

# Language Policy for Stepping Stones Montessori Primary School

## 1 Introduction

Stepping Stones has expanded from a Pre-School into a Primary School. As part of this expansion the school now needs a Language Policy and to offer an additional language(s) program. This document outlines the criteria on which the decision of which language(s) to offer were made and the process by which this decision was made.

## 2 The Criteria informing the Language Policy

1. Learning additional languages must provide developmentally-appropriate, enriching ways to extend and deepen learning in specifically Montessori ways, in alignment with Montessori principles
2. Teaching and learning of additional languages, considered in a broad cultural context, must align with the ethos of our school (i.e., strengthening community engagement, connection and participation, as well as environmental stewardship and ethics, etc.)
3. Any offered language should contribute to and not obstruct achieving the school's goals regarding desired diversity of its community of children, families and educators.
4. Languages taught should help foster an increased sense of belonging and identity of children as Capetonians, South Africans and Africans, while opening their minds to the diversity of global cultures.
5. Language requirements from the Education Department with regards to 2<sup>nd</sup> language in junior schools must be complied with, and the requirements in senior schools taken into account.
6. At least one language offered should have ample opportunities for continuity of learning in Cape Town high schools once children leave our school.
7. Languages offered should support viable and practical compliance with South African matriculation requirements and with the Cambridge system (the generally used alternative curriculum in South Africa).
8. Practical considerations for implementation of the language policy must be assessed, including the availability of Montessori curricula, availability of suitable qualified staff, and costs, bearing in mind the current and possible future resources and staff of the school.

### 2.1 Education Department Requirements

In order to develop conversational competency, the Department of Basic Education is implementing the Incremental Implementation of African Languages (IIAL) for Grades 1 to 3 from 2018.

Further deadlines are as follows:

2021 - 2023 Grades 4 to 6

2024 - 2026 Grades 7 to 9

2027 - 2029 Grades 10 to 12

During the pilot programme of the IIAL in 2017, the Western Cape had the worst implementation rate of Xhosa at less than 1% of the 817 targeted schools. Lack of suitable and qualified teachers played a big part in this. Gauteng had the best rate and subscribe their success to the itinerant teacher model in which one language teacher is shared between several schools.

Under IIAL there will be 5 compulsory subjects for grades 1 to 3:

1. Home Language
2. First Additional Language
3. Second Additional Language
4. Mathematics
5. Life skills

This is then carried through to grade 12.

## 2.2 Languages Currently Offered by Cape Town High Schools

The following table shows the languages offered at Cape Town High Schools in 2018

School	Home Language	1 <sup>st</sup> Additional Language	Additional Language/s offered
Bishops	English	Afrikaans or French if a foreign national	Xhosa
St. Cyprians	English	Afrikaans	French
Herschel	English	Afrikaans	Xhosa or French
Cedar House	English	Afrikaans or Xhosa	Spanish
Reddam	English	Afrikaans	French
Jan van Riebeeck	Afrikaans	English	-
Camps Bay High	English	Afrikaans or Xhosa	-
Westerford	English	Afrikaans or Xhosa	French, Italian, Chinese
SACS	English	Afrikaans or Xhosa	French

In the Western Cape, English, Afrikaans and Xhosa are considered the three official languages with each carrying equal weight. It is interesting to note that out of the 9 schools mentioned above, only 4 offer Xhosa as a subject, which will obviously have to change in the near future as Afrikaans is not considered an indigenous African language for the purposes of IIAL.

Table 5(B) Language selection guide:

Xitsonga

Nguni languages: isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, SiSwati

Sotho languages: Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana

Tshivenda

Afrikaans

### 2.3 Matriculation Requirements

What is unclear at this point is whether the compulsory second additional language could be a foreign language. A paper (attached) by Ferreira-Meyers et al (2017) published in one of the Stellenbosch University's Linguistics journals defines "Second Additional Language (SAL)" as "languages that are neither official nor national languages", however, from the paper it seems that the first three languages (Home, 1<sup>st</sup> Additional and 2<sup>nd</sup> Additional) are all to be local languages, with a foreign language then being moved to a fourth position, making the curriculum very language heavy.

Language subjects offered by the Cambridge Advanced Program (A-levels) are:

Afrikaans

Arabic

Chinese

English

French

German

Hindi

Japanese

Marathi

Portuguese

Spanish

Tamil

Urdu

### 2.4 Staff

Staffing for implementation, whether permanent staff, part-time, or outside service providers, will be done in a way that aligns with Montessori principles and practices.

## 2.5 Montessori Curricula

Auburn House Montessori school shared their Xhosa curriculum overview with us and LTC Language School will assist with a Xhosa curriculum. No Xhosa Montessori materials have been found at this stage. These will need to be made.

From a brief search on the internet there are schools that teach Montessori in all the other languages listed below. Certain materials are available for purchase.

