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LANGUAGE POLICY

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Philosophy and principles of language learning at the ISHU

Philosophy

*To educate a child perfectly requires
profounder thought, greater wisdom, than to govern a state*
William Ellery
Channing

The International School of Herzen University (ISHU) is an International Baccalaureate (IB) School and currently offers its students the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). Also, the ISHU is **a school certified to run the IB Diploma Programme (DP)**. We consider languages as a means for determining and shaping meaning and learning languages is central to studying in our school. At the ISHU, we are committed to developing in our students confidence in self, creative abilities, commitment to their education, as well as qualities of a cosmopolitan person. One of the ways to achieve this goal is, in our opinion, to create a multilingual educational environment using a research-based learning approach. We believe that multilingualism and the development of critical literacy help shape students as internationally minded persons, in particular through the School's curriculum.

At the ISHU, all teachers are language teachers. All students study languages no matter what language(s) they speak. All students have unique wealth of knowledge, which is crucial for defining their current cognitive development and for maintaining their cultural identity. At the ISHU, we are committed to building a learning environment for active support of language skills development as a part of our bilingual curriculum. As an international school based in St. Petersburg, we do our best to make sure our students have access to learning the Russian language throughout the curriculum and can get linguistic and cultural experiences in the country and community they live in. We are equally convinced that each student should have the opportunity to maintain and develop their mother tongue(s). The acquisition of additional languages allows students to comprehend and explore different cultural perspectives.



Furthermore, we believe that learning and practicing language in the most efficient way require an environment that encourages risk taking and mistakes are regarded as inevitable and necessary. The most effective ways of acquiring language skills are to use language in result-oriented contexts to address particular social or academic problems and to explore texts and literature from various cultural and linguistic sources. Communicating in languages is integrated in the learning process in all subject areas, being one of the ways of applying an interdisciplinary approach to learning languages at the ISHU. Discussions, training dialogues and conversations as an element of communication also contribute in a certain way to the language acquisition process.

This Language Policy is a **working** document and each teacher of the School has a responsibility to interpret and implement it in real life. This Language Policy shall be revised on an annual basis in order to optimize the educational process and incorporate any developments in teaching practices of both the IB Programme and ISHU.

The ISHU Language Policy shall apply to all participants of the educational process of the School, including its administrators, teachers, students and their parents (legal representatives).

At the ISHU, we are committed to creating an enriching, fair and inclusive learning environment to help students learn the content of the IB Programme to the fullest extent possible.

The Language Policy and the IB Learner Profile

The Language Policy is aimed at developing life-long learners who possess all the attributes of the IB Learner Profile. Learning several languages provides a foundation for the development of all attributes of an IB Learner, such as being communicator and inquirer, open-minded and critical thinker which one cannot develop without being proficient in several languages.



The Language Policy and International Mindedness

According to the IB mission and the mission of our School, the Language Policy reflects the international nature of the programme. The ISHU offers opportunities to learn multiple languages. A well-established culture of language learning is a unique feature of our School. Language learning and **various activities (homeroom periods, assemblies and the Native Language Day)** enable our students to get deeper knowledge and understanding of multiple cultures, which, in turn, leads to developing tolerance and open-mindedness. This ensures that our students are prepared to consider multiple factors and tackle global problems. Besides, it maintains the atmosphere of trust and mutual support in the multilingual ISHU community.

The Language Policy is one of the major tools for nurturing international mindedness which involves not only respect for and acceptance of other cultures, but also cooperation in addressing important community issues. Therefore, during the next three years, we expect to implement the following activities:

- Assemblies dedicated to the mother tongue of international students and important events in their mother tongue countries;
- Reading and discussing books in mother tongue (as part of conversation clubs involving native speaker parents);
- Station games that will involve addressing global problems.

