

Sussman Middle School

Language Policy

2025-2026

Sussman Middle School Vision:

At Sussman Middle School, 21st-century learners thrive as they prepare for their high school journey to become college and career ready, globally competitive, and citizens of strong character.

Sussman Middle School Mission Statement:

At Sussman Middle School, we provide a safe, engaging, and rigorous learning experience that empowers all students to reach their full potential. We develop learners of strong character who demonstrate integrity, resilience, and compassion. Through a curriculum that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, we nurture future leaders who contribute meaningfully as responsible and reflective citizens in our local community and the wider global context.

“Sussman Middle School is a Candidate School* for the Middle Years Programme. This school is pursuing authorization as an IB World School. These are schools that share a common philosophy—a commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that Sussman Middle School believes is important for our students.”

Philosophy of Language Learning

At Sussman Middle School, we believe in fostering linguistic and cultural literacy to develop globally minded, open-minded, and balanced thinkers. Aligned with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP), we recognize the significance of multilingualism in promoting cross-cultural understanding. Multilingualism nurtures respect for diverse cultures and perspectives, essential for our students' personal, academic, and global growth.

We are committed to:

- Encouraging all students to develop proficiency in their mother tongue, target languages, and additional languages.
- Promoting a global perspective through multilingual education.
- Fostering a learning environment where all languages and cultures are valued.
- Utilizing instructional materials that integrate multicultural perspectives.
- Providing access to resources in multiple languages, expanding them based on demographic data.
- Revisiting this policy annually to reflect on its effectiveness and incorporate feedback.

Language Profile

The linguistic diversity at Sussman Middle School is a strength, with students speaking a variety of languages at home, including Spanish, Mandarin, Tagalog, and others. Our students fall into various categories:

- Students whose primary language is a non-standard form of English.
- Students proficient in both English and their mother tongue.
- Students whose primary form of communication is American Sign Language (ASL).
- Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) who have yet to meet reclassification standards.

Language Definitions

- Mother Tongue: The language spoken at home by the student.
- Language Acquisition: Learning an additional language after acquiring the first.
- Language and Literature: One of the eight IB MYP subject areas focused on deepening students' proficiency in English and literature.

Language Instruction at Sussman Middle School

English is the language of instruction at Sussman Middle School. We provide a rigorous, culturally responsive curriculum aligned with IB MYP requirements and Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To meet the needs of our diverse population, we employ strategies from AVID and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE).

Language and Literature Offerings

Students from grades 6 to 8 are enrolled in Language and Literature courses each year, designed to meet IB objectives. These courses emphasize reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Assessments are aligned with MYP criteria to ensure students' growth in language proficiency.

Language Acquisition Offerings

Students at Sussman are encouraged to study a second language. We currently offer Spanish as the primary language acquisition course. By integrating cultural aspects of Spanish-speaking countries into the curriculum, we ensure students develop both linguistic skills and intercultural competence. The World Language component of IB MYP also gives students the opportunity to read literature that is relevant to their own culture. Additionally, students may enroll in American Sign Language (ASL) as an elective, further supporting multilingual pathways.

Mother Tongue Support

Maintaining and developing students' mother tongues is essential for preserving cultural identity and cognitive development. We encourage parents to speak their home language with their children and provide access to multilingual resources in our library. Teachers support students in using their mother tongues during learning activities where appropriate. Our media center includes materials in various languages to support continued use of students' mother tongues. We also include communication about the importance of

home language at parent workshops, Coffee with the Principal, and other family engagement events.

Dual Immersion Expansion (Beginning 2025–2026)

Beginning in the 2025–2026 school year, Sussman Middle School will launch a Spanish Dual Immersion pathway aligned with the IB Middle Years Programme. Students in the Dual Immersion strand will continue their bilingual education with courses taught in Spanish in Language Acquisition and Individuals and Societies. Instruction will be aligned to IB MYP criteria and content standards, delivered primarily in Spanish.

