

Facilitating the transition from primary to secondary school

Pupils entering secondary school have been learning English for 4 or 5 years of instructed language development. The interface between primary and secondary school in foreign language learning is defined and explained in the relevant curricula and syllabus documents.

Beyond that, teachers and pupils can promote the continuity of language learning across school levels with the help of special transition activities. These so-called bridging tasks aim to make the transition more transparent and give the pupils concrete opportunities to display what they can accomplish with their growing competences in English and French.

Classes that have learnt English with the Explorers materials (Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, 2006–2008) are offered a special bridging module, entitled *Moving on* (Explorers 3, Module 5). Pupils who have worked with this module should be given time and the opportunity to present the outcomes of the tasks at the beginning of the English lessons in secondary school.

Here is a short presentation of the bridging tasks in Explorers 3 *Moving on*. The pupils may have covered one or more of these tasks at the end of Year 6. The parts of the tasks that are to be done in secondary school are marked here in *italics*.

Scenario 1, Amazing places: The pupils listen and write descriptions of different places. They start by matching postcards with descriptions and then use their imaginations to draw a continuation of the postcard and describe the new picture.

The pupils write a description of a place they have been to on the basis of a postcard or photo. They write about what one can do there, why they like the place and give reasons for their choice of the place. They store the revised text in the Dossier of their European Language Portfolio.

→ *At the beginning of secondary school, the pupils display and/or present their texts about amazing places in the classroom for everyone, including the teacher, to read.*

Scenario 2, My dream island: The pupils write about their dream island and present it to their classmates. They draw and write about things to do and to visit as well as facilities in different parts of the island.

The pupils draw their dream island and design a leaflet about it. They practise how to present aspects of someone else's island fluently and confidently.

→ *At the beginning of secondary school, a travel agency is set up where pupils present the leaflet and drawing of their island. They try to attract the other pupils to visit the island.*

Scenario 3, It means a lot to me: The pupils write and talk about an object that is important to them personally. They begin by naming and displaying their objects and go on to prepare short presentations. They practise their presentations and give feedback to each other.

→ *At the beginning of secondary school (possibly reserving the first few minutes of each lesson), the pupils briefly present their objects and say why they have a special meaning for them. Depending on their degree of confidence, pupils will use either notes with key words or a written text with highlighted key words (but they have been encouraged not simply to read the presentation out).*

The idea behind bridging tasks is to give pupils confidence when entering a new and more demanding level of school as they have already had an opportunity to prepare their performance. The presentation of the task outcomes helps secondary school teachers to form a first diagnostic impression of what pupils can realistically achieve with different productive skills. Importantly, the texts and presentations are also an opportunity for pupils to get to know each other better in what is likely to be a newly-formed class.

It is vital that secondary school teachers communicate with primary teachers to coordinate and organise these bridging tasks.

Additional ideas for bridging tasks and teaching samples, including classroom videos, can be found at www.voicesweb.ch. They are the products of a Comenius project funded by the European Union and the Swiss government.