Principles

ISHU teachers seek to:

- enable students to develop and use their linguistic skills in various contexts;
- enable students to learn diverse communication and behavioural models actively used in contemporary speech practices;
- encourage students to study language as a tool for understanding different cross-cultural points of view and to learn and use language in an efficient, accurate and confident fashion;



- encourage students to learn from texts of different forms, genres, styles and applications, taking note of the moral and cultural potential of a literary text;
- assist students in understanding subject-specific lexis and terms used in different disciplines;
- encourage students to learn about samples and values of their own and other cultures and reflect on the socio-cultural development of mankind;
- develop openness to cross-cultural communication and be tolerant to other cultures;
- enable students to develop a point of view, articulate their views, and substantiate their opinions;
- enable students to actively interact with people from different cultures, while maintaining their own linguistic and cultural identity;
- maintain transparency of courses, programmes and assessment criteria;
- develop professionally and take refresher courses;
- develop interdisciplinary integration involving cooperation between teachers of all educational courses aiming to enhance retention of the learning material and facilitate its presentation.

Language learning occurs in every classroom and in learning every subject area. It stands at the core of the many interdependent cognitive, affective and social factors that shape the learning process. Because of this, teachers in every subject group attend to various language needs of their students. Following the differentiation principle, students whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction (English / Russian) may receive classroom support in one or another format depending on the context. The forms of support include *but not limited to* the following:

- use of visual aids;
- use of multimodal texts;
- peer support in communicating ideas in mother tongue;
- access to readings in advance;
- access to graphic organizers;
- use of adapted tasks with reduced amounts of writing where the key objective is other than mastering writing skills;



- checking for understanding so as to avoid a situation where a student responds with only a “yes” or a smile and nod, because as we know many cultures view this as being polite and respectful even despite the actual lack of understanding;
- additional time for the completion of a task;
- where the assessment is not directly related to language skills, students are allowed using dictionaries or translation software;
- using body language to support verbal explanations;
- designing tasks to empower peers in giving feedback to each other;
- structuring tasks to discourage the use of digital translation software;
- activation of “students’ prior understanding, using the mother tongue and other languages when appropriate”;
- taking into account “time and strategies necessary for activating and building up background knowledge when planning a unit of work or lesson”;
- demonstration of learning objectives or tasks;
- using work formats to enable students to work in small groups.

Most of the above listed differentiation strategies can also benefit many other students — even those whose mother tongue is the same as the language of instruction (English / Russian). This is particularly true when learning subject-specific terminology. Moreover, communication is a criterion in each subject group of the MYP / DP, and students will necessarily benefit from developing a wide range of communication skills.

ISHU Language Policy

Hosting students from a wide range of countries with diverse language proficiency levels, ISHU provides a multilingual environment. The Language Policy is aimed at supporting this multilingualism, while setting clear guidelines for its operations.

The School’s languages of instruction are Russian (which is the native language of the majority of students) and English. The majority (approximately 86%) of ISHU students have Russian as their mother tongue.



Apart from Russia, the most commonly spoken are Korean and English. The composition of international students is variable, as many families stay in Russia for 1 to 3 years. In the academic year of 2022 / 2023, ISHU has 125 students (aged from 5 to 17 years), of whom 17 are international students. Our students come from different countries (**Korea, China, Ukraine, Germany, Norway, Ecuador, and Spain**) and speak other mother tongues.

At the ISHU, all students in Grades 5-11 must study English and Russian (with at least of them being Language A, i.e. the language of instruction). The IB MYP (Grades 5-9) is taught in both Russian and English, with the exception of Languages B (French, Spanish and German). The IB DP (Grades 10-11) is taught in English only, with the exception of Russian Language A, Korean Language A, Chinese Language A and Languages B (Russian, French, Spanish and German). All DP students, regardless of their native language, will therefore have English as their main language of instruction.

The School's Language Policy is aimed not only at maintaining a multilingual environment, but also at the linguistic development of each student, which is monitored once every six months by entries on key developments (such as the results of international examinations, participation in academic competitions, performing in languages at events of various levels, confirming the achievement of a new language level by testing) that are made by the designated language teacher in the student's Language Passport. This document is designed to reflect the realistic linguistic profile and inform both teachers and students of their achievements and progress as part of not only curricular but also extracurricular activities, where games and competitions in foreign languages, including those organized by students for lower graders, play an important developmental role.

Language Use at School

The School's teachers and administrators are Russian-speakers, and its official documentation is mainly written in Russian. Both Russian and English are used for documentation and communication between IB teachers.



