

INFORMATION ABOUT SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AT AN EARLY AGE (FRÜHE SPRACHLICHE FÖRDERUNG) FOR PARENTS AND LEGAL GUARDIANS

Support for language development at an early age (*frühe sprachliche Förderung*)

Styria has signed once more the agreement concerning measures for “support for language development at an early age” (*frühe sprachliche Förderung*) with the federal government for the kindergarten years 2015/16 and 2017/18 pursuant to art.15a B-VG. These measures aim at making it easier for children to start primary school (*Volksschule*), to optimize their future education opportunities and, consequently, to enable them a better start in professional life.

Language as an educational task

Language education and support are tasks laid down by legislation as established in the Education Support Plan (*BildungsRahmenPlan*) and therefore belong to the educational tasks of each institution for elementary education.

Language support comprises the entire everyday work of institutions for child education and care.

Language skills assessment (*Sprachstandsfeststellung*)

Language skills assessments inform about the child’s level of language skills and its need for support, when necessary.

These tests focus on observing the linguistic competence of the child with the help of an observation sheet developed for this purpose.

Observation sheet “BESK (DaZ) KOMPAKT”

Children in child care and education institutions are observed with an observation sheet, which serves for assessing the linguistic competence of children with German as a first language from the age of three and a half-years onwards (BESK) and for children with German as second language from the age of four and a half-years onwards (BESK-DaZ).

According to the education standards for competency in speech and language at the beginning of compulsory education (“Bildungsstandards zur Sprech- und Sprachkompetenz zu Beginn der Schulpflicht”), children, who are found to have a need for support of their linguistic development, are to receive specific support in order to have achieved the highest command of the German teaching language possible when they enter school.

Observation

Observation is an indispensable part of the daily work of educators in kindergarten. It offers the opportunity to get to know each child better and to find out what it needs in terms of language development support, among others.

The findings of this specific observation highlight the abilities, strengths and special competences of the child and offer starting points for planning and creating an environment beneficial for language development.

How observation is carried out

Observation is carried out in naturally occurring situations in the daily routine in kindergarten in a playful and integrative manner and in a stimulating linguistic environment.

In general, with its speech and language offers for the entire group of children the kindergarten provides a beneficial environment for succeeding in learning German as first and second language.

In order to provide individual support for a child's development, the kindergarten teacher carries out a language skills assessment twice a year. In autumn (October/November) the first evaluation is made. If this results in a need for support, a second observation is conducted in spring (April/May).

The repeated use of the observation instrument for evaluating the same child offers the opportunity to prove the child's progress during the language support programme and to adapt the support measures to its current level of language competence.

Results

The language profile resulting from the analysis visualises the abilities of the child regarding its individual language qualifications.

If the results from the language skill assessment show that the child is in need of support, measures adopted to the child's individual needs are taken.

Additional support measures

Largely, early language support in kindergarten is covered by the professionals employed at the institutions.

However, according to the number of children in need of language support, the educational institutions

-see for additional professionals for support in terms of language skills, who offer on-site language support for children in an integrative way

-employ professionals, who support, help and assist children speaking a different language, in their mother tongue

-see for interpreters for different first languages to carry out language skills assessments

-offer information, support and continuous education of the professionals by the expert advisors for early language development of the federal state of Styria

Paying attention to multilingualism – German as second language

Appreciating and fostering one's first language is the basis for learning to speak a second language. It gives the child confidence and security in new situations while at the same time fostering its self-esteem.

“Because language is the key to the world”