support system.

The importance of this class relies on the idea that by having these classes, students will build greater confidence in their regular schedule classes and will be able to offer a better foundation of the language to support their success and understanding.

The EAL class aims to support new students in their adaptation process, providing more contact with the English language, build on their skills for listening, speaking, reading and writing.

This program usually starts in mid-October, before the start of the new academic year, and lasts for an average of one year. Classes take place on the opposite shift from the student's regular classes.

The EAL teacher contacts the family and teaching staff quarterly (or whenever necessary) to assess and share student development.

Portuguese Support Program

As well as our English Support Program (EAL), we also offer a Portuguese Support Program for students who are in Elementary level and identify with this need after the admission process. This support is for students who have limited or no language development in Portuguese.

The Portuguese Tutoring is organized by one-to-one sessions or in small groups depending on their age level and skill in the language.

This program aims to support students in their opposite shifts with a foundation knowledge of Portuguese since it's a language of instruction during their regular school program.

Mother Tongue Languages

We have an average of 1% of our student population whose mother tongue is not Portuguese or English, for those students we create an individual action plan together with the family to follow their development within our regular program and support their needs.

We believe that maintaining their language is essential for their cultural identity and to promote a diverse and caring environment at our school.

Language Scope and Sequence

At Escola Canadense de Brasília we provide a balanced language programme as described in the our Language Scope and Sequence document that was built in collaboration with classroom teachers and support staff.

References:

Fountas, Irene C., and Gay Su Pinnell (2017), Literacy Continuum. A Tool for Assessment, Planning, and Teaching. Heinemann

Grosjean, F. (2012). Bilingual: Life and Reality. Harvard University Press.

Hopewell, S. & Escamilla, K. (2014). Biliteracy development in immersion contexts. Journal of Immersion and Content-based Language Education.