



## **The Bilingual Matura at Zurich High Schools**

In 2001, the Canton of Zurich launched the extensive pilot project „Implementation of bilingual German/English maturas in Zurich high schools“. At this point, the Liceo Artistico had already been offering a bicultural German/Italian program leading to the matura (= high school diploma, level of an international baccalaureate) for many years. At the start of the school year 2001/02, the new bilingual option German/English was introduced in a project also leading to a bilingual matura. Ten high schools took part in this pilot project which was originally limited to five years.

**Structure:** One or two classes of students per year are taught various subjects in English. The program is called immersion program and leads to a bilingual matura which is recognized in the Canton of Zurich as well as in the rest of Switzerland.

The bilingual program begins at the earliest after the try-out period of about three months and takes, depending on the school's particular immersion program, between two to four years until the students take their bilingual matura exams. The program is run in one or several of the matura profiles the school offers. Besides the regular foreign language classes, the students are taught at least two matura subjects in English while all the remaining subjects are taught in German. At the Literargymnasium Rämibühl and at the Realgymnasium Rämibühl students can additionally get an International Baccalaureate (double degree: matura diploma and IB).

**Immersion classes:** In immersion classes, not the language but the subject is the focus of attention. There is a crucial difference between traditional foreign language classes, in which teachers try to influence the language learning process, and immersion classes, in which language learning happens “naturally” when students engage with subject contents.

**Evaluation and extension of the project:** Taking into account the positive results of an external evaluation of the project, the Regierungsrat, the executive power in the Canton of Zurich, decided in 2005 to extend the piloting phase by three years until the end of 2008/09. It also decided to include three more schools into the project. The extension of the project was again evaluated by an external team.

***Bilingual matura in Zurich High Schools declared definitive:*** Due to the convincing results of this study, the Regierungsrat, at the end of January 2009, declared the bilingual programs definitive and decided to allow bilingual maturas at all high schools. Taking into consideration the significance of the English language as an international language of work and exchange and the canton's need to be able to compete for business, the Regierungsrat determined bilingual German/English programs to become the standard in cantonal high schools in the long run. However, according to the Regierungsrat's decree, schools can still apply for the program on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, it was decided to allow also the combination of German/French.

***Bilingual program German/French:*** At the end of September 2009, the Bildungsrat (board of education) authorized Kantonsschule Freudenberg and Kantonsschule Oerlikon to start a pilot project introducing a German/French bilingual program by the beginning of school year 2010/11. Both programs will include a stay in the French speaking part of Switzerland where the students involved will attend a local high school. The students will attend regular classes in the partner school in the Romandie and live with a host family for half a semester or a full semester while profiting from total immersion.

***Schools:*** The following 18 schools currently offer bilingual maturas (two more schools starting the program in 2011/12):

Liceo Artistico (German/Italian)

Kantonsschule Büelrain Winterthur (German/English)

Kantonsschule Enge Zürich (German/English)

Kantonsschule Freudenberg Zürich (German/French, starting 2010/11)

Kantonsschule Hohe Promenade Zürich (German/English)

Kantonsschule Hottingen Zürich (German/English, starting 2011/12)

Kantonsschule Küsnacht (German/English, including a bilingual program at the junior high school level (Untergymnasium))

Kantonsschule Im Lee Winterthur (German/English)

Kantonsschule Limmattal, Urdorf (German/English)

Kantonsschule Oerlikon Zürich (German French, starting 2010/11)

Literargymnasium Rämibühl (German/English) (double degree matura diploma and IB)  
Realgymnasium Rämibühl (German/English) (double degree matura diploma and IB)  
Mathematisch-naturwissenschaftliches Gymnasium Rämibühl (German/English)  
Kantonsschule Rychenberg Winterthur (German/English)  
Kantonsschule Stadelhofen Zürich (German/English, starting in 2011/12)  
Kantonsschule Wiedikon Zürich (German/English)  
Kantonsschule Zürich Birch (German/English)  
Kantonale Maturitätsschule für Erwachsene (German/English)

**Admission:** Basically, the bilingual programs are open to any student willing to increase their ability to actively communicate in the target language and ready to take on the extra work this involves. Students do not need to be native speakers of English or French. Prerequisites for admittance to the program are passing the high school entrance exams and good grades in German and maths. While every student who has passed the high school entrance exam has a right to being admitted to a high school, there is no guarantee for students to be accepted to a bilingual program due to the limited number of courses offered.

**Qualification of the teachers:** Teachers teaching immersively must be in possession of a master degree from a university in their subject and of the teaching diploma of the Höheres Lehramt Mittelschulen (now MASSHE). Furthermore, they must have a university degree in English (French) or proof of similar qualifications. They also have to take a methodological-didactical course on immersion teaching. Since the spring of 2006, such a course has been offered to immersion teachers of English in a two-semester class at the Institut of Gymnasial- und Berufspädagogik of the Zürcher Hochschulinstitut für Schulpädagogik und Fachdidaktik. For teachers in bilingual German/French programs a similar course is being organized. In addition, a concept for continuing education classes in English and French as immersion languages is currently being developed.