

Early Years Vision in Action

 INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF ZUG AND LUZERN
respect | motivate | achieve





Our Mission Statement

The International School of Zug and Luzern (ISZL) provides a high quality Early Years to Grade 12 international education to day students resident in the cantons of Central Switzerland.

Respect | Motivate | Achieve

ISZL promotes a climate of respect, where outstanding teachers encourage students to develop self-confidence, positive relationships and an enthusiastic approach to learning.

ISZL is committed to excellence in education through a balanced academic programme. Students at ISZL share responsibility for their own learning in a caring and stimulating environment designed to promote achievement.

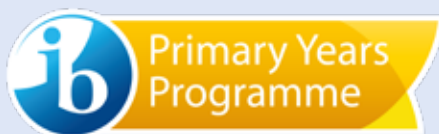
About our Early Years Programme

Young children have an insatiable curiosity and an almost limitless capacity to learn. They are natural inquirers, critical thinkers, competent, creative and rich in potential. As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, our philosophies and teaching and learning programme are developed within the framework of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) framework and with this image of the child in mind.

Designed to give our youngest learners the best start on their educational journey, our Early Years programme harnesses children's innate abilities by providing them with authentic opportunities for solving problems, for creative thinking and for research.

The Early Years at ISZL can be found on our Zug campus, which is a historic location surrounded by forest and farmland. We would encourage you to make an appointment with a member of our Admissions team to see our school in action. Learn more by visiting:

www.iszl.ch/early





At home, you have two dogs. How could it have
anybody else to see all eggs. How could it have
anybody else to see all eggs. How could it have
anybody else to see all eggs. How could it have

Framing the Vision

In 2011, the staff of ISZL Primary School engaged in a professional dialogue about their vision for the early childhood division and developed these guiding principles. ISZL's teachers envisioned their ideal early childhood programme and this 'Early Years Vision' represents their shared beliefs about best practice.

In 2016, all teaching staff from Early Years 1 to Grade One were asked to look critically at the 'Vision' and consider how the document supports current practice. In line with our commitment to a reflective practice, amendments have been made, which reflect our ongoing commitment to the outdoors as an arena for learning.

Forest visits are as a regular part of our students' schedule and we are committed to researching the pedagogy around forest education. The inclusion of a guiding principle related specifically to Mathematics reflects our desire to promote its valued place in the curriculum. The changes also reflect the importance we place on the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme Transdisciplinary Skills as a framework for the assessment of children's learning. Play also continues to be recognised and promoted as a tool for meaning-making and there is a shift to ensure its role in the learning of students in Grade One.

Some new and potentially thought-provoking concepts have been included, such as a consideration of post-modernist perspectives on learning, the development of children's working theories and the inclusion of Te Whariki, a curriculum from New Zealand, as another context for researching early childhood practice. We hope these additions provide us with new provocations for our work with the children at ISZL.

At ISZL, we believe...

The mission and philosophy of ISZL and the values and beliefs of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) framework underpin our programme.

We aim to establish a climate of respect through the development of positive relationships within a caring environment. Our programme is balanced, concept-based and planned for our learners. This negotiated curriculum is a way of planning a curriculum based on the students' interests and passions within the framework provided by the PYP Units of Inquiry.

Planning involves observation, documentation and collaboration amongst teachers. It requires flexibility and patience and aims to provide engaging, relevant and challenging learning experiences for all children. This motivates children as their questions drive in-depth investigations and encourage their enthusiasm for learning.

The programme is supported by formative and summative assessments designed to recognise the achievements of the individual and the group, with a particular focus on the transdisciplinary skills for learning: social skills, self-management skills, communication skills, research skills and thinking skills.



At ISZL, we believe...

Our early childhood programme must have intellectual and pedagogical integrity.

Our approach to early education is research-based and reflects the theories of John Dewey, Vygotsky, Bruner and Malaguzzi as well as considering the post-modernist ideas of Dahlberg and Moss. We are committed to keeping up-to-date with research with the aim of discussing and creating shared understandings alongside a critical view of our practice.

As a school committed to the IB PYP, we recognise inquiry as a powerful pedagogical approach. We understand the links between the IB PYP and the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia and draw on their practice as inspiration for our context. We view reflection as a critical element to professional development and are committed to engaging in ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning. We consider other international perspectives on early childhood education such as New Zealand and its curriculum, Te Whāriki.

We acknowledge that learning takes place in a social context and is an activity in which “children construct knowledge, make meaning of the world, together with adults and equally important, other children.” (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007)

At ISZL, we believe...

Play is a powerful vehicle for exploration and learning.

