

# “A turning point in education – the courage to change course”

## Back to the core mission of the school

by Philipp Loretz\*



Philipp Loretz.  
(Picture ma)

(CH-S) It's common knowledge: schools in German-speaking countries are on a downward trajectory that threatens to turn into a nosedive. Warnings from the field have so far gone unheeded by the self-referential education bureaucracy. That is set to change soon.

On 27 April 2026 an inter-cantonal group comprising teachers, school leaders, experts in educational science, child and adolescent psychology, and politics presented a manifesto<sup>A</sup> and invited the public to the press conference “Turning point in education – the courage to change course.”<sup>B</sup>

Below you will find the statement from Philipp Loretz, President of the Baseland Teachers' Association (LVB). As a practitioner, he presents seven proposals for a change of course.

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**1. Reduce to the max!** It almost seems to be a law of nature: whenever a social problem arises, the reflexive response is to call for a new school subject: PISA shock? Early foreign languages! Debt among young adults? Financial literacy! The result: the range of subjects is constantly growing – early French, early English, ERG (Ethics, Religion, Community), ESD (Education for Sustainable Development), WAH (Economy, Work, Home budget), M&I (Media & Computer Science)– yet hardly anything is being scrapped. Addition dominates; subtraction becomes a for-

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Headline image from the press conference on 27 April 2026.  
(Picture ma)

eign concept. The result is evident in overloaded curricula. They encourage arbitrariness, prevent depth of understanding and hinder a systematic, cross-year progression. Primary school is increasingly slipping into a politically mandated “sightseeing” mode: tap, swipe, move on.

**2. Language decline is a reality:** After primary school, many pupils do not have a firm grasp of basic vocabulary. In lower secondary school (years 6 or 7 to 9), these gaps can hardly be closed. Quite a few children have not read a single book at home throughout their entire primary school years – this lack of reading continues. Even in high-achieving classes, texts frequently reveal fundamental deficits in vocabulary, structure and spelling.<sup>1</sup>

**3. Core mission: language of instruction:** Yet it is clear: reading comprehension is based on a broad vocabulary and sound prior knowledge. Many young people are literally missing out on thousands of pages of reading. The language of instruction – the local language – is the key to emotional learning, social participation, integration into the labour market and a self-determined life. Given this importance, it is an educational duty to provide all children with targeted and intensive support in the language of instruction. The goal is not a half-hearted five-language proficiency,<sup>2</sup> but a confident command of the language of instruction. This is part of the school's core mission.

4. *Consequences and demands*: The crucial question is: would we reintroduce the existing subjects, concepts and reforms if they did not already exist? If the answer is no, they must consequently be scrapped. Thinking this through to its logical conclusion means: the overloading of primary schools must be stopped. We must reflect on what is actually achievable for teachers and schoolchildren. The focus must be consistently on the school's fundamental mission. This requires streamlined, concrete and age-appropriate curricula. *Jürgen Kaube* sums it up succinctly: "What must a school do? It must teach pupils to read, write, do arithmetic and think for themselves."<sup>3</sup>

5. *Stress factor inclusive schools*: According to *Peter Sonderegger*, President of the *Swiss Association for Child and Adolescent Psychology*, behavioural problems represent "the greatest possible strain on teachers".<sup>4</sup> In counselling sessions with teachers who turn to the *Baselland Teachers' Association (LVB)*, a picture is increasingly emerging of exhaustion, resignation and even despair. The figures confirm this: 82.4 per cent of primary school teachers and 72.3 per cent of lower secondary school teachers describe children and young people with severe behavioural problems as a source of stress. 70.6 per cent of special needs teachers also experience it this way.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, numerous representatives and figures from teacher training colleges (PHs) and the *University of Special Education (HfH)* – often without any teaching experience of their own – explain the reality to practitioners and specialists. To paraphrase the German cabaret artist *Rolf Miller*:

"Idealism grows with distance from the problem."

6. *Teacher training out of touch with practice*: Dissatisfaction with teacher training is no myth: feedback from students and practitioners highlights an insufficient practical focus. In the canton of Basel-Landschaft, this has been recognised at a political level. The motion "More practical focus in primary school training – a new training pathway for teachers"<sup>6</sup> was passed by 77 votes to 2 with 0 abstentions – a clear signal. A package of motions by the SP<sup>7</sup> (Socialist Party) also calls for "More practical relevance in the teaching staff at the PH FHNW" and "More

teaching instead of research". The PH FHNW management's reference to the high proportion of practical placements falls short. Practical relevance cannot simply be outsourced. Those who train teachers must be familiar with the reality of school life through their own, long-standing and successful teaching experience. That is why the LVB calls for all lecturers in subject didactics to have relevant teaching experience in the subjects and levels for which they provide training.

