



The World is Here

Reykjavik City Department of Education and Youth
policy on multicultural education and leisure



City of Reykjavík
Department of Education and Youth

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Content

The World is Here 7

Diverse teaching methods and practices.....9

Icelandic as a second language and active bilingualism 11

Parent Cooperation..... 13

Briefly about multicultural education and leisure 18

Reception and adjustment..... 18

Language and Literacy 20

Diverse teaching and work practices 24

Cooperation with families..... 25

References 27

Main emphases of the policy

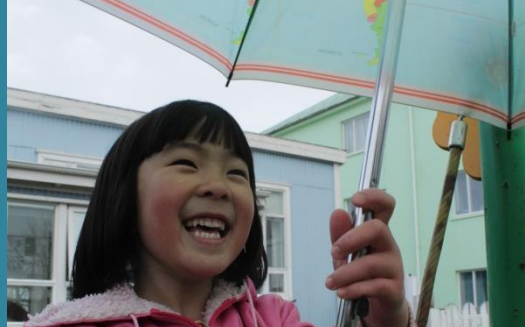
Diverse teaching methods and practices: Every child's needs are met with the development of diverse teaching methods and practices. An emphasis is placed on interactive communication between children and adolescents where everyone gets the opportunity to stand on an equal footing guided by respect, while at the same time they are learning from each other.

Icelandic as a second language and active bilingualism: The goal is that all children succeed in Icelandic, as the ability to speak Icelandic is the main ground for democratic participation and equality in Icelandic society. All children whose first language is not Icelandic should have the opportunity to develop active bilingualism, i.e. gain the ability to maintain and strengthen their first language/s while at the same time achieving progress in learning the Icelandic language.

Parent cooperation: Teachers and employees in education and leisure DEY (Department of Education and Youth) should make an effort to get to know every child and their family individually, so that education, activities and leisure can be based on previous experiences and knowledge. Teachers and employees should initiate cooperation with parents and develop solution oriented and flexible ways to prevent opposing views, cultures and experiences from hindering cooperation.

All children and youth are successful in education and play, are socially successful and get an opportunity to take pride in their background and culture.

The guiding light of Reykjavik City Department of Education and Youth regarding multicultural education and leisure activities



The World is Here

Over the past few years, the Icelandic society has transitioned from being relatively homogeneous into the multicultural society that we now know. The same can be said of the city's school and leisure activities, where the background of employees and students is diverse*.

The main goal of the school and leisure activities is to create the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for children and

adolescents to succeed both socially and academically, become strong participants in the Icelandic society and develop respect for their own culture as well as other cultures.

As it says in the Main Curriculum of Preschools and Compulsory schools (2011, p. 11), the professionalism of teachers is based on “professional education, knowledge, attitude, and work ethic”. It also says: “In the organization and subjects of school activities as well as in school practices, the



* The concept “diverse” here refers to diverse cultures, skin complexion, national origin, languages, and religion, as well as the diversity that characterizes the children and adults involved in the city's school and leisure activities.

educational environment and communication should be cultivated to support general education”. It is also mentioned that learning and education takes place outside of the school system as well, for example in organized leisure activities. The leisure centre curriculum places an emphasis on social skills where individuals are taught to develop empathy, compassion, and respect for others’ opinions and values to be able to have rich and meaningful communication with others. The Human Rights Policy of Reykjavík (2006) states that in all pedagogical and recreational activities, education and training by the city should take into account the needs of diverse families and “diversity and multiculturalism of the society should be introduced in activities with children and adolescents”, where they are given the opportunity to introduce their own cultures. It is important that in all school and leisure activities of the city that every individual sees that by doing their part we are closer to reaching the goals of DEY. In this way the goal reflects a reality that is part of general learning and education, as opposed to being some sort of a specific solution for a particular group of children and adolescents. At the same time, managers of all workplaces* must be at the forefront of developing school and leisure activities that view the diversity in our society as an opportunity for development and higher morals that benefit everyone.

It is important to take into consideration factors such as social standing, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, age, health, and ability in all practices. By recognizing and respecting diverse backgrounds and cultures of individuals, the view taken is that all culture is “multiculturalism”.

The DEY policy for multicultural school and leisure activities is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the factors that are necessary for workplaces to keep in mind in regard to the

development of multicultural school and leisure practices, and includes 6 policy factors. At the end of the first part, the roles of DEY workplaces are reviewed as well as the roles of the office division. The latter part of the policy, “Briefly about multicultural school and leisure activities” is a chapter of ideas, checklists, related items, and useful tips that workplaces can utilize in development of multicultural school and leisure practices.



