

## Germany-Thuringia

### ImPULS- Schule Schmiedefeld, State School

*This secondary modern school (123 students aged 10 to 16), was previously a state project school to investigate teaching and organisation in small secondary schools, in the philosophy of “Jenaplan” reform pedagogy. Its classes are mixed in terms of student abilities and, in part, student age. The school day is consciously structured to begin with an assembly of the whole learning group, and further includes blocks of time allocated to cross curricular work and to the planning of individual learning activities. There are exercise breaks, and the classes have lunch together. Students present their results in weekly sessions. The school uses tools like learning diaries and learning contracts, and supplements regular school certificates with individual report letters. The school’s activities to prepare students for the choice of a profession (e.g. yearly practical projects in different companies from grade 7 to 9, portfolio work, etc.) have received several awards.*

**Main Focus of Innovation:** LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

**Other Keywords:** alternative philosophy

#### General Information

**Name of the ILE:** ImPULS- Schule Schmiedefeld, State School

**Location/Address:** 98711 Schmiedefeld, Schulstraße 12 (Thuringia, Germany)

**Website:** [www.schule-schmiedefeld.de](http://www.schule-schmiedefeld.de)

**ILE submitted by:** Thuringian Ministry of Culture and Education

**Rationale**

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

ImpULS-Schule Schmiedefeld, Secondary Modern School, State School

Presentation of the school

General introduction

Brief description of the school

The school Staatliche Regelschule Schmiedefeld was founded in 1991.

It represents an integrated form of Haupt and Realschule, a Secondary Modern School with different qualifications. Students can leave school with “Hauptschule” or Qualified “Hauptschule”- and “Realschule” qualifications. Meanwhile the catchment area, as laid out by Ilmkreis, the body maintaining our school, covers four small villages in a rural area. The school had 270 students after the German reunification. Because of the demographic changes this number has decreased to 123 during recent years. 17 teachers teach at ImpULS- Schule at the moment. The school building from 1920 is protected as an historic monument. Inside, almost completely renovated and reconstructed, it offers good conditions for an up to date school.

In 1999 the school was approved as a project school of the Ministry of Education in our federal state of Thüringen for 7 years. The project title was “Development of Teaching and Organization in a small, integrated Secondary Modern School with Jenaplan and Media profile”. The main points concerning the contents of school development are: cross curricular and mixed ability teaching, differentiation, media education and a wide didactic repertoire.

Since 2002 the school has been called “ImpULS- Schule”- “Impulse School”. The ambiguous definition of the word wittingly implies both- the idea of the school as an institution that gives and takes impulses itself, as well as one which is “up to date”- reacting on current developments topically. This can be seen in our participation in the Development Project “Self accountable School” since 2006.

Following our ideas, we define a “school” in the following way:

We see ourselves as a school, that

- Thinks on the basis of the child and his/her “world”
- Prepares and builds up a learning culture, which has lifelong learning as its aim
- Keeps the balance between both the support of the individual interests and needs of the students on one hand and the moral values and standards of the society and the general culture on the other hand.

Achievement/Performance

Our school development focused its aims on achievement. Our school concept is based on achievement. Achievement means more than just repeating things to us. Achievement should also be seen by taking actions. The word achievement includes the verb “achieve” that means to obtain something in a specific situation. Achievement is focussed on the development of one’s personality as a whole. Our approach to the development of achievement implies the process of holistic learning, in which both knowledge and ability as well as social and moral learning and acting competence to act accordingly are related to each other in a deeper and more discoverable manner. We see our students as independent, self accountable, self active learners who are able and ready to use the freedom to act which is offered to them in an inventive, productive and reflexive way. Achievement is, as a result, not only product oriented, but the journey is the reward. Therefore we consider achievement to be in particular process oriented. This covers individual learning as well as learning in a social context. The basis for that is learning competence, which includes the development of issue, social, self competence and the competence of methods.

What exactly does that mean for teaching at Regelschule Schmiedefeld?

Teaching is planned correspondingly, that means the didactic- methodical implementation corresponds with the aim of a development of all competences.

Thereby we follow the so called “Didactic Dimensions” of modern “Jenaplan”. We take the child and his/her previous experiences, interests and needs as a starting point (anthropological dimension). That’s why we differ in the textual dimension from the formal fixed content of teaching and check, whether the 5 topics are meaningful to the students and whether they offer a wide space for the development of competences because of their cross curricular approach or not. This means that we emphasis certain parts of the curriculum or topics. After that we decide which kind of working arrangement (methodical dimension) we practice to achieve the aim, the development of competences. Mainly we practice individual-, partner-, group-, or project work; we work with so called “weekly plans” or “learning stations/circles”. We turn great attention to the formulation of tasks, because we see one key element of a good teaching practice in the “operationalisation” of the definition of this aim. The emphasis put on the task is chosen according to the development of competences and it is the main condition for the following assessment. Because that task stimulates and initiates actual thinking and acting processes with our students we as teachers have the chance to observe and assess the development of competences. The assessment (qualifying dimension) is measured by clearly defined quality criteria according to issue, social, self competence and the competence of methods. It is of vital importance to ponder how these qualities can be observed in the working process of the students, within the product or in a presentation.

Therefore special “observing instruments”, for example the so called “Note-Book” and Rubrics, were developed and introduced at our school. Meanwhile we developed several Rubrics for assessing competences in the lessons, in the oral exams, in “the project work” of grade 10, concerning our “working techniques” and the standards of the individual letter every student receives with the school report. They turned out to be practicable and expressive instruments of students’ competences for self- assessment and assessment by others. We always pay attention to the fact that the observing and assessing criteria are transparent and that the students get involved into the assessment, for example by means of a self assessment sheet with analogical observing criteria. Assessment, with this in mind is not a report of the actual state but rather a way to stimulate (further) development. At ImPULS- Schule Schmiedefeld every student gets an individual letter with an individual assessment of his/her competences twice every school year together with the school report, the so called “school report letter”. These letters replace the marks for “behaviour” and “cooperation” which are obligatory in Thüringen. For this reason our “school report letters” have to meet some very important requirements. The quality standards are fixed in our Rubrics for “school report letters” which we worked out together in a common pedagogical workshop. In a multifunctional text, with the help of which the single student is recognised as an individual, the letters have to examine the achievement of the student in the context with a development process seen from different angles. From this an individual assessment is created from which the student can use to deduce aims for his/her further learning and also his/her life. Our “school report letters” have to fulfil the following conditions: They record what the student learned and achieved during that term, without commenting on every single mark, but giving a supplement to these marks he/she reached through an assessment of the competences in view of the development of learning competence. They describe the individual learning and developing process. They are related to the past as well as to the future. They recognise achievement and give guidance, support, help and encouragement at the same time. They are a means and a special form of communication between student, teacher and parents.

The students are becoming more and more involved into the process of assessment. The “school report letters” inform the parents about the work and social behaviour of the student far beyond the school report mark. The validity of the school report is extended this way and can be related to learning in all subjects in the long term. The form teacher who is responsible for writing the “school report letters” relies on the cooperation of his specialist subject teachers.

Meanwhile individual conversations with the student and also with the parents, concerning the “school report letter”, are conducted twice a year after the first half and at the end of the school year. This exchange is seen as extremely valuable by students and parents as well as teachers.

