



Language Policy

■ Introduction

Language plays an important part in supporting the school's mission statement. The school focuses on preparing world citizens who are responsible and confident communicators imbued with a sense of service to others. Within the school community, many languages exist side by side, thus, stakeholders' appreciation of the cultures associated with them is enhanced.

Tokyo West International School (TWIS) offers an authentic language education for real life, which gives emphasis on children's achievements and academic excellence. By learning language, as well as learning about and through language, we nurture an appreciation of language. Through this, extensive and achievable support is given according to students' needs.

■ Language Profile

Approximately 60% of the student population speaks Japanese, which happens to be the first language among TWIS students. Not all parents can speak English, but are very proficient and fluent in their respective mother tongues. The remaining 40% speak Korean, Hindu, Chinese, and English etc. as their first language. Given this language profile, more than half of our students are English Language Learners (ELL). Most often, if not all the time, students communicate with each other in Japanese. All our teaching staff speak English and the majority is fluent in at least one other language.

■ Principles of Language Learning

Informed by practices espoused in the document "Learning in a Language other than mother tongue in IB programmes". The school affirms the conditions of learning language through the following:

1. **Activating prior knowledge and building background knowledge** - the school believes and affirms that new learning and understanding is constructed on previous experiences and conceptual understandings. To help students acquire and become proficient in their first/native and mother tongue languages, teachers should activate the learner's prior understanding through the use of their prior understanding to differentiate tasks and activities to build knowledge, support planning for future differentiation, and consider time and strategies for activating and building background knowledge.
2. **Scaffold meaning** - teachers are expected to provide students with strategies to create new meaning and help them understand texts. Visual aids, graphic organizers, demonstrations are all scaffolds to help students understand and comprehend language. At the same time, scaffolding should also foster students' increasing independence in taking responsibilities for developing strategies for their own



learning.

3. **Extend language** - as students progress through their grades, they are required to read and write increasingly sophisticated texts in the context of their learning. Teachers can extend language learning and acquisition by combining high expectations with opportunities for learner-centered practice and interaction with rich materials and experiences. Opportunities for reading and practicing writing in different genres are equally important and must be fully supported.
4. **Affirm identity** - the school affirms that language is integral to identity, therefore the school welcomes and embraces diversity of cultures and perspectives, valuing the diversity of cultures and perspectives to enhance learning, establishing a mother tongue program for all learners, and liaising with parents to establish understanding of how best to collaborate and achieve shared goals.

Language Program

■ Primary Years Programme

TWIS uses differentiation within each language class. While the majority of the subjects are taught in English, the Programme of Inquiry is in English.

From Kindergarten to Grade School, English Language and Literacy classes are conducted daily. Japanese language, which is the most common mother tongue as well as the host country language, is explicitly taught from Preschool. In addition, TWIS has Japanese classes for non-native speakers.

■ Official School Documents

All key official documents in school are published in English. The official school documents are as follows:

1. School Handbook
2. School Policies
3. Progress Report Cards
4. Medical Records of Students (Health records, medication cards)
5. Emergency Cards
6. School Calendar of Activities
7. Letter to Parents (school notices, updates and correspondence)
8. Programme of Inquiry
9. Promotional Invitations

■ Portfolio

1. Pre – school Department – The entire portfolio is written in English.
2. Kindergarten Department – The entire portfolio is written in English.
3. Grade School Department – The entire portfolio is written in English.



■ Mother Tongue Support

TWIS believes that mother tongue support is essential to further acquire knowledge and academic development. Since 60% of our students are Japanese, extensive lessons are given by the Japanese teachers in their class. Likewise, other mother tongue languages may be used at the teacher's discretion to support learning, according to the age, maturity and confidence of the individual student.

■ Language Level Assessment

The role of assessment is integral in determining the effectiveness of our language programmes and the language proficiency level of our students as they progress in both Japanese and English language learning continuum. Results from standardized assessments and from formative and summative assessments in class are used for referencing and planning the approaches to teaching and learning in addressing the language needs of all students.

■ International School Assessment - ISA

International School Assessment (ISA) is developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). ISA is designed especially for Grades 3 to 10 students in international schools. The results of the assessment provide information about student performance in relation to levels of proficiency in the following key areas: mathematical and reading literacy, and writing.

Assessment results are discussed with parents. Further information is used and analyzed to strengthen the mathematics and language arts programs of the school.

■ EIKEN

**Nihon Eigo Kentei Kyokai, or the Eiken Foundation of Japan (formerly the Society for Testing English Proficiency, Inc.), is a public-interest incorporated foundation established in 1963 and based in Tokyo, Japan. Eiken produces and administers English-proficiency tests with the backing of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and in cooperation with Japanese prefectural and local boards of education, public and private schools, and other leading testing bodies.

TWIS students from Grade 1 to Grade 9 are highly encouraged to take the EIKEN test every year. TWIS Teachers can be consulted about the EIKEN level of language proficiency test that students could take.

Recommended Step Eiken Level	Grade Level
Eiken Level 5 or Eiken Level 4	Grade 1 and Grade 2
Eiken Level 4 or Eiken Level 3	Grade 3



Eiken Level , Pre-2	Grade 4 and Grade 5
Eiken Level 2, Pre-1	Grade 6 , Grade 7 and Grade 8
Eiken Level 1	Grade 9

EIKEN test level written above is the level that the school suggests students take in each respective Grade level. The final decision of which specific EIKEN test level the students should take is at the discretion of their parents.

■ KANKEN

The KANKEN (The Japan Kanji Aptitude Test) is one of the most widely used Chinese characters testing programs in Japan. It is administered by the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation. It is a certificate that can be used as a reading and writing skill for Kanji.

TWIS started KANKEN in 2019. TWIS Grades 1 to 9 students take the KANKEN in July and October of the school year. Test results are given to the students within one month from the test. Due to the KANKEN, TWIS students practice Kanji using past exams in Japanese Class. The Japanese Department will leverage the result of the test and support the students' Kanji study. **Elementary Department Campus and Classroom Language Practices**

The language of instruction for the Programme of Inquiry is English. Except for Japanese Literacy, all single subjects are taught in English. The department strongly encourages students to speak in English at all times. All grade school students are encouraged to use the English language in their daily conversation.

■ Review of Language Policy

A committee will be formed to review the language policy. The committee will consist of the Headmistress, PYP Coordinator, teachers and staff. The committee will review the current policy, make revisions to current policy if needed, and create a plan to communicate the policy to the stakeholders. The language policy will be reviewed every two years.