*Workplaces here refer to preeschool, Compulsory schools, recreational centres, leisure centres, and social centres and all belong to the Department of Education and Youth, DEY.

Diverse teaching methods and practices

The methods considered most effective in the education of diverse groups of children are built on developing school practices the way that involves the participation of all students, active democracy, equal opportunity for education and power distribution to everyone involved with the school practices. (Banks, 2010; Hanna Ragnarsdóttir og Börkur Hansen, 2010).

“Diverse teaching methods are the driving force in all school practices.”

Valgerður Eiríksdóttir, a teacher for 30 years at Fellaskóli.

The development of multicultural teaching methods must include all student becoming the leaders of their own learning, their voices being heard, and methods being used that makes them “conscious of contradictions, errors and injustices in their ideologies and social activities” (Hanna Ragnarsdóttir and Börkur Hansen, 2010, p. 24).

The attitude and expectations of teachers as well as their confidence about their own teaching in a diverse group of children is fundamental factor, in addition to their knowledge of diverse teaching methods and techniques.

It is important in the city’s school and leisure activities that an emphasis is placed on building the knowledge and skills of employees to develop diverse teaching and work practices with the goal of meeting the various needs and knowledge of children and adolescents. It is important to reflect on how to utilize the diversity of the group of children and parents as an advantage in activities in which the atmosphere, communication and methods are characterized by sensitivity for different needs, cultures and experiences. In this context it is important to keep in mind

what teaching materials are available, in how the development of new knowledge among the group is being supported, how prejudice and bullying is being handled, and how equality and active participation is being implemented.

In today’s society, where communication between different cultures is increasing, both between nations and in the lives of individuals, it is important for everyone to develop skills for communicating and cooperating across languages and cultures. Research show that by using cooperative learning methods, where cooperation between students is organized in a specific way, the maximum potential can be reached in the group and everyone within it is given equal access to the learning process.



In this way students are purposefully shown that with cooperation they will accomplish more and the progress will be better than when they each work in their own corner. Those who participate in cooperation are in this way getting training in social skills where the main emphasis is placed on each and every person having something to contribute that will benefit the whole group. By using these methods, the children and adolescents are

given the opportunity to train important social skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

“Social relationships are created in children and adolescents’ leisure activities, which is the foundation of a multicultural society. The benefits of leisure activities will never be measured in test marks, but in the good deeds of the future.”

*Bjarni Þórðarson, department director
at Kampur Leisure Centre.*

By participating in leisure activities children experience endless opportunities to work with and strengthen themselves as individuals, social beings and as active members of society.

Leisure centres place the main emphasis on working on identity, compassion, social skills, activity and participation. Leisure time plays an important part in children and adolescents’ lives, and through leisure activities they get the opportunity to reflect on their opinions and attitudes in a peer group on their own terms since participation is voluntary. The work that is done in leisure settings and within the school system supports each other and results in better skills, like two sides of the same coin. Active participation in leisure activities creates different training opportunities for children and adolescents than those created in the context and environment of formal education. The leisure settings are even more suitable for some students than the Compulsory school settings for development and increased skills. Leisure activities are in this way providing additional opportunities for a fulfilled life.

Researchers have pointed out the importance of building on diverse experiences, knowledge, cultures, languages and religions that exists in the staff group when working with

children. The importance of diversity within the group of teachers and staff has also been identified as an important factor in the context of role models for diverse groups of children, and is an important resource especially when communicating with families and working with diverse native languages (Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, 2010).



“Multilingualism is a treasure.”

Sabine Leskopf, translator and interpreter

Icelandic as a second language and active bilingualism

It is important that an emphasis is placed on strengthening children's Icelandic language skills in all education and leisure practices for children whose mother tongue is not Icelandic. Their Icelandic language skills are the foundation for the children becoming active participants in a democratic and just society and to be able to study at Icelandic schools.

"By strengthening an understanding of diversity in schools, we are working towards a society that can function in harmony despite people having opposing views and attitudes. "

*Juan Camilo Roman Estrada
Chairman of the Multicultural Council of Reykjavik*

It is essential that bilingual and multilingual children get the opportunity to develop the same social and communication skills, literacy, reading and writing skills as other children in education and leisure. In the chapter on Icelandic as a second language in the Compulsory School Main Curriculum (2011, p. 106-107) an emphasis is placed on students with different first languages following their peers in their studies and other subjects and receive the necessary support to be able to do that.



A complex interaction between inner and outer factors in each individual case determines how well the student does in developing the Icelandic language. Examples of inner factors are disposition for learning, status with the mother tongue, previous experiences, age and personality. Examples of outer factors are society's attitudes and expectations, as well as the teacher's ability and teaching methods.