At the beginning of the school year this conversation leads directly into stipulating a so called “learning contract” for every student. During the conversation after the first term this contract is evaluated together.

Therefore our Team Assessment has worked out a conversation guide. In our federal state of Thüringen central written examinations take place to obtain Realschule School leaving certificate and Qualified Hauptschule School leaving certificate. The results of these exams are evaluated annually at our last meeting of the board of examiners at the end of the school year. Our school internal statistics shows that the amount of Hauptschule students that pass the exams for a Qualified Hauptschule school leaving certificate is very high. In any case almost all Realschule students passed the central exams for a Realschule school leaving certificate.

We also want to refer to the change and the development of the school internal oral exams at this point.

Complex tasks are created by the specialist subject teachers that include all areas of the competences, not only issue competence. Furthermore there are tasks at different levels in these exams, so that the student has to decide himself/herself, self accountably, which level of difficulty he/she feels able to do. Besides that a Rubrics for “Oral exams” was created at our school. We have been starting to look at the ideas of group exams in a variety of subjects for some years now. For about three years the students of our tenth grades have been creating a complex “project work” with a practical approach. For preparation, realization and assessment a school internal working group has created a guideline and a concept. Our students take part in different competitions, for example so called “Maths Olympics” or “Kanguru- Competition” (also Maths), Chemistry competition, “German Olympics” and all kinds of sports events, above all in winter sports, like “Youth is practising for the Olympics”

Summary:

- Support of the development of competences
- “Learning contracts”, “School report letters”, Individual conversation
- Rubrics as a means of assessment
- One year Project Work
- Competitions

Management of diversity

One of our guiding principles states: individuality that means every child should get the chance to be supported and develop his/her own personal qualities. We see the differences between our students as something positive which can be developed and can link them with others. Our common aim of differentiation is composed of supporting and encouraging our students depending on their personal abilities. This includes a new role of the teacher which is featured by individual guidance instead of general instructions. Through or above all by the means of group internal differentiation we want to achieve a necessary basal level/minimum standard of the knowledge and abilities of all our students. Differentiation and Individualisation are main aspects of our school development. As a consequence differentiation and individualisation are a main emphasis in our annual school development plans. Alongside this “Individualisation of Learning” is our first aim in a target agreement within the Development Project “Selfaccountable School” in our federal state of Thüringen. This agreement was stipulated between the school and the school board. Since 1999 we have the allowance to teach students with different “profiles” together in one grade, because of our status as a project school. This means that students with different school leaving certificates (Hauptschule school leaving- and Realschule school leaving certificate) learn together in one grade by taking their different achievement levels into consideration. Using our experiences concerning differentiation we contributed to the change of the school regulations in our federal state Thüringen, so that since 2004 all so called “Regelschule” schools in our federal state have been allowed to teach their students in an integrated way since 2004.

Our heterogeneous grades are maintained until grade 9, which prevents a segregation of both students: these with Hauptschule as well as those with Realschule profile. In doing this we meet the requirements of the social aspect of a school community.

That does not mean, however, that all students do the same things at the same pace, in the same way and at the same time. In fact it is the other way around: the lessons are taught on different levels, so that all students can be supported or pushed further according to their level of achievement.

It appears that this kind of teaching has a positive effect on the motivation to learn, as well as on cooperation, critical self assessment of the individual achievement and discipline. A special form of organisation is our so called "Individual Learning Time" (ILZ). It is based upon two aims: on one hand it introduces more possibilities for individual support and guidance and on the other hand the students are led to self accountable learning. Since 2004/05 we put our concept of the "Individual Learning Time" into practice. The subjects Maths, German and English each dedicate one lesson per week to this concept. The basic approach is that the students, the older they get, decide which subject, within which topic and on which level they work on to increase their achievement. Therefore the students can find appropriate materials and tasks for every subject on different levels as well as "special tasks" which are more complicated questions which the students need to spend more time on and tasks for revision. In every ILZ lesson two teachers guide the students individually. In their role as coaches they pay attention to the fact that they help the students to reflect on their own learning, possible ways to the solution and learning strategies themselves through specific questioning. The ILZ approach is assessed on a regular basis by all involved teachers. For students with special educational needs an individual supporting concept was worked out by our counsellor. Supporting plan and supporting lessons play a major role within this concept. ImpULS- Schule Schmiedefeld has been an all- day school since 2007/08. Therefore we worked out a common argumentation about the advantages of this kind of school. The main reason for orienting towards "All-day learning" is to have more time for individual guidance and dealing with the single student- time you can't organise easily within a "normal school day". Manifold offers should meet the students' individuality. With the growing possibilities to decide things or to choose an offer (out of a great variety of possibilities) we intend to support the self accountability of our students. Of particular importance is another "rhythm" of the day because of the scientific knowledge about the "biological rhythm" of the day and modern brain research. Not of subordinate importance is the changed social situation in many families and the knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. Our day at ImpULS- Schule starts with an open beginning, so that the students can arrive, talk, learn, play or go over their work. Our so called "Morgenkreis"- a kind of "assembly" of the grade or learning group in which all sit in a circle is the start of a day where the students have the possibility to talk about the latest events, cope with concerns or trouble and create a trustful atmosphere for the grade or learning group. Our daily planning time allows the students to formulate their learning aims for the day- detailed and achievable- and write them down. Besides this the students assess how well they planned their time over previous days and through that the self- confidence of the students is strengthened, so that they can take responsibility for themselves as individuals. Learning demands phases of relaxation so that there is time for processing in the brain. It has also been proven that movement supports the thinking and learning processes. That's why we have longer breaks with lots of possibilities for movement and relaxation. We have breakfast and lunch together to support a common social life and, last but not least, we want to develop a "culture of eating" in which silence and "taking time for eating", healthy food, but also the aesthetics of eating are brought into our consciousness. In the context of equal opportunities for all children and the growing number of one-child families we see our offers of different activities on Friday morning and on three more afternoons as an enrichment of the learning and living world of our children. The children have the choice between different offers for one term. This way they get the chance to spend their free time meaningfully, but they also have to prove their sense of duty and endurance. Due to different familial conditions our all-day school offers are welcomed by the parents. With the involvement of lots of extracurricular partners from outside we support the link to the social life in our communities which should not be underestimated. Our students do their written practising tasks during the "Individual Learning Time". At any time they are supported by specialist subject teacher's there.

As a result we can guarantee the correctness of the tasks as well as time and space to support students individually. It's compulsory for the students to continue working on oral tasks, vocabulary, poems or preparation for tests and so on.

Another emphasis of school development is mixed age teaching. We see ourselves as a school that provides excellent conditions for social learning through mixed age teaching. Forms and habits of social contacts acquired by students have to be tested, developed further and corrected in new situations. Many examples have proved that new friendships were established thereby, students are no longer left out, the self-confidence increases and the anxieties of some 8 students are removed. We noticed that the spectrum of development and achievement differences was not essentially bigger than in homogenous groups of the same age. As a consequence the necessary differentiation offers favourable conditions for lots of students to develop further according to their individual level of achievement. This is a special advantage for example for grade 5 students with high performance, because they are able to orient towards the higher level. It's also beneficial for the self confidence of grade 6 students with a weaker performance because permanent failure of achievement is prevented and a sense of achievement is possible through a pre-orientation at the level of the lower grade.

