



EDUCATION

«We learn to do something by doing it. There is no other way».

- John Holt

This chapter provides a brief overview of the Zurich education system and a list of private international schools. It also includes a list of language schools (after all, you want to be able to keep up with your children, don't you)?

A STEP FORWARD

Swiss Education, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Extra Studies, Language Schools

SWISS EDUCATION

The education system in Switzerland is not federally regulated. Each canton sets its own guidelines, which are then interpreted by the individual town/community, educational authorities and teachers in alignment with the overall educational goals of the canton. Due to the complexity of the subject, we have chosen to feature the Swiss educational system on our website www.TheNewStorkTimes.com rather than report in-depth within the confines of this book. The descriptions here provide only an overview. Contact your district or community educational department (*Schulgemeinde/Schulpflege*) for details on your local schools.

It is mandatory for all children to receive nine years of schooling. After six years of primary school students are evaluated on their last two years of work. Their class teacher decides, in conference with the family, on the appropriate level of secondary schooling for them. After three years of secondary school students can decide to continue at the same school, attend a specialised vocational school (*Berufschule*) or enter an apprenticeship.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Depending on the community in which you live, **Swiss kindergarten** is available free to children from four or five years of age (your child must turn four years of age by 30 April to be eligible to enter

kindergarten at the start of that school year. Children born after 30 April must wait until the next school year). If you are planning on staying in Switzerland for any length of time, this could be the perfect way for your child to integrate and learn the language. Be aware that kindergarten here is viewed as a place where children learn to socialise but are not expected to read or write. If you are concerned that your child should be learning these skills, contact one of the international kindergartens about supplementary sessions or after-school literacy programmes (see chapter 7, '*Childcare Options*').

Children start **Swiss primary school** at the age of six or seven and generally keep the same teacher for three years (grades 1-3 and grades 4-6). Academic subjects include Maths, German, Science, Social Studies, History, Sports, Music and Crafts. Foreign languages are usually introduced in the second three-year block.

If you are planning a trip home to visit family, written permission must be sought from the school board if it cuts into school time. Absenteeism is taken very seriously in Switzerland, and parents can be fined for not complying with the guidelines.

If you are here for only a couple of years and are less concerned that your children learn Swiss-German (or German depending upon the level), then many of the international schools also run pre-school programmes that are integrated into the schools' curriculums and offer a high standard of education. It can be very convenient to have all your children attending the same school (for **pre-schools** see chapter 7, '*Childcare Options*').

Following is a list of **international and Swiss private schools** serving the Canton of Zurich. But first, it may be helpful to explain a few terms. The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) was founded in 1968 to provide a standard curriculum for local and private schools around the world. There are many schools world-wide who now follow it, which is particularly helpful for families who move frequently from one country to another. The curriculum is divided into three stages: the Primary Years Programme (PYP) for students ages 3-12; the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students ages 11-16; and the Diploma Programme, which prepares students for university and culminates in the International Baccalaureate (IB).