

Germany-Thuringia

Jenaplan-Schule Jena

This school includes kindergarten, primary school, and different levels of secondary education for students aged 3 to 19/20. Students with minor physical and/or learning difficulties are integrated in mixed aged classes. Teachers cooperate in teams, including team-teaching and peer-coaching among teachers. Students learn partly in cross-grade and partly in homogenous age groupings, in different work forms including open learning and interdisciplinary project work that are organised with individual week plans. The schedule is periodic with a focus on changing subjects every 3 to 4 weeks in areas like history or geography. School days and weeks are structured by recurring routines, like a morning assembly and an end-of-week meeting. Written reports are used to replace or supplement traditional grading, and emphasis is placed on students' peer- and self-assessment.

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

Other Keywords: alternative philosophy

General Information

Name of the ILE: Jenaplan-Schule Jena

Location/Address: Tatzendpromenade 9, 07745 Jena, Thuringia, Germany

Website: www.jenaplan-schule-jena.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 21st century learning challenges?

Due to its specific features and forms of organisation, the school Jenaplan Schule (further on named Jenaplan School) is able to respond to the 21st century learning challenges by applying the following aspects:

- mixed age groups with all consequences resulting from this fact such as learning in an atmosphere without competition leading to a higher motivation
- individualisation of the learning and the evaluation process
- integration of students with minor physical challenges and/or learning difficulties
- consistent concept of basic democracy
- a student-teacher relationship marked by warmth, sympathy, empathy and confidence

Evidence

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

We are encouraged to further pursue our concept by the regular feedback the school receives from former students, from various authorities as well as from the visitors we have hosted within the past years.

Feedback of former students:

- Equipped with the necessary hard and soft skills in order to successfully complete their academic education.
- Students with mental and physical challenges: are enabled to become an acknowledged and integrated member of society.

Feedback from authorities:

- Increasing acknowledgement by political representatives and local authorities.
- Successful participation in various competitions, work associations, programmes and networks, such as:
 - “Demokratisch Handeln” (4x)
 - “Eigenverantwortliche Schule“
 - “Blick über den Zaun“
 - “Jugend debattiert“
 - “Hörspielwettbewerb“
 - “Schule musiziert“
 - Mathematikolympiade
 - “Adam-Ries-Wettbewerb“
 - “Känguru-Wettbewerb“
 - “Schillerwettbewerb“
 - “Technikwettbewerb“
 - “Vorlesewettbewerb“
 - Schulkonzertwettbewerb “Kinder zum Olymp“
 - Sports: cross country competitions, volleyball
 - Contributions to local arts exhibitions
 - On a national scale: first prize in the federal competition “Erinnern für Gegenwart und Zukunft – Toleranz gewinnt”
 - 2006 “Deutscher Schulpreis” (Preisträger)
 - 2003 Theodor Heuss medal for the promotion of political education and culture in Germany and in Europe.

Feedback from visitors, for example:

- Calm, friendly and open atmosphere at school
- Good co-operation between students of different age groups
- Impressive presentation skills of the students
- Fair and supportive relationship between teachers
- Diversity of teaching methods
- Individualisation of the learning process

The above-average results which our students have received taking their O- and A-Levels serve as further evidence for the successful outcome of the school's initiative. Hereby it is remarkable that, in comparison to the average school, the discrepancy between the best and weakest results is extremely small.

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)

- acquiring basic skills and working methods
- increasing skills in individual and independent research
- installing ability to find own ways to collect and structure information
- applying working methods to a new context
- using new technology and media for research and presentation reflecting own achievements and own learning progress
- social interaction (e.g. during group work sequences)
- acquiring a sense of democracy and responsibility (e.g. class speakers, school speakers)
- tolerance of diversity and mutual respect
- integration and support of students with physical and mental challenges
- active participation in school life
- installation of regular practices (7th, 8th and 9th grade) as well as career guidance counselling for A-level students enable them to consciously choose a suitable career

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?

Number of students: 448

Ages: 3 - 20 years, all official kinds of school career, no Streaming (apart from the necessary ones in the Decisive school year 9)

Kindergarten: ages 3-6/7

+

Primary school: ages 7 – 9/10

(Qualifying) school leaving certificate after 9th grade: ages 9 – 15

Secondary modern school: ages 9 - 16

Grammar school: ages 16 – 19/20

Please note that this structure does not correspond to the one we apply. Our structure will be explained in 7.

Facilitators

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

Number of teachers: 43

Teachers: (3 kindergarten teachers)

1 special education teacher + 2 aides (not fully employed)

4 nursery school teachers (not fully employed)

4 primary school teachers.

