

GIVE YOUR CHILD SEVERAL LANGUAGES

The world is full of languages, and language skills open many doors! Being bilingual or multilingual adds richness to a person's life, and at the same time, it is a societal resource, especially considering globalization.

With this brochure, our hope is to stimulate thoughts, and give you the tools and courage to give your child two languages from the very beginning. Finland is a country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, and you can choose in which language you want your child to receive their education. The Swedish language education path, including early childhood education and care and schooling in Swedish, is a gift you can give your child, regardless of your home language. Knowing Swedish can open many doors for your child.

Language development is a lifelong process. Children have the ability to learn language when they are born, but their language growth and development depends on their environment.

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DAYCARE AND SCHOOL

- THIS IS HOW IT WORKS!

- Comprehensive education usually lasts twelve years.
- School in Finland is free of charge, and all children have the right to attend school in one of the national languages, Finnish or Swedish.
- It is possible to receive all of one's early childhood education and care (ECEC) and schooling in Swedish, all the way up to the level of university and higher education.
- Parents choose the language of education for their child. For example, in bilingual families that have Finnish and Swedish as home languages, parents should carefully consider which school language to choose.
- If parents speak a language other than Finnish or Swedish, they have the right to choose in which language they want their child to receive an education.
- In Swedish schools, all the teaching is conducted in Swedish, and the teachers are, for the most part, native Swedish speakers.
- In both Swedish and Finnish schools, the other national language is also taught as a compulsory subject.
- In Swedish schools, the pupils start studying Finnish in the first grade, while in Finnish schools, pupils begin learning Swedish in the sixth grade.



ECEC AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

- Children in Finland have the right to ECEC after the parents' parental allowance period is over. This means that ECEC is for children from almost one to six years old.
- However, ECEC is voluntary and subject to a fee. Children have the right to ECEC in Swedish or Finnish. The parents decide in which language their children will take part in ECEC.
- Pre-primary education is a free-of-charge educational program in which children participate the year before comprehensive education begins. ECEC, pre-primary education and comprehensive education should, regarding children's development and learning, build a consistent and continuous whole that lays the foundation for life-long learning.

LANGUAGE IMMERSION

- A language immersion is a method with which children learn a new language through ECEC and schooling in a language other than their home language.
- In Finland, this includes mostly Finnish-speaking children learning Swedish. The staff only speak Swedish with the Finnish-speaking children, but also understand Finnish. Finnish-speaking children who start in a language immersion daycare do not need to know any Swedish when they begin, and the staff's contact with the parents is in Finnish.
- It is the parents' task to support their child's mother tongue (Finnish) at home. The goal of a language immersion is to achieve functional multilingualism. Pupils can receive their education in language immersion groups all the way up to grades 7-9 in some places.



POINTS FOR MULTILINGUAL FAMILIES TO KEEP IN MIND!

BE A LINGUISTIC ROLE MODEL

Raising a child in several languages should be a wholehearted choice. So, think about your own language use and your attitudes and hopes towards the languages your child encounters in everyday life. Parents are their children's primary linguistic role models and are responsible for their children's language development.

BE CONSISTENT

Learning a language can be energy consuming. Never force a child to use one language or another. Engage and challenge the child instead, and show that you are happy when they say something in your language. Also, don't give up and switch languages—just keep speaking your language consistently with the child. Remember, a child's need to understand and make themselves understood is the driving force for them to learn languages.

TALK, TALK, TALK—AND READ!

Surround your child with language and words. Name objects and things around you. Explain and describe what you are doing and what interests your child.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

A positive attitude towards all of a child's languages has positive effects. If a child mixes languages or says something incorrectly, repeat what they said and fill in the right word. Explain and

give examples without correcting or criticizing them. Connect the weaker language to fun activities.

DIFFERENT LANGUAGES IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Multilingual children can have strong feelings about which language they use with different people, in different places and in different situations. They often master certain subject areas better in one language than in the other, which is completely natural. This can depend on a child's hobbies, friends, relatives, and of course their language of education.

COOPERATION BETWEEN ECEC, SCHOOL AND HOME

There is a difference between speaking a language and using it as a cognitive tool. In school, children learn to read, write and think in the language of education. The development of the language that happens during the years before school is therefore relevant when thinking about the intended language of education. For children to be able to successfully manage in daycare and school, they need language support at home as well. The educators in daycare centers and schools support and stimulate the language. Cooperation between ECEC, school and home create a meaningful linguistic reality and provide broad linguistic support for children.