Positive experiences appear within "fitting in" into existing group standards and according to role changes in "help and receive help". In grades 5/6 all lessons, except Maths and English are taught in mixed age learning groups. From grade 7 the students learn in mixed age groups in compulsory subjects which the students can choose like "Technology and Natural Science" called "TUN", "World of Media" (ICT), French/Home Economics as well as Religious Education, Ethics and PE. We hope that mixed age teaching from grade 7 will be extended in the next few years.

#### Summary:

- Differentiation and Individualization
- Individual Learning Time
- Teachers as "advisers"/"guides"
- All-day school
- A different "rhythm" of the day (open beginning, „assembly of the learning group or grade called "Morgenkreis", individual planning time, core time for working at cross curricular topics, „exercise breaks“, individual learning time, having lunch together, time for a variety of offers for individual choice, "celebration" on Friday- a time to present e.g. results of project work)
- "Learning Diary" (with not only schedules and homework, but also planning and reflections and a lot more)
- Mixed age teaching

#### Quality of teaching/lessons

Our school concept is aimed at the qualification for lifelong learning and for self-accountable learning through a systematic support of learning competence. To achieve this aim solid so called "working techniques" are required with our students. Special attention is therefore devoted to another emphasis of our school development process- the introduction and the use of working techniques. By the means of systematic introduction, targeted practice and the systematic use of methods of learning the students become qualified to understand tasks better as well as implement them in a higher quality. Our aim is that the students carry out necessary actions across the curriculum, they become able to reflect their own learning methods and optimise them through that and learn in a more self-accountable way. To achieve these aims all teachers are asked to use these systematically introduced working techniques during their lessons with all students. For a systematic introduction all teachers of our school worked out a school internal curriculum for "Teaching and learning methods". A newly created team led this work. A current plan of introduction is created for every school year. The use of the introduced working techniques during the lessons is recorded in our class registers by the relevant specialist subject teachers and analysed by the responsible team at the end of the school year.

We aspire to the idea that methods of learning are used more deliberately and above all that they are assessed and offer individual advice and possibilities to each individual student to develop his/her own abilities in handling these methods.

Another emphasis of our school development concept is cross curricular teaching. We intend to reach the following aims with our students:

- Development of the ability of networked thinking that means realisation of connections and the awareness that the student works at the same topic all affected lessons and hence all facts, experiences and results are networked and associated to each other.
- Development of learning competence through methods of self-accountable learning.

To achieve these aims a part of the contents and also of the lessons of special subjects is referred to cross curricular topics, but the single subjects partly remain with a reduced amount of lessons. The chosen subjects are identified in our school internal curriculum and taught according to student- oriented methods. The cooperation of teachers is intensified this way, so that the corresponding teachers prepare, discuss and reflect a topic together through detailed agreements in content and methods. They develop the school internal curricula and the materials in team work. The teachers involved in a cross curricular topic partly do not only teach the subjects they are qualified in, but also others.

Out of the corresponding subjects or contents of subjects we formed the following seven cross curricular core areas:

“Sachkunde” (Biology, History, Geography) in grades 5/6- mixed age teaching

“Natur” (Chemistry, Physics, Biology) in grades 7 and 8

“Gesellschaft” (Geography, History, Social Studies) in grades 7 to 10

“Kultur” (German, Music, Art) in grades 7 to 10

“WRT” (Economy, Law and Technology) in grades 7 to 10

“Medienwelt”- “World of Media” (a compulsory subject which can be chosen from a variety of others in grade 7) in grades 7/8 and 9/10- mixed age teaching

“TUN”- “Technology and Natural Sciences” (another compulsory subject which can be chosen from a variety of others in grade 7) in grades 7/8 and 9/10- mixed ability teaching

“Französisch/Hauswirtschaft” (French, Home Economics) in grades 7/8 and 9/10- mixed ability teaching

Alongside the all day school our “core time” in grades 5/6 was introduced. In this time the students have the cross curricular core area “Sachkunde”. The subjects German, Art and Music dedicate one lesson per week each to a cross curricular topic. The “core area” is fixed in the schedule of the mixed age learning groups with 90 minutes four days a week. The students are allowed to deal with problems and tasks holistically in this cross curricular “core time” - without “pigeonhole thinking”, as it is developed during learning in single subjects. Syllabuses of different subjects are brought into a logical order, by which lots of things are more understandable to the student and connections are clearer. The core time is dominated by “open learning arrangements”, like weekly plans, learning stations/circles or projects in which the social competence of every student can be strengthened. With teachers cooperating extensively a core time plan was developed to give a thematic, temporal and topical orientation. These topics are prepared by the teachers following the aims in the competences, fixing of appropriate methods, the preparation of the teaching and working materials and the agreements concerning assessment, observation and reflection as to how they worked.

In connection with that we want to mention our “School internal curriculum” as a means of school development. We have an internal, fixed and binding common structure. Firstly the school internal curriculum divides into special subject and cross curricular topics. A summary of all topics is worked out for each special topic and for the cross curricular topics. One example of this is the plan for our core time which was established for mixed age teaching for year A and year B.

To initiate and coordinate cross curricular, subject- joined and subject integrated learning our so called “lesson scores” were worked out with all teachers. According to the single topics competence sheets are worked out. Through that we focus on all four areas of learning competence: issue-, self-, social competence and the competence of methods.

These competence sheets form the “heart” of our school internal curricula. The detailed learning aims are not only associated with the four competences, but also refer to the derived criteria for assessment.

Our lessons are shaped by teaching methods, which contribute to self-accountable learning and working” of our students, e.g. through learning stations/circles, weekly plans, project orientated lessons or workshop-like lessons. With these arrangements we offer free zones to our students, so that they can test and further develop their abilities, needs and strengths. Project orientated working as well as student- centred and action- based learning methods form the conditions for this. Cooperative and self-accountable learning is supported in our school as well as in cross curricular lessons and in special subject lessons by the means of teaching methods that are specifically aimed to it. From the start another essential question was:

How can the students with Realschule School leaving certificates get their technological and practical education at our secondary modern school called Regelschule?

As a result of our deliberations we developed the following edited offer of subjects from which one is to be chosen by every student and compulsory from grade 7 to 10:

- “Medienwelt” (World of Media- photo-, video-, audio-, publishing media, computer, Internet)
- “TUN” (“Technology and Natural Sciences”)
- “French/Home Economics”

These three subjects (one of which is compulsory, but the students are free to choose which one they want to take) can be chosen by students with both orientations- Hauptschule and Realschule school leaving orientation. Through this possibility the students with Realschule School leaving orientation also get the chance to take the exams for a Qualified Hauptschule school leaving certificate at the end of grade 9. The students with Realschule orientation appreciate this possibility explicitly, because that means a first test before their exams for Realschule school leaving certificates in grade 10. Our emphasis area “preparation for the choice of profession” is to be seen in close connection to that. For several years our school has paid special attention to that area. As a secondary modern school we see our task to be supporting our students together with their parents, the companies, the local job centre and other cooperating partners outside school on their way to further education and vocational training. We will feel we have achieved that aim when all students know their abilities, skills and interests; when they have clear ideas about vocational alternatives. We offer many possibilities in preparation for the choice of profession from grade 7, so that almost no students abandon their further school education or vocational training after leaving our school.

