



**Assessment
in the primary level and
in the lower secondary level
of compulsory schooling**

Information for parents and legal guardians on assessment in the primary level and the lower secondary level of compulsory schooling

Information on kindergarten, the Basisstufe and the cycle élémentaire is available on the website of the Department of Education of the Canton of Bern: www.erz.be.ch

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Dear parents,

This pamphlet provides you with information about the assessment of your child and decisions taken about his or her educational path. Should you require further information, please visit our website at www.erz.be.ch or speak to the class teacher or the head of the school.

Translations of this informational pamphlet in several different languages are also available on the website of the Department of Education of the Canton of Bern, www.erz.be.ch

The Department of Education

Competence-oriented assessment

The primary purpose of an assessment is to encourage learning and growth; the aim is for your child to feel that assessments support his or her learning. Lehrplan 21 competencies provide reference points for teachers when observing and assessing pupils.

The assessment of pupils is ...

... aimed at promoting learning and growth

Assessments and feedback encourage the learning and growth of children and adolescents, pointing out ways to approach the next learning steps.

... suited to the lessons

Learning situations in lessons constitute the basis of every assessment.

... transparent

Assessments provide parents with understandable and differentiated information about the learning progress and development of their daughter or their son.

... comprehensive

Assessments cover both subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies.

Subject-specific competencies are acquired in the various subjects (German, mathematics, music, etc.). Cross-curricular competencies, such as independence or the ability to work in a team, play an important role across all subjects. Subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies are linked together in the context of instruction.

Various functions of pupil assessment

Assessing and supporting the learning process

The principal task of instruction is to support your child's learning process successfully. This is why teachers observe pupils regularly on the basis of selected criteria. The teachers use what they learn from these observations to plan their lessons appropriately, as well as to offer concrete suggestions and information at parent-teacher meetings.

Assessment of learning progress

Upon completion of larger blocks of instruction, teachers assess how well the pupils have achieved the learning targets associated with those lessons, using products, tests and the learning process to do so.

The pupils are informed about the learning targets and criteria at the start of the learning sequence.

Self-assessment

Pupils perform self-assessments to evaluate their own subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies over the course of the school year. In doing so, they reflect on their learning and assume responsibility for their own learning process. Self-assessments are carried out in every subject within the context of learning situations.

The parent-teacher meeting

The parent-teacher meeting, held once each year, plays a key role in building trust and cooperation between school and parents. It encourages personal contact between the parents and the teachers and makes it possible to compare the pupils' self-assessments with those of their teachers and the parents' own views. Parent-teacher meetings provide an opportunity for good performances and positive behaviour to be acknowledged in an appreciative way. However, they also allow parents and teachers to address problematic situations directly and arrive at joint agreements on how to proceed. The school will offer additional parent-teacher meetings in connection with specific incidents or at the request of the parents.

Record of the parent-teacher meeting

Topics discussed are checked off; brief notes can be added if necessary. Joint agreements with parents can be noted down in a few words in the area provided for this purpose. If no joint agreements are necessary, the area will be left blank. The form is part of the document folder.

Portfolio on personal competencies and key competencies

Personal competencies and key competencies are among the cross-curricular competencies. The evaluation of these competencies is documented in a separate form at the end of years 7, 8 and 9. Both teachers and pupils evaluate these competencies.

The assessment report

The assessment report provides pupils with written feedback on their level of achievement in the various subjects.

Pupils receive an assessment report:

Primary level:

- at the end of years 2, 4, 5 and 6

Lower secondary level:

- at the end of years 7, 8 and 9

These assessment reports are based on the discretionary professional judgement of the teachers and not on the calculation of averages.

Decisions on educational paths

Decisions on educational paths are taken on the basis of a comprehensive assessment. At the heart of the decision-making process is the question of which class, which type of school or which requirements level would be most conducive to a pupil's learning and growth.