The schedule for our youngest learners is built around long periods of uninterrupted time during each day for adult-supported, freely chosen play and adult-led small group activities. Research informs us that children make better all-around progress in settings where there is a balance between these two. Teachers are mindful of this balance in their daily planning.

Our educators acknowledge that play is a primary tool for making meaning and that free choice time scheduled in long periods enhances the complexity of play. During these times the teacher’s role is to observe and ask probing questions that challenge children to comprehend at deeper levels, and encourage sustained, shared thinking.

Teachers use observation, reflection and documentation of children’s learning and working theories which allow educational goals to develop around children’s interests and motivations and so enhance the “potential for co-constructing knowledge between adults and children.”(Wood 2010)

Daily reflections on play and learning are considered essential in the construction of knowledge.





At ISZL, we believe...

Children are unique individuals and practices should be inclusive.

We model and foster an appreciation of diversity and international mindedness. We aim to achieve this through our Units of Inquiry and by creating links to the local Swiss community through German language and culture, as well as with our own international community.

We recognise the importance of L1 language (first language) development, and when possible, provide opportunities for children to use their language of choice. We also appreciate that the language of instruction plays a crucial role in learning and in promoting equality in children's opportunities to learn, we strive to support the additional needs of English as an Additional Language students. In Kindergarten and First Grade, children for whom English is an Additional Language, are supported by specialists who work closely with classroom teachers.

We view differentiation as an integral part of the planning of our programme. We also understand the effect of children's emotional well-being on learning and individual children are supported with the development of social and emotional skills. The value of additional support systems for children with learning differences is recognised.

At ISZL, we believe...

The development of physical well-being is essential.

Our programme incorporates daily time to develop motor skills and hand/eye coordination both in indoor and outdoor learning environments. It is well documented that for children, spending time outdoors is good for health and well-being in all weather conditions.

Daily Outdoor Learning sessions and regular forest visits provide the children with opportunities to move about freely and be physically active as well as offering challenge and risk within a framework of security and safety. We have trust in children and the environment to provide appropriate levels of challenge.

Regular opportunities for swimming are part of the Kindergarten and Grade One schedules. We recognise the health benefits of balanced nutrition and incorporate healthy eating practices into our daily routines, as well as offering regular opportunities for cooking and baking.

In line with the ISZL guiding principles for well-being and involvement, all time is seen as valuable.



At ISZL, we believe...

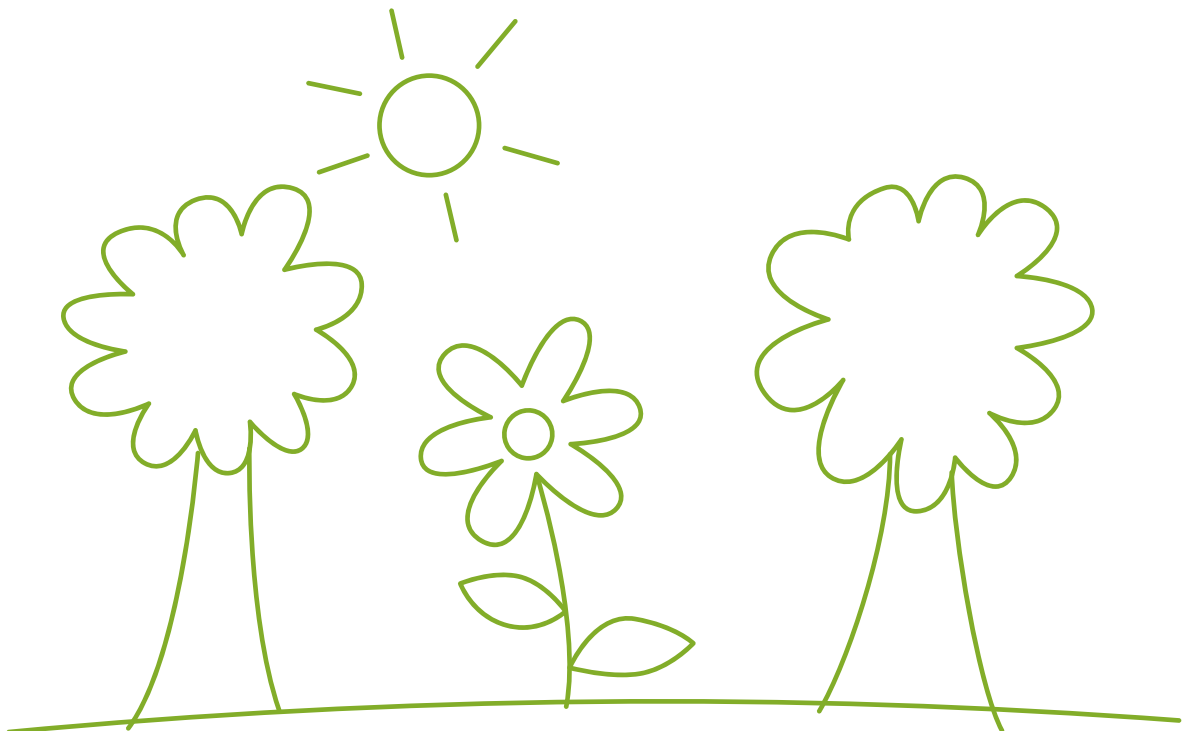
Flexible, resource-rich learning environments activate learning.