Within the MYP, English and Russian are used for communication in classes (except Language B classes), staff meetings, and faculty assemblies. **In the beginning of the academic year, the rules for communication and those for the use of languages are set for each subject with a view to create an atmosphere of mutual respect.**

Within the DP, English is used for communication in classes (except for Russian Language A, and Languages B), staff meetings, and faculty assemblies. In both programmes, students are free to use the language of their choice for communicating with **peers, other schoolmates** and teachers outside the class. **In fact, every group of students selects their own language for communication.** This is usually Russian, English, or less frequently, another (possibly native) language spoken by several students.

ISHU Languages and Language Pathways

Entrance to ISHU

Entrance to the IB MYP

According to the Admission Policy, a candidate for the IB MYP at the ISHU (Grades 5-9) takes an entrance interview consisting of an oral part (in both English and Russian) and a range of written tests depending on their age, grade he / she applies for and their training background. Based on the entrance interview outcomes, the Entrance Committee creates an ISHU candidate's Language Passport, which shows the candidate's linguistic background, such as his / her mother tongue, primary language, the languages of instruction he / she used previously, etc. This document and the candidate's family plans and expectations provide a foundation for designing the candidate's / student's Individual Educational Path, which includes language(s) of instruction, Language A and Languages Acquisition programmes choice and required linguistic support. **All the developments relating to the linguistic education level, such as examinations passed, outcomes of linguistic contests and academic competitions, as well as to the linguistic support level are recorded in the Language Passport throughout the student's period of study.**



The School offers students one of the three individual language routes:

Russian as a mother tongue	English as a mother tongue	Other language as a mother tongue
1. Russian Language and Literature	1. English Language and Literature	1. Mother Tongue Language and Literature (school teacher or home tuition in accordance with the agreement with the parents)
2. English Language Acquisition / English Language and Literature (based on the language level)	2. Russian Language Acquisition / Russian Language and Literature (based on the language level)	2. English Language Acquisition / English Language and Literature (based on the language level)
3. Second foreign language out of the three foreign languages offered by the School: German, French or Spanish	3. Second foreign language out of the three foreign languages offered by the School: German, French or Spanish	3. Russian Language Acquisition / Russian Language and Literature (based on the language level)
		4. Optional: One of the three foreign languages offered by the School: German, French or Spanish

Entrance to the IB DP

According to the Admission Policy, a candidate for the IB DP at the ISHU (Grades 10-11) takes an entrance interview consisting of an oral part (in English) and a range of written tests depending on the DP subjects he / she applies for in-depth study. All candidates, including those who have studied in the IB MYP, are subject to the entrance interview.



If a candidate for DP at the ISHU comes from a different school (regardless of the educational system), the Entrance Committee creates an ISHU candidate's Language Passport, which shows the candidate's linguistic background, such as his / her mother tongue, primary language, the languages of instruction he / she used previously, etc.

Based on the entrance interview outcomes and the DP candidate's parents' interview, the decision is made to enrol him /her on the full Diploma Programme and the selection of HL and SL subjects. For these students, Russian will be used as the main language of instruction. Students whose level of English language proficiency is insufficient to successfully meet the full DP requirements, are recommended to enter the full Russian Federation Final Years programme to prepare for the Russian State exams. They may find it beneficial to take IB DP courses in addition to their compulsory RF courses, rather than the full IB Diploma Programme.

Training Programmes

Language and Literature / Language A

Language and Literature / Language A is a compulsory subject for all students in the IB Programme. This covers learning Russian (the first language for the majority of students) and / or English (the second language of instruction in the Programme).

Russian Language

Russian-speaking students study Russian Language and Literature throughout their time at the ISHU, as part of the Language and Literature subject group of the IB MYP and the Language A subject group in the IB DP (if they enter the IB DP). Otherwise, they study Language and Literature as part of the 10-11 Years of the Russian programme.



The Russian Language and Literature / Language A subject is designed for the following categories of students:

- Students with Russian as their mother tongue;
- Bilingual students who use Russian as one of the languages for everyday communication;
- International, non-native Russian students with B2 (MYP) / C1 (DP) and higher level of Russian.

As a licensed and accredited Russian educational institution, the ISHU provides support in preparation for the Russian state examination to students with any level of proficiency in Russian as the mother tongue. The number of hours and the learning content for Russian Language and Literature / Language A are determined by Head of the Russian Language and Literature department and IB Coordinator in accordance with the IB requirements for the Language and Literature / Group 1 subjects depending on whether Russian is the mother tongue for a student or, if not, on their level of Russian proficiency.

