

ALPHA – zesumme wuessen

Presentation handout

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Page 1: « **ALPHA – zesumme wuessen** »

“ALPHA – zesumme wuessen” is an important reform of the Luxembourgish school system that will come into effect in the 2026/2027 school year. It offers children the opportunity to learn to read and write in Cycle 2 in the language they understand best: German or French.

Page 2: **Les objectifs de la réforme**

This reform reflects Luxembourg’s linguistic diversity and enables schools to better respond to the varying language skills of children. As a result, every child is given from the start the best possible chance to succeed.

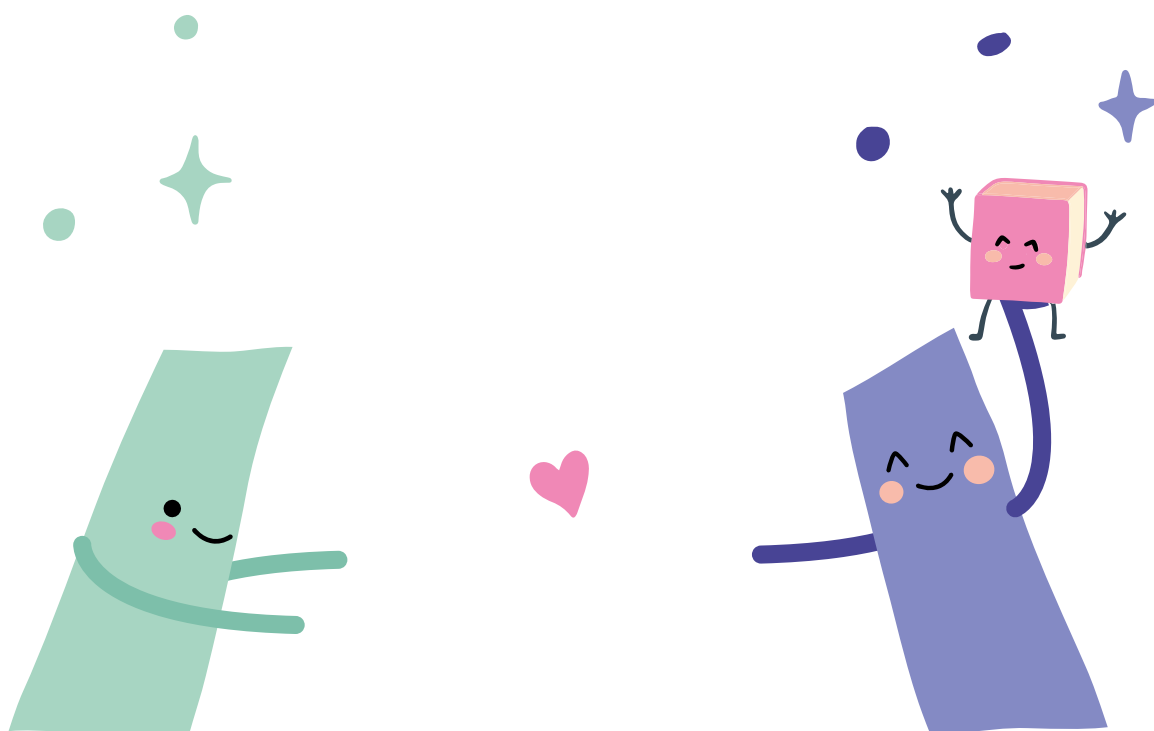
It is important to emphasise that “ALPHA – zesumme wuessen” does not change the existing educational offer: pupils who find it easiest to learn to read and write in German will be able to continue along this path. An additional option will be available for other pupils.

The aim of the reform is to make learning more accessible and fair from the very beginning of their education, to prepare children as effectively as possible for the linguistic reality in Luxembourg and for the transition to secondary education. To achieve this, a solid foundation in both German and French is essential.

The objective is not to create two separate pathways, but rather to offer literacy instruction in the language that best matches the child’s language skills and linguistic environment. Learning to read and write is easier in this language, which consequently makes it easier to learn a second language.

The name “ALPHA – zesumme wuessen” emphasises multilingualism and shared school life. Children remain in their regular classes and only meet in their respective ALPHA group for language lessons and, where applicable, for mathematics.

This strengthens social cohesion while ensuring that every child receives the best possible support throughout their educational pathway. The reform therefore represents an opportunity for many children in Luxembourg.