Our learning environments, both indoors and outdoors, create a variety of opportunities for social interaction and learning. These environments support individual, small group and whole class involvement with a variety of materials.

Flexible and open-ended educational resources are chosen both indoors and outdoors to activate a process of research, reflection, creative thinking and the development of working theories. Other supportive elements of the environment include light, storage, furniture, a connection to the natural world and an emphasis on aesthetics. These spaces and elements are frequently changed or rearranged to draw attention to their features or provoke inquiry and exploration. Children can access materials as and when they need them, and we recognise the vital role of real-life, first-hand experiences in children's learning.

We recognise the unique nature of the forest in offering children a new dimension to the established Outdoor Learning programme and so include forest visits or "Waldzeit" as a regular part of our schedule.

In our outdoor environment, we value our garden area as a focus for inquiry.





At ISZL, we believe...

Children are competent, creative, rich in potential, critical thinkers and problem solvers.

We are conscious of our image of the child. We acknowledge that our perception of a child impacts our decisions regarding time, space, materials and relationships.

Our curriculum reflects this image of a child and is characterised by numerous opportunities for solving problems, creative thinking and research. We listen to and respect children's working theories.

We emphasise children's symbolic languages as a means for exploration and expression of individual understandings. As children proceed in an investigation, generating and testing their ideas, we encourage them to express their understandings and theories through these many symbolic languages which may include drawing, sculpture, painting, dramatic play, mathematics, writing, music-making, singing, movement and the use of technology amongst others.

We recognise, value and draw on the funds of knowledge that children have already gathered from home and family, from peers, from popular culture and their experience of the world.

Our programme is underpinned by the mission and philosophy of ISZL and the values and beliefs of the IB PYP framework.

At ISZL, we believe...

Positive relationships, social and self-management skills should be fostered.

We model respectful interactions in all areas of the school and aim to foster a sense of belonging. In line with the ISZL guiding principles for well-being and involvement, we strive to build community in our classrooms, across grade levels and through the whole school. Educational and social development are viewed as complementary supporting all-round development.

Classroom morning meetings are seen as an essential part of the day providing an opportunity to plan and prepare for the day ahead and consider any thoughts, ideas or inquiries from the learning community. Reflection meetings also provide opportunities for revision of ideas as children are supported to share their work and respectfully evaluate the work of others with the common aim of achieving a more in-depth understanding and tightening the bonds of the community of learners.

Our daily periods of Outdoor Learning and regular forest visits offer children and adults opportunities to get to know each other differently.



At ISZL, we believe...

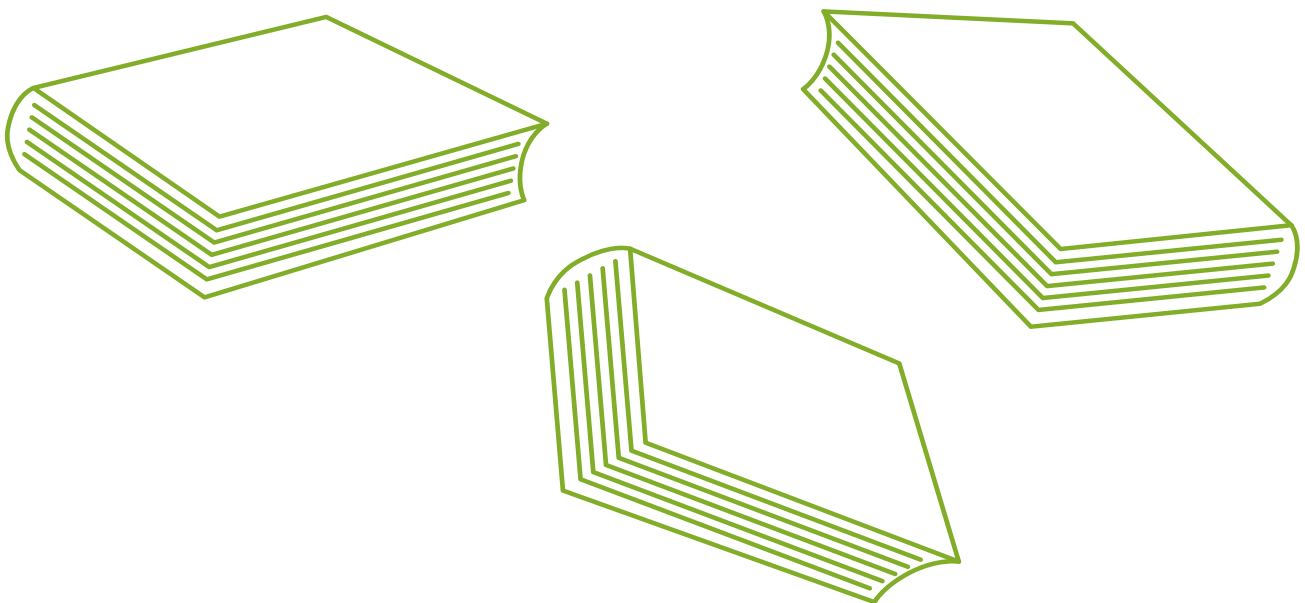
Language development is fundamental to learning.

