

## Early Language Immersion. Language Immersion Project in Estonian Kindergartens

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POSTER

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**S**erious attempts have been made in Estonia to facilitate integration at an early age. Language immersion programmes of Canada and Finland are used offering a model of the organisation of language learning.

Teachers use the immersion language (Estonian) in communication with the children and encourage the children to use the language. Educational and developmental games and activities are used with the children. Age and cultural traditions are taken into account. Mutual understanding, cooperation, self-respect and respect for other people, self-evaluation, and so forth are the aspects also developed within the program framework.

The Estonian language immersion programme is a part of the sub-programme "Education" of the national programme "Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007 (<http://www.kke.ee/>)". In 2002 the Integration Foundation, in cooperation with the Finnish National Board of Education, began the implementation of the language immersion programme as a pilot project in 9 kindergartens. The following groups were asked to assess the project: kindergarten teachers, trainers, kindergarten managers, methodologists, inspectors of municipalities, and parents. Questionnaires and interviews were used.

The early immersion project had a favourable impact at local and national levels in Estonia, according to the respondents.

The poster presentation followed by examples of activities in CD illustrates the principles of language immersion, the course and results of the kindergarten language immersion project, and the participants' assessment of the components and impact of the project.

Along with the poster presentation, a publication is presented which covers the history and current situation of language immersion, its implementation in Estonia, and the kindergarten language immersion programme.