It is important to build on children's strengths, whether that is in their studies or leisure. Proficiency in languages, both mother tongue and Icelandic, affects the children's identity development for the future.

"If the special education teacher is the only one responsible for the cases of children of other nationalities, other teachers avoid this responsibility."

Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, professor at the University of Iceland

Language and literacy is largely a social construct based on communication and discussion about issues where comprehension and new knowledge is the goal. The active participation of all students must be ensured in both education and play, where the language is enhanced in diverse ways and at the same time an emphasis is placed on everyone enjoying themselves in counteractive communications where the message is clear; everyone is welcome and worthy of belonging to this group!

Elín Þöll Þórðardóttir (2007, p. 102) has pointed out that when working with Icelandic as a second language, it should be kept in mind that not all circumstances work equally well when teaching a language. "Some of the methods developed especially for bilingual children are less

effective than expected because too much emphasis is placed on the specifically tailored factors so there is not enough emphasis placed on the general factors of language stimulation. Bilingual children are first and foremost just children, and language acquisition in two languages is subject to the same principles as language acquisition in only one language". Therefore it is important to utilize all opportunities that school and leisure practices offer to work with Icelandic as a second language.

"The Icelandic language is, as we know, our mother tongue and it is our responsibility to protect it. But we must also respect other languages and understand that they are just as valuable as our Icelandic language."

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland

A recent study done on the development of the language test *Between Languages (Milli mála)* found that language acquisition of Icelandic as a second language is a time consuming process and children need to spend at least 50% of their waking hours in an Icelandic language environment so that the language grows and flourishes and becomes useful to them (Elín Þöll Þórðardóttir, 2012).

It can take 1-2 years to master the basic communicative skills of a language, but up to 6-7 years to achieve "academic language skills" or the kind of skills necessary to grasp the language of schools. (Cummins, 2004; Elín Þöll Þórðardóttir, 2012).

Children learning Icelandic as a second language require frequent and diverse opportunities to listen to and use Icelandic in communication with both their peers and adults.

In this context organized leisure activities in addition to the formal education within the Compulsory school is very important because the leisure settings offer opportunities for communication built on common interests where the strengths of individuals can be used.

Children's mother tongue has a strong effect on their education and development. Having a good foundation in your first language/s can have a fundamental impact on the learning of another language when it is a successful language acquisition (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Cummins, 2004; Elín Þöll Þórðardóttir, 2007). Researchers have found that respect and attitudes toward the mother tongues can have a huge effect on the development of children's self esteem and confidence in their own abilities (Banks, 2010; Cummins, 2004). Good knowledge of the mother tongue as well as the Icelandic language is valuable for both the individual and the society, and should be nurtured and protected.

"Active bilingualism is productive for the education and lives of children. Switching to a new language completely has negative effects on the academic performance of children as well as the communications within their families."

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, professor at the University of Iceland

The conclusion of the Icelandic Language Committee in 2013 discusses the importance of supporting active bilingualism in a way that works on children's native language at the same time as they are grasping Icelandic as a second language.

Research has found that active bilingualism is the best route for the education and lives of children. It involves the addition of a language where the new language is added to the first language/s instead of replacing it. Active bilingualism strengthens and has a positive impact on educational performance, whereas switching to a new language entirely

can have negative effects. Proficiency in the mother tongue is essential for learning a second language, and it can also support cognitive development in other areas.

The United Nations Convention on the right of the child places an emphasis on countries ensuring children's opportunities to maintain their mother tongue and receive the opportunities to use it with others in the society (The UN Convention, article. 30). The Compulsory School Main Curriculum includes a chapter on Icelandic as a second language where it says that it is important to encourage parents to support their children's learning of Icelandic as well as helping them develop and nurture their mother tongue with the goal of active bilingualism. The same emphases may be found in the literacy policy *Reading and Playing* ([i. Lesið í leik](#)) for the preschools in Reykjavík and the [reading policy of Compulsory schools in Reykjavík](#), in addition to emphasizing the importance of



working with children's mother tongue and knowledge in both education and play. In Reykjavík's school and leisure practices, diverse languages should always be respected and worked on in a purposeful way, mother tongue skills should be supported for all children, and staff's awareness of the importance of the mother tongue in the education and lives of children and adolescents should be developed.

We must look for ways to bridge the gap between the mother tongue and the Icelandic language for those children who start attending preschool or Compulsory school and do not speak Icelandic. This can be done in cooperation with staff, other children, or adults who are accessible for assistance and speak the children's native language. An emphasis is placed on supporting parents with maintaining and strengthening their children's mother tongue and educating them about its importance.