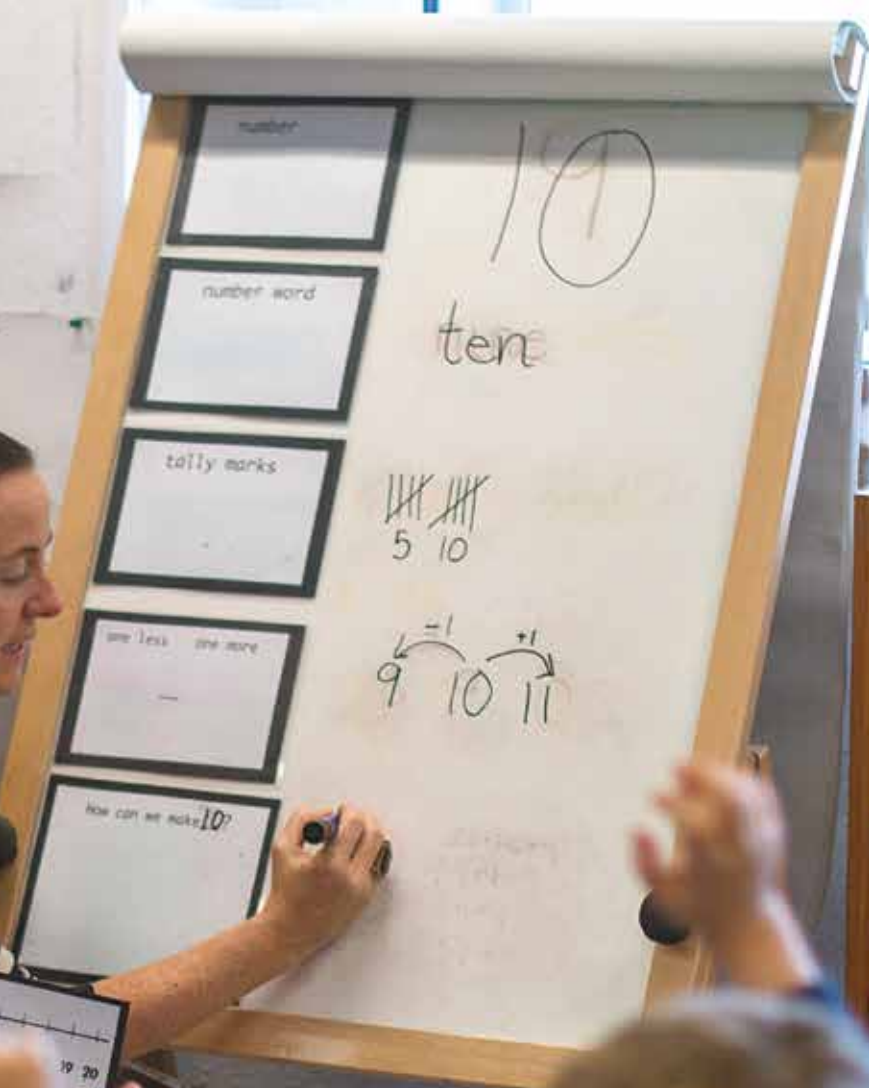
We view children's early experiences with reading and writing as embedded in a larger system of oral communication.

Children engage in productive conversations with adults and peers during their day. Through the negotiated curriculum, children have many opportunities to share ideas and experiences and participate in activities which support the development of oral communication skills.

