

Word from the Principal

Quality bilingual education is spelled - T-I-M-E

by Rachel Sanchez

Last Friday, I taught my first and second graders how to tell time. They were attentive to my story explaining how the Handy brothers circle around the clockface telling time. One of my little first graders lost focus for a moment gazing up at the sky—this was a teachable moment not to be missed. "Class," I told the children, "Let's join Maxime up there in his imagination and observe the sun, moon and stars perform their dance."

Yes, it is this fascination with celestial movement crafted into motion by the Creator that captured ingenious minds long ago in Switzerland. These individuals designed precise objects on which school children learn how to tell time.

Time is precious, a gift to be used wisely in the daily education of children...

Parents know the value of time, and we are concerned that our children's time be spent in meaningful ways—we seek to give them the proper balance of time in nature, we invest in intelligent toys and hope to limit unhealthy screen time. We know that time well used means overall well-being.

Time and bilingualism

Becoming a multilingual individual takes time. According to language researchers such as Barbara Zurer Pearson¹, we should *expose children to quality linguistic models at least a third of their waking time to develop true multilingual skills*—and this *into the early teen years*. At LIA, we have made this standard our own; true immersion over time enables academic proficiency in French and in English. In this environment, we see our little international English-speaking students able to express themselves orally and even excel on their written French tests often within a year of joining LIA. Likewise, our local students from French-speaking families are equipped for native English level middle school reading by the end of primary.



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As we operate in Switzerland, we also *invest time into learning an additional national language, German*, to give our students *a strong foundation if they wish to continue into higher education here*. This multilingual aspect of education is shared by many of our families. Sixty percent of the LIA families have significant home exposure to an additional language. Many of our students have weekly lessons in Italian, Russian, Chinese or Brazilian

Portuguese (to name a few), and we recognise these additional achievements of our students whenever possible on our students' semester report cards.

Time and learning

More broadly speaking, our desire as a school is also to *value children's learning time* and ensure an environment that fills their school time inside and outside of the classroom into *meaningful activities* that will set in motion the *lifelong learning skills* and motivation.

As a Christian school, we also have different ways of considering time — there is the 'chronos' aspect: a sequence of events that fills our days. We want to provide learning that is *organised with explicit teaching* and a sequence of activities that enables proper *assimilation and the practice necessary to retain well*.



But we also recognise that there are *teachable 'moments'* that our teachers faculty seeks to identify when a group or an individual student is ripe for new learning — this may mean that the lesson objective at hand should be set aside momentarily or completely in order to seize these priceless moments.

For each of us, as adults, our best schoolteachers either planned or recognised these moments that left in our lives a strong impression that shaped us into the individuals we are today.

Leman International Academy is a school where we hope to see our students' time valued and multiplied, not by taking artificial shortcuts to the solid acquisition of fundamentals — *solid reading skills, efficient recall of math facts, strong logic, and the ability to express ideas well in writing*, but by spending time well to *develop a love for lifelong learning*.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider how your children's time could be better used to further their learning.

¹ Pearson, Barbara & Amaral, Luiz. (2014). [Interactions between input factors in bilingual language acquisition](https://doi.org/10.1075/tilar.13.06pea). 10.1075/tilar.13.06pea.