The activities on this field are coordinated and reflected in a team of teachers called “preparation for the choice of profession” team which is led by the counsellor. To name only some activities here: students of our school conduct a two-week practical project per year in different companies from grade 7 to grade 10, students of grade 7 work in a project called “Ability”, we work with a portfolio called “Choice of Profession Passport” (all assessments, certificates connected to the topic are collected in this portfolio, ready for use in applying for a job), the project “Profession Start” in grades 7 to 9 and modules for “application training”. In 2006 our school was awarded with the so called “Quality Label” for our activities in preparation for the choice of profession. Last month this award has been renewed for another three years. To meet the requirements of the European idea and to prepare our students for their future in the European Union we attach great importance to the development of language competences. Our school internal language concept includes: bilingual modules, Email projects, language study travels to Britain (as a tradition in grade 9), eTwinning projects, school exchanges with French- and Dutch partner schools, “French- as a meeting language” (mixed age learning in learning groups 5/6) and Comenius projects.

“Media Education” has been a very important development area since the founding of our school in 1991.

Our media education is linked with several subjects (so called Sachkunde= Biology, History and Geography; German, Art, Ethics, Maths and English).

Our aim is to link into as many subjects as possible to the fact that students use media as a daily necessity. Therefore we worked out a so called “teaching score” for all colleagues in which single “chapters” of media education are included. We like every student to work with the computer and with publishing media frequently as well as at least once a school year in a photo-, video- or audio project. We see these “chapters” of media as parts of our lessons. They serve for better learning and should not be detached from the topic, but support its teaching.

Therefore it is indispensable for us to begin with teaching the basis of ICT with one lesson per week in grades 5 and 6 and to consolidate and accentuate the knowledge they gained during those lessons in all subjects in the upper grades as well as in our subject “World of Media” and in all offers of the all-day school. Our students generally get a so called “Media Passport” with their school reports from grades 5 to 10 in which not only the subjects they dealt with but also the detailed contribution of a modern media education is visible.

#### Summary:

- “Working techniques“
- School internal curriculum for “Teaching and learning methods“
- Cross curricular teaching
- School internal curriculum
- Structure of teacher cooperation and communication (Teamwork)
- Methods of self- accountable and project oriented teaching (week plans, learning circles, projects)
- Cooperative learning, partner and group work
- Changed choice of compulsory subjects with technological and practical orientation
- Quality Label for activities in preparation for the choice of profession
- Concept of media education

#### Responsibility

Our school is characterised by a “school climate” which is supportive for learning, because it is shaped by rules for students, teachers and general rules for how to behave in the school building which were worked out together and collected in a Mind Map. Students, teachers and parents actively involved into decision making processes. Therefore meetings of the school conference, parents’ representatives of all grades and the team of class representatives take place on a regular basis. An example of an important decision of the school conference was the approval of the application to participate in the Development Project “Self accountable School”. A special and vital “committee” in decision- making is the so called “Student ImpULS”. All class representatives meet here once a week with the head teacher. The meetings in which 12 concerns, ideas and problems are discussed are chaired by the school representative. Within this committee the idea of a school T-shirt, the so called “ImpULS- T-shirt”, was developed as well as the suggestion of a “voluntary” break (the students can decide whether they spend this break in the playground or inside the school building). The class representatives conduct and analyse surveys themselves to draw conclusions afterwards. Their last survey was a census about the number of projects carried out during lessons. The background of this survey was the question as to whether our students are well prepared for their project work in grade 10 through different projects within their lessons or not. Normally the class representative introduces the request of the “Student ImpULS” to the teachers during the weekly so called “Pedagogical Assembly. He/she also presents an analysis of the survey there. After that a general discussion about the results, the inferences and decisions takes place. Our system of support and advice for students, parents and teachers includes parents consultation-hours, meeting for parents called “Elternstammtisch” (groups of regulars for parents which are initiated by the parents themselves), pedagogical support conversations with the form teachers, the counsellor and the school management, information and advice parents meetings (with information and advice for all parents), pedagogical assemblies and so called “Friday celebrations” for the students as well as “individual conversations “ among others. Since 2004/05 trained student mediators have been “working” at our school. They help to solve conflicts and differences between students peacefully.

The small size of our school and the variety of possibilities for individual conversations, for example in the Monday morning assemblies create a good social atmosphere which diminishes bigger social conflicts; for this reason our mediators are not called very often. The mediators are very effective in their own grades where they contribute specifically to the compliance of fixed communication rules within open discussions about problems. They are able to support the teacher. This “conflict and conversation culture” creates a good social interaction in our school. Students of grade 9 and 10 take self- responsibility and support teachers who are on duty during the breaks for example. They contribute in ensuring organised breaks this way.

#### Summary:

- Rules for students, teachers and house rules (Mind Map)
- Student -ImPULS
- Mediators
- Regular meetings for parents

#### School climate, school life and extracurricular partners

The creation of a pleasant learning environment should contribute to the fact that the whole school community is comfortable and can find suitable conditions for learning and working. Therefore different areas for students and teachers were established in our school- for example a so called “Students Island” and a “Teachers Island”, a breakfast and lunch supply as well as enough rooms and space for talks and group work. We follow the so called classroom principle (every grade has a classroom in which the majority of the students lessons are held), including a competition suggested by the class representatives, which gives stimulus to a creative and clean interior classroom design so that the students can identify with their school from the beginning of their time here. We attach great importance to a “routine”, to reach continuity and stability in the behaviour of our students and in social interaction. Several factors contribute to this: the welcoming of the students at the beginning of the school year by all teachers, as well as our “Monday assembly” (the start of every day which the students and the class teacher of a class spend together planning or discussing things, mostly sitting in a circle) and our “Friday celebration” (the completion of the week; during this time the students can present results of their work, e.g. project presentation, songs and more) within our all- day school. Besides that monthly “celebrations” of the whole 13 school community have been taking place for two years now. These celebrations are prepared by a learning group or grade and once a year by teachers. Rated among this is also the fact that we cherish an esteeming social interaction among each other. Besides others we worked out a “concept of the appreciation of students’ achievements”. Two annual “Meetings” (one per half year) and the “Reception with the head teacher” at the end of the school year are highlights within this concept. The presentation of these “meetings” is performed by the class representatives. We aim to design a school life which is varied and supports social interaction. Some of the things which contribute to this are: the all-day school offers, the clubs, our international contacts within the Comenius projects, the school exchange with our Dutch and French partner schools, the annual educational tour to Britain, the get-to-know trip in our mixed age learning groups, excursions, our annual meeting of alumni, our “Open Day”, parents meetings and consultations, “groups of regulars” for parents, mediators and our students company “ImPULS Event” (Event Management). Students and parents are actively involved into school life and school development through different activities. The greatest possible number of external supporters and partners is involved in this process, like for example the teacher training institute of our federal state called ThILLM, Bertelsmann Network, former scientific advisers (from our time as project school, now financed from our so called self managed budget), career officers of the job centre, a so called “Working group: School- Economy”, a social service (which especially cares for students with special needs), supervisors of the project works of grade 10 and companies in which our students do their practical work experience. A very intense collaboration connects the school with a company called “Landesentwicklungsgesellschaft- LEG Thüringen”. This company is the partner our school got together with the award “Quality Label”.