The ISZL Language Guiding Statements underpin our early literacy programme. It supports children's developing phonological awareness, places emphasis on making meaning from print, and highlights the relationship between reading with writing in everyday experiences and environments. There is an emphasis on story and children listen to and have free access to carefully selected literature within the classroom alongside regular library visits.

Activities and materials are available to support literacy learning such as alphabet charts and word-walls. In role-play areas, writing centres and during writer's workshops children have opportunities to use developing forms of writing and are supported in the development of more conventional forms of writing.





At ISZL, we believe...

Mathematics is a way of thinking about and describing the world.

We encourage children to explore mathematical concepts and communicate their thinking through their representations.

We recognise the value of these representations and mathematical 'mark-making' as a valuable means for children to explore the 'written' language of mathematics. These early, personally meaningful experiences support and contribute to the development of an understanding of the abstract language of mathematics.

We recognise the value of real contexts for mathematics, such as cooking and baking and incorporate these into weekly routines. We highlight the processes of mathematical thinking such as reasoning, problem-solving and co-construction of understanding.

We recognise the importance of the analysis of children's mathematical graphics to the assessment of children's current thinking as we plan to support and develop their understandings.



At ISZL, we believe...

Teachers are researchers.

Pedagogical documentation informs the planning of teaching and learning. Observations and documentation of students' learning are used as assessment strategies and reporting tools. Observations by teachers inform and widen the perspective of a child's competencies.

We believe pedagogical documentation plays an essential role in supporting reflective practice (Dahlberg et al. 1999) and building a professional learning community.

Pedagogical documentation could be described as visible evidence (written notes, photos, videos, audio recordings, children's work) that enable teachers, parents and children to discuss, interpret and reflect upon what is happening from their various points of view and to make choices about the best way to proceed.

We value the knowledge and understanding that teachers with specialist disciplinary training (music, physical education, art, languages) bring to our transdisciplinary approach to working with children.

Our long-term commitment to enhancing our understanding of children reflects the continuing evolution of our ideas and practices.

At ISZL, we believe...

Collaboration between teachers, children and parents produce positive, productive relationships.

Parents are partners in their child's education and we aim to create an atmosphere of community, collaboration and trust.

We believe parents, teachers, and children contribute in meaningful ways to the school experience and we aim to find ways to involve parents as closely as possible. We recognise the value of technology as a way of connecting with families.

In responding to children's ideas and interests, we trust children to be interested in things, which are worth knowing. We aim to provide opportunities for parents to learn more about their child's learning and trust parents to be informed and productive members of a cooperative educational team.



A WORLD CLASS LEARNING COMMUNITY

The International School of Zug and Luzern (ISZL) is an independent co-educational, non-profit day school serving the international community of Central Switzerland by providing a comprehensive education from Early Years to university preparation, from ages 3 to 18.

As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, ISZL is authorised by the IB Organisation to offer the Primary Years, Middle Years, IB Diploma and Career-related Pathway Programmes. In addition, students in Grades 11 and 12 have the option of taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams, which are audited by the College Board.

ISZL has been accredited by the prestigious and highly respected Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). ISZL is a member of the Swiss Group of International Schools (SGIS) and the European Council of International Schools (ECIS).

ISZL is supervised by the Educational Authorities of the Canton of Zug and operates with their approval.

A NON-PROFIT FOUNDATION

ISZL is registered as a non-profit foundation (Stiftung) in Switzerland

EINE LERNGEMEINSCHAFT DER WELTKLASSE

Die International School of Zug and Luzern (ISZL) ist eine unabhängige, gemeinnützige Tagesschule die der internationalen Gemeinschaft der Zentralschweiz eine umfassende Ausbildung vom Vorschulalter bis hin zur Universitätsvorbereitung für 3 – 18 Jährige anbietet.

ISZL ist als International Baccalaureate (IB) World School durch die IB Organisation autorisiert die Primary Years, Middle Years, das IB Diploma und den Career-related Pathway anzubieten. Ausserdem haben Schüler der 11. und 12. Klasse die Möglichkeit, Advanced Placement (AP) Kurse zu belegen und Examen abzulegen. Alle AP Kurse werden vom College Board überprüft.

ISZL ist akkreditiert vom renommierten und hochangesehenen Council of International Schools (CIS) und der New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Die Schule zeigt damit, dass ihre akademischen Programme von höchster Qualität sind.

ISZL wird von der Bildungsbehörde des Kantons Zug beaufsichtigt, und wird mit deren Genehmigung geführt.

EINE GEMEINNÜTZIGE STIFTUNG

ISZL ist nach schweizerischem Recht als gemeinnützige Stiftung organisiert



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