English Language

The English Language and Literature subject is designed for the following categories of students:

Within the IB MYP:

- Students with English as their mother tongue;
- Bilingual students who use English as one of the languages for everyday communication;
- Non-native English students with B2 and higher level of English, choosing the subject English Language and Literature with the possibility to transfer to the Programme provided the following conditions are met simultaneously:
- The student has at least B2 proficiency of English (CEFR) which is proved by the Certificate of the corresponding Cambridge English Language Assessment exam
- The student is studying at least one more Foreign Language within the subject group “Language Acquisition”.



- Students who do not have a sufficient level of English or Russian (languages of instruction in the Language and Literature programme at the ISHU), if the ISHU cannot deliver Language and Literature courses for this category of students within the IB MYP Programme. According to the ISHU Inclusion Policy, if the language of instruction is different from the student's mother tongue, additional support is provided as described below.

Training and progress assessment are carried out according to the IB MYP Language and Literature Guide, thus preparing students for an IB MYP exam in MYP Grade 9.

Within the IB DP:

- Students with English as their mother tongue;
- Bilingual students who use English as one of the languages for everyday communication;
- Non-native English students with C1 and higher level of proficiency of English (CEFR), which is proved by a Certificate of the corresponding Cambridge English Language Assessment exam.

Other mother tongues

The term "mother tongue" may refer both to the language that a student first learned when he / she was born or to a language he / she speaks at the level of a native speaker. For the purposes of the IB MYP and IB DP, the term "mother tongue" includes both definitions and refers to the language used by the student at home and/or outside the school.

If the student's mother tongue is not one of the ISHU's languages of instruction, the School does the following:

Within the IB MYP:

- The MYP Coordinator and the Language Acquisition subject group leader contact the student's family to collect information about the student's history of studying their mother tongue.



- The School administration employs a student's native language teacher (for example, a Lithuanian language teacher, a Polish language teacher, a Czech language teacher, etc. have worked at the ISHU at different times) and the IB Coordinator and the language teacher together create the MYP unit planners for the mother tongue Language and Literature for the student.
- If, for any reason, it is impossible to hire a student's mother tongue teacher, the ISHU discusses this with the student's family and learning the mother tongue is provided by the family (for example, by regular classes with a parent). This will help students to develop native language skills, improve their cognitive skills, and maintain the understanding of their native culture.

Within the IB DP:

- If the School is unable to employ a teacher of the student's mother tongue, a student may be allowed to study it as a "school-supported self-taught Language A (Literature) student". The course is only available at SL and will be assessed in accordance with the IB P guidelines for "school-supported self-taught students".

In both the MYP and DP, the School offers **additional support** to students who study a language other than their mother tongue, with the main aim being to facilitate teaching and learning, as well as inclusiveness.

- Language and Literature and Language Acquisition teachers support all students in various ways, such as by implementing reading and writing strategies across the curriculum, selecting and providing access to literature from a variety of cultural backgrounds from all over the world, providing multiple opportunities for students to write in a variety of genres, allowing students a wide choice of reading materials and encouraging reading for enjoyment, and by assessing students formally and informally in the classroom.
- Teachers of all subject groups provide ongoing support and also address linguistic matters in their classes. This is partially based on the assumption that the use of language varies from discipline to discipline.



- All teachers work with the librarian to collaborate on vocabulary and concepts across the curriculum, spread the use of a common terminology for language, and teach the conventions for referencing, citing and the principles of academic integrity.
- Differentiation in lessons is based on best practices in accordance with the IB standards and practices. All teachers respond to students' needs and therefore may provide individualized instruction guided in some cases by specific learning goals and students' Individual Learning Paths. Teaching strategies may include working in small groups, using different resources with different levels of language complexity, as well as changing the level of questioning and tasks for individual students. Students may also have choices following their interests or use a preferred learning style.
- Students who are not sufficiently fluent in Russian and/or English and as such need further support may access resources, such as peer-tutoring, language dictionaries and online translators, and articles in various languages.

IB DP – Bilingual Diplomas

IB DP level Students with a grade of 3 or higher in two Language A courses (for example, Russian and English) are eligible for a bilingual diploma. The same applies to students with a grade of 3 or higher in one Language A course and one Sciences or Individuals and Societies course in a different language (for example, Russian Language A, and Chemistry in English).

Language Acquisition / Language B

English Language Acquisition

Training groups are set up according to students' age and English proficiency levels, i.e. a Language Acquisition group has students of the **same age group** with the same language phase (these groups are not necessarily the same as classes within the relevant year of study).

A programme is developed for each group according to the students' individual characteristics, as well as MYP objectives for an appropriate phase of the Language Acquisition subject group.



Transition to the next phase of the Language Acquisition subject group is based on at least one of the following:

- Student's performance in summative assessments within MYP units of the current phase, school mock exams, etc.
- External monitoring results (annual academic competitions and state tests)
- Official Cambridge English Language Assessment results (May / June session).

The Language Acquisition subject group makes a joint decision on the next academic year plan for a group / student (transition to the next phase / staying in the same phase). This decision is made in August / September.

Russian Language Acquisition

Within the IB MYP, Russian Language B is studied by international students (except for bilingual students who use Russian as one of the languages for everyday communication). The course is aimed at developing students' communicative competence based on linguistic and speech competences, i.e. the ability to solve vital extra-linguistic problems using a foreign language. A decision on whether students need to study Russian Language B and on the number of hours allocated to the course per week is made depending on their age and proficiency (phase) in Russian as well as the IB MYP requirements for the Language Acquisition subject group. According to the ISHU's Admission Policy, international students are placed in a group based on their age and proficiency (phase) in Russian. A test in the admission process is based on the Russian Federation requirements for the proficiency in Russian as a foreign language.



Proficiency in Russian as a foreign language according to Russian requirements	CEFR level	MYP phase taught in the School
Elementary (additional)	A1	Phase 1
Basic	A2	Phase 2
First	B1	Phase 3
Second	B2	Russian Language and Literature
Third	C1	Russian Language and Literature

Table 1. Proficiency levels in Russian as a foreign language

The School provides courses in Russian Language B across the three phases (see the Table). Upon completion of each phase within the MYP course, students are tested to show they are ready to transfer to the next phase. Besides, they are recommended to take a Test of Russian as a Foreign Language (**TORFL**) in accordance with the requirements applicable in the Russian Federation to formally confirm their proficiency in Russian.

Twice a year, students of Russian Language Acquisition complete a test based on which the Russian Language and Literature Department and IB Coordinator decide whether they can be moved to groups of Russian Language and Literature and subsequently take a basic state exam in MYP Year 5 (Grade 9).

When reaching the CEFR level B1, international students may, depending on their future education goals, transfer to full Russian Language programme and become eligible to take state exams in the subject. The School delivers extra hours of Russian Language to such students, if necessary.



Within the IB DP, the School offers a Language B (SL) course in Russian. It is intended for non-native speakers of Russian and operates in the same way as other Language B courses described below.

German / French / Spanish Language Acquisition / Language B Within the IB MYP, all ISHU students must study a third language throughout the programme.

The School offers programmes in French, Spanish and German. Students are streamed into groups of different proficiency levels (MYP Language Acquisition phases) based on an entry level test according to the ISHU's Admission Policy.

Training groups are set up according to student's age and language proficiency levels, i.e. a Language Acquisition group has students of the **same age group** with the same language phase (these groups are not necessarily the same as classes within the relevant year of study).

A programme is developed for each group according to the students' individual characteristics, as well as MYP goals and objectives for the Language Acquisition subject group.

For the mainstream students, the programme of each phase in Language Acquisition is mastered within two MYP years (see Table 2).

Grade / MYP Year	CEFR level	MYP phase taught in the School
5/1	A1.1	Phase 1
6/2	A1.2	Phase 1
7/3	A2.1	Phase 2
8/4	A2.2	Phase 2
9/5	B1.1	Phase 3

Table 2. Mainstream levels of language proficiency (Language Acquisition, third language)



Students are transferred to the next phase after they have confirmed their proficiency level in school exams. Students are also recommended to take international exams: DELE in Spanish, DELF in French and Goethe Institut in German.

