Information for parents – German as a second language (DaZ)

Dear parents

Around a third of all young learners in the county of Zurich speak a language other than German in their family. One of the goals of elementary education is to ensure that all children/young people’s German is good enough to enable them to participate in lessons. If necessary, the school supports learners by offering additional lessons in German as a second language (Deutsch als Zweitsprache (DaZ)). Here we aim to inform you about how the children/young people who need to improve their German skills can receive support at various levels of elementary school.

How does the school support children with learning German as a second language?

Kindergarten:
- German as a second language (DaZ) in kindergarten
  Children who can only speak very little or no German have one-to-one or group lessons with a qualified DaZ teacher. The child has between two and four lessons a week. DaZ lessons take place in kindergarten.

Primary and secondary school:
- DaZ for beginners
  Children and young people with no prior knowledge of German who move to the county of Zurich have „DaZ for beginners“ lessons at school every day for a year either in a group or in a „Reception class“. The aim is for the child/young person to learn enough basic German for them to actively take part in lessons in mainstream school as soon as possible.

- DaZ for intermediate learners
  Learners who already have a basic understanding of German but not enough to be able to participate in mainstream classes have between two and four „DaZ for intermediate learners“ lessons a week („DaZ-Aufbauunterricht“).

The school takes the following approach when a child/young person needs support with learning German:
- When you or your child’s teacher thinks your child needs support, the teacher will set up a parent-teacher meeting to evaluate your child’s current level („Schulischen
Standortgespräch*). At the meeting you should both agree on the kind of support your child should receive. If there is any disagreement, the school governing board reaches a decision.

- The next step involves the DaZ teacher creating a study plan for each child and providing individualised support to learn German.
- The class teacher also helps the child/young person to learn German and ensures that the exercises they are given in class are appropriate to their German skills.
- The teaching staff talk to you about how you can help and encourage your child to learn German outside of the school.

What can parents do?

- Demonstrate to your child that both your own first language and the German language are of value and importance.
- Encourage your child’s language development by talking to them often about different topics in the language you feel most comfortable speaking – it is often your first language.
- Make the most of opportunities to use German. Your child will learn a lot of German from being with German-speaking children in the playground, in play groups, in daycare, in after-school clubs, sports clubs, in scouts etc.
- Borrow books, audio books, educational games and other audio-visual material from your local library. Look at picture books with your child and read them books, making sure your child reads a lot themselves.
- Let your child attend classes in the language and culture of your country of origin (Heimatlicher Sprache und Kultur - HSK, see Information/advice), if such courses are available in your first language. This will help your child to learn to read and write in their first language. Being bilingual is an advantage.
- Provide your child with a quiet place at home where they can do their homework on a regular basis.
- Keep in touch with your child’s teacher, talk to them openly about how your child’s language and leaning is progressing and about their well-being.

Information / advice
For any questions related to learning German, please contact your child’s teacher or the Volksschulamt, Sektor Unterrichtsfragen, Tel.: 043 259 22 62, E-Mail: unterrichtsfragen@vsa.zh.ch

Further information about German as a second language can be found in the following brochure: „Deutsch als Zweitsprache in Aufnahmeunterricht und Aufnahmeklasse“ at: www.volksschulamt.zh.ch/daz.

For information about classes in the language and culture of your country of origin (HSK), such as contact details and information about what is available in 22 languages, go to: www.vsa.zh.ch/hsk and www.hsk-kantonzuerich.ch
Further reading for parents of children growing up in a multilingual environment:
