

# Primary Language Learners at ICS



**inter-community  
school zurich**

EST. 1960

The Inter-Community School is committed to providing a supportive and enabling learning environment in which all members of the community are challenged to achieve their individual potential, encouraged to pursue their passions, and expected to fulfil their responsibilities.

# Primary Language Learners at ICS

## Overview

At ICS, we believe in equipping our students with the skills to communicate in multiple languages. Our German program, which is an integral part of the curriculum from Preschool to Grade 5, offers exciting enhancements to support your child's language development.

**Preschool (PreK, K1, K2):** German language instruction begins in Preschool. Our dedicated German teachers provide four periods of German lessons per week, catering to both language learners and speakers. To ensure a nurturing environment, each preschool class also benefits from the support of a German-speaking teaching assistant.

**Grades 1-5:** In these grades, students receive four periods of German instruction per week from our experienced German teachers. We take great care in assessing each student's language proficiency level and place them in the appropriate class - beginner, intermediate, or proficient - to provide tailored support. We continuously monitor students' progress and make necessary adjustments to their classes throughout the year.

## The Purpose of Language Learning at ICS

At ICS, we believe that language learning benefits all students, whether they are German learners or already proficient in the language. Our language program aims to:

1. **Foster Respect and Understanding:** By learning the official language of the Canton of Zurich, students develop respect for and understanding of the host country's culture and language.
2. **Promote International Mindedness:** Language connects people, and at ICS, we emphasize using language to build connections and strengthen relationships across borders. This helps develop our students' international mindedness, an essential skill in our globalized world.
3. **Enhance Cognitive Skills:** Language learning is more than just acquiring words and grammar rules. It cultivates flexibility, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities in our students.

At ICS, we live out the International Baccalaureate (IB) philosophy, which recognizes the importance of multilingualism:

*"An IB education further enhances the development of international-mindedness through multilingualism. All IB programmes require the students to study, or study in, more than one language because we believe that communicating in more than one language provides excellent opportunities to develop intercultural understanding and respect. It helps the students to appreciate that his or her own language, culture and world view is just one of many." ("What is an IB Education?", 2019)*

When students join ICS, they bring with them diverse language backgrounds and abilities. Some may encounter German as an additional language for the first time, while others may already have some German knowledge or be proficient due to prior exposure or it being their home language. We believe in understanding each learner's unique language profile and their aspirations for language learning.

To enhance the profile of German, ICS has implemented several initiatives in our German program, including a partnership with language consultant Eowyn Crisfield. This collaboration enhances our learning and teaching practices at ICS, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to develop and expand their language skills.

# Curriculum Development

At ICS, we are dedicated to enhancing language learning for our students. Our German language continuum, introduced in 2022, supports learners of all levels - beginners, intermediates, and proficient speakers. It comprises seven phases with defined outcomes across different language strands, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and learning approaches. By organizing our curriculum this way, we provide a clear and structured path of opportunities for students to advance their German proficiency.

To make learning engaging, we teach grammar in context, relating it to the four language skills and tailoring it to each student's developmental stage. This ensures that grammar instruction is practical and meaningful, enabling effective application of knowledge.

We have also aligned our German language continuum with the secondary school curriculum, specifically the MYP Language courses. This alignment supports a smooth transition for students, allowing them to build upon their language skills and continue their learning journey as they progress to higher grades.

Our goal is to provide a structured and effective language learning framework that fosters student growth, confidence, and communication skills in German. We recognize that learners within the same age group have different proficiency levels and needs. Therefore, our approach is not tied to a specific grade. We embrace this diversity and prioritize individual progress, catering to learners of all levels through our inclusive and flexible German language program. This personalized approach promotes growth, and a passion for language, and celebrates the achievements of every student.