7. *Research under scrutiny*: Social research in the field of education is not an exact science. Design flaws, biases and contradictory findings are part and parcel of it. Nevertheless, "evidence" is often treated as if it were infallible. A broad-based meta-study from 2022<sup>8</sup> concludes, for example, that there is no demonstrable disadvantage for children with special educational needs who attend separate schools, either in terms of academic performance or discrimination.<sup>9</sup> This shows that reality is more nuanced than many assumptions and postulates regarding integration policy. Empirical findings should therefore not be hastily regarded as established fact. Practitioners would be well advised to critically examine studies for their practical applicability – and to keep asking themselves: "Can that really be the case?"<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, Professor Dr *Raphael Berthele* is among those researchers who advocate for methodologically sound evidence.<sup>11</sup> He calls for rigorous scientific work rather than speculative assumptions. *Felix Schmutz*, a Basel-based teacher with many years of professional experience, sums this up as follows:

"The danger of pseudoscience lies in making false recommendations to policymakers out of ignorance, triggering educational innovations based on uncertain evidence that are doomed to fail, and damaging one's own discipline by spreading poor science and vague theories and twisting studies to confirm one's own beliefs."<sup>12</sup>

Source: <https://condorcet.ch/2026/05/philipp-lorenz-sichtder-lehrerschaft/>, 7 May 2026 und [https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2026-04-27\\_MK-Wendepunkt-Bildung\\_Statements-Referierende.pdf](https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2026-04-27_MK-Wendepunkt-Bildung_Statements-Referierende.pdf)

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

<sup>A</sup> [https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2026-04-27\\_MK-Wendepunkt-Bildung\\_Manifest-fuer-einen-bildungswirksamen-Unterricht.pdf](https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2026-04-27_MK-Wendepunkt-Bildung_Manifest-fuer-einen-bildungswirksamen-Unterricht.pdf)

<sup>B</sup> <https://lvb.ch/medienecho-lvb/medienkonferenz-wendepunkt-bildung-mut-zur-kurskorrektur/>

- <sup>1</sup> [https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/09\\_Anhaltende-Lese-und-Sprachkrise-im-Klassenzimmer-Warum-die-UeGK-Ergebnisse-alarmierend-sind\\_lvb-inform-25-26-01.pdf](https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/09_Anhaltende-Lese-und-Sprachkrise-im-Klassenzimmer-Warum-die-UeGK-Ergebnisse-alarmierend-sind_lvb-inform-25-26-01.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Five languages: mother tongue, dialect, French, English and, where applicable, a non-local mother tongue (in the canton of Basel-Landschaft, 37% of children attending primary school speak a foreign language. This figure is rising.)
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. Jürgen Kaube (2019), *Ist die Schule zu blöd für unsere Kinder?* (Is school too stupid for our children?) Berlin: Rowohlt, P. 97, 85ff.; 109ff.
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.srf.ch/play/tv/10-vor-10/video/integratives-schweizer-schulsystem-belastet-lehrerschaft?urn=urn:srf:video:64128911-f359-4773-8100-dce30dbef3dc>
- <sup>5</sup> Roger von Wartburg, LVB-Mitgliederbefragung, "Belastungsfaktoren im Lehrberuf", *lvb inform* 2022/23-02
- <sup>6</sup> <https://gruene-bl.ch/blog/vorstoesse/mehr-praxisbezug-in-der-primarschulbildung-neuer-ausbildungsweg-fuer-lehrpersonen-ist-dringend-notwendig-einfuehrung-einer-dualen-ausbildung>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://sp-bl.ch/vorstosspaket-paedagogische-hochschule-verbessern/>
- <sup>8</sup> The effects of inclusion on academic achievement, socioemotional development and wellbeing of children with special educational needs
- <sup>9</sup> <https://condorcet.ch/2024/06/16968/>
- <sup>10</sup> [https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/02\\_Editorial-Im-Namen-der-Evidenz\\_lvb-inform\\_2024-25-03.pdf](https://lvb.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/02_Editorial-Im-Namen-der-Evidenz_lvb-inform_2024-25-03.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> Prof. Dr. R. Berthele, Policy recommendations for language learning: Linguists' contributions between scholarly debates and pseudoscience
- <sup>12</sup> <https://condorcet.ch/2020/02/wissenschaft-und-pseudowissenschaft-in-der-sprachdidaktik/>