Parent Cooperation

The prerequisite for success here is that the school gain the trust and respect of the parents from the start and is solution oriented when it comes to developing ways to communicate. The preschool and the Compulsory school must initiate an active cooperation between the home and the school, and work towards connecting children's families.

Education and leisure need to take into consideration that we live in a multicultural society where family structure is diverse and family needs differ. What is suitable for one family is not necessarily suitable for another family.

Leisure centres must emphasize parent cooperation based on multicultural attitudes, and create an environment that reflects the diversity. Leisure centres, recreational centres, and social centres build on a Northern European ideology which is not much known outside of that area. The role of leisure centres is to introduce to the parents the importance of organized leisure activities. It is a good idea to cooperate with

preschools and Compulsory schools to reach as many parents as possible.

Children in Iceland spend a lot of their free time in organized leisure activities and studies have shown that these activities have great preventative value. Parent cooperation in multicultural leisure activities must be built on information delivered to the parents about the importance of the leisure activities for the education and development of the child, and on encouraging the parents to participate in the activities that are organized in the child's free time. When a child's mother tongue is not Icelandic, the school and leisure practices should specifically try to cultivate a cooperative relationship with the parents right from the start, with the goal of establishing communication and trust.

"When working with children it is essential that staff is conscious of the importance of comforting, being present, and having confidence in our future adult citizens. It can be crucial in the life of a child to have an advocate who helps them connect to other people as well as to society."

Ester Helga Líneyjardóttir, department director at Fellaskóli

It is important to establish conversations with all parents, taking into account diverse cultural backgrounds, knowledge, and the diversity of families. Teachers and staff in education and leisure need to adopt a positive attitude towards parents and see it as their role to create a cooperative relationship with them.





The goals of education and leisure in Reykjavík are:

- To meet the needs of all children by developing diverse teaching methods and work practices.
- For all children to succeed in learning the Icelandic language, since the ability to speak Icelandic is the main prerequisite for democratic participation and equality in the Icelandic society.
- For all children whose mother tongue is not Icelandic to develop active bilingualism, i.e. the ability to maintain and strengthen their first language/s skills while simultaneously developing the Icelandic language.
- That children and adolescents have interactive communications where everyone has the opportunity for a just standing with respect as the goal, while also learning from each other.
- That DEY staff make an effort to get to know each child and his/her family so that education, play and leisure activities can be built on the child's previous experiences and knowledge.
- To initiate a cooperative relationship with parents and to develop solution oriented and flexible ways to prevent opposing views, cultures and experiences from hindering cooperation.



The role of preschools, Compulsory schools and leisure activities is to:

- Follow the goals of DEY regarding the academic and social success of children and adolescents.
- Ensure that literacy policies in preschools and Compulsory schools address the issue of working with the language and literacy of bilingual children in cooperation between the school levels.
- Ensure that leisure centres cooperate with preschools and Compulsory schools when welcoming children into leisure activities in accordance to the reception plan of Compulsory schools and leisure practices for bilingual and multilingual children. .
- Ensure that equality programs of workplaces address how to work towards multicultural education and leisure practices, similar to what is discussed in the fundamental factor *Equality* in the shared part of the main curriculum of both school levels.
- Annually account for the use of the allocated funds for school and leisure practices, as is discussed in policies regarding inclusive education.

The role of Department of Education and Youth is to:

- Follow the plans of DEY workplaces in regards to:
 - The literacy policy of preschools and reading policy of Compulsory schools.
 - Equality programs.
- Oversee and distribute funding for multicultural school and leisure activities.
- Use the overall assessment to monitor how the goals of DEY are being worked towards in multicultural school and leisure activities.
- Manage interpretation services and providing education for establishments.
- Ensure that a checklist is used in regard to visual material and translations in publishing and distributing information for the department.
- Provide advisory services and education regarding:
 - Multicultural education and leisure activities as well as diverse teaching methods.
 - Parent cooperation in diverse groups of children and adolescents.
 - Icelandic as a second language.
 - Working with diverse languages, cultures and background of children and adolescents.
- Develop cooperation with agencies that can support multicultural education and leisure activities.
 - The Human Rights Centre of Reykjavík.
 - Multicultural projects at the City Library.
 - Cooperation teams of educational consultants and preschool consultants knowledgeable about multicultural school and leisure activities.
 - The Association of bilingualism, (Móðurmálssamtökin), The Polish School, The Language Centre (Tungumálaver), The Language Square (Tungumálatorg).