## Primary Language Options

PreK	K1	K2	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5
						D/E	E/F
					C/D	C/D	D
			C	C	B/C	B/C	C
			B	B	A/B	A/B	(A)/B
German Speakers	German Speakers	German Speakers	A	A			
German Learners	German Learners	German Learners					

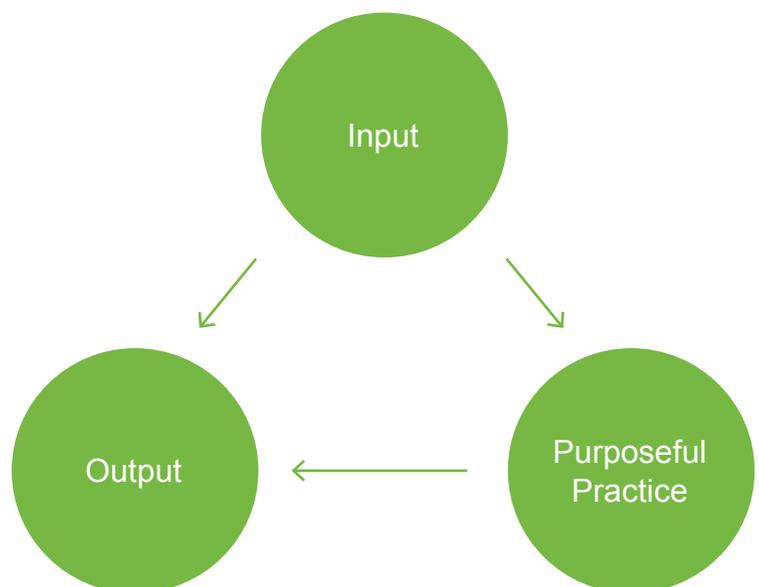
# Learning and Teaching

At ICS, our learning and teaching approach centres around language functions as the main focus of language development. Throughout the year, units of inquiry are designed to revolve around various language functions, providing students with targeted exposure and practice based on their proficiency level. For instance, students who are new to the German language will engage in activities that develop their skills in describing and comparing, while proficient language users will focus on refining their ability to retell and explain. By aligning our instruction with specific language functions, we ensure that students receive tailored language learning experiences that cater to their individual needs and promote their growth and proficiency in German.

## Language Functions

Description Beschreibung	Comparison Vergleich	Evaluation Auswertung	Deduction Abzug
Sequencing Sequenzierung	Retelling Nacherzählung	Opinion Meinung	Argumentation Argumentation
Explanation (math) Erläuterung (Mathematik)	Hypothesis Hypothese	Prediction Vorhersage	Explanation Erläuterung

At ICS, we have designed the structure of our lessons to effectively support the development of language functions. Our lessons follow a three-step process that facilitates language acquisition and application. First, we provide rich input by focusing on the specific language function being targeted. This includes introducing sentence frames and relevant vocabulary necessary for the lesson. Next, we engage students in guided processing, practice, and feedback. Teachers lead activities that allow students to practice the language function, while providing feedback and error correction. Collaborative work in pairs or groups is also incorporated during this phase. Finally, we emphasize output, where students demonstrate what they have learned and what they can do. At the end of each lesson, progress is checked, either verbally or through written assessments, to capture students' language development. This comprehensive approach ensures that students receive ample opportunities to engage with the language, practice their skills, and receive feedback, ultimately fostering their proficiency and confidence in using German.



## Learning and Teaching Process

# Curriculum Development

At ICS, both teachers and students engage in ongoing progress checks against learner outcomes, constantly asking the question, “How am I doing, and where to next?” While this continuous monitoring is crucial in each class, standardized assessments are also employed to capture a snapshot of a child’s abilities at a specific point in time

These assessments are administered at the end of each academic year, specifically from K2 to Grade 5, and provide valuable information on student achievement. Together with teacher observations and student work samples, these standardized placement assessments play a crucial role in determining the most suitable class placement to meet each child’s individual progress. Assessment tools are regularly reviewed to ensure the tools are up-to-date and fit for purpose.

