

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are proud to offer a bilingual learning environment that nurtures not only academic excellence but also cultural richness and global competence. As your child embarks on this bilingual journey, we want to share some important insights about how bilingual development works—and why patience and support are key.

Bilingualism Takes Time

It's important to understand that **learning two languages at once is not the same as learning one language twice as fast**. Research shows that children exposed to two languages from an early age often develop each language more slowly than monolingual peers—especially in the early years. This is completely normal and expected.

Children's vocabulary and grammar in each language may initially lag behind those of monolingual children. However, this is not a sign of delay or difficulty—it's simply a reflection of how language exposure is divided. Think of it as building two bridges at once: each takes time, but both will be strong with the right support.

Every Child Develops Differently

Some children may speak one language more fluently than the other for a time. Others may understand more than they can express. This variation is natural. What matters most is **consistent exposure, meaningful use, and encouragement in both languages**.

Long-Term Success

By the time our bilingual students reach the end of their school journey, they are not only fluent communicators—they are often **far ahead of their peers** in critical thinking, problem-solving, and intercultural understanding. In fact, **100% of our bilingual learners achieve the MSA with permission for the Oberstufe**, and they do so with confidence and competence in both languages.

Studies show that bilingual students:

- Reach **A2/B1 levels in their second language** by the end of Grade 4—levels expected in Grade 7/8.
- Perform **on par in their mother tongue** with students in monolingual schools, even though 50% or more of their day is in English.
- The development of the mother tongue may slow initially but typically catches up to and surpasses the normal level after a few years of schooling.

What If You Only Speak One Language Well?

If you are a parent who only speaks one of the two languages well, it is generally best to stick to your stronger (mother tongue) language rather than using a weak version of the other language.

Why you should use your strong language:

- Children need rich, complex, emotionally warm language input—things like storytelling, jokes, cultural references, and nuanced conversation.
- If you try to speak a language you don't know well, the input is often simplified or awkward, and you can't model correct grammar or a broad vocabulary.
- Research shows that strong skills in the home language support learning the community or school language later ("transfer of skills").

But what about exposure to the other language?

That's still important! The key is to provide it through other sources:

- The other parent or caregivers who are fluent.
- Preschool, school, or childcare in the other language.
- Books, songs, shows, or playgroups.
- Extended family, community, or cultural activities.

Example:

If you speak Spanish and your child is growing up in an English-speaking country:

- Speak to your child in Spanish at home—tell stories, have conversations, express affection.
- Let them get English exposure from preschool, friends, and media.

What's not recommended:

Trying to speak your non-native language if you are not fluent enough to provide natural, correct, and emotionally connected input. This can:

- Lead to stilted or limited language models.
- Make communication feel strained.
- Limit your child's vocabulary growth in both languages.

In short:

- If you only speak one language well, stick to that language and do it with warmth and richness.
- Make sure your child has good exposure to the other language from other fluent sources.

How You Can Support at Home

- Foster a **positive communication culture** in your home language: talk often, read together, and encourage storytelling.
- Take advantage of school offerings: e.g., German AGs for non-German speakers, English AGs for German speakers.
- Don't feel pressured to speak a language that isn't your own. **Your child's identity and emotional connection to language matter.**

We are here to partner with you every step of the way. If you have questions or would like to learn more about how bilingual development works, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Warm regards,
Stephen Kelly
Schulleitung