

Czech Republic

Zakladni skola Chrudim, Dr. Jana Malika 958

This elementary school has a diverse student body (aged 6 to 15) with more than 10% children with physical handicaps, who are taught in integrated classes. The school uses a self-designed curriculum which was developed and refined over several years by the staff in consultation with parents and students. Its purpose is to maintain the students' motivation by making content meaningful and placing it in a relevant context, giving students the opportunity to affect the learning process (e.g., by taking part in choice and time planning of homework), and by many cooperative activities in groups of learners. The students' performance is monitored in weekly reports, and assessments involve self-evaluation and peer evaluation based on criteria that were pre-determined by students and teachers together. Furthermore, the school offers a wide range of seminars on social-emotional development, in order to build positive relations between teachers and students and to practice communicative and social skills. There is also a project on health promotion. During the school breaks, the students can use facilities of the school to do sports in the gyms or work in the computer laboratory. There are individual consultations for gifted students.

Main focus of innovation: ORGANISATION, CONTENT, LEARNERS

Other keywords: equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: Zakladni skola Chrudim, Dr. Jana Malika 958

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Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

During the last eighteen years The Elementary School of Dr. J. Malik in Chrudim has been going through a step by step transformation. This transformation can be divided into following steps:

First, we focused on a change of relationships and the climate at the school. Then we tried on some different variants of the school's curriculum and started with inner differentiation by giving students the possibility of "compulsory-elective" subjects. It means that every pupil MUST ask himself: *What is the importance of school for me?*

We began to use effective methods of learning more and more, especially cooperative learning and learning in groups as well as education through different projects. We realized a necessity to change the evaluation system. That's why we use verbal evaluation report for 1st – 5th grade. It brings effective feedback which cannot be brought by grades (marking where 1 means excellent and 5 means unsatisfactory). We unified classification demands for pupils of 6th - 9th grade.

These changes have brought several important positives: our pupils do not mind going to school, some of them even like to attend it and look forward to come to school every day. Parents are interested in the school programme and in the long term we have above average number of pupils in a class. The teaching staff consists of active, motivated and self-confident teachers.

Since 2000 we allow teachers from other schools to become familiar with our school curriculum and its implementation. Through the two-day programme for further education of pedagogical employees "Why to change a school" we provide seminars, model lessons, teaching demonstrations for the visitors of our school and, if they are interested, subsequent analysis too.

Till now these events have been attended by nearly *three thousand teachers* from across the Czech Republic. In 2007 due to the long-term integration of physically disabled pupils our school has been awarded by the annual price of the National Council of Persons with Disabilities of the Czech Republic – Bridges.

In October 2009 the school was awarded as "The Family-friendly Organisation". The school was nominated for this award by The Parent Center in Chrudim called "Mama Club".

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

By everyday work we try to meet objectives stated in the school curriculum "To Know and To Know How, So We Can Work in our Life": to lead pupils to acquire social skills and ethical values, to encourage pupils' positive attitude to education and lifelong education.

Programme is aimed at independent thinking, effective selecting and sorting information from various sources and the ability to use acquired knowledge in solving problems. School work helps to foster activity and creativity of pupils, to create space for their needs meeting and talent development.

What we feel as the most important is student's opportunity to experience success, which is one of the essential presumptions for positive relationship to education and motivation to lifelong learning.

School curriculum offers wide range of activities for children with different levels of talent and interests – ILE creates space which brings challenges and opportunities to improve the outcomes of students' work. It depends only on the decisions and responsibilities of pupils and their parents how to turn profit.

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

We can say that our school focus on ALL pupils – it is possible because of active ways of education: pupils' learning is supported by sophisticated and skilled management of teacher (pupils also learn from others and teach others). Because we believe in the negative impact of external differentiation, the school has established no classes providing extended instruction of some subjects (e. g. special language classes or special math classes) or classes for pupils with learning disabilities. Pupils with special needs (and also handicapped pupils) are incorporated into common classrooms and work teams. Over *ten percent* of students with disabilities or special needs are incorporated into common/mainstream classes. All students whose parents agree with the school education programme (and children who fit age criteria) are eligible to take part. Currently, in 18 classes there is the total number of 475 pupils (app. 26 pupils in one classroom). The maximum capacity of the school is 500 pupils, age of 6 – 15 years.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

Teaching staff members (30 teachers in total, 7 males) are highly proficient, educated, active and motivated ones. The current average age of the teaching staff member is 40 years. The age range is from 23 to 56 years.

Leaders: Zdenek Broz – headmaster, Iva Jehlickova – deputy headmaster.

We have an organizational leader for 1st – 5th grade and pedagogical and organizational leader for 6th – 9th grade. School also offers its own educational advisor.

Professional background: Two teachers currently study at universities to be qualified, two other teachers are not fully qualified (one certified at pedagogical high school and the other one has a university degree but hasn't a pedagogical degree). Other teachers are fully qualified. All members of the teaching staff regularly participate in further education.

Roles of teachers/facilitators: All teachers are responsible for creating the optimal conditions for the education of their pupils. Eighteen teachers take important role of a class teacher. Several teachers lead after-school activities for pupils. These after-school courses work as extension of school education.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Emphasis is placed on the use of a wide range of methods and forms of teaching. Basis is creating space for pupil's activity and development, whether mental or physical.

Motivation is fostered mainly through the meaningfulness of the content and learning in context.

In accordance with partnership with the children we follow the principle "pupils should not be surprised" (unfortunately it is typical feature of Czech schools!). They need to know what is expected and when and how they will be tested. Pupils take part in decision making, e.g. a choice of homework, setting a date when the homework should be done, etc. This helps to meet individual expectations of pupils, their pace and their different style of learning. They are responsible for their work and performance.

We build on prior learning - students summarize what they already know about the subject; teachers (or classmates) add the missing information and help pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills. Dialog and discussion is used very often.

Students often work in groups or in pairs (those groups can be permanent or temporary for several weeks).

The project teaching method is applied in the educational process as well. For each class (6th – 9th grade) there is a one to two days project performed every school year or an outdoor training workshop and also a whole-school project during every school year.

Cooperative learning is an important method for the development of key skills, as cooperative learning has been working with these concepts (key skills/competencies) for a long time and has been based on these concepts. Our students are systematically encouraged to use and develop their individual skills. Cooperative learning is provided from the first grade and we have the best experience with it.

We place emphasis in our programme to develop pupils' inner motivation - unlike traditional schools - which is based mainly on external motivation (e.g. rewards, punishments, threats, elaborate systems of disciplinary sanctions, etc.), we understand the importance of inner motivation and motivation to lifelong learning. To maintain inner motivation there are three major factors needed: the *meaningfulness and context*, the *ability to affect the learning process* (pupils' choice), and *cooperation*. Teachers of our school try to provide lessons with regard to all these three factors. Teachers felt it as a big problem in first year of school existence – they wanted their teaching to be meaningful and on the other hand they had to follow the extensive mandatory content of training. Therefore, it was the meaningfulness from the perspective of children, which became one of the key criteria in making our school curriculum. These strategies are mandatory for all teachers (and shared by them) in all subjects and also for educators in the after-school programme.

Since the school year 1993/1994 in the grades 6th to 9th inner differentiation started by using a wide range of optional subjects. This allows greater respect for individual pupils' potential, higher motivation to study selected courses, leading students to personal responsibility for choice and for further successful studies at high school.

Curriculum and pedagogy concepts: Since 2003/2004 school year the school curriculum "To Know and to Know How, So We Can Work in Life" has started. The school curriculum has been approved by the Ministry of Education. It joined the project "Experimental verification of teaching according to school curriculum for basic education in selected pilot schools". Current sixth version of the school curriculum "To Know and to Know How, So We Can Work in Life" is already the outcome of seven years of cooperative work of the teaching staff of Dr. J. Malik Elementary School in Chrudim. The programme is processed according to the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Schools.

The basis is a partnership between students and teachers, between teachers and parents based on mutual respect. This is the number one factor for us, because it is the attitude and relationship aspect, which affects the cooperation of pupils and teachers when choosing teaching/learning methods and approaches. In everyday life there is eliminated any humiliation of children.

An integral part of the school curriculum is a series of other activities (seminars) linked with particular personality-social education of the students, but also with other cross-cutting themes of the Framework. All the trainings/seminars are based on comprehensive program called "We Can Do It Together". The aim of the programme "We Can Do It Together" /focused on 1st – 5th grade/ is: mutual knowledge of pupils and teachers, increasing the confidence of pupils and knowledge of their individual differences and their personality. Through various activities mutual respect between pupils, confidence and responsibility is supported. These traits can positively affect school performance of pupils. Those activities mentioned above are also system instruments of chicanery prevention.

Great attention is paid to basic life skills and familiarization and awareness of the children's rights, establishing common rules for coexistence of pupils and teachers.

The main goal of the programme for 6th – 9th grade is the development of skills acquired in the first part of the programme (1st – 5th grade) and the establishment of a well-functioning team of pupils and teachers, where relationships are based on trust, respect, helping each other, cooperation and tolerance.

Thus formed team placed where students and teachers feel safe will help them to avoid any risky behaviour - harassment, drug and alcohol abuse, pathological gambling, etc.

The programmes based on active work of groups and individuals include activities for strengthening relations in a team, solving stress situations, developing the ability to make free and responsible decisions, practicing effective communication based on their own experience and increasing self-confidence.

Another part of the programme is environmental education, training activities in verbal and nonverbal communication, activities for self-knowledge, simulation games/role plays and relaxation activities. For all the training/seminars written materials are provided, including a methodological overview of the recommended activities and facilities.

This methodology is always updated and adjusted according to the particular situation in individual classes.

The aim of our sport courses is to introduce interesting sport activities to the pupils and to offer them alternative options how to spend their leisure time. Courses are aimed at different sport disciplines – rules and exercise (cross country and downhill skiing, hiking, biking, water sports and basics of climbing), mutual aid, perception of dynamics of the group, solving physically difficult situations, learning the basic skills for staying in the countryside and camping.

Great attention is paid to the individual development of pupils, their ability to communicate and problem-solving skills. A difference is not perceived as a problem, but as an opportunity for all. If there is an interest of parents the school also accepts students with disabilities and health handicaps. These students are individually integrated into mainstream classes where the conditions for successful learning and meeting their special educational needs are created. If it is necessary the *individual educational plans* in accordance with our own curriculum are prepared for these pupils which applies the principle of differentiation and individualization of educational process in the organizing of activities in determining the content, forms and methods of teaching. Teachers work with the extremely talented students during individual consultations, which are based either on the initiative of the pupil or from various teachers. Furthermore, the exceptionally talented students work intensively during their compulsory school leaving work in the 9th grade and during preparation for different competitions. This leaving work is a speciality of our school.

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

Each classroom is carpeted, which is effectively used in most of the lessons. At the beginning of a lesson it is often used for emotionally and motivationally tuned introduction. During the lesson it's used for group activities, individual activities or for small relaxing. At the end of the lesson carpet space can be used for reflection and evaluation.

Almost all the classrooms use stable arrangement of the desks for group teaching. The school is open to all students from 6.45 a.m. The lessons start at 8.15 am. Pupils can enter the building at 8 am, or sooner if they are on schedule to work individually in a computer lab or if they have a consultation with a teacher.

At school there's no bell. At the end of a break, teachers supervising students warn them by switching off the lights in the hallway. A teacher ends the lesson – not the bell. In all the classrooms and corridors there is a clock on the wall for a better time orientation.

During the breaks children have absolute freedom of movement throughout the whole school. The main break after the second lesson takes twenty-five minutes. During breaks students can play sports in the corridors or in both gyms. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday the gyms are reserved for 6th – 9th grade and on Tuesdays and Thursdays the gym is reserved for 1st – 9th grade.

If there is a good weather, students have the opportunity to spend a break in the outdoor campus. Pupils of the 1st – 5th grade can spend the main break in the computer laboratory according to the schedule. Due to the project “Health Promoting School” we participate in project “Healthy Town” Chrudim. There is a mutually beneficial cooperation with the kindergarten Pastelka too.

Parents’ and community involvement: Any major changes in all versions of the school curriculum "Know and to Know How, So We Can Work in Life" were always discussed with the Council of Parents and Friends of Dr. J. Malik School. Parents share school program visions and support their children to participate in the events of the program "We Can Do It Together”.