The company provides us with contacts to businesses, which help our students (and the teachers as well) to gain insights into the vocational and professional world. Besides that different scopes of school like school management or the students company received advice and assistance in questions of management.

ImpULS- Schule Schmiedefeld has been a member of a communal network called “Am Rennsteig” which belongs to the so called “educational model”: “New learning culture in communities” since the beginning of this year. We also work in close cooperation with other schools, for example within the learning network “learning competence” of the Bertelsmann Foundation, the so called “Blick über den Zaun” (“view over the fence”)- schools, the network “Jenaplan 21”, together with a school in Jena, the Lobdeburg School, the primary school in Stützerbach, our partner schools from the Netherlands and France, schools from a network for Maths called “Sinus Transfer” and the so called BilMod schools (schools that use bilingual modules in their lessons). We pay great attention to the cultivation of our school’s image.

Instruments and means of our public work are our logo, the school brochure, short descriptions of the school, flyers in German and English, our school homepage ([www.schule-schmiedefeld.de](http://www.schule-schmiedefeld.de)) with passages in English as well as homepages of the Comenius project and the students company.

#### Summary:

- „Students and Teachers Island“- spaces and rooms for work
  - Classroom competition
  - Monday assembly and Friday celebration
  - School celebrations
  - Concept of the appreciation of students’ achievements (meetings, reception with the head teacher)
  - Comenius-Project
  - Students company
  - Project school within the “educational model”: „New learning culture in communities“
- Member of the union of reform pedagogical oriented schools called “Blick über den Zaun“ (“view over the fence“)

#### School as a learning institution

Our aim at school is to continuously build up a professional school culture.

We see ourselves as a “learning organisation” which is characterised by a supportive atmosphere, which allows mistakes as well as suggests an intensive exchange, mutual consultation and transparent feedback.

An organisation is not able to learn without individuals who are learning. Teachers are learners here as well. Therefore using our own resources stands in the foreground. School internal training plays an essential role in our annual education and training plan. Here, individual colleagues show their externally acquired knowledge and abilities in terms of an edited teacher training available to the other colleagues.

“Pedagogical conferences” as well as our “pedagogical group of regulars” which take place on a regular basis are an appropriate place for the teachers to present their ideas besides the team meetings that take place frequently. The weekly so called “Pädagogischer Morgenkreis “(“pedagogical assembly”) offers the possibility of learning from each other as well. Here, there are often very intensive discussions about students so that all colleagues know about specialities of these students better so that they have the possibility to react individually. In terms of “learning from each other” sitting in on classes is also important. The head teacher sits in on classes according to fixed topics in our school calendar regarding to certain school development areas. After that a detailed advice and exchange conversation takes place with the colleague who taught that lesson. The conversations between employee and employer are to be seen in connection with the basic approach of a learning organisation. The head teacher conducts these conversations according to a guideline she developed herself. In this conversation the agreement on the individual aims of the single colleague is an intrinsic component. The teachers have the possibility to codesign the plan of action in our school via handing in personal and team related wishes for their work assignment. Learning from each other requires clear structures of collaboration. The basis of systematic teamwork is a grown “structure of the collaboration of teachers”. The teachers work together in cross curricular and thematic teams towards school development.

Most of these teams have special meeting times at their disposal that are fixed in the schedule. Every team has a team leader who is able to ensure exchange, inclusion and coordination of the opinions of all team members. The team leaders are reference persons for the school management and our group of moderators. They also take over coordination planning-, documentation-, reporting- and organisational tasks for the team. The group of moderators plays a central role, because it overlooks the school development process as a whole and takes responsibility for it. Our group of moderators consists of two members of the school management and three committed innovative colleagues from different departments. The group of moderators develops and picks up ideas, works out suggestions for concepts for these ideas and pools them, draws conclusions, finds structures, demands action and makes the school development more transparent as a whole.

For guidance and management of the complex school development cycle an independent cycle of evaluation was developed at our school- the "ImPULS- School Development- Cycle". Derived from the school concept and from the recent stage of development an annual school development plan is worked out for the coming school year to come. The school development plan identifies the emphasis areas of school development which are worked out in the current school year. Furthermore we identify activities according to quality development within these emphasis areas seen from the entire school view are identified. On team level so called activity plans derived from this are written in which the aims of the year, the activities for the current school year and the need of qualification according to the working area of the team is substantiated.

Every activity plan is a two dimensional school internal instrument of supervision for the development of quality and quality assurance. It creates commitment, clarity and transparency about planning-, implementation and reflection processes (supervision and working instrument) for the single teams and the team leaders within the teams.

That is the main function of the activity plans. For the school management and the group of moderators activity plans serve as a means for coordination and control of all teams with a view on the aims and their implementation according to the emphasis areas named in the school development plan (instrument to account for; supervision instrument on school management level). As soon as the activity plans are worked out, school management conducts conversations about the plans with every team leader. The base of these conversations is a guideline, of which the team leader is aware in advance for preparation. As identified in the activity plan every team hands in a selection of documents in a so called Team Portfolio to the school management. The team portfolios consist of progress reports as well as concepts, lesson plans or results of lessons, thoughts and ideas from students, teachers or parents, team records and other planning instruments. These materials put the school management into a position to visualise the process of school development at our school as it is now. All team portfolios are considered by the school management through an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The main cognitions enter the so called TRENDS that illustrate the present stage of the school development process. Incorporated into this school development cycle are the following instruments for self evaluation called: ThüNIS (analogue INIS/SEIS) as well as (only once until now) the exertion of EFQM. The analysis of our ThüNIS school report takes place during a one day pedagogical conference during the so called preparation week (one week before the official school start of term) at the beginning of the new school year. In summer 2006 after the end of our work as a project school in July we assessed the time working as a project school in detail on the basis of the progress reports of the teams and from an all-school view on all emphasis areas. This assessment represents one of the essential bases for the agreement on our aims with the quality agency- local school board as well as the school report of the team of experts within the Development Project "Self-accountable School". The agreement about our aims reflects one part of our vision and our next aims and strategies. We focussed our further way of school development on that.

**Summary:**

- School internal training
- Employee-employer conversations according to a school internal developed guideline
- Group of moderators and teams of school development
- “ImpULS-School Development- Cycle” as a school internal developed cycle for evaluation
- school concept
- school development plan (annual)
- activity plans of the teams (annual)
- conversations of the teams with the school management
- team portfolios
- TRENDS of school development

**Evidence**

*Is there any evidence or indications showing that this initiative achieves the outcomes that it is aiming at?*

- High regard of the school concept, school development and the culture of learning at ImpULSSchule Schmiedefeld in the school report of the team of experts within the Development Project “Self accountable School” (see attachment 1)
- Very positive feedback of students, parents and teachers concerning learning culture of ImpULSSchule within the so called ThüNIS inquiry the school is participating in from the beginning
- Certification (2006) and re- certification (2009) with the award "Quality –Label” for our activities in preparation for the choice of profession
- In November 2008 ImpULS- Schule Schmiedefeld was awarded with the title "Exemplary All Day School" by the Thuringian Service Agency "all day learning".
- Since 1992 no student of grade 10 had left school without a school leaving certificate. An average amount of about 30% of our students with Realschule School leaving qualification continue achieving a higher education and Gymnasium school leaving qualification, so called "Abitur", which they pass successfully. A high percentage of our students with Hauptschule- and Realschule School leaving qualification start a vocational training immediately after leaving school.
- At our school no cases of aggressiveness have appeared for years. The school life is characterised by a good social interaction.
- Since 2008 a frequent intake of students from outside our catchment area which is laid out by Ilmkreis has been proof of the recognition of our school concept by parents and students who make a conscious choice.
- During numerous school visits by education- and local politicians, school supervising authorities, representatives of other schools and the press we got appreciation and extremely positive feedback.
- The film "How schools in Germany get on with heterogeneity" by Dr. Paul Schwarz, a well known filmmaker, reports about our school ImpULS- Schule.