Remaining: secondary and grammar school teachers

1 school counsellor/social worker

- usually trained in at least 2 subjects
- some with supplementary training (teachers' counsellor, students' counsellor, NL)
- close professional co-operation between all branches

Structure:

Principalship: principal (Ms Gisela John), vice principal (Mr Thomas Röher), leader of secondary education team (Mr Harald Zeil) extended principalship: (Ms Britta Müller, public relations)

Role:

- no traditional hierarchy, co-operative management
- installation of a coordinating steering group taking over tasks of a regular principalship as a democratic device in order to attain a higher degree of transparency and participation (one representative of each team participates in regular meetings every week); discussion of questions of common interest and co-ordination of weekly work plan (appointments, conferences, school visits, etc.)
- teachers co-operate in teams, work and act individually and interdependently; have full freedom of decision and responsibility, which motivate team members
- within the teams: team-teaching, regular visits and counselling, supervision
- various team meetings (pre-school, primary, secondary, grammar school)
- department meetings (science, foreign languages, social studies & history)
- meetings of groups of common interest (school yard planning group, group for pedagogical development, for school renovation and healthy lunch)
- regular plenary conferences of all teams: discussion of current issues, new projects, arrangements and agreements annual seclusion: evaluation of the school year, reflection of projects, setting of new goals)
- regular balancing and external assessment by external supervisor raising questions and setting new foci of development
- regular exchange with other schools (including multilateral visits)

Role of parents:

It is the sincere intention of the school to include parents in all activities at school (school life, lessons, development of new structures, special events). All ideas and planned changes are discussed with the parents; they actively participate in the decision-making processes. Of course, all pedagogic issues concerning their own children are being discussed and explained.

Beside frequent informal talks, official parent-teacher meetings take place on a regular monthly basis, where all teachers are available for the parents.

All the above mentioned devices provide new stimuli for immanent school development and help setting new goals.

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?

At Jenaplan School, the work at all stages of a student's school career is closely connected; one step logically follows the other. Consequently, students have no difficulties in the transition from one school form to the next, as there are no organizational barriers. Methods and working techniques are implemented at primary school and are developed further in the following years up to grammar school.

Key features of learning at Jenaplan School:

- structuring of knowledge and lessons and grouping of students according to their needs, thus creating open learning situations with room for individual daily and weekly study and work rhythm (e.g. no traditional 45-minute lessons in only homogeneous age groups)
- combination of learning in mixed age groups (Stammgruppen) and homogeneous age groups (Kurs)
- mixture of project work and courses (exclusively taught: foreign languages, maths, all others accompanying the projects)
- project: involving 3 working steps, increasingly several subjects connected by contents (in order to avoid redundancy and to enable to student to think outside the box)
- periodical schedule (subjects: history, geography, natural science, 3-4 weeks, 3 lessons per week; students acquire knowledge on a special sub-topic belonging to a given main topic)
- rituals/routines structuring the school day and school week: morning assembly (every Monday morning, discussing current issues) end of week ceremony (every Friday afternoon, presentation of weekly work results or special group activities)
- teacher is partner in learning process, no transmitter of knowledge, raises curiosity and makes student a discoverer or a research scientist
- all students are taught together (including those with physical and mental challenges, partly supported by special education teacher)
- recently established individual study time (50 minutes once a week, students revise and study individually, teachers available for support)

Details:

Primary school: - basically preparation period for project work

- installation of the so-called weekly work plans ("Wochenpläne")

- duration: a fortnight, 7 lessons per week per student

- topics: from the fields of geography, history, biology, etc. or topics of general interest to the students

- tasks corresponding to the level of knowledge of the learners

- individualisation of special contents

- supplementary tasks for those who cope with everything easily, support for those in need

- increasing self-evaluation _ increasing responsibility for own learning process

From early secondary school:

- projects in heterogeneous age groups
- clear structure and rules
- rituals have to be included
- 3 stages:

1. Introductory phase (prepared & conducted by teacher in order to open students' minds to the topic; activate knowledge, make curious, state a clear frame about what to be expected by the students; enable him/her to choose a topic of personal interest)

2. Acquisition of knowledge (basically individual work phase; pupils get an idea of the dimensions of their topic; teacher observes, analyses & helps if necessary; pupils study material on their topic provided by their teacher; pupils help each other with practical issues/skills _ = feedback of their own skills, social experience of being needed and important)
3. Presentation phase (students present work results, make a whole of the fragments and reflect the work process _ ambition to acquire the most knowledge possible and to present it the best way, reflection of the work process)
4. Evaluation process (students: balancing and drawing conclusions for the following projects; afterwards > teacher: evaluation of process, oral presentation and written results)

10th grade - homogeneous age group for organisational reasons (due to the O-level exams)

Grammar school:

- Consistent continuation of all above mentioned principles and structures
- Particularities: semesters 11/1 and 13/2 are taught in heterogeneous age groups
- Current changes in the structure of Thüringen A-levels are being adopted by the teams (regarding contents of projects and curriculum)
- 11th grade: established projects connecting several subjects; persisting ambitions to continue this work

Beside the projects there is a variety of other hands-on forms of learning and teaching, such as learning at stations, experiments, exercises, debates and discussions, role plays and short forms of drama, in which the students alternately work individually, in pairs or in groups.

