

SPARK Schools Language Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The SPARK Schools Language Policy was developed based on requirements and recommendations of the Department of Basic Education's "Language in Education Policy," the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 ("the Constitution") and the SPARK Schools Diversity Policy.
- 1.2. We affirm that multilingualism and equitable language rights are protected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and that the promotion of multilingualism demonstrates our commitment to nurturing respect for diversity amongst our Scholars.
- 1.3 This policy informs the language planning and language management at SPARK Schools in the context of classroom teaching and learning to fulfill our mission to create global citizens.

2. Approach

- 2.1. SPARK Schools, in seeking to implement and uphold this Language Policy, specifically adheres to the following considerations and obligations outlined in the Constitution as well as the Department of Basic Education's *Rights and Responsibilities of Independent Schools, 2008*, and *Language in Education Policy, 2008*:
 - 2.1.1. There are eleven (11) languages granted official status in the Constitution.
 - 2.1.2. The Constitution provides for the right of all students to receive education at public education facilities in the official language of their choice.
 - 2.1.3. SPARK Schools is an independent school network, which has a responsibility to "meet all learning outcomes and assessment standards prescribed" by the Department of Basic Education's national curriculum standards.
 - 2.1.4. SPARK Schools has the right to "choose their own curriculum and examinations" and "pursue a particular philosophy or methodology".
 - 2.1.5. The Department of Basic Education has determined that "being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African" and that "societal and individual multilingualism are the global norm today".
 - 2.1.6. Finally, "a wide spectrum of opinions exists as to the locally viable approaches towards multilingual education" with a school's responsibility to "maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional languages".
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3. Languages as Subjects

- 3.1. All SPARK Schools are English-medium, meaning that English is the primary language of instruction and behaviour management for all subjects except of additional languages taught at the schools.
- 3.2. All SPARK Schools offer as a first additional language, mandatory from Grade R, the most populous and previously marginalised language spoken in that province. For example, the first additional language offered in Gauteng is isiZulu, and the first additional language offered in the Western Cape is isiXhosa.
- 3.3. Proficiency in an additional language may be used as an indicator for promotion or retention in concert with a scholar's results in literacy and math, the primary subjects used to determine promotion and retention.
- 3.4. Where SPARK Scholars require additional support to cement their understanding in a topic, a teacher may act as a translator or ask a helpful peer to translate. This "scaffolded" instruction is a form of structured bilingual education that supports scholar achievement.

4. Languages as Social and Cultural Media

- 4.1. SPARK Scholars are free to speak with their peers in the language in which they are most comfortable while on the playground, in common spaces, or in social interactions.
- 4.2. Similarly, SPARK Scholars are free to speak with their peers in the language in which they are most comfortable while working collaboratively in groups in the classroom.
- 4.3. In acknowledging that language plays a significant role in cultural identity, SPARK Parents/Guardians are encouraged to continue speaking with their child in their home language, to instill cultural values and practices related to home language, and to support their child in expressing these cultural values and practices so that they can be shared with peers at school. We value diversity and the expression of diverse cultures at our SPARK events, when we celebrate public holidays at school, and through our themed units of study, as well.

5. Languages as Media of Communication

- 5.1. Where necessary due to the composition of the school community, a school leader (Principal, Assistant Principal, School Operations Manager) may provide translations of weekly newsletters, homework instructions and announcements, and other policies sent home. This translation will always be accompanied with the original document in English.
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- 5.2. Where necessary due to the composition of the school community, a school leader (Principal, Assistant Principal, School Operations Manager) may facilitate community meetings and events with dual language translation.
- 5.3. Where necessary, practical, and accessible, a teacher may translate or request a translator in meetings with parents about a child's behaviour, academic progress, or overall development, providing written and verbal feedback in both English and the parent's most proficient language.
- 5.4. Vendors and partners will provide communication about their products and service in English, unless otherwise requested directly to the vendor, partner, or service provider directly.

6. Rules

- 6.1. Discriminatory behaviour based on language, intentional or otherwise, will not be tolerated at SPARK Schools.
 - 6.2. This applies on SPARK Schools' facilities, at School-related events as well as to any instance where the Scholar can reasonably be recognised as being a Scholar of the School. This is also applicable to online activity of the Scholar.
 - 6.3. Any breaches of this Policy will be dealt with in terms of the School's Code of Conduct.
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