During the various projects (Inclusive Education, Training Teachers to Teach Integrated Content, the Cooperative School, Establishing Personal and Social Education in School Curricula, Teaching Project for Media Education, etc.) the school staff has cooperated with a number of experts over the last few years, which significantly contributed to the improvement of their work and also affected the school curriculum forming.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

At the beginning the main initiator of the changes was the headmaster and during the time other members of the pedagogical staff joined the process. We would like to note (and feel it as very important feature) that pupils were also participating in the “wind of changes”.

The first moment of the changes was the headmaster’s own experience gained in different schools in both roles – a pupil and a teacher. Many times he had some negative experience.

The main cause of the step by step change was responds of a questionnaire (respondents were pupils of 5th – 8th grade) in May 1992 - our school was established in September 1991. One of the issues in the questionnaire was: “*What do you imagine when someone says ‘school’?*” Most of the pupils answered – stress, fear and boredom!

The pupils didn’t want to learn in accordance with unified (as called traditional) school’s curriculum (as they expressed in the questionnaire) and in their responds they offered different kinds of its adaptation. This worked as an inspiration for establishing the optional subjects system.

Some of the pupils thought that the teachers’ behaviour towards them and their parents was negative. That was the reason for a change in a social climate of the school and shift to safe learning environment. Pupils could feel that they were very important for a way of education – *school cares about them*.

However, above mentioned reasons weren’t the only ones. During the time, due to systematic and intensive education of the pedagogical staff members, new reasons appeared – new information from neurophysiology, psychology a pedagogy which talks about new demands on a quality of the school environment.

The act of transformation has been shared by all members of the pedagogical staff. It’s done thanks to long and intensive further education of all the teachers and also thanks to goal-directed work of the school management in the human resources field. Our school is now sought by teachers who want to be on the board; they want to be a member of team and share the vision.

We believe that transformation process should go on – we seek to be the school on the move.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

The school is financed from the state budget and by its founder – the town of Chrudim.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

Since 1996 the school has been using KALIBRO comparative tests which are undertaken by pupils in the 5th, 7th and 9th grade. This long-term project gives us a comparative scale of the educational outcomes and it gives us an opportunity to evaluate methods and curriculum. Thanks to it, we have a detailed overview of pupils' outcomes and a summary of results of the classes and whole school.

We are also get awareness of pupils' motivation to lifelong learning. Information about the development of each class is important for us as well.

Since 2004 we use KALIBRO questionnaire to get knowledge about social changes at school too. From the results of the questionnaire we learn how pupils perceive the school climate, relationships, teachers' proficiency, organization of the school life and other very important information.

Basis for effective evaluation is primarily a feedback from pupils and teachers (written or oral). The pupils' performance is monitored systematically, during 1st – 5th grade mainly by the week reports.

All the teachers do the periodical evaluation of the pupils.

A part of the evaluation is a self-evaluation done by pupil. Student self-evaluation is not only an integral part of the evaluation process, but it is also considered as one of the key skills to be acquired.

This evaluation maps each student's individual progress, respecting his individual assumptions without comparing with other classmates.

An integral part of the evaluation is a mutual evaluation among students. It is necessary to have pre-determined criteria for evaluation – made by pupils and teachers together. In these days the process of creating criteria allows students to better realize what is evaluated.

Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE

Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)

School activities are documented by detailed annual report every year. Detailed information about the school is on the school website www.zsmalika.cz.

The school has published the school magazine "Malicek" for seventeen years. There have been written several articles in different magazines such as Reflex and Respect about the school practice and filmed several TV shows.

In 2007, Czech Television broadcasted the first program dedicated to the phenomenon of a nowadays school reform. The views of teachers, parents, pupils and experts were brought in a story about two different schools - antireform one, Masaryk School in Litomerice and pro-reform school of Dr. Malik in Chrudim.

Under the title "Schoolchildren and truants" the Czech Television performed a show devoted to truancy in March 2008. By the example of our school it has been shown how children can attend school without fear, with the expectation that learning is not boring, classmates are friends and teachers are partners, who can be appreciated by the child. If school brings fun and inspiration to children there are no truants.