Students in the Dual Immersion program will be placed in Language and Culture courses according to their Phase of Language Development (Phases 4, 5, and 6), as outlined by the IB MYP Language Acquisition continuum. This placement ensures linguistic challenge and growth appropriate to each student's proficiency level. The program emphasizes the development of biliteracy, academic Spanish, and cross-cultural understanding.

Courses will support students in progressing toward the California State Seal of Biliteracy by high school and prepare them for continued participation in rigorous bilingual programs such as the IB Diploma Programme, AP Spanish Language and Literature, or university-level coursework.

English Language Development (ELD) Program

Our ELD program is designed to help students achieve grade-level proficiency in English. It focuses on academic literacy and includes instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with an emphasis on academic language. Students identified as Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) receive additional support, including tutoring and targeted instruction. Multilingual Learners (MLs) take the state-mandated English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) annually to determine progress and continued need for services. Results from ELPAC and other diagnostic assessments (e.g., iReady for ELA and Math) guide individualized language development plans and targeted intervention strategies.

Role of Technology and AI in Language Learning

In keeping with the evolving landscape of education, Sussman Middle School integrates technology, including AI tools, to enhance language learning. Students are encouraged to use these tools ethically and in line with the academic honesty policy, by only using AI to aid in language acquisition and research, rather than as a substitute for original thinking or personal effort.

Multilingual Communication and Family Support

To support families whose mother tongue is not English, we provide translation services and bilingual resources. Our bilingual staff members assist with communication and interpretation to ensure families can engage meaningfully with school activities. Sussman

Middle School also participates in initiatives that celebrate and showcase linguistic diversity through school-wide projects and service-learning activities.

Assessment of Language Learning

Teachers employ a variety of assessments to measure student progress in language learning. These include:

- **Diagnostic Assessments:** To identify language learning needs and plan effective instruction (e.g., iReady for ELA and Math).
- **Formative Assessments:** Ongoing assessments that provide feedback to adjust teaching and learning strategies.
- **Self-Assessment & Reflection:** Students are encouraged to evaluate their own progress, set personal goals, and reflect on their learning journey.
- **Peer Assessment:** Peer feedback provides valuable insight and helps students refine their language skills through collaboration.
- **Summative Assessment/Culminating Tasks:** Formal assessments measure students' mastery of language skills, including district and state standardized assessments.

Teacher Training and Classroom Supports

Recognizing that all teachers are language teachers, Sussman Middle School ensures that faculty receive training in language acquisition strategies. Teachers who instruct ML students complete coursework in strategies to support language learning. Additionally, technology is infused into the classroom to bridge gaps between the language of instruction and students' mother tongues.

Resources and Support

To support multilingualism, we provide access to a wide range of multilingual resources, including digital platforms, bilingual literature, and translation services for families as needed. Our library and district resources include materials in various languages to ensure students and families can access relevant information in their preferred language. We also collaborate with feeder high schools to align language acquisition pathways.

Exemptions from MYP Requirements

While Sussman Middle School strives to include all students in the MYP, exemptions may apply when district, state, or national mandates conflict with MYP requirements. Examples include:

- Placement in a remedial course based on reading and math test scores.
- Enrollment in credit recovery type classes (Math and ELA support classes).
- Determinations made by an IEP or 504 team based on specific student needs.
- Decisions about exemptions will involve meetings with students and families, when appropriate, to ensure transparency and respect for individual circumstances.

Revisiting the Policy

Sussman Middle School will review this language policy annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective in meeting the needs of our diverse student population. Feedback from teachers, students, and parents will be integrated to continuously improve language instruction and support multilingualism.

By promoting multilingualism and cultural literacy, we aim to nurture globally minded students who respect linguistic diversity and are prepared to engage meaningfully with the world around them.

Reviewed and Approved by the Sussman Middle School MYP Language Policy Committee

Date of Review: August 2025, February 2025