At ICS, we understand that each student is unique and progresses at their own pace. By combining ongoing formative assessments, standardised placement assessments, and a holistic approach that considers teacher observations and student work samples, we strive to ensure that each child’s class placement is tailored to their specific needs, supporting their continued growth and development in the German language program.

## Class Structure

At ICS, students are placed in classes that align with their German language competency at a given time. Our class placements consider all language strands, including listening and speaking, reading, writing, and approaches to learning language. Each class can encompass two phases of language development. The composition of classes each year is based on the unique profiles of the students, ensuring a diverse and supportive learning environment.

As students’ knowledge and skills in German increase, we offer additional pathways to facilitate their progression to the next phase of language development and support a smooth transition to the MYP (Middle Years Programme). This flexible class structure allows us to cater to individual learning needs, promote growth, and provide students with the appropriate support and challenges as they embark on their language-learning journey.

### Example of phases at each grade

<b>Proficient</b>	Phase C	Phase C	Phase C/D	Phase D/E	Phase E/F
<b>Intermediate</b>	Phase B	Phase B	Phase B/C	Phase C/D	Phase D
				Phase B/C	Phase C
<b>Beginner</b>	Phase A	Phase A	Phase A/B	Phase A/B	Phase B
	<b>G1</b>	<b>G2</b>	<b>G3</b>	<b>G4</b>	<b>G5</b>

# Success in Primary German

There are various ways to gauge success in Primary German. Depending on the unique goals that students and families set for language achievement, the standard for success will be personally relevant.

A host of factors contribute to student success, chief among those is a student's intrinsic motivation as well as exposure (time) to the language being learned.

Students are most successful in our German program when there is a shared clarity of goals and a partnership between home and school.

## Language Learning Factors

Motivation	Support at home	Prior linguistic knowledge
Learning environment	Teaching strategies	Language aptitude
Student personality	Exposure	Linguistic distance L1-L2

## German Language Hopes and Dreams Conferences

At ICS, we understand the importance of personalized support in language learning, which is why as of 2023 we will offer German Hopes and Dreams conferences with our German teachers.

These meetings provide an opportunity for families to have dedicated discussions with our curriculum leaders about their aspirations for their child's language learning journey. We recognize that various factors, such as motivation, exposure, other languages spoken, environment, and personality, can influence language acquisition. During these conferences, a language pathway will be created. Our aim is to collaborate with families in finding effective ways to support language learning goals, leveraging the strengths and resources of both ICS and the families.

In addition, starting in 2023, we will ensure that parents gain a clear understanding of their child's engagement level in German classes through explicit reporting opportunities, including language pathways conferences and written reports. By fostering open communication and tailored guidance, we strive to empower students and families in their language-learning journey at ICS.

# German Home Learning

At ICS, we understand that achieving proficiency in an additional language requires consistent and high-quality input over an extended period of time. Research supports the notion that the amount of time spent in the target language directly impacts language development and bilingualism levels.

Time in the target language	Level of Bilingualism
20%	Passive level of Bilingualism
30-35%	Developing skills in all strands (speaking, listening, reading and writing)
40-60%	Equal vocabulary knowledge (at 5 years old)

In order to enhance students' exposure to German beyond the four periods of instruction provided each week, we offer various opportunities for formal and informal language practice.

In recognition of this need, starting from 2023, German home learning will be introduced for students in Grades 1-5, offering purposeful opportunities to practice language skills outside the classroom setting. A combination of listening, reading and writing exercises will be set each week. These initiatives aim to provide language experiences that reinforce and extend students' language proficiency in German.

## Conclusion

Our comprehensive and inclusive German language program empowers students to enhance their language learning journey. By nurturing flexibility, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, we prepare students for future opportunities. We also cultivate a deep respect for language and culture, allowing them to open doors to new experiences and connections.





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potential • passion • responsibility

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