**It is the role of everyone
teaching and working in
education and leisure to adopt
a positive attitude towards
parents.**

Briefly about multicultural school and leisure activities

Here you can find numerous ideas and useful tips for multicultural preschool, Compulsory school and leisure activities. Here you can also find educational material connected to the ideology that the policy is built on, in addition to ways to record, assess, and monitor the progress of bilingual children.

“People are like smartphones. They are diverse with all sorts of features. It’s not the appearance or the colour that matters but the software.”

Jón Gnarr, former mayor of Reykjavík

The multicultural policy of the School and Leisure Department is based on laws and the main curriculum of both school levels, the curriculum of the leisure centres in Reykjavík, policies of Reykjavík and international charters. Following is a list of most of the key documents that teachers and staff of school and leisure activities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with:

- [The Human Rights Policy of Reykjavík](#)
- [Inclusive schooling and special support for students in Compulsory schools](#)
- [The DEY policy regarding support for preschool students](#)
- [Preschool literacy policy “Reading and Playing”](#)
- [Reading policy for Reykjavík Compulsory schools](#)
- [Equality program – The centre for gender equality](#)
- [Welcoming society](#)
- [Rules regarding communication between Reykjavík preschools, Compulsory schools and leisure centres with religion and life stance associations](#)
- [Reykjavík leisure centres information booklet](#)
- [Reception plan for Reykjavík Compulsory schools](#)

- [The conclusions of the Icelandic Language Committee regarding the Icelandic language 2013 – bilingualism and multilingualism](#)
- [The main curriculum of preschools](#)
- [The main curriculum of Compulsory schools](#)
- [Laws regarding Compulsory schools](#)
- [Laws regarding preschools](#)
- [The United Nations conventions on the Rights of the child](#)
- [The United Nations declaration of human rights](#)



Reception and adjustment

It is important to keep in mind the interactive participation of children and parents from the beginning in preschool, Compulsory school and leisure activities. During the first days the goal should be to create an atmosphere of great expectations and respect in which the discussion about the activities, as well as the child/student’s background is characterized by cultural sensitivity and interest. It is important that preschools, Compulsory schools and leisure centres work together on the adjustment and reception of the child with effective cooperation.

In those cases when the parents and the staff do not share the same language it is important to ensure communication in ways that make the parents participants and real representatives of their children in education and play. By utilizing interpretation services, bilingual employees or other resources it is possible to develop communication founded on reciprocated trust from the beginning. **It is important that everyone who works for the city's school and leisure activities does not use the children to interpret for their parents.**

Resource ideas:

- [Interpretation services, over the phone or on site](#)
- [Diverse methods to communicate with parents who do not speak Icelandic](#)
- [Word lists and more material in 10 languages](#)
- **Communication contract:** One method is to make a contract or a checklist regarding communication where both parties (parent and teacher) discuss how to ensure communication and information disclosure. Such a contract might include the following information about the way in which those involved will communicate.
 - Do parents want an interpreter, and if so do they want a specific one?
 - Do parents use email, and would it be possible to send messages via email and use Google translate or something similar to assist with translation?
 - Can the parents read Icelandic? English?
 - Is there anyone in the home, in the family, friends or neighbours who can read Icelandic and help bridge the gap between Icelandic and the native language?
 - Are there other parents at the school who might be able to assist with communication?

- Are the parents willing to support other parents in cooperation?
- Can the parents utilize the website of the preschool, Compulsory school or leisure centre to obtain information about activities or to see pictures of the children?
- Would the parents like to receive notes with messages with the child when he/she comes home from school?
- Are the parents notified about information available in various languages?
- Are the parents notified about information available only in Icelandic (such as the school curriculum) and informed about the importance of familiarizing themselves with it, for example with the help of someone who can read Icelandic? Is such assistance offered at the school/leisure centre?

“Languages give us roots and wings. The roots of our identity are in the mother tongue, but the new language we are learning gives us wings that create connection and communication with the world around us. But it can also be said that the new language gives us new roots, and a good grip of the mother tongue sends our minds flying.”

Kristín R. Vilhjálmsdóttir project director of multiculturalism at the City Library.

According to Compulsory school laws 91/2008 it is the obligation of the country's Compulsory schools to develop a specific reception program for students with an immigrant background. For a long time the reception of preschoolers has included parent participation in the child's adjustment

period, therefore the emphasis has focused on purposeful reception of all children as well as special resources when receiving children with a different mother tongue from Icelandic.

Leisure centres have developed a specific reception program for children whose native language is not Icelandic.