The Language Acquisition subject group makes a joint decision on the next academic year plan for a group / student (transition to the next phase / staying in the same phase). The decision is made in May / June; **however where necessary an entry test to assess the language phase and identify group members is taken in the beginning of a new academic year.**

The School provides an opportunity to revise the student's individual language route prior to the beginning of an academic quarter and, if a student wishes, he /she may choose a third / fourth language for acquisition, subject to an application from his / her parents.

If before the beginning of the academic year, a student wants to change his / her second foreign language for a good reason (such as moving to a country of the second language) and start learning this language from the zero level, this is only possible if the relevant phase has a current beginner group or the teacher of the required second language has free time in his / her schedule.

Within the IB DP, students will choose to study English, Russian or Spanish as Language B depending on their educational priorities and linguistic background. They may enter the SL Language B course if they have achieved at least B1 (CEFR) level of competence, they may either the SL or HL Language B course if they have achieved the B2 level. In Russian Language B, only SL courses are currently available.



ISHU IB MYP Linguistic Class Programme

The Linguistic Class programme is designed for children learning the English language whose aim is to master it for educational purposes. The Linguistic Class programme involves teaching and learning certain subjects included in the IB MYP curriculum using English as a language of instruction. ISHU aims to offer a set of English-taught subjects that, as a minimum, enables each MYP student to select at least one subject in every subject group to become eligible for the full IB MYP certificate. A decision on subjects to be taught in English is made at a collaborative session in June and may vary depending on availability of teachers, students' needs and capabilities, family requests, etc.

By MYP Year 5 (Grade 9), Linguistic Class students should be able to complete a Personal Project in English and take their eAssessment electronic examinations that are necessary for obtaining the MYP Certificate.

To be eligible to enter MYP Year 1 (Grade 5) of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (Linguistic Class), students must have international examination certificate (A2 level) according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) scale — the Key for Schools examination (the Cambridge English Language Assessment) or Flyers (Young Learners Exams). Upon the completion of the International Baccalaureate Programme (Grade 9), students will be assigned at least CEFR B2 level and should pass the First for Schools (the Cambridge English Language Assessment) or higher level examination, which will make them eligible for entering the IB DP.

The table below shows the expected levels of English Language proficiency for the Linguistic Class programme and corresponding Cambridge English Language Assessment exams.



Grade	Language proficiency level
5	A2+ / B1 (passing KET, preparation for PET)
6	B1 / B1+ (PET / pre-FCE)
7	B1+ / B2 (pre-FCE, preparation for FCE)
8	B2 (FCE)
9	B2+ or English Language and Literature (based on teacher's recommendations and the student's goals)

Table 3. Required level of English language proficiency for studying in the Linguistic Class programme

Information Support in Learning Languages

Information competence is a necessary component for learning languages. ISHU students develop their information competence when studying all subject groups by searching, processing and critical evaluation of information sources necessary for research.

The Information Resource Centre based in the ISHU Library provides support to teachers and students in their preparation for classes and self-guided work on projects. The ISHU librarians regularly update students on new educational, fiction and non-fiction books and current cultural events. Besides, students learn the basics of research and proper source citing according to the ISHU Academic Integrity Policy.



Links between the ISHU Language Policy for IB MYP and IB DP and other ISHU policies

ISHU Admission Policy

At the ISHU, students are enrolled on the IB MYP / IB DP programmes based on the entrance interview. An integral component of the entrance interview is a check of the candidate's proficiency in languages, which allows for developing an Individual Educational Path taking into account the candidate's language skills and educational background. For further details, please refer to the ISHU Admission Policy.

Academic Integrity Policy

Both students and teachers must be aware of the principles of academic integrity and of the possible consequences of failure to follow them. For further clarification of requirements, including in case of misconduct, you should refer to the Academic Integrity Policy.

Assessment Policy

For all IB subjects (including Language and Literature / Language A and Language Acquisition / Language B), assessment is conducted in accordance with the IB requirements set out in subject guides and procedures listed in the IB documentation and further clarified in the ISHU Assessment Policy.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Inclusion Policy

The IB and ISHU's propriety is to give students from different cultural backgrounds and children with special educational needs appropriate support in learning languages and to enable them to use language both in everyday and academic situations. For further details on the SEN students support system, please refer to the ISHU Inclusion Policy.



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