

CRIA Language Policy

1. Language Philosophy

Costa Rica International Academy, a U.S. accredited college preparatory school serving an international community, inspires a passion for learning and provides children with the skills, values, and courage to become responsible leaders in their communities and the world. Intensive language learning is fundamental to this mission. Language learning promotes a dynamic framework with which to understand other cultures and perspectives. CRIA students are expected to attain a confident level of oral and written proficiency in both English and Spanish. The ability to communicate in more than one language facilitates an individual's movement beyond the first language and home culture, increases awareness of the world, and ultimately enables one to participate more fully as an international citizen. The learning process involves learning language(s), learning about language(s), and learning through language(s). Students learn about language and through language to foster knowledge, understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation of cultures, values, and traditions.

2. Language Programs

A. Dual Language Program (Nursery – Grade 2)

Students in our Nursery through Grade 2 program spend approximately half of the learning time in Spanish and half in English. The long-term goals of the dual language program are: bilingualism; biliteracy; high academic achievement; cultural competency. CRIA utilizes a single teacher model in the Nursery-Grade 1 classes where fully bilingual teachers are the main classroom teacher. In 2nd grade, we employ a two-teacher model. Each teacher is a homeroom teacher for their 2nd grade classroom and students move between the two teachers. Our Spanish lead teacher instructs both groups in Spanish language arts and science, while our English lead teacher instructs both groups in English language arts and social studies. Each homeroom teacher teaches math to their home group in English. Both 2nd grade homeroom teachers teach math in English to their home group. All students in the dual language program learn the following subjects in Spanish: art, physical education, music, and Costa Rican social studies.

Our teachers instruct students using the common underlying proficiency (CUP) model in which various aspects of a bilingual's proficiency in the child's language 1 and language 2 are seen as common or interdependent across languages. In other words, when applied to bilingual education contexts, the common underlying proficiency refers to the cognitive/academic knowledge and abilities that underlie academic performance in both languages.

B. English Language Learners (ELL) Students

As an international school, CRIA hosts an increasing number of multilingual students. For those Primary students for whom English is a second language, there are specific school, teacher, and parent protocols for identifying, monitoring, and supporting their growth in order to assist students in reaching high English proficiency levels. CRIA does not accept students into the secondary program who are unable to function in the mainstream classroom without ELL support services.

CRIA is a member of the WIDA International Schools consortium, and as such, uses the WIDA standards as a tool for both classroom planning and also communication with families.

Identification of ELLs

There are two parts to the identification process. First, as part of the yearly intake procedure, all Primary families from Prek-5th grade turn in a home language survey for each enrolled student. The survey consists of 7 questions about the child's exposure to English and use of the language. Answers to these surveys assist us in identifying those students who will initially qualify as an English Language Learner (ELL).

Next, all students initially identified as ELL will take the four-part, online MODEL test. This test is designed to assess students in four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and provides individual as well as composite scores for each student. The composite score from this test will determine if the child will continue to qualify as an ELL student (See Graduation from ELL program, below). The ELL support staff will ensure that a complete ELL list by class, with parent contacts and other pertinent information is assembled as soon as possible, for use during the year.

Services for ELLs

ELL support staff and the Director will use the MODEL scores to determine the cut off for additional services, based on availability each semester. Students with a certain MODEL composite score at 3.5 receive some type of additional support or program, beyond general classroom accommodations. The ELL support staff will create an ELL support plan for each ELL student, in order for all parties, parents, teachers, and support staff, to understand their role in offering services/support to ELLs.

ELL services are offered in a variety of formats. First and foremost, all teachers offer in-class differentiation for ELL students. Teachers are provided with an ELL Support Plan for every ELL student to guide their instruction, and also consult with ELL Support Staff for additional ideas and assistance. Students are expected to learn grade level content. However, teachers offer students reasonable, alternative means to demonstrate their understanding of academic assignments or subjects.

Students with low proficiency as demonstrated by the MODEL test composite scores will also receive some form of support from the ELL support staff. Such support will be in the form of “push-in” services (ELL teacher working with the student or a group of students in the general education classroom) or “pull-out” services (ELL teacher works with the student or a group of students in a setting separate from the general education classroom). Any type of such support will be determined and offered on a case by case basis.

Monitoring of ELLs

In order to monitor the ongoing growth of students’ English proficiency, there will be regular, ongoing supervision, both by classroom instructors as well as ELL support staff.

MODEL test: The MODEL test will be given twice a year, at the start of each semester. These results will be shared with both parents and teachers, and kept in each ELL’s file.

ELL Report Cards: Homeroom teachers submit ELL report cards for their ELL students to both parents and the ELL Support staff. These reports are based on WIDA’s Can Do descriptors by grade level groupings.

Reporting periods: ELL support staff work with individual teachers, checking in frequently during the four reporting periods as to the progress and grades of students.

Communicating with Parents of ELLs

Parents will receive information regarding their child’s services (ELL Support Plan) as well as the results of the MODEL test, twice a year. Parents will also receive the ELL report card twice a year.

ELL support staff hold open, published office hours in order for parents to visit and ask any questions about their child’s progress.

Graduation from ELL Program

As students’ proficiency improves, they will no longer qualify for services or be considered ELL. As students’ MODEL test results reach a score of 5 or higher, they will be removed from the ELL roster and will no longer receive ELL services.

C. Spanish Language Program

In 3rd- 11th grades, all students at CRIA study the Spanish language (outside the dual language program of N-2), which reflects both our student population and the language of our host country. Students receive daily instruction in Spanish that is targeted to a range of Spanish proficiency levels.

Spanish language placement

The Spanish Department is responsible for assessing students' Spanish proficiencies and placing students into the appropriate Spanish classes. Placements are based on the Home Language Survey, previous schools' transcripts, and a placement test which assesses students' listening, speaking, reading and writing levels. As the education specialists with professional knowledge of the language learning process, as well as knowledge of our curriculum and course content, **class/course placement is decided by our Spanish Department faculty.**

Spanish language course structure

Several grade levels are scheduled for Spanish simultaneously, allowing CRIA to offer 3-4 levels of Spanish to our 3rd-12th grade students with varying levels of Spanish proficiency. We offer Spanish 1(beginner) – Spanish 4 (highly proficient) as well as AP Spanish Language and Culture for students in Grades 10 - 12.

All Spanish language courses address the domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Spanish 4 utilizes the MEP (Costa Rican Ministry of Education) standards and prepares students for AP Spanish Language and Culture and/or the Spanish exam of the Costa Rican Bachillerato diploma.