



Canton of Zurich  
Department of Education  
Office of Elementary Education

# Information for Parents

## German as a Second Language





Dear parents,

Over 40% of the pupils in the canton of Zurich do not speak German at home. One of the goals of the public school is that the children and adolescents know enough German to be able to follow the regular lessons. If needed, the school supports the pupils by giving them lessons in German as a second language (“Deutsch als Zweitsprache”, DaZ).

Here is some information on how the school helps the children and adolescents learn German as a second language (GSL).



## How does the school help children learn German as a second language?

### Kindergarten:

#### – **GSL in kindergarten**

Children that speak no German or only very little German receive additional help from a qualified GSL teacher, either in individual or group classes. The child receives this support in at least two lessons a week. The GSL lessons are integrated into the kindergarten classes.

### Primary and secondary school:

#### – **Basic GSL lessons**

Children and adolescents that move to the canton of Zurich and do not speak any or just very little German receive Basic GSL lessons (“DaZ-Anfangsunterricht”) at school every day for one year, either in a group or in an induction class (“Aufnahmeklasse”). The goal is to learn basic German skills as soon as possible so that they can participate in the lessons of a regular class.

#### – **Advanced GSL lessons**

Pupils that need to further improve their German receive at least two Advanced GSL lessons (“DaZ-Aufbauunterricht”) a week.

When a pupil needs support to learn German, the school does the following:

- If a teacher or you as parents feel like your child needs support, the class teacher invites you to a GSL orientation (“DaZ-Standortgespräch”), where you and the involved teachers discuss and agree on the support that your child should receive. If you can not agree, the school board decides.
- Then, the GSL teacher defines individual goals for each child and helps them learn German.



- The class teacher also helps the child learn German and makes sure that, in class, the child receives work that is appropriate for its level of German.
- The teachers discuss with you what you as parents can do to support your child in learning German outside of school.

### What can the parents do?

- Show your child that your first language and the German language are both valuable and important.
- You can promote a good linguistic development of your child by having many conversations about different topics with them. This should happen in the language that you speak best – usually your first language.
- Encourage the contact with the German language. Your child can learn a lot of German when it is with German-speaking children, on the playground, in playgroups, in daycare, in a sports team, with the girl/boy scouts, etc.
- Regularly take your child to the library in your neighbourhood or municipality and borrow children's books, audio books, educational games, and audiovisual media. Look at picture books with your child, read books to your child, and make sure that it reads a lot on its own.
- Send your child to classes in native language and culture ("Heimatliche Sprache und Kultur", HSK, see further information) if they are available in your first language. This way, your child can also learn how to read and write in its first language. Being bilingual can be an advantage.
- Make sure that your child can do its homework at regular times and in a quiet place.
- Stay in regular contact with your child's teachers. Talk to them about the language and learning situation and the wellbeing of your child.

### Further information

Extensive information can be found in the brochure "Deutsch als Zweitsprache in Aufnahmeunterricht und Aufnahmeklasse" (in German) at:

[www.volksschulamt.zh.ch/daz](http://www.volksschulamt.zh.ch/daz).

Information about the courses in native language and culture (HSK), for example addresses and information regarding the available classes, can be found here:

[www.vsa.zh.ch/hsk](http://www.vsa.zh.ch/hsk) and [www.hsk-kantonzuerich.ch](http://www.hsk-kantonzuerich.ch)

### Book recommendations for parents of children growing up with several languages:

- Nodari C./De Rosa R. (2003). Mehrsprachige Kinder. Ein Ratgeber für Eltern und andere Bezugspersonen. Bern: Haupt.
- Cathomas R./Carigiet W. (2008). Top-Chance Mehrsprachigkeit. Zwei- und mehrsprachige Erziehung in Familie und Schule. Bern: Schulverlag.