

The Swiss School System - Fokus Zürich (s. Portner, Pflingstweidtschule Elternrat, June 2021)

Finalized in June 2021 - As our school system is dynamic and constantly improving, please visit the original state sources for exact detailed information

Switzerland has one of the best educational systems in the world.

Educational Institutions:

428 professional education and higher education institutions including:

12 Public Universities

including two Federal Institutes of Technology which are **world leaders** in Science and Engineering

8 Public Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts

20 Universities of Teacher Education

382 Upper Secondary vocational education and training schools (aprox. 600 pupils/school)

284 Upper Secondary general education schools (aprox. 360 pupils/school)

1,629 Lower secondary level schools (average 150 students/school)

4,614 Schools at primary level 3-8 (average 110 students / School)

5,451 Schools at primary level 1-2 (kindergarten/first learning cycle, 30 students in average per school).

[Source: Federal Statistical Office - Educational institutions by educational level, status and canton](#)

The Swiss School System is a **Decentralized System** - "1 Land - 26 Schulsysteme":

Compulsory school regulated at the Kantonal level and executed by the Municipalities (Gemeinde).

The objective of the school system is **equal opportunity**:

Each kid must receive the best possible education and be individually developed during the entire school time

Children have a **right** to free Education in a public school

It is **mandatory** that children attend school during the first 11 years

Despite its **complexity**, Swiss Education offers students **flexibility** to explore their skills and offer lots of **permeability** and opportunities to move between different educational levels/structures.

The three main levels of the Swiss Education System are

1- Compulsory School: Primary (2 years Kindergarten + 6 years Elementary) and Secondary I (Classes 7-9)

2- Upper Secondary Education: Sekondary II (Classes 9-12 in Highschools or Vocational Educational Training)

3- Tertiary Education: Professional and Higher Education.

*This document is focused on providing a broad overview of the **School System in Kanton Zürich, specifically in Zürich City**. It aims to be a **resource guide** for parents to understand the **generalities** of the **Compulsory School** and to point at sources where to find more specific information on the different **options** children have **afterwards**.*

Some Statistics in Canton Zurich in Schoolyear 2020/2021

310,000 pupils and students in public or private educational institutions (6,000 more than in the previous year and 15 percent more than 10 years ago)

The number of primary school pupils in the Canton of Zurich increased by 2.4 percent, which corresponds to around 100 additional school classes.

After the Compulsory School:

~70% of the students move to a **Vocational School (Berufsschule)**. Students of basic vocational education are taught the school education of a profession. Vocational schools also offer vocational matura lessons as well as vocationally-oriented further education.

~19% of students go to a **Middle School (Mittelschule)**.

~10% of students make a **Briding Year (Brückenangebot)** in order to decide which later training is appropriate

~1% of young people in the first year after compulsory schooling attended a home or special school.

[Source: Statistics Canton Zürich: Die Schulen im Kanton Zuerich 2020 2021](#)

~21% of the young Adults in Zürich city hold a **Highschool Degree (Gymnasiale Maturität)**. This is 19% in Kanton Zürich and around 20% in Switzerland, and expected as this is an specific Studium for people who want to pursue Academic and Research Careers and Universities and Federal Institutes of Technology.

There are other options like the Berufsmaturität and the Fachmaturität wich add together with the Gymnasiale maturität to around 38% of young adults. Switzerland offers as well a variety of professional and occupational certifications to serve its labor market and employment needs.

[Source: Maturitätsquote Kanton Zürich 2019](#)

[Source: Maturitätsquote nach Maturitätstyp, Kanton und Geschlecht](#)

The School System in Switzerland and in Zürich envisions students as whole individuals and places emphasis on Social Skills, Sciences, Languages, and Arts and Sport.

Curriculum for the Public Compulsory School

The focus is on competence-oriented learning (students not only acquire knowledge, but also learn to use it and thus solve tasks). The individual competences are built up over the entire primary school period. The **Zürich Curriculum 21** shows what the students should know and be able to do up to what point in time.

Zürich Curriculum 21 is structured into six balanced subject areas:

- Languages
- Mathematics
- Natural sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences
- Creative Design and Textile & Technical Design
- Music
- Movement and Sport

Additionally, students work on and develop competences like "Media and IT" and "Vocational Orientation" as well as "Education for Sustainable Development" and "Interdisciplinary Competencies".

Kindergarten: Children learn in kindergarten with all senses. Play has a great importance and is an important part of the lessons. The teaching lessons designed by the teachers are geared towards smooth transition between learning and playful learning. In kindergarten, it is important to be together in the community. The children learn with and from each other and can develop their social skills in a group.

Primary school: students are taught important, basic knowledge and skills in six subject areas mentioned above. As a first foreign language, the children learn English from the third primary class, followed by French as a second foreign language in the 5th grade. Students are guided to think about their learning and work, and to perceive it more independently and with more self-responsibility on a gradual basis. Students interact with others and with themselves and learn in groups. They become more independent in this phase of learning and life. At the same time, they are expanding social contacts outside their family and the neighbourly world.