## 2.6 Motivation for a foreign language

Learning a foreign language provides opportunities for cognitive development (grammar, script used/orthography, direction of writing, sounds used, etc.), cultural enrichment, personal growth, social cohesion and more.

Learning to speak in another language engenders a respect for other cultures as well as respect for those who speak one's own home language as a second or third language. It further affords opportunities to learn and practice ways of showing respect, greetings, manners, and other diverse cultural practices.

Competence in other languages opens up learning opportunities in terms of material ('content') as well as traditions, histories, arts, and perspectives, which can become part of a Montessori approach to learning and being in the world.

Competence in a foreign language also provides opportunities for internationally-connected careers (UN, politics, translators, business etc.) and is also beneficial in the obtaining of foreign scholarships, bursaries and international student exchanges.

## 2.7 Analysis of potential languages (long list):

The following languages have the potential to meet the criteria and goals of the language policy as a Second Additional Language:

### **Arabic**

Official UN and AU language  
Official or co-official language in 12 African countries

### **French**

Official UN and AU language  
Spoken in France and Canada  
Spoken commonly in 22 African countries

### **German**

Most widely spoken European language in Europe, and an official language in 3 European countries



### **Mandarin (Standard Chinese)**

Official UN Language

Language spoken by the most people globally as their first language

Official language of the world's largest economy by GDP

One of SA's biggest trade partners

### **Portuguese**

Official AU Language

BRICS partner Brazil

Spoken in nearby African countries of Mozambique and Angola

### **Spanish**

Official UN Language

Language spoken by the second greatest number of people globally as their first language

Official language of one African country

Spoken across Latin America and Spain

## 3 Language Policy

### 3.1 First Additional Language.

Xhosa is the first additional language taught at the school. The school will have a full-time, permanent staff member dedicated to teaching Xhosa throughout the school. This teacher will only speak Xhosa to the students.

#### 3.1.1 Primary

The teacher will teach, using Montessori materials where possible, a language curriculum at least equal to the national education standard, to all Primary students. Students are expected to be conversing, reading and writing in Xhosa once they complete the Primary level.

Xhosa materials are to be available in the classroom at all times and form part of the work plan for the week. The children may choose to do this work in conjunction with the teacher or individually or in groups on their own, as they do with all the other materials in the classroom.

#### 3.1.2 Pre-School

The teacher will spend time in each Pre-School class during the week working with the children on Xhosa specific materials such as the 3-part cards and will also conduct lessons in Xhosa using the standard materials in the classroom. For example, they may do a presentation on the pink tower in Xhosa or a cultural lesson talking about the animals of the world.

Group singing, and story reading will also take place in Xhosa.

#### 3.1.3 Toddler

The teacher will spend time in each Toddler class during the week conversing with the children while doing daily classroom activities such as a puzzle or practical life skill work.

Group singing, and story reading will also take place in Xhosa.

### 3.2 Second Additional Language

The second additional language is to be offered in a way that allows the students to be introduced to different cultures and to learn some of the greetings and basic vocabulary of the language. They will also be introduced to the written form of the language through the Montessori materials used. This is part of the Montessori Elementary curriculum, based on the Five Great Lessons, namely, the Fourth Great Lesson; "How writing Began."

It was decided to provide the second additional language on a 2 year rolling cycle of different languages. This will start with French in 2019. A decision on what language will follow will be made in the first term of the year prior to implementation to allow for the collection of materials and the contracting of staff.

### 3.2.1 Primary

The teacher will teach, using Montessori materials where possible, all Primary students. The lessons will include both language skills and an introduction to the culture of the language.

Materials are to be available in the classroom at all times and form part of the work plan for the week. The children may choose to do this work in conjunction with the teacher or individually or in groups on their own, as they do with all the other materials in the classroom.

### 3.2.2 Pre-School

The teacher will work with the Pre-School directresses to introduce the children to the culture and verbal language through the use of appropriate materials, stories and singing. There is also the opportunity for the Primary children to share their learning of the culture and language with the Pre-School classes.

## 3.3 Other languages spoken by Stepping Stones Staff

It was identified that there are additional languages spoken by many of the teachers within the school. These languages include Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu and Shona. Teachers are to be encouraged to speak to their students in their additional languages when appropriate. This is to be done through story and music time but could be expanded into other activities and lessons within the classroom.

Some schools require a second language to be spoken in the classroom by the assistant teacher, at all times. This is something that could be considered in the future.

## 3.4 Language in the life of the school

The first additional language will be reflected in the life of the school generally. Communications with staff and parents, signage, presentations, and other forms of communication will include the first language to a significant degree. The second additional language will also be included where appropriate and in balance.

The culture of the first additional language will also be reflected in the life of the school generally. This will include artwork displayed, food, music, holidays, and in other ways. The culture of the second additional language will also be included where appropriate and in balance.



Parents will be encouraged to learn and support learning of both languages. Where possible the school will provide access to resources and facilitate this for parents.