See further:

- [The reception and adjustment of preschool children](#)
- [Compulsory schools reception program for children whose native language is not Icelandic](#)
- [Handbook on the reception of children whose native language is not Icelandic into organized leisure activities](#)



Language and Literacy

The goal of the city's school and leisure practices is to support the active bilingualism of children and adolescents. Active bilingualism includes the ability to use Icelandic and the native language daily in education, games, and communication. For this to be possible we must ensure

access to all purposeful language stimulation as well as to the teaching of Icelandic as a second language. It is essential to utilize all the opportunities offered in school and leisure practices to work with and strengthen diverse native languages.

Icelandic as a second language

- All those who are involved with the activities and teaching of children and adolescents are language role models and Icelandic language teachers and are responsible for the children and adolescents receiving ample opportunities to use Icelandic.
- It is estimated that children must spend about 50% of their waking time in an active Icelandic-speaking environment to grasp the language.
- Social communication and participation in learning and playing is an important foundation for learning Icelandic, as well as any other language.
- Effective cooperation with families is a motivating factor for grasping the Icelandic language.
- It takes about 1-2 years for children to master social communication language but 4-7 years to master academic vocabulary. The quantity and quality of the Icelandic language in their language environment affects the level of success.

Assessment of the language development of bilingual children

- In the assessment of language development of bilingual children it is important to avoid using the [deficit model](#) which entails only looking at what the child **can not do** instead of recording and assessing what the child **can do**.
- In assessing and recording the progress of children it is important to take into account all of the diverse parts of the development, such as personal development,

social development, knowledge of the academic language, and knowledge of the customs and traditions of the school system. Knowledge about the child's standing and background can also help with developing ways for additional support.

- It is not ideal to depend on the results of assessment tools and criteria that are designed for monolingual children, as the language development of bilingual children is not comparable to the same standards that apply to monolingual children.
- Bilingual children with normal bilingual language development are often behind their monolingual peers in development in each language. However, they are often on the same level or even exceed monolingual children overall, as the assessment of the language development of bilingual children should always take both languages into account.
- Bilingual children can appear to have speech development disorders even if they don't.

Preschool children

- Here you can find various information on [assessment for language development of bilingual children](#).
- The preschool literacy policy "[Reading and playing](#)" includes a chapter on the assessment of language development of bilingual preschool children.
- [In a booklet on educational assessment in preschools](#) you can find ways to assess and record the progress of children.

Compulsory school students

- "Between Languages" (author: Elín Þóll Þórðardóttir) is the first assessment tool standardized for bilingual Compulsory school students, and is meant to assess

"If we need to reach a little bit further to have a cooperative relationship with some parents, it is important that we do so. It pays for itself many times over."

Anna Margrét Þorláksdóttir, kindergarten teacher at Laugasól

their knowledge of the Icelandic academic vocabulary. Schools should use this assessment tool to assess the Icelandic language status of students and their requirements for support. The allocation of funds to Compulsory schools takes these results into account.

Some methods and links for ideas when working with Icelandic as a second language:

- [Tungumálatorg – Icelandic as a second language](#)
- [Tungumálatorg – tool chest, Icelandic as a second language](#)
- [The multicultural web – Icelandic as second language](#)
- [PALS \(peer assisted learning strategies\)](#)
- [Text talk](#)
- [The sound train](#)
- [6+1 Traits of writing](#)
- [Computer tablets in school work](#)
- [Katla web](#)
- [Preschool – The literacy policy "Reading and playing". Ideas for working with speech stimulation and Icelandic.](#)
- [Compulsory school – The reading policy of Compulsory schools](#)
- [Paxel games that train words and concepts connected to the native tongue and math.](#)
- [Imagery - dubbed visual word collection.](#)
- [Stories sacks \(söguskjóður\)](#)
- [The national centre for educational materials](#)
- [Language and literacy, mutual responsibility of parents and teachers, 10 languages](#)

Diverse mother tongues

- Working with diverse languages in school and leisure practices increases everyone's awareness of languages (metalinguistic awareness), and this

knowledge is beneficial to everyone, both in communication and in learning languages.

- Good proficiency in the mother tongue directly affects the opportunity to succeed in learning Icelandic as a second language.
- Cognitive development and the progress of the language go hand in hand. Knowledge which is obtained in the native tongue contributes to underlying skills in Icelandic as a second language.
- Support with native languages in school and leisure activities increases society's respect for languages.

For children to be able to develop an active bilingualism they need a rich language environment, both in their native language and in Icelandic.

