

## Why Serbian Language & Culture Classes?

The objective of this class is to stimulate development of conversation skills in the Serbian language.

By offering a fun and positive experience, these classes aim to arouse children's curiosity and interest in their heritage. I want to avoid language classes that become a chore.

The class also acquaints children with contemporary Serbia and helps them make connections between the Australian and Serbian cultures.

Beyond this, a broader goal is to encourage lifelong learning of languages and promote cultural understanding, which aligns to the school's IB curriculum Primary Years Program.

Session plans are flexible enough to accommodate varied skill levels.



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## Serbian Language & Culture Class



*After-School  
Activities  
at Forrest  
Primary School*



Maria Milbridge  
Promoting bilingualism



## About the Teacher

Maria Milbridge is a native fluent speaker of Serbian who grew up in Australia from the age of six.

A self-confessed Europhile, in 2009-2011 Maria went to live in Serbia with her husband and two children and they had a blast.

Having studied Education, Maria has always had an interest in bilingualism in school-aged children and in the challenges of growing up with two cultures.

Maria has worked in human resources and training roles, and has worked in the community sector helping skilled migrants adapt to the challenging Australian employment market. She nurtures a love of music and the arts.



## The Program

Classes are run in the Serbian language, are highly interactive, up-beat and fun.

Each 1-hour session will generally consist of:

- Thematic learning of **vocabulary** and phrases for conversation in Serbian
- Learning a Serbian **children's songs** or rhymes
- **Reading** and **pronouncing** key words and phrases (using the Latin alphabet)
- **Games** and activities that reinforce language and cultural concepts
- Learning a new letter from the **Cyrillic** alphabet each week
- Responding in the Serbian language, both orally and in writing (using **Latin alphabet**)
- **Learning** about Serbia: daily life, geography and tourism, important dates and customs

Children build up a **portfolio of work** which is kept in individual folders until the end of term.

Each week children take home an overview of that week's learning, so they can revisit key vocabulary and phrases at home. This is not homework but a chance to **practice** their learning **with parents/carers**.

Children will also bring home the words (and translation) of songs/rhymes they are learning.

Parents are always welcome to come for a chat after class, or to browse through their child's folder. You are also welcome to occasionally come and sit in during class.

**Parent feedback** is welcome and encouraged. I am interested in your expectations and hopes regarding your child's bilingualism.

There is provision to run two classes, to cater for different skill levels, if there are adequate enrolments.

## Supporting Your Child's Bilingual Learning

The best way to promote **bilingualism in children**, research says, is to expose them to spontaneous social situations where speaking English is not an option.

This may be a hard ask for Canberra families.

Here are some ways to **support your child's learning** in this class:

- ⇒ **Become familiar** with each week's session summary
- ⇒ With your child, **have a go** at pronouncing some of the key words and phrases they learned. Ask them to teach you. If they don't remember, or mis-pronounce the words, do not criticize them. (In any second language learning, speaking is always the last skill in which we show proficiency)
- ⇒ **Have fun learning** a children's song or rhyme together **as a family**. Do it gradually - one line or one verse at a time, over a few weeks. Play the suggested videos. Practice in the car on the way to school.
- ⇒ Schedule 3 times **each week** when you will attempt to have some Serbian speaking time with your child
- ⇒ Focus on **encouraging**, rather than correcting your children, so they build confidence.