In particular, decisions on education paths concern:

- the move to the next school year;
- the skipping or repeating of a year of school;
- assignment to a special class or the reassignment from a special class to a regular class;
- assignment to, continuation in or a switch to a specific type of school or a specific requirements level in a lower secondary level subject;
- admission to the academic baccalaureate program, the upper secondary commercial school, the upper secondary specialised schools or the vocational baccalaureate schools.

Decisions on individual educational paths

Decisions on individual educational paths can be taken at any time during the period of compulsory schooling, including, in principle, mid-year. Such decisions can be taken on a case-by-case basis for individual pupils as necessary and advisable. For instance, individual pupils can switch mid-year to a special class or to a higher or lower requirements level within the upper secondary level.

Decisions on educational paths are taken by the head of the school at the request of the class teacher. They are communicated to the parents in writing in the assessment report or in a notice of a decision on an individual educational path.

The procedure for the move from the primary level to the lower secondary level

Primary level and lower secondary level

- The term “primary level” refers to years 1 through 6.
- The term “lower secondary level” refers to years 7 through 9, irrespective of the path being pursued or the type of school or requirements level (Niveau) attended. At the lower secondary level, pupils attend classes in one of three requirements levels: the *Realschule*, *Sekundarschule* or special *Sekundarschule* requirements level (if the commune offers this level). Requirements at the *Sekundarschule* level are more demanding than those at the *Realschule* level. The move to the lower secondary level normally takes place after year 6.

The procedure for moving

The aim of this procedure is to ensure that your child is assigned to the type of school and subject-specific requirements level most conducive to his or her learning and growth. To enable your child’s developmental process to be observed over a longer phase, the observation period starts early on, in year 5. The assessment of the probable course of development is based on the following:

- the assessment of the subject-specific competencies in the subjects German, French and mathematics; the assessment report for year 5 and the transfer report constitute the primary basis for the assignment.
- the assessment of personal competencies in all subjects;
- the observations of the parents;
- the self-evaluation by the pupil.

The transfer report

The class teacher prepares a transfer report in consultation with the other teaching staff who work with the class. The report provides information about the pupils’ performance in the subjects German, French and mathematics, as well as on personal competencies in all subjects in the first semester of year 6.

The transfer file

The transfer file is made up of three separate statements:

- the assignment from the perspective of the teachers;
- the self-evaluation of the pupil;
- the assignment from the perspective of the parents.

The transfer file serves as the basis for the transfer meeting.

The transfer meeting

At or before the end of January in year 6, parents receive the transfer report and the transfer file along with a request for their opinion. Subsequently, the parents and the pupil are invited to the transfer meeting by the class teacher. The aim of the transfer meeting is to formulate a joint assignment request. After the meeting, the class teacher adds this request, addressed to the head of the school, to the transfer file.

Reassessment examination

If a pupil’s parents and teacher are unable to agree on a joint request for a specific assignment, parents can register their child for a Cantonal reassessment examination by way of the transfer file. Pupils must sit the examination in all three of the subjects relevant for the assignment (mathematics, German and French) even if the parents and teachers only differ with respect to one or two subjects. The head of the primary level school then takes the transfer decision on the basis of the results of the reassessment examination. Separate rules apply for children from other language backgrounds who have recently moved to the canton, for children who were unable to attend school for health reasons and children who suffer from a learning disability. Teachers and parents will find the examination requirements and further information about the reassessment examination on the website of the Department of Education. (www.erz.be.ch)

The transfer decision

The transfer decision is taken by the head of the school on the basis of the transfer file. Pupils who are assigned to the *Sekundarschule* requirements level or the special *Sekundarschule* requirements level (if the commune has a class at this level) for at least two of the three subjects relevant for the assignment are considered to be pupils of that type of school.

A standard set of rules governs the move to the lower secondary level throughout the Canton of Bern. The head of the school can deviate from the rules governing assessment and the procedure for the move in cases of children from other language backgrounds who have recently moved to the canton and of children who were unable to attend school for health reasons.