**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)*

The learning aims can be found in our “vision“and in our guiding principles:

Vision:

We understand school as a space, in which our students increasingly:

- learn independently and self controlled
- learn to research and discover new ideas which requires self- activity demanding all senses
- explore an appropriate way of managing contents of teaching and learning
- think critically and reflect
- make decisions independently and give reasons on the basis of a competence to judge which is developing constantly

Guiding principles:

- that think on the basis of the child and his/her “world”
- that prepares and builds up a learning culture that follows the aim of lifelong learning
- that keeps the balance between supporting the individual interests and the needs of the students on one hand and the moral values and general standards of society as well as the general culture on the other hand.

Extracts taken from the school concept (Extended guiding principles):

Learning competence means the sensible control and improvement of the student's learning. The human being should be able and willing to learn for his/her whole life. If school wants to qualify students for life in that sense an encyclopaedic knowledge transfer is not sufficient, but rather it is about developing concepts in all their multidimensionality and holistic approaches.

Jenaplan-pedagogical thinking

Every human being is unique and he/she has the right to develop his/her own identity that is characterized by autonomy, critical consciousness, creativity and social equity. Therefore our students need a relationship with nature and culture (visual reality), but also with the world which is not experienced with our senses like: thoughts, ideas, fantasies, dreams and approaches to life. It's our task to create appropriate pedagogical situations for all that to our students.

Individuality

Every child should be offered the chance to be supported and to develop his/her personal qualities. We understand the differences between our students as something positive we can use to link them together and build upon

Lessons

We see the school as a space, in which our students constantly:

- learn independently and in a self controlled manner
- learn discovering and researching which requires self- activity demanding all senses
- explore an appropriate way of managing contents of teaching and learning
- think critically and reflect
- make decisions independently and give reasons on the basis of a competence to judge which is developing constantly
- practise social interaction

### Cross curricular approach

- to develop the ability to think in different perspectives, on different levels and using different trails of thought
- to allow thinking in meaningful contexts
- to make contacts to complex questions taken from real life
- to impart more “orientation knowledge“ instead of “providing knowledge”
- to think beyond the single subject in a subject- linking way and allow holistic learning as a consequence

### Mixed age teaching

The work in (age) heterogeneous groups offers extraordinary conditions for social learning. Age heterogeneous groups also offer many of incentives for employment and learning on the next higher level of development of the child, because he/she should not only be guided in things he/she knows and is able to do, but also within activities within an area of a future level.

### Media

Today, dealing with the media in a skilled, self controlled and socially responsible manner is an important cultural technique. We allow our children the meaningful use of modern media. They learn how to work with it critically, they collect their own experiences and, as a consequence, they are no longer only “blind” consumers. Through their own work they learn to assess the effects and capabilities of modern media.

Our innovative learning environment aims to support the following: social- , self competence and competence of methods additionally to issue competence (see attachment 12)

### 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?*

At present about 127 students aged 10 to 16 learn at ImpULS- Schule Schmiedefeld in grades 5 to 10. On the basis of a Thuringian school system which is based on two parts students with Hauptschule related qualification and students with Realschule related qualification learn here. Indeed our school concept and our teaching- and learning culture is aimed on supporting the students with special needs on one hand as well as challenging the students with Grammar School level on the other hand. In pursuance of the principle of heterogeneous learning groups, the basic approach of differentiation and the individualization of ways of learning our school is suitable for every child.

### Facilitators

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

Head teacher: Dr. Kerstin Baumgart

- general study course at Pedagogical College in Halle/Saale
- graduated teacher for Chemistry and Mathematics
- since 1991: head teacher of ImpULS-Schule Schmiedefeld
- 2003: training to be able to work as EFQM-Assessor (European Foundation for Quality Management)
- from 2005: training and work as an expert in the Thuringian Development Project“ Selfaccountable school“, member of the working team “Self- accountable school”
- 10th April, 2008: obtaining of an academic degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. Phil) at Osnabrück University with the final grade: magna cum laude.

**Role:**

The head teacher identifies with the cooperative- delegating concept of leadership, which is described in short as follows: delegating of tasks, cooperation of teachers and staff of the school, responsibility of the head teacher.

**Teachers:**

- nearly all teachers graduated in two subjects
- some of the teachers obtained an allowance or an assignment for teaching other subjects
- the following positions are practised by teachers of our school: consultants for various subjects, didactic trainer, Comenius moderator (Thuringia), counsellor
- teachers of ImpULS- Schule work in working groups of our ministry of education, our teacher training institute called ThILLM and of the local school authority

**Role:**

tutor/learning coach

**Other persons of the school community:**

- school social worker
- extracurricular workshop leaders
- secretary

**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?*

See the answer to Rationale.

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ImpULS- Schule is an all day school. Therefore school- specific “rhythm plans” were developed (see attachment 2 and 3). Another speciality is the fact that grades 5 and 6 learn in mixed age learning groups (called Aras, Delphine and Pumas). From grade 7 we offer mixed age teaching in some subjects, in the so called compulsory subjects the students can choose. Starting with the school year 2009/2010 grades 7 and 8 will form mixed age learning groups. This will be the next step of the development of ImpULS-Schule.

The collaboration of teachers is based on a well structured team basis. Additionally a structure of teacher cooperation exists which is constant in its basis (see attachment 4). The Thuringian curricula are valid as a basic orientation for the lessons. The school development teams deduced internal curricula for our school from these, which was especially important because of the cross curricular approach of our school. Since 1996 a clear structure of cross curricular learning areas was developed (see attachment 5). Our school internal curriculum is consists of subject specific and cross curricular parts. As part of this we have topic pages and competence pages for every topic in which the targets of learning concerning issue-, social-, self competence and competence of methods are described (see attachment 6: an example taken from a cross curricular learning area called “nature”). The interaction of student and teacher/learning coach takes place in a great number of talks and counselling situations: for example in our daily assembly of the grade or learning group called “Morgenkreis” and in the meetings of the learning groups on Fridays called “Freitagkreis“, during the daily planning time, in which every student plans and reflects his/her targets of the day in his/her learning diary guided and supported by the teacher, in reflection discussions during the lessons, during the so called Individual Learning Time in which the students work self accountably on their weaker areas guided by the teacher, through verbal feedback of the teacher after longer periods of working, during the individual student- teacher meetings about their so called “learning contracts” and in the personal letters the students get together with their school reports as well as the parents-student- teacher talks.

