



Parents' Information for Speakers of Other Languages

Dear Parents,

You are living in Canton St. Gall and your child is attending here kindergarten or public school (1st – 9th grade). The brochure on hand shall help you get to know the school better.

Take an interest in the work that your child does in school and at home. Inquire regularly from the teacher about your child's learning progress.

One of the aims of the school is for your child to learn the German language; that does not mean, however, that you should give up your mother tongue in your family, for it is part of your cultural heritage. It is important to master the German native language and your mother tongue.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF CANTON ST. GALL
(BILDUNGSDEPARTEMENT DES KANTON ST. GALLEN)
Office for Public School (Amt für Volksschule)
31 Davidstrasse
St. Gall 9001

April 2003

School System

Your local school runs a kindergarten which your child should attend. The compulsory school education contains 9 school years; it is subdivided into 6 years primary school and 3 years secondary school (Realschule or Sekundarschule).

Newly arrived children in Switzerland are, as a rule, placed in a class, in which s/he is taught together with children of the same age (a lower class, if necessary).

Children, who have a low capability or a distinct partial poor performance and cannot follow the lesson in the regular class, are recommended to the special small class (Kleinklasse) after consulting the parents. In the Kleinklasse a especially trained teacher gives the lessons and to each child individual help. Insufficient command of

the German language *alone* is not a reason to be placed in the Kleinklasse. As parents, you can request a clarification through an expert of the School Psychological Service. A clarification against your will is not permitted.

Children with special problems in speaking or writing will receive help by means of a speech or dyslexia therapy. Children with disabilities will attend a special school (Sonderschule).

If the child does not speak the school language quite well, s/he has the right to receive additional language instruction in the first three years of schooling. This is done in smaller groups; in local schools with a lot of children and young people who speak other languages, the instruction can be given, for a maximum of one year, in separate classes (Deutschklassen).

From the end of the 2nd grade until the 9th grade, your child will receive a report with marks (Zeugnis) twice a year (in January and in July).

Interpreter's Service

The class teacher can give you information on inquiries and school problems. It can be necessary, in this case, that, as parents, you will want a person who also speaks the German language besides your language, for good communication to be possible. Should the need arise, the teacher can give you the address of an interpreter. The expenses for translation will be paid by the local school.

Choice of Occupation

Following the public school an apprenticeship or a pre-apprenticeship can be completed.

Young people are prepared in secondary school for their choice of occupation. In this way, they will learn to know their own abilities and the different occupations. The school organizes trial days or weeks during which young people will gain an insight into a vocation and work on the job. The vocational guidance will support young people in the right choice of an occupation. It is available free of charge.

A solid school performance and good knowledge of German are prerequisites for an apprenticeship. Seeking an apprenticeship is mainly the responsibility of the young people and yours, as parents. If the young people do not find an apprenticeship due to poor knowledge in German, there is a possibility to do a pre-apprenticeship year (information at the vocational guidance).

Exceptionally capable young people can do an entrance test for further studies in a middle school: Cantonal School (Kantonsschule), School of Economics (Wirtschaftsmittelschule), Diploma Middle School (Diplommittelschule).

Recommendations for a Bilingual Upbringing

For the integration of the family, it is important that you, as parents, also master the German native language. Convey to your child that both languages – German and your mother tongue – as well as both cultures, are positive.

Speak your mother tongue at home consistently, even though it is simply a dialect and persist with it.

Avoid mixing up the languages; do not judge it as negative, however, if your children do it occasionally.

Tell your children about your own childhood and use your native language expressions in everyday life.

It is exceptionally important to master one's mother tongue in order to learn the German school language.

Look at the schoolwork of your children and let them explain it in your mother tongue.

Send your children to the instruction for native language and culture (HSK- Kurs) and check their progress by looking together at their books and notebooks (addresses of HSK – school services /Schulanbieter/ see page 1 !).

Being bilingual or trilingual alone does not lead to language problems. Possible speech delays, for the most part, regulate themselves.

Miscellaneous

- *Two half days off* : Parents have the right, per school year, to take their child for two half days off, for example, for family gatherings, visiting relatives, etc. For further foreseeable absences, religious holidays also belong here, a vacation permit must be obtained *beforehand* from the teacher.
- *When your child is absent due to sickness*, you must hand in a written explanation about his/her absence to the teacher.
- *The teachers are obliged to hold a parent-teacher meeting* with you at least once a year; the date will be recorded in the report card.
- *Special course weeks*, like for example, camps or school relocations are a valuable enrichment to the school program. It is compulsory for your child to attend these special events.
- *Children who work outside school hours*: According to the Swiss Federal Law, only schoolchildren, who are older than 13 years old, may accept a job outside the school hour. As parents, you have to inform the class teacher.
- Your child will regularly be examined through the *school medical and dental service*, free of charge.
- The legal minimum age for *marriage*, with the permission of the parents, is 16 years.

Information Offices

School Principal (Schulleitung) :

Appointed Member of the School Board for Speakers of Other Languages
(Verantwortliches Mitglied des Schulrates für Anderssprachige):

President of the Local School (Präsidentin/Präsident der Schulgemeinde):

Counseling Office for Speakers of Other Languages
(Beratungsstelle für Anderssprachige):

Reto Moritzi, Postfach 57, Stella Maris, 9400 Rorschach, Tel. 071 858 71 20

Vocational Guidance (Berufsberatung):

School Psychological Service, Regional Office
(Schulpsychologischer Dienst, Regionalstelle):

HSK- Instruction (HSK – Unterricht)

(Courses in Native Language and Culture) (Kurse in heimatlicher Sprache und Kultur):
