

Switzerland (Bern)

Lernwelt Volksschule NMS Bern

This private secondary school for students aged 13 to 16 (grades 7 to 9/10) uses a special teaching concept for most of their subjects, with a focus on students' autonomous and independent work with three sorts of activities: Input sessions, during which knowledge is communicated to the students, "atelier" sessions, during which contents are deeply processed with tasks that the students conduct independently, and interactive classes, during which teachers and students are in constant interaction. The different rooms in the school have different rules, i.e., some require absolute silence; others allow whispering or talking during collaboration. The students have a learning diary in which they document their planning and progress. Yearly, there are four personal discussions between student and teacher.

Main Focus of Innovation: CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANIZATION

General Information

Name of the ILE: Lernwelt Volksschule NMS Bern

Location/Address: Waisenhausplatz 293011 Bern

Website: <http://www.nmsbern.ch/volksschule/profil-/profil.html>

Rationale

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

The “Lernwelt” is an innovative teaching concept, which focuses on autonomy and self-dependent learning of the learners. The concept allows the learners to actively acquire (a) knowledge, (b) skills and (c) attitudes in different and individually fitting ways. The combination of these three concepts will prepare the road to success in a later career.

Evidence

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

- Relatively young concept, first school students left in 2005. They all are still in education.
- Signs within the “Lernwelt”: Students organize their learning autonomously and independently. They constantly readjust to new situations and apply what they have learnt. They seek the necessary help from the teachers. They collaborate actively with other learners (also for a longer time period – in a project style) in order to obtain results and products. Thereby they use appropriate technical tools/means/material.

Evidence of these competencies becomes apparent:

- At the preparation and realization of the “working week” (8th grade): learners search autonomously an external work place/employment, introduce themselves, work for a week in a new environment and apply their learnt strategies.
 - During the language stay aboard the procedure and the necessary competencies are the same: The environment however is clearly more complex due to the foreign language and the different culture.
- 10th school year¹: high quota of graduation at “Sekundarschule”²-level. Many students take the opportunity to graduate or make a diploma
 - “Realschule”³-level: clearly less discouragement
 - Evaluation 2005: The first students had experienced 3 years of “Lernwelt” and replied to questions on this topic (internet). The answers (see enclosure) gave conclusions whether “Lernwelt” obtained the challenging goals. The questions were prepared, realized and evaluated by the group who initiated “Lernwelt” in 2002 (direction: Dominik Baumgartner).

¹ In Switzerland 9 years of school are compulsory. There is a possibility to add a 10th year, funded by the canton, in special situations and under defined conditions.

² “Sekundarschule” and “Realschule” are types of schooling for grade 7 to 9, where the more advanced students attend “Sekundarschule” and the weaker (and often more manually orientated) students attend “Realschule”. For highest achieving students, a third type, “Untergymnasium” is offered.

³ See footnote 2

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)

Main learning aims:

- Self-determined, holistic and active learning. To apply what has been learned and to link it with other learning contents.

Knowledge to be achieved:

- Depending on the level (Real- / Sekundarschule): the requested minimum standard of the curriculum of the canton of Bern.

Skills to be achieved:

- To read and understand tasks, realization according to the request
- To apply adapted means
- To plan and organize autonomously, also for a longer time period
- To collaborate with partners: to accept help and to help others
- Presentation of developed products
- During interactive classes/teaching: to listen, to talk, to act, to assume responsibility, to integrate in a community, collaborate actively

Attitudes to be achieved:

- Positive approach to learning: to realize that knowledge and skills lead to progress
- Willingness to lifelong learning: success motivates on this path
- To participate actively in everyday school life
- To assume responsibility, to be disposed to integrate in a community
- Interest in subject matters

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?

Grades 7 – 9/10

13-16 years old students

Learners for this approach:

- Learners who show interest for teaching contents
- Learners who can already work independently/autonomously or who are ready to learn it
- Learners who have realized that organization and planning is important in order to be able to work independently
- Learners who are able to adapt to specific learning environments (“Input”: to concentrate, to assimilate contents; “Interactive classes”: interest in offered activities; “Atelier”: perseverance, dealing with tasks, concentration)
- Learners who see an advantage in collaboration between teacher and learners and who want to come away from the traditional attitude “teachers are policemen”

24 students per class, in “Atelier”: 3-4 classes together and side-by-side

In total 12 classes, almost 300 learners.

Facilitators

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

Teachers who teach the following subjects: German, French, Mathematics, Science

Persons in charge:

Head and teachers of the department “Volksschule” (compulsory education)

Professional background of the teachers/facilitators:

Graduation as a teacher for grade-level 7-9, additional training depending on interests (counselling, communication skills, support of slow learners and quick learners, advanced training/education in languages according to ESP⁴).