Page 3: *Alphabétisation <--> Apprentissage d'une langue*

Literacy acquisition is not the same as learning a language:

Literacy acquisition is the process through which children learn to read and write, that is, to understand and produce written texts.

Learning to read and write builds on the spoken language. Every language has its own characteristics, including its sounds, vocabulary and sentence structure. For example, Luxembourgish and German share similar sentence structures, as do French and Portuguese.

To associate letters to sounds correctly, pupils must be able to hear, distinguish and recognise the sounds of the language concerned. Strong oral language skills help children recognise words, form correct sentences and understand texts. These abilities make learning to read and write easier. For this reason, these skills are systematically developed and practised in Luxembourgish throughout the two years of Cycle 1, providing a solid foundation for initial learning of reading and writing.

When a pupil is learning a new language while simultaneously learning to read and write in that language, the task becomes particularly demanding. Pupils who already speak the literacy language, or a closely related language, can focus more fully on learning to read and write without also having to concentrate on vocabulary and sentence structure. This reduces the cognitive load and facilitates their transition to Cycle 2.

“ALPHA – zesumme wuessen” enables every pupil to acquire fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics in the language that best matches their language skills and linguistic environment, whether German or French.

For this reason, it is not recommended to choose a literacy language that is less closely related to the child’s family language solely for the purpose of learning a new language two years earlier. This is particularly relevant since, in Cycle 3, the focus shifts to the language in which the child did not acquire initial literacy.

Page 4: *Cycle 1*

Page 5: *Langues au cycle 1*

In Cycle 1, Luxembourgish serves both as the language of instruction and the language of integration.

Luxembourgish plays a central role, and phonological awareness is also developed in Luxembourgish. Once pupils have acquired a solid foundation, these fundamental skills can be transferred to other languages. Through *Éveil aux langues* (language awareness activities), all the languages represented in the classroom are recognised and valued, helping to strengthen pupils’ home languages.

Throughout Cycle 1, pupils’ language skills are continuously observed. Consideration is given not only to the languages spoken at home, but also to those used in the educational and childcare settings attended by the child. Information is gathered about the languages the child is exposed to in their everyday environment, as well as the school languages in which they feel most confident and those they particularly enjoy using.

Based on these observations, parents are supported in choosing the literacy language that is most suitable for their child for Cycle 2. Once this decision has been made, activities in German or French are organised during the final trimester to ensure that all pupils have the best possible conditions for learning to read and write.