Following is a list of 10 ways to work with diverse languages in school and leisure activities. More ideas can be found on [Tungumálatorg](#) and the [multicultural web](#).

1. Prepare a language collection with information about all languages spoken by children and adults at the preschool, Compulsory school or leisure centre. The bank can be used online and/or on a poster. [Register the school's languages into "the search for the languages of Iceland."](#)
2. Advertisements, greetings and announcements in the languages of the school and leisure centres. Welcome guests in diverse languages. [A poster for the preschool can be printed here.](#)
3. Introduce one new word a day in the languages of the group. This can be done simply, for example by finding out how new words being learned in Icelandic sound in other languages.
4. Make bilingualism books or communication books with pictures and text in Icelandic and other

languages. Older and younger students can help each other out with the assignment in which those who speak Icelandic are paired with students who speak different languages. In preschool such books can be made with the parents and children themselves. [Lend me a word; a visual dictionary for preschools is available here.](#)

By using tablets, students anywhere can use their native language to comprehend the material being taught. If students do not get the opportunity to develop their thoughts in their native language, the danger is that they hit a plateau and can neither grasp their native tongue nor the new language.

From the Hagaskóli homepage

5. Provide children the opportunity to use their native language when working with new concepts. This deepens their understanding of the material at the same time as their previous knowledge is activated.
6. Use electronic technology, computers, video recorders, cameras and [tablets](#) to facilitate children in expressing themselves and learning through their mother tongue.
7. Learn songs, games and counting in diverse languages. Get children and parents to assist in finding the appropriate material online.
8. Make posters with family words, such as mom, grandma, grandpa in the different languages of the school.
9. Utilize books in diverse languages that are accessible online or in libraries. Ask parents to come and read in different languages or get older students who can read in their native language to come and read for the younger children.

“The mother tongue is a part of us and it is a wonderful right to learn it and use it. We all love languages and want to be proud of them, wherever we are in the world.”

*Renata Emilsson Peskova,
chairman of the Mother Tongue Association (Móðurmál)*

10. When a new child who is learning Icelandic as a second language, but speaks, writes and reads fluently in his/her mother tongue comes into the group, it is an excellent idea to pair him/her with other students in the group throughout the tasks of the day and create learning pairs who learn Icelandic and a new language together. The pair has a notebook (or a tablet) and uses that to write down new words to be learned, in both languages. This creates communication between the children, which contributes to literacy, reading, writing and awareness of languages and at the same time a dictionary useful for communication is created. Such work practices strengthen social communication and make the whole class share the responsibility of welcoming a new student.

Cooperation regarding children and adolescents' native languages

- [Tungumálaverið](#) is a service establishment that provides advice in Norwegian and Swedish to schools and municipalities all over the country. They offer **local teaching** in Norwegian, Polish and Swedish for students in Reykjavík. **Online learning** is offered in Norwegian, Polish and Swedish for students in the city and outside of it.
- [The European Language Portfolio](#) is a project for students from the age of 5 upwards in which the development of the language is mapped out and divided into levels. Students can monitor their own

abilities by assessing themselves using a specific self-assessment frame to find out where they stand in all skill factors from A1-C2. Here you can also find a self-assessment list that teachers can use in class.

- [Association on bilingualism](#) has been operating since 1994. The goal of the association is to teach bilingual children their native language, support native language teachers, gather knowledge about bilingualism and encourage the parents of bilingual children to provide them with opportunities to learn about their mother tongue and culture.
- [The Polish School](#) was established by a group of teachers and parents who wanted a greater access to the Polish language, history and geography. The students of the school are aged 5-18.
- [Homework assistance at the City Library](#) is a cooperative project between the City Library and the Reykjavík division of the Icelandic Red Cross.
- [Café Lingua](#) is run by the City Library and is a forum for anyone who wants to strengthen his/her language skills.



Diverse teaching and work practices

When developing multicultural school and leisure activities it is important that all factors of the practices are considered.

James Banks (2010) has put forward the following guidelines, which can be used as a checklist to review one's own work.