Conditions for advancement within the lower secondary level

A pupil advances to the next year of school if his or her assessment report shows no more than three unsatisfactory grades. The report must not show more than one unsatisfactory grade in the subjects German, French and mathematics. If, at the end of the school year, these criteria for advancement have not been met, the pupil will be reassigned to the lower type of school or required to repeat the year in the same type of school. A pupil switches to the next higher type of school if there is reason to assume that she or he will be able to satisfy the requirements.

Realschule pupils

Pupils of the *Realschule* type of school can repeat year 7 in the *Sekundarschule* type of school if there is reason to assume that they will be able to satisfy the requirements.

Realschule pupils can repeat a school year if, at the end of the school year, they have not received passing grades in the majority of subjects in the assessment report.

The move to a school at the upper secondary level

For pupils who wish to attend the academic baccalaureate school or another upper secondary school, the decisions on educational paths are taken in the middle of year 8 or year 9, respectively. Parents receive detailed information about the procedure from the head of the school and the teachers in due time.

Appendix 1: The meanings of the grades are as follows

Grade	Achievement of learning targets associated with the lessons	Fulfilment of assignments	Achievement of competence levels in line with Lehrplan 21
6 very good	reliably achieves challenging learning targets in most of the competence areas	consistently fulfils assigned tasks associated with an elevated level of difficulty successfully	attains the level of competence expected at the relevant time ¹ and has additional competencies in individual competence areas.
5 good	achieves learning targets in all competence areas, and to some extent more demanding learning targets as well	sometimes fulfils assignments associated with an elevated level of difficulty successfully	attains the level of competence expected at the relevant time ¹ , in all competence areas.
4 satisfactory	achieves basic learning targets in most of the competence areas	adequately fulfils assignments associated with a basic requirements level	attains the level of competence expected at the relevant time ¹ in most of the competence areas.
3 unsatisfactory	fails to achieve basic learning targets in multiple competence areas.	fails to fulfil assignments with a basic requirements level satisfactorily	does not attain the level of competence expected at the relevant time ¹ in most of the competence
2 poor	fails to achieve basic learning targets in most of the competence areas	fulfils almost no assignments associated with a basic requirements level	fails to achieve the level of competence expected at the relevant time ¹ in most competence areas.
1 very poor	fails to achieve basic learning targets in all competence areas	fails to fulfil assignments associated with basic requirement levels	fails to attain the level of competence expected at the relevant time ¹ in all competence areas.

¹ Basic standard applies as at the end of year 2 and year 6 at the primary level and the end of year 9 at the lower secondary level.

Appendix 2: Form of assessment at each level

Form view: ww.erz.be.ch/beurteilung → Downloads

Year of school		Start of school year	Middle of school year	End of school year	
KG 1	Cycle 1 Kindergarten/Primary level		Parent-teacher meeting*		
K 2			Parent-teacher meeting*		
Y1			Parent-teacher meeting*		
Y2			Parent-teacher meeting*		Assessment report, no grades
Y3	Cycle 2 Primary level		Parent-teacher meeting*		
Y4		Parent-teacher meeting*		Assessment report with grades	
Y5		Parent-teacher meeting*		Assessment report with grades	
Y6			Placement meeting** Lower sec. placement decision Placement report/-record; Reassessment exam, if nec.	Assessment report with grades	
Y7	Cycle 3 Lower secondary level		Parent-teacher meeting*	Assessment report with grades	
Y8		Parent-teacher meeting*	Placement decision: baccalaureate or vocational baccalaureate school	Assessment report with grades	Portfolio on personal competencies and key competencies
Y9		Parent-teacher meeting*	Placement decision: academic or vocational baccalaureate school	Assessment report with grades Comp. school leaving cert.	

* Schools are free to set times and dates of parent-teacher meetings. Parents are notified of the scheduled meetings well in advance.

** At the primary level, placement meetings in year 6 and held before mid-February.

Decisions on individual educational paths, which can be appealed, can be taken at any time in the entire compulsory schooling period.