Page 6: *Choix de la langue d'alphabétisation au cycle 1*

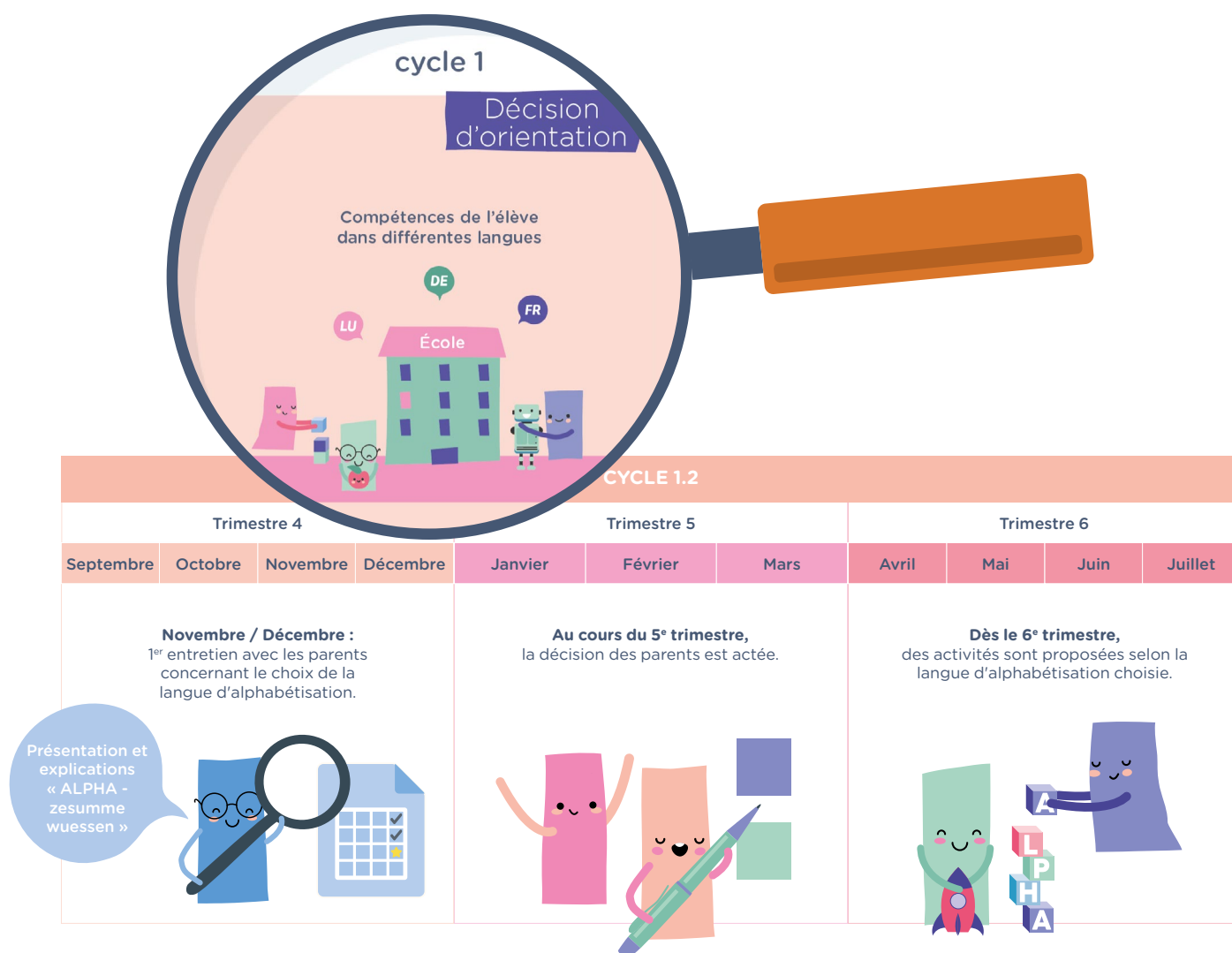
During the progress review meetings held in the first trimesters of Cycle 1, parents are supported in choosing the literacy language for their child.

Together with the parents, the criteria for selecting the literacy language are reviewed in order to determine whether German or French is the most suitable option for the child.

Based on the observations described above, the educational team provides parents with a recommendation regarding the literacy language.

During the 5th trimester of Cycle 1, parents make their decision regarding their child's literacy language and record it on a form.

During the 6th trimester, pupils are prepared for their chosen literacy language through targeted activities in either French or German.



Page 7: Critères pour le choix de la langue d’alphabétisation

The criteria used to select the literacy language are grouped into three categories:

- the linguistic situation within the family and the child’s environment;
- the child’s language profile;
- the family’s perspective.

1. Linguistic situation within the family and the child’s environment

The first category focuses on the languages the child is primarily exposed to. This includes the languages spoken by the parents, the language used in everyday family life, and the language(s) used in childcare settings such as *crèche* or *maison relais*. This information helps to build a clearer picture of the child’s linguistic background.

2. The child’s language profile

The second category focuses on the child’s language skills. The child’s strongest language and the language they prefer to speak is identified. Their capacity to understand and speak the school languages (Luxembourgish, French and German), as well as their interest in activities offered in these languages are observed. Teachers’ observations and findings in Cycle 1, which track and document the development of pupils’ language skills over a long period, also provide an important basis.

3. The family’s perspective

The third category takes the family’s situation into account.

Firstly, it is noted in which language parents are best able to support their child in their learning.

Next, the family’s language of integration in Luxembourg is identified, that is, the language they use in everyday life, for example when shopping or in their interactions with public services.

Finally, the family’s plans are discussed. For instance, in a Luxembourgish-speaking family where Luxembourgish is widely used at home and in the surrounding environment, learning to read and write in German is generally the most appropriate option. In other situations, parents may express their expectations regarding language learning or indicate that they themselves are learning a new language. The expected length of the family’s stay in Luxembourg is also taken into account, as well as the language that will be most relevant for their future. The aim is to actively involve the family in the child’s educational pathway and to recognise and value their role.

These three categories complement one another: the linguistic situation provides the background, the language profile reflects the child’s language skills, and the family’s perspective brings in expectations and opportunities for support. Together, they provide a comprehensive basis for choosing the most suitable literacy language.

Page 8: *Arbre des langues*

The [language tree](#) developed by the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe) is a visual tool that shows how different languages are connected and which languages belong to the same language family.

German is a Germanic language and is closely related to Luxembourgish and Dutch. These languages share common roots, particularly in their vocabulary and certain grammatical structures.

By contrast, French is a Romance language and is closely related to Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian. These languages originated from Latin and share similarities in both grammar and vocabulary.

This relationship between language families and a child's language skills is important: when children learn to read and write in a language they already know well, the process becomes much easier for them.

Page 9: *Matériel didactique cycle 1 - SILA*

In Cycle 1, the programme "[Phonologesch Bewosstheet mam Sila](#)" ("Phonological Awareness with Sila") gradually introduces pupils in a playful way to the initial sounds and phonemes in spoken Luxembourgish through listening activities, rhymes and syllable work.

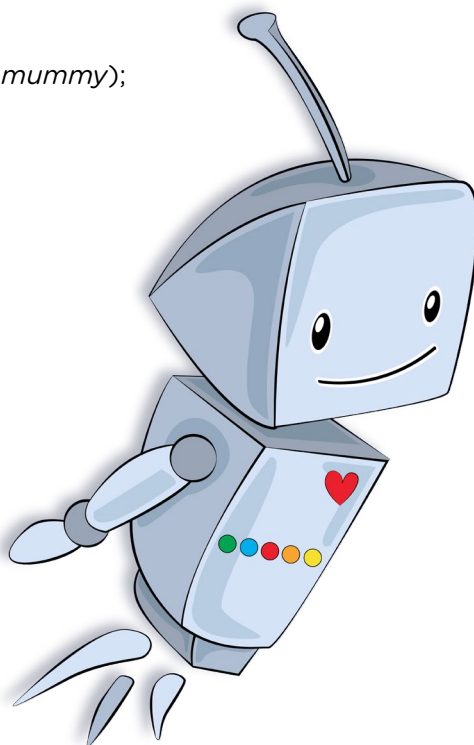
The programme also provides an excellent foundation for literacy instruction, as some phonological awareness skills acquired in Luxembourgish can be transferred to other languages.

Phonological awareness means learning to pay attention to the sounds of language and to play with them.

For example:

- Listening to, recognising and matching sounds and words;
- Recognising rhymes (*cat* – *hat*);
- Breaking words into syllables (*ba* – *na* – *na*);
- Identifying the first sound in a word (the /m/ sound in *mummy*);
- Combining sounds to form a word.

In short, phonological awareness is the ability to hear, recognise and manipulate the sounds within words. It helps children learn to read and write more easily.



Page 10: *Matériel didactique cycle 1 – Sproochekëscht*

The "*Sproochekëscht*" ("Language Box") is a collection of language-based activities designed to support the learning and practice of Luxembourgish, German and French. These activities address the five subdomains of the *domaine de développement et d'apprentissage* "*Langage, langue luxembourgeoise, éveil aux langues et préparation aux langues d'alphabétisation*" defined in the new curriculum framework:

- Oral communication;
- Listening comprehension;
- Phonological awareness;
- *Éveil aux langues* (language awareness);
- Preparation for the literacy languages.

Page 11: *Exemples d'activités*

After parents have made their decision regarding their child's literacy language during the 5th trimester, pupils are prepared for their chosen literacy language through targeted activities.

Pupils who will be taught literacy through German in Cycle 2 regularly take part in activities in German, while pupils who will be taught literacy through French participate in specific activities in French.

Page 12: *Cycles 2 et 3*

Page 13: *Langues aux cycles 2 et 3*

Pupils remain together in the same class. They only join their respective ALPHA groups for language lessons and, where applicable, mathematics.

In subjects taught in the class group, Luxembourgish is mainly used as the language of communication, while teaching materials are available in both German and French.

For language instruction (German and French), pupils join the ALPHA group corresponding to their literacy language.

Pupils who are taught literacy through French receive nine lessons of French and one lesson of German (oral language only) in Cycle 2. In Cycle 3, they receive more instruction in German, while the number of French lessons is reduced in order to establish a balanced distribution between the two languages.

For pupils who are taught literacy through German, the situation is reversed. In Cycle 2, they receive nine lessons of German and one lesson of French (oral language only). In Cycle 3, they receive more instruction in French, while the number of German lessons is reduced.

All pupils therefore learn Luxembourg's three official languages (Luxembourgish, German and French). By the end of Cycle 3, they will have received the same number of teaching hours in German and French, regardless of their literacy language. The only difference is the order in which German and French are learned.

Page 14: Vidéos explicatives

This video explains how classes and ALPHA groups are organised in Cycles 2 and 3.

(The video is available in two languages: Luxembourgish and French. It is also available with Portuguese and English subtitles. The videos can be accessed via the QR codes or the links provided.)

Page 15: Organisation des classes et groupes ALPHA DE et FR

In Cycles 2 and 3, pupils remain together in their class for all subjects other than German and French (Luxembourgish, Physical Education, Art, Sciences, Life and Society and Music). For language instruction (German and French), they join the ALPHA group corresponding to their literacy language (ALPHA DE or ALPHA FR).

Where there is more than one class at the same year level, ALPHA groups include pupils from two or more classes.

Schools may choose whether mathematics is taught within the class group or within the ALPHA group. Regardless of this choice, pupils receive their learning materials in their literacy language.

Page 16: Cycle 4

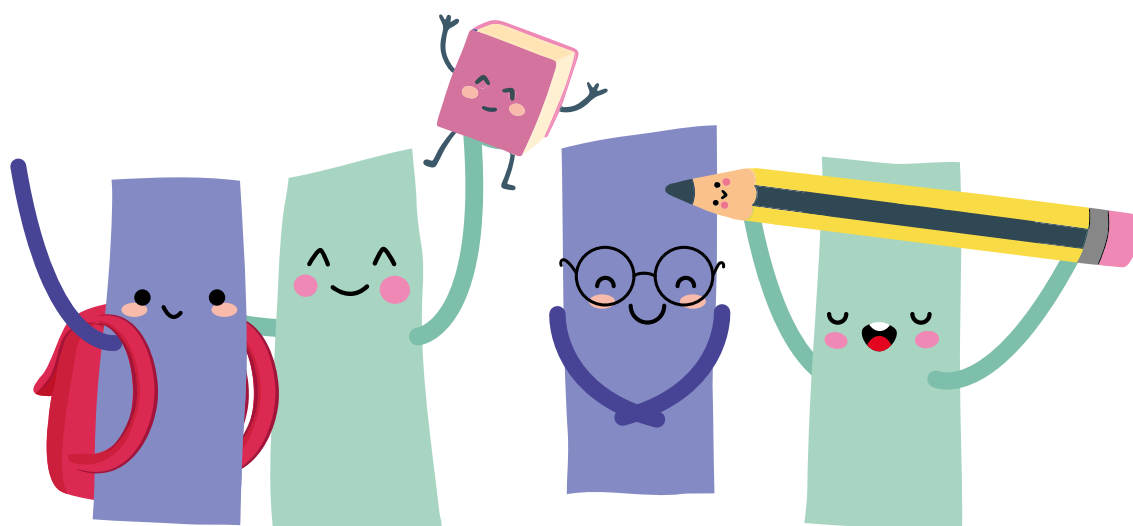
Page 17: Langues au cycle 4

In Cycle 4, pupils are once again taught together in the same class for all subjects. They receive the same number of lessons in German and French.

Page 18: Orientation à la fin du cycle 4

At the end of Cycle 4, pupils are guided towards the educational pathway that best matches their interests, aspirations and abilities:

- Classical secondary education (*enseignement secondaire classique*);
- General secondary education (*enseignement secondaire général*);
- A European or international school.



Page 19: Vidéos explicatives

This video explains the “ALPHA – zesumme wuessen” reform.

(The video is available in Luxembourgish, French, Portuguese and English. It can be accessed via the QR codes or the links provided.)

Page 20: Informations

The alpha.script.lu website provides a wide range of information about the “ALPHA – zesumme wuessen” reform. There is a dedicated section for parents and another one for teachers. Visitors can find short videos, information on how the reform works, testimonials and other useful resources.

Finally, the leaflet provides extensive practical information on the organisation of “ALPHA – zesumme wuessen”, as well as QR codes giving access to two videos that are also featured in this presentation.

The image displays three educational materials related to the ALPHA reform:

- Leaflet (Left):** Titled "Le luxembourgeois", it explains the language policy for cycles 1 to 4. It includes QR codes for explanatory videos and the website alpha.script.lu.
- Poster (Top Right):** Features the "ALPHA zesumme wuessen" logo and illustrations of a book character, a pencil character, and a globe. It mentions "LE GOUVERNEMENT DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG" and the "Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse".
- Timeline (Bottom Right):** Titled "LES LANGUES dans l'enseignement fondamental", it shows the progression of language learning from cycle 1 to cycle 4, including decisions on integration and teaching languages.