

Icelandic society has in recent years changed from being homogeneous to the multicultural society we know today. The same applies to education and leisure in the city where diverse individuals work and study. It can therefore be said that “The world is here”.

Reykjavik’s policy on multicultural education and leisure is based on three main pillars.

- *Diverse and inclusive teaching methods and practices.*
- *Icelandic as a second language and active multilingualism*
- *Building partnership with parents*

Diverse and inclusive teaching methods and practices

The needs of individuals should be met with diverse and inclusive teaching methods and practices. It is essential that children experience rewarding and constructive relationships in which they are equal to others, respect each other and learn from each other. The message should be clear; everyone is welcome and worthy of belonging!

It is necessary in education and leisure to scrutinize what educational material and artefacts are appropriate, how new knowledge and critical thinking is constructed, how prejudice and bullying is dealt with and how equality and active participation of everyone can be fostered. Cooperative learning methods suits well to provide children with

access to the learning process and to ensure maximum activity of everyone.

Intercultural encounters is a project where the aim is to empower the strengths, interests, identities, languages and cultures of all children.

www.meningarmot.is

Icelandic as a second language and active multilingualism

It is the objective that all children succeed in learning Icelandic. Competence in Icelandic is the prerequisite for democratic participation and equity in the Icelandic society. It is important to build upon the strengths of individuals in all activities, be it in education or leisure. Good language proficiency, both in the mother tongue

“People are like smart-phones. They are different and have all kinds of potential. It is not the appearance or the colour which counts, but the software.”

*Jón Gnarr,
former mayor of Reykjavik*

and Icelandic, affects children’s identity, academic achievement and family relationships.

It is of great importance to take advantage of every opportunity to work with Icelandic as a second language. It can take a child 1-2 years to master basic social vocabulary for everyday communication but up to 6-7 years to

reach proficiency in academic vocabulary. Proficiency in Icelandic is determined by many factors, i.e. how much time children spend in Icelandic language environment every day. Children’s and youth’s participation in organized leisure activities is important both for the development of Icelandic and for building social relationships based on shared strengths and interests. In cooperation with parents it is important to aim at better knowledge of the mother tongue of all children. Ways to bridge the gap between mother tongue and Icelandic should be sought

“Diverse teaching methods are the impetus of all schoolwork.”

*Valgerður Eiríksdóttir,
teacher at Fellaskóli*

for children who are new to school and leisure. This can be done in cooperation with educators, other children or adults who speak the child’s home language and can be of assistance.

The perspectives and respect of others for diverse languages affect how children value their home language. In the multicultural policy there are indications of ways in which to work with children’s home languages, such as welcoming posters in different languages, use of bilingual books and translation technology.

Partnership with parents

Employees of Department of School and Leisure (SFS) make an effort to get to

know each child and their family so that they can build the education, play and leisure activities on children’s experience and knowledge. Teachers and staff of SFS initiate partnership with parents and develop solution focused and flexible ways to prevent that different views, culture and experience hinder cooperation.

When parents and staff, teachers and directors of schools and leisure do not speak the same language as children, it is important to secure communication that makes parents active agents in their children’s education. By utilizing the services of interpreters, bilingual staff or other resources, it is possible to build a partnership on mutual trust. It is important for everyone in school and leisure to be aware that children should not interpret for their parents.



This brochure presents few main points from the policy of Reykjavik City for multicultural education and leisure. The whole policy may be found at www.skolarogfristund.is

The project “Vinafjölskyldur” (Friend Families) has proven effective in building family connections and making the first steps in a new school easier. To simplify communication between parents and the school it is useful to make a communication contract.

- Do parents want an interpreter and is there any specific interpreter they wish to use?
- Do parents use e-mail and can Google translate or something else be used to translate?
- Do parents read Icelandic, English or another common language?
- Is there anyone at home, in the family, among friends or neighbours who can help?



“Multilingualism is a treasure.”
*Sabine Leskopf,
 translator and interpreter*

- Are there other parents at school who can assist with communication?
- Are the parents ready to assist with cooperation with other parents in?
- Can parents use the schools/leisure homepage to get information?
- Do parents want the child to bring home notes with messages?
- Are parents informed of available information in various languages?



Guiding Light
 All children and youth are successful in education and play, are socially successful and get an opportunity to take pride in their background and culture.



The World is Here
 The policy of Reykjavik City on multicultural education and leisure