Materials/curriculum:

- school specific curriculum is based on the official federal curriculum
- alternating rhythm (3 year rotation because of the mixed age groups)
- project plans for the whole academic year
- project plans for particular projects
- internal school standards

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?

General context:

Learning takes place in one building complex which has been housing our school since 2002 and which has been under permanent renovation and reconstruction. When kindergarten and primary school first moved into the building in 2000, it was in a rather dilapidated state, so that teachers, students and parents volunteered to help with the redecoration of the rooms and thus created their own environment. In 2010, the final reconstruction will be conducted; therefore a temporary relocation will be necessary again.

Each heterogeneous “Stammgruppe” has their own room with a computer for research. In addition to that, there are rooms for specific subjects such as sciences, arts, music, crafts, computer science. There is a gymnasium, a sports ground, a football and basketball area as well as a playground. The auditory hall is used on a regular basis for presentations, exams, conferences and lessons. After school it is available for leisure activities.

There is a student’s library and a variety of working areas in the corridors to be used individually during lesson times.

Since Jenaplan School is an all-day school, students can get a hot meal at the school canteen and a cafeteria, which is run by students, can be frequented during break time.

Due to the students’ continuous participation in the decoration according to their needs and in the maintenance of the building and the rooms, they feel responsible for them.

The school has become a working and living area for them where they move around freely and know where to go for information and material, etc. As a result, there are only extremely rarely cases of damage to property.

There are two official staff rooms for the teachers to work in. The students have free access to them at any time. In addition to that, teachers have individual work spaces in a separate area. The secretary's office connects the two rooms of the principal ship.

Environment

The facilities can be used by people from the surrounding quarter and there is a close co-operation with various organisations and institutions in town (e.g. university, university of applied science, Imaginata, enterprises like Goepel Electronics and the Schott-Zeiss Bildungswerk). Local politicians and representatives of other institutions are regular guests at our school.

History of ILE

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

The school and all processes concerned are based on a particular concept.

It was newly founded after 1989 by a group of committed parents and teachers who wanted to implement their pedagogic ambitions and concept in a new learning environment. In Jena, it could be built on a pedagogic tradition established by Peter Petersen at his original Jenaplan School.

After a long time of experimental state, during which the school had been assessed on a regular basis and had to constantly report its progress to the board of education, there is currently only one element being researched and observed and, therefore, subsidised (50% public relations), which is assessment. Apart from this part, there are no special regulations and obligations. Nonetheless, we still pursue the same pedagogical goals and principles of education: The focus remains on the optimal support of the learning progress of the individual student.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

As stated above, Jenaplan School is a state school and receives, therefore, no additional subsidies than the ones provided to other schools. There is, however, a beneficial organisation of the name Arbeitskreis Jenaplanpädagogik e.V. (255 members from all over Germany), which was acknowledged by the social association "Jugendhilfe" in 1996, and which has been financing the kindergarten, the salary of the school social worker (Schulsozialarbeit), the school counsellor (Schuljugendarbeit).

Furthermore, it grants financial support to families in need whenever there is a school trip and in addition to that there is a fund for school equipment, material and excursions.

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 are enabled and have the possibility to take all official school leaving examinations at Jenaplan School. In this context, our focus is on the provision of the best conditions and facilities to empower each individual student to gain his or her ultimate learning progress. In order to achieve this, teachers and students have developed a diverse measurement system in which the individual is the only relation basis. In the process of assessment, students are not rated in comparison to each other.

Without neglecting official standards, our evaluation system shows ways to further individual progression.

Examples:

Primary school: no grades, detailed verbal evaluations (by the teacher and first steps to self-assessment)

Secondary school: grades (1-6) demanded by school authorities from 7th grade onwards, but additional verbal evaluations, continuing self-assessment and assessment of and by classmates Grammar school: grades (point system 15-0), specific individual verbal assessments after projects and course papers, continuing self- and mutual assessment of/by students, introduction of portfolio School reports: handed out twice a year in a thirty minute session in the presence of student and parents, the older the students get, the more the focus is on self-evaluation and reflection of the individual learning process, students increasingly set own goals (portfolio).

Consistent assessment as practised, in our view, should contribute to the school's general goal which is to bring forth human beings who become fit members of society, able to:

- participate in political and democratic processes
- form their own opinion
- use the acquired skills and knowledge to further broaden their horizons
- transfer knowledge and skills to new contexts
- remain curious to acquire new knowledge
- practice tolerance and acceptance towards people who are different
- adopt to the new challenges of an always changing world

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)

- Books: “Die Jenaplan-Schule Jena. Band 1.” 1997 “Die Jenaplan-Schule Jena. Band 2. “2003 “Ein neuer Jenaplan. Befreiung zum Lernen“. 2008
- Films: Treibhäuser der Zukunft, Jenaplan-Schule Jena“documentaries (e.g. 37°)
- Flyers
- Website
- Various newspaper articles and radio broadcasts