## 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?*

ImpULS- Schule is situated in a school building from 1920 which is protected as an historic monument. Inside, almost completely renovated and reconstructed, the building guarantees good conditions for modern learning. With the amalgamation of three schools in Schmiedefeld, Stützerbach and Frauenwald the first larger building project since the German reunification started in 1989/1990. As a result the school yard got a completely new design, for example green spaces, seats and a sports ground were laid out. The whole school building got new windows, outside thermal insulation and it was covered with slates. The school roof was tiled. The former girls' toilet became a common room, the office of our students company now. As well as the Physics and Chemistry labs were designed and completely newly furnished.

In all rooms suspended ceilings were installed. As a result of several students' projects and free time activities our corridors were designed in different ways. In the whole school building new electricity was installed. From the east side of the bottom corridor to the cellar a new staircase was incorporated. In the cellar area a large reconstruction took place. With it the former kitchen and the dining room were remodelled into technology rooms. A room for machines was also built in the cellar. The gym was refurbished in an extensive way. New sanitary facilities, cloak rooms, a room for gymnastics and a room for equipment were created. The roof of the gym was tiled and a snow protection was added to it. Room 14 on the first floor was split with one half transformed into toilets and the other half into a well furnished home economics room.

The former Handicraft workshop on the first floor was rebuilt into a modern and very nice staff room so that the teachers of the school can feel comfortable. Former room 17 became a modern computer lab with 12 networked computers.

Former room 1 (for so called Polytechnics- a practical subject in former GDR times) in the loft was reconstructed into a so called Reading- and Conference Room. The staff room of former room 1 is now our library. The old computer lab in the loft was changed into a room for modern media and was arranged with modern media gadgets. The loft corridor was also reconstructed. The main entrance changed its facade as well. A big annex was added to the main building.

Our mixed age learning groups use this annex. The new auditorium in this annex is used for having lunch together within our all day school. The school cinema which is operated by the students company "ImpULS- Event Management" is also located in this room. Alongside the school administration office the staff area was also completely remodelled. Meanwhile every teacher has his/her own workplace in our school with good access to the computers, the internet and to photocopiers. At our school we follow the "classroom principle" so that every learning group or class can identify with its room. Every learning group or class has a so called "circle room" to its disposal in addition to the classroom. In this room, amongst other things, talks or discussions in a circle, group work or occupation during the lunch breaks take place.

Altogether modern designed rooms are offered to our students. We can also offer enough space within the school building. The whole building is arranged in an informative and creative way.

The collaboration with the communities of our catchment area (Schmiedefeld, Stützerbach and Frauenwald) has been extremely intensified during the last years. An essential part of this was the foundation of a "local network of "Rennsteig" area" within the new educational model called "New learning culture in communities". Due to the network all persons involved into upbringing and education of children and young people know more about each other and they support each other. In the "local network of "Rennsteig" area" the following people work closely together: the Primary and Secondary Schools, the Kindergartens, the mayors and the chairman of our administrative district, the local priests, the social worker of our district as well as societies/associations and companies. Representatives of our Secondary School "go outside" within this network and support the other educational and community facilities.

The other way round extracurricular partners from the communities enrich the upbringing and educational work within our school. A large amount of support we get within realising a great variety of attractive offers (of activities) the students can choose themselves in the all-day school.

### **History of ILE**

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

The systematic school development process at ImpULS- Schule started in 1995. Three impulses were responsible for the change:

The first impulse was at a similar time to the foundation of the Secondary School in 1991. From the start the teachers were aware that the school had to react to the new barrage of media information which was unfamiliar to us at this time. All colleagues agreed on the fact that students as well as teachers have to face the task of developing media competence. This demanded, in the sense of an objective, self controlled, creative and social responsible acting as well as knowledge in analysis- and in judgment abilities in three textual realms:

- In the realm of designing possibilities which are used in the media
- In the realm of using possibilities and the effects of media
- In the realm of conditions of media production and -processing

In 1994 a working group called “Media” was founded at our school which was supported by the Thuringian Teacher Training Institute (ThILLM) for coordination and planning of this media educational emphasis and activities.

The members of this working group worked out a school internal concept “Media education- School Communication” which served as a basis for the application for specialization at “Thüringer Landesverwaltungsamt” (Thuringian Administrative Office) (approval: 08/1994) and in a developed and edited form a basis for a project application at the Thuringian Ministry of Education (approval: 09/1995). This first realm resulted from a practical and a whole societal situation which represented a change and a challenge not only to the students but also the teachers. Also the teachers were facing the task to require competences and knowledge within a responsible- minded handling with media technology and media information. Therefore teachers were affected personally. After starting with single projects in certain branches in 1991 the head teacher recognised more and more during the media educational work that media competence of students and teachers cannot be reached through single actions or installing a new subject. In her reflection of a 4 year term of media specialisation she came to the conclusion that effective media pedagogical work is only to be carried out in the context with the development and the change of teaching and school as a whole. This knowledge was a realm to engage in the project of school development in a more vital, more comprehensive and more systematic way in 1995.

A second realm resulted from the separately formed so called “Hauptschule”- and “Realschule” classes at our Secondary Modern School. The school regulations allowed either the creation of classes based on the school leaving qualification (additive system) or the creation of so called courses on Hauptschule and Realschule level in defined subjects (integrative system). Because at Regelschule Schmiedefeld we weren’t able to refer to any experiences in the comparison of both school forms we changed two years after the foundation of the Secondary Modern School from the integrative form to the additive form. The division into Hauptschule and Realschule classes had been practised for three years. Behind the second realm was hidden an obvious dissatisfaction of the teachers with the division of our Secondary Modern School into Hauptschule and Realschule classes were hidden. Our negative observations were enhancing constantly. Especially within Hauptschule classes the level of performance and the students’ willingness to learn decreased rapidly. On the contrary to our expectations the expected motivation with Hauptschule students, who were no longer the weakest learners in a heterogeneous class, could not be observed.

Instead of that the entire level of performance and behaviour moved down which was expressed in weak results of tests, noise and inattention during the lessons. In talks with the students we noticed that they felt like put in pigeonholed and ostracised. Because of that unsatisfactory and afflicting situation for both students and teachers of Hauptschule classes the head teacher made the decision to come back to the integrative system.

At the same time everybody was aware that we have to detect and implement new ways of learning and teaching within a complex school development.

The third realm is based on the demographic development. Since 1995 it has been obvious that the school will become very small in the future, because of the dramatic decrease in the number of students. That's why the third realm resulted from a certain degree of "suffering" within the teachers' council. The problem which we foresaw was that the Regelschule Schmiedefeld would not be able to function in its traditional form with an unchanged structure, content and organisation with the expected low number of students.

The courses of education and offers of the school based on the school leaving qualifications could not have been maintained. The colleagues were aware of the fact that: if we don't do anything, we can't prevent the school from being closed. Out of this pressure all colleagues were willing to change the school. Even if no concrete ideas concerning contents and concepts of school existed at this time the will to look for impulses was strongly distinctive. Even though the effective date of the decrease of students was expected in about 5 years only, everybody was convinced of the fact that nobody from outside or from the authorities would provide us with a solution to the problem. It was clear that we ourselves had to look for new ideas and concepts which would be feasible under the expected general conditions.

As a conclusion of the cognitions from all three realm situations the head teacher contacted the Thuringian Teacher Training Institute (ThILLM) in 1995 where she got connected and consulted to be incorporated into projects of qualification of school development.