Secondary school: young people deepen and expand what they have learned in primary school. In addition to learning from concrete actions and situations, abstract thinking and meaningful learning are of importance. Interdisciplinary skills are also practiced continuously and in depth: students reflect on their attitudes and postures, learning more independently and under their own responsibility.

Dealing with oneself is a central theme. Young people are gradually breaking away from their parents' homes and striving for greater autonomy. Belonging to a group becomes important. Discovering and recognizing their talents, interests and inclinations is a focal point. In addition, during the three years of secondary school, students are well prepared for a vocational apprenticeship or for continuing their education.

Computers, tablets, smartphones and a variety of computer-based applications shape nowadays our daily lives. With the module "Media and Computer Science", the Curriculum 21 addresses this important topic. In specially designed lessons, students acquire skills in the fields of media and computer science in the 5th and 6th grades of primary school as well as in the 2nd and 3rd grades of secondary school.

[Source: Der Zürcher Lehrplan 21](#)

Zürich offers comprehensive special educational support for children with remarkable abilities, learning disabilities, and/or behavioural issues:

- German as a second language (DaZ)
- Integrative support / Integrative Förderung
 - Individual Learning Time (ILZ - Individuelle Lernzeit)
- Psychotherapy
- Gifted and talented pupils
- Audio educational activities
- Speech-Language Pathology
- Special needs schools
- Psychomotor therapy

School social Services is a point of contact for social issues and problems at school and in the family. It is located directly in the school building and is aimed at children, young people, their families as well as teachers, employees and kindergarten teachers.

[Source: Besondere Beduerfnisse/ Integrative Förderung](#)

[Source: Pfingstweid Schule Besondere Beduerfnisse/ Integrative Förderung](#)

Age-mixed learning (AdL-Altersdurchmischtes Lernen) School Pfingstweid:

In most social groups, be it in professional life, in the family or in leisure activities, people from different age groups work, live, train, make music together. In mixed-age classes, there is this natural diversity through this mixing of age groups. Students learn from each other and with each other. The school also uses this potential in an AdL class. In the Pfingstweid school children learn exclusively in mixed-age classes: both in kindergartens and in lower grades (1st/2nd grade), in intermediate 1 (3rd/4th grade) and in intermediate 2 (5th/6th grade).

[Source: Pfingstweid School AdL](#)

ILZ - School Pfingstweid:

During the individual learning period (ILZ), our students in the primary school (1st - 6th grade) have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in work as independently and individually as possible after the lessons. The ILZ is part of the day school and takes place after the 3rd afternoon lesson from 15.15 to 16.00. Cancellations from the ILZ by the parents or guardians are possible after consultation with the class teacher.

The ILZ takes place within the cluster. The students work in an age- and level-appropriate manner in a quiet setting with the support of teaching and support staff. They learn to work independently and gain confidence in their skills. They use the available time to complete remaining tasks from class or to pursue self-selected work or projects alone or together with other children.

They practice and deepen the subject matter, apply established learning techniques, work with learning games, prepare for exams or research topics that interest them.

What cannot be covered with the individual learning time?

All tasks not yet solved in class will be completed during the ILZ. However, *the reading training, the number series and the vocabulary must be practiced regularly and individually. This "learning and practicing" must take place on a daily basis. Since lessons do not take place every afternoon followed by an ILZ, the children have to "learn and practice" at home.*

After consultation with the supervisor, a "learning and practicing" time can also take place in the care from 16.00 - 18.00 o'clock.

The ILZ can be used for the homework of the Gymi preparation. If the additional work and tasks in the ILZ cannot be completed, they must be done at home. *The ILZ is not a guided gym preparation lesson.*

Pupils with special needs in individual subjects are supported during the compulsory lessons. *The ILZ is not an integrative support lesson.*

[Source: Pfingstweid Schule Individuelle Lernzeit](#)

The Parents' Council of the Pfingstweid School networks parents, supports school projects and organises its own events. We are in regular contact with the school team and actively participate in the school events.

The Parents' Council is made up of parent representatives from the individual classes from kindergarten to the 6th grade. Five times a year we meet with the school management. In between we are involved in various working groups.

Our tasks and goals:

- We are the point of contact for parents, the school team, the school authorities and the pupils.
- We take up the concerns of parenthood, which are of interest not only to individual parents, but to the whole school, and bring them into the discussion with the school management.
- We promote the exchange and mutual information between parents and school.
- We contribute to the social and cultural life of the school with our own projects and activities.
- We support the school team in the development and implementation of the school program (e.B. annual program).
- We are committed to networking and dialogue among parents.
- We follow the current school, care and education policy with regard to the implementation at the Pfingstweid school.

Topics in which the Parents' Council can participate are, for example: consultation in the development of the school program, playground design, project weeks, sports day, school festivals or parent education. Personnel and methodological-didactic decisions of the school are excluded from parental participation by law.

Do you have a concern or questions? Contact the parent council representatives from your child's class or write an email to the parents' council.

[Source: Pfingstweid Schule Elternrat](#)