- **Material.** *How are we using diverse material, pictures and other things that have a connection to diverse cultures and languages?*
- **The development of knowledge.** *Are we using methods which have the purpose of discussing, investigating, viewing and understanding how different opinions, visions and attitudes build up new knowledge?*
- **Minimize prejudice.** *What do students' prejudices consist of, and what methods and material can be used to minimize them?*
- **Equal opportunities for children to education.** *How are we contributing to equal opportunity of all children to education? Are we using methods aimed at improving children's performance regardless of origin, gender and social standing?*
- **Empowering school culture.** *Do managers, teachers and staff look at the practices overall, group divisions, assessment methods and the labelling of ability, participation of children and communication across groups? Is the school atmosphere empowering for everyone?*
- **Diverse work practices and teaching methods are important for success in working with a diverse group of children. Following is a list of ideas for such work:**
 - In the work done at leisure centres, it is important to keep in mind the ways in which we should work with and discuss diverse cultures. It must be considered how to adjust work practices in ways that are beneficial for everyone. I.e., the centres being open during the day might be more convenient for some groups than them being open in the evenings.
 - [Cooperative learning and active participation of all children in preschools.](#)
 - [The survey method](#)
 - [SíSL \(team of experts\)](#)
 - [Culturally responsive teaching](#) is a specific approach based on teachers and staff making an effort to use the experience and knowledge of children in education and play.
 - [CLIM \(cooperative learning in multicultural groups\).](#) This approach, which is called SAFN in Icelandic (i.e. cooperative studying in a diverse group of students) has the goal of reaching the maximum activity within the student group and giving everyone an equal access to the learning process. Students are in this way trained in social skills in which the main emphasis is placed on each and every person having something to contribute that is beneficial to the whole group. The ideas of CLIM are aimed at connecting multicultural teaching with general academic and language education.
 - [Storyline](#) is working with specific story frames and themes. The learning is solution oriented and bases on the prior knowledge of students.
 - [Area-workshops.](#) The area is divided into study zones, often by subjects or courses. ([Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir og Jóhanna Karlsdóttir, 2010](#)).
 - [Multilevel learning.](#) Work is based on the overall picture, and 3-4 fundamental factors are chosen that everyone must adopt to obtain the basic knowledge, skills and understanding. ([Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir og Jóhanna Karlsdóttir, 2010](#)).
 - [Cultural encounters](#) is an interdisciplinary teaching method meant to shed light on the diverse strengths and interests of the children in the group.
 - [Compass](#), a handbook about human rights education.
 - [Access all areas](#) a handbook on leisure activities.

Cooperation with families

All DEY workplaces are encouraged to make a contract regarding communication with parents (see an example of a contract on p. 19). The contract should entail whether parents would like information to be sent to them via email, by phone, on a note in a compartment or a bag, and whether the parent can read Icelandic. [Here are some diverse ways to communicate with parents who do not share a language with teachers and staff.](#)

- Encourage the parents to join their child at school or at the leisure centre for the first few days if possible.
 - It provides the child with a feeling of safety.
 - The parents get to know the child's daily routine.
 - Parents are offered an insight into school practices.
 - It contributes to interactive communication as well as a trust between parents and staff.
 - Parents get the opportunity to assist the child with sharing his/her knowledge and experiences.
- Find out about the parent's previous experiences of school and leisure activities and the expectations they have.
- Give the parents useful information about the school and leisure practices so they can have a clear idea of what to expect. Information in diverse languages can be found on the [parent web of the school and leisure department](#) as well as [the preschool websites](#).
- [Give the parents information about the importance of leisure activities, which is available in a few languages.](#)
- [Introduce the leisure card to the parents.](#)
- [The parent association of Austurbæjarskóli has put together a variety of information for parents in a message pouch, which can be used for communication within the parent group.](#)
- Discuss the role of parents and what is expected of them.
- Explain to the parents how they can support their child's education, including Icelandic studies.
- Introduce [Homework assistance at the City Library](#)

- Give the parents the chance to choose the arrangement and time that is most convenient for them for communication, such as email, phone calls, meetings, etc. Also find out if an interpreter is needed..
- Ensure that the class representative meets the parents.
- Try to connect the new family with a [friend family](#) in the class if they are interested.
- [Utilize interpretation services, phone interpretation and staff](#) of the school who share a language with the parents to make communication with families easier.
- Class/preschool communication pages for parents and teachers (facebook). The school uploads a few pictures of the students working on some daily tasks. This facilitates a discussion between the parents and the child in their mother tongue about the events of the day. This is very easy since the tablet has a camera and a wireless Internet

"When cooperation with parents regarding the children is a success, the students benefit from it. Positive and productive support from the homeroom teacher to the parent group throughout the first year of compulsory school is critical for building good class practices."

Birgitta Bára Hassenstein, vice chairman of SAMFOK and the representative of parents in the Education and Youth council committee

connection.

- A communication book with photographs from home (the family, extended family, travels, culture, festivals, traditions, etc.) and from the preschool (field trips, events, festivals, traditions, games, learning, etc.). The child talks about the pictures in Icelandic at the school, and in their native language at home. This encourages discussion and cooperation and is also an effective form of speech stimulation.

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