With that the following stage of orientation began. In 1995 the contact to the so called Pedagogical Workshop in Jena, which was a satellite station of the ThILLM in that time, followed. All strings in education and in-service training for teachers and pilot projects for school development were pulled together in this workshop. The exposed problems of Regelschule Schmiedefeld were picked up by the persons in charge and an inclusion of the head teacher and other colleagues as "career changers" into running in-service courses, like for example into the project "Moderation of School Development" followed. These courses focussed information concerning theories of school development. During these courses we tried to establish contacts to reform pedagogical oriented persons. The representatives of Jenaplan attracted our special interest. We participated in all offered seminars including „Netz-Werk-Statt Jenaplan 21“. Additionally to the ThILLM seminars observations of lessons and discussions at Jenaplan schools in Jena and Suhl provided a versatile picture of the possibilities of the practical implementation of Jenaplan theories in the present time. We were introduced into mixed age, cross curricular and differentiated teaching as well as into the usage of new teaching methods, which underlay the implementation of these basic approaches. Upon this a team which dealt with the topic "Projects as a teaching method" using chosen pedagogical literature was founded. The head teacher herself grasped the idea of getting into contact and getting support from ThILLM. Joining in the first Jenaplan congress she was on her own. As a reaction to the information and theoretical approaches concerning school development imparted during the first in-service trainings a group of moderators was founded at school.

She herself, her former deputy head teacher as well as 4 more colleagues became members. She tried to involve more and more colleagues in joining in the ThILLM seminars. She also paid attention to the fact that especially members of the group of moderators are represented in the seminars as well. She also joined in nearly all seminars herself. Getting into contact with the staff members of Pedagogical Workshop Jena, the participation in the in-service courses and seminars and the inclusion into the network of Jenaplan schools, first as a "Jenaplan inspired Secondary Modern School", marked in the starting point of the school year 1995/96, the stage of initiation of our school development process, an important and meaningful step.

Thus not only the school development process was initiated, but also a cornerstone for its direction and contents were placed. Out of lots of intensive discussions with Jenaplan teachers the hope grew in us that Jenaplan pedagogy offers initial stages for a solution to our problems as well as concerning new structures and forms of learning and teaching, but also related to the fact that our school will be very small. Even through the deep discussions, in connection to observations of lessons at Jenaplan Schule Jena and Suhl, and the various information connected to management/leading and organisation of these schools we were sensitive to the preferences and chances, but also the problems of these alternative schools. Due to becoming a member of a network of reform pedagogical thinking teachers and head teachers not only the knowledge about topics and aspects of school development with the participating teachers was extended, but also the power of community encouraged us to force the process of innovation at our school.

The further steps and stages on the way of school development of ImPULS- Schule are summarized chronologically on a table - see attachment 7.

### **Funding of the ILE**

*How is it funded?*

In Thuringia schools can only dispose about a small amount of self accountability in the area of school finances. The teachers are chosen, staffed and financed by the federal state. Head teachers have in a certain way a voice within this choice. Because of a too large amount of teachers (more than the schools can employ) for years no or only a few new colleagues get employed. Therefore the head teacher can only try to influence secondments or transfers of teachers. ImPULS- Schule is under the aegis of the administrative district. It finances the building, equipment or physical resources and the technical staff.

The head teacher can make purchase decisions of up to 400, 00. The accounting is with an authority of the administrative district called Landratsamt. All larger purchases require the decision of the body maintaining the school. The school has a so called ThILLM budget of a maximum of 1000, 00 Euros per year at its disposal for teacher training/in-service courses for teachers.

Sponsoring is possible with the help of a society which supports the school called "Schulförderverein". Because ImPULS- Schule is located within an economically weak- developed region we can only count on a little support of companies.

### **Learning Outcomes**

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

The students of ImPULS- Schule learn self-accountably.

At the beginning of a day they fix their targets of the day and they reflect on them the following morning.

In addition to that they fix targets of the week in assembly of their learning group or class called

Morgenkreis which are reflected by themselves, class mates or the teachers at the end of the week in another assembly of the learning group or class called Freitagskreis. At the beginning of the school year every student agrees on an individual so called "learning contract", which has been reflected several times during the school year and which is talked about with teachers and parents. Due to our practice of cooperative learning we can assess whether the students are able to work responsibly in groups. With it they pay attention in a sensible division of tasks and in using the strength of the individual. Following the rules of group work represents an essential condition for successful working. The students of ImPULSSchule get trained to present the results of their work in a substantive and sophisticated way. Very often they assess their performance self critically afterwards and they get feedback from their class mates. The reflections are based on criteria; the so called Rubrics are used therefore as a means of assessment, among others, at our schools. The cognitive performance depends strongly on the learning conditions the students have. Basically students with Hauptschule or Realschule qualifications attend, according to our Thuringian School system, our kind of school called "Regelschule". A small number of so called Gymnasium (Grammar School) students also attend the school. It's our aim to support every single student according to his/her conditions in learning competence.

As a result, the path of development and –progress of the individual is important to us. Statistical comparisons of average values are only available in a very small amount and they do not play a dominant role to our individual learning guidance.

### **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 development at ImpULS- Schule is based on a school intern quality management, the so called ImpULS- School Development- Cycle (see attachment 8). Following to the school concept an annual school development plan is discussed and agreed (see attachment 9- summary of the main points of the school development plan 2008/09 and attachment 10- example of a so called “activity sheet” to the main focus area “Cross curricular lessons”). The content of the school development plan is based on the so called activity plans of the school development teams. In these activity plans the teams fix their long term targets as well as their annual targets and the derived activities which are planned, to reach them. Besides that all teams note how to record their activities and results and which qualification they need. To establish the annual school development plan the group of moderators sights the activity plans and generalises the targets and activities on school level. The group of moderators also discusses further developing areas seen from a whole- school point of view. These are also incorporated into the school development plan. The draft of the school development plan which is worked out by the group of moderators is discussed, changed and, after that, agreed during a staff meeting. During the school year talks about the activity plans take place between the school management and the teams to establish a relation to the school development plan and to reflect the stage of development together.

At the end of the school year a second reflection round per team with the school management takes place to check the implementation of the plans and to “account” for the activity plan. The results of the reflection are summarised in a so called report of experiences which can be seen as the main part of the team portfolios. Other materials of the team portfolio can be: materials from the lesson, products of students work, protocols, reflections of shorter time periods, planning instruments, like for example school intern curricula.

These team portfolios are reviewed systematically by the school management during the summer holidays. On the basis of the handed in documents and materials the school management works out the strengths and weaknesses per team and per school development area. They summarise these statements into “Trends of school development” (attachment 11) related to the past school year. In the first pedagogical conference at the beginning of the school year these trends are sighted by the colleagues and conclusions are drawn by the teachers, the teams, the group of moderators and the school management. This is the basis for working out the activity plans of the new school year whereby the cycle starts again from its beginning.

Concepts, reports and results of our work can be found at the homepage of our school:

[www.schule-schmiedefeld.de](http://www.schule-schmiedefeld.de)

As further reference the school report within the school development project “Self-accountable school” (see attachment 1) is to be seen.

In a film called: Das können wir doch auch! Wie Schulen in Deutschland mit Heterogenität umgehen (GEW-Shopc/o Call a Gift, Schafgasse 23, 63225 Langen) (We also can do that! How schools get on with heterogeneity) they also report about our school.