Professional background of the leader of the school:

Corresponding education/training

Roles of the teacher:

- “Input”: to impart knowledge. To give overview over the learning contents. To establish context
- “Interactive classes/teaching”: training skills, teaching how to apply knowledge
- “Atelier”: teacher is consulting: helping, consulting, intervening (basic conditions have to be guaranteed)
- Counselling: in personal dialogue/discussion: to analyze situations, to develop solutions, to plan realizations, to fix agreements

“Morgeneinstieg” (Morning rite): to strengthen the class cohesion, to develop community rules, to enforce rituals, to introduce and try learning strategies

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?

“Lernwelt” encompasses instruction and learning in German, French, Mathematics, NMM⁵. The other subjects are taught traditionally, whereby we also respond as far as possible to the requirements of teaching in the 21st century.

Learning in the “Lernwelt” is mainly organized in three parts: Input, Atelier, and Interactive classes/teaching.

“Input”: knowledge is communicated, in order to be continued afterwards either in an “atelier” or in “interactive classes/teaching”.

In the “atelier”, tasks resulting from the “input” are treated

- Which have to be handled until the next input or until the next “interactive class/teaching”. These are a shorter tasks mainly for younger learners, since the latter still have to learn the autonomous learning
- Or which are handled as a project during a defined time period (a week, several weeks, a quarter or a semester). These projects have to be planned, realized and presented autonomously. The teacher is available for consulting. Projects that last a longer time period are discussed with the supervising teacher.

⁴ ESP: European Language Portfolio (further information: www.sprachenportfolio.ch)

⁵ NMM ist he acronym for NaturMenschUmwelt, school subject which deals with nature, humans and environment – including subjects like Science, geography, history

Description of “atelier”: Approximately 2 lessons per day in the subject German, French, Mathematics, NMM.

The new teaching contents of the input are deepened (shorter tasks) or a longer lasting project is treated, learners may have access to help: Medias, books, solutions, posters, partners, and teachers. The necessary skills are applied: oral, written, acting. Teacher and partner are constantly available. Teachers are *consulting*.

- In the “atelier” learners work individually, in pairs or in groups. In the easiest case the learners solve a worksheet from a theme of the input. But the tasks are considerably more various:
 - Foreign languages: learning dialogs, holding an interview, developing together a learning content, learning together for a test, interrogating each other, playing language games, reading texts, listening (headphones)
 - NMM: conducting and recording experiences, research in media centre and internet, writing entries in notebooks, shaping, gluing
 - German: writing texts, reading, listening (headphones), preparing presentations, developing dialogs
- In the “atelier” there are clearly defined rooms:
 - Oasis: absolute silence
 - Whispering rooms: basically individual work, but whispering is allowed for explanations
 - Quiet voices: rooms for work in pairs, for explanations which cannot be whispered
 - Group rooms: here you can discuss (cf. foreign languages: exercise dialogs)
 - Teachers give explanations mostly in “quiet voices”-rooms

“Interactive classes/teaching” can follow directly the input or the atelier (for shorter atelier tasks):

Description of “Interactive classes/teaching”: In constant interaction, new knowledge is applied and thereby deepened: orally, acting. Teachers and partners are constantly available. Teachers are *guiding*.

- In interactive classes we work mainly acting and orally (normally a whole class together in one room):
 - Foreign languages: listening to texts and talking about them, reading, talking, discussing, teamwork and work in pairs where teacher participates actively, listening to dialogs which have been prepared in the “atelier”
 - German: developing texts, interpreting, class conversations/discussions, elaborating and exercising grammar rules
 - NMM: conducting more complex experiments and talking about them, drawing conclusions, developing information from texts...

Homework results from input and “interactive classes/teaching”. With homework, learners do another step on the way to independence, since the help from the school is no longer available. “Input”, “atelier” and “interactive classes/teaching” made it possible that the homework can be done autonomously and that the learners understand the sense of homework.

“Input” of the next day: The learning contents of the previous day are resumed, discussed, once again explained, deepened and pursued.

Further elements of the “Lernwelt”:

Counselling: Personal discussions between a teacher and a student (e.g. 4 times 20 minutes per year): Analyzing the situation, developing solutions, planning realizations, fixing agreements. The consultations support the learners in their independence.

“Bildungspass” (learning diary): The learners keep a “Bildungspass”, kind of agenda, where they record their dates/deadlines, “atelier” tasks, homework, aims for the quarter, achievements, success and failure, comments, reflections. The “Bildungspass” is basis for each counsel; arrangements between student and counsellor are entered in the “Bildungspass”, too.

The “Bildungspass” enjoys great popularity and is a personal and emotionally rich instrument for planning, realization and reflection of the learners about their work.

Example of a schedule of a 7th grade learner

8.00 – 8.20	Morning rite	Morning rite	Morning rite	Morning rite	Music
8.25 – 8.45	Input German	Englisch	Input French	Interakt German	Music
8.55 – 9.15	Input Math	Englisch	Englisch	Interakt German	Music
9.20 – 9.40	Input NMM 1	Interakt German	Englisch	Atelier	Music
10.00 – 10.20	Input French	Input Math	Atelier	Atelier	Interakt F
10.25 – 10.45	Interakt French	Atelier	Atelier	Sports	Input
10.55 – 11.15	Atelier	Atelier	Interakt	Sports	NMM1
11.20 – 11.40	Atelier	Input French	NMM1	Sports	Atelier
11.50 – 12.10	Interakt NMM 1	Interakt French		Sports	Atelier
12.15 – 12.35					Atelier
12.45 – 13.05					Input
13.10 – 13.30	Input NMM 2	Interakt NMM1	craft and	visual arts	NMM2
13.40 – 14.00	Atelier	Interakt NMM1	creative work	visual arts	
14.05 – 14.25	Atelier	Atelier	craft and	visual arts	
14.35 – 14.55	Interakt NMM 2	Atelier	creative work	visual arts	
15.00 – 15.20	Interakt NMM 2				Sports
15.30 – 15.50	Input Math				Sports
15.55 – 16.15	Input Math				

NMM1 = History, Geography, NMM2 = Science, Interakt = “interactive classes/teaching

Collaboration between learners and teachers

Depending on the learning context (Input, Atelier, interactive classes/teaching): see above: role of the teacher

Applied pedagogy

After many visits in other schools and on the basis of our own pedagogical experiences, we have tried to reach independence and autonomy aligned to the age of the learners. This corresponds to the guidelines of the NMS to lay the emphasis on autonomous learning

Besides we are integrating the consulting activity between teacher/facilitator and learner which also satisfies a big need.

Curriculum

Curriculum of the canton of Bern. Depending on the level: “Realschule”, “Sekundarschule”, “Untergymnasium”.

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?

Context:

- Input: classroom, guided teaching
- “Atelier”: different rooms, depending on the room other rules are applied: absolute silence, whispering, talking: collaboration
- Interactive teaching: classroom, group rooms, outdoor, museums, etc.

Environment:

- Classrooms: arranged in such a way that all necessary means for input and an interactive teaching are available. Appropriate arrangement and room decoration create a comfortable learning climate.
- “Ateliers”: abundant room. Various rooms so that everybody can learn according to his or her type of learning. Meeting room. All necessary technical material (ITC), Medias, books, solutions, experiments are available. Creation of a comfortable learning climate/atmosphere by appropriate arrangement and room decoration

Use of resources:

- “Atelier”: each teacher is helping each learner; if possible we organize learning partnerships amongst learners (short- or long-term)
- NMS offers “LernBar” (learning bar): qualified teacher give private lessons, exam preparing courses, catch-up-lessons or give specific courses: exploratory learning, networking the acquired knowledge and applying it in other contexts, sports programs

History of ILE

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

Initiation:

“Lernwelt” was initiated by Dominik Baumgartner (as head of the school) accompanied by two teachers (Samuel Loosli and Betina von Gunten)

Planning period in 2000 - 2002

Start in 2002/2003

Reasons for creation:

Private schools always have to be innovative, so that potential clients realize an added value and a clear difference to public schools. At the end of the 20th century the public schools realized a lot of what before only private schools practiced, therefore a new step was necessary.

Purpose:

- To allow autonomous and self-responsible learning in order to enable the students to cope with the requirements of the 21st century.
- To give learning a relevance by taking another approach. To communicate learning contents in such a way that the learners realize a sense and a context and for this reason assume the responsibility for their learning
- Learners spend a big part of their day at school where knowledge, skills and attitudes should be experienced as meaningful and constructive, so that lifelong learning arouses interest.

The purpose did not change. The relocation to “Aarhof” (a new school building) even caused a re-enforcement of the autonomous and self-responsible learning.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

Per capita contribution of the canton: CHF 2000 per year, the rest is funded by tuitions of the parents: CHF 2020.- per quarter (siblings get reductions, partly municipalities/communities are paying a contribution to the tuition, from municipality to municipality this amount is variable). Besides the parents have to bear the costs for learning material. Here we strive for a second-hand market, in order to keep the costs low.

Comparison: a learner who follows school in the canton of Bern costs CHF 17'579.- per year (cost data of the department of education Bern)

Learning Outcomes

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

- Relatively young project, first graduates left school in 2005, therefore they are still in the process of education.
- “Realklassen”(classes of “Realschule”⁶-level): learners are clearly less discouraged and are willing to learn
- 10th school year: high quota of “Sekundarschule”-graduates → better chances for further education or apprenticeships
- Most school leavers transfer to post-compulsory institutions and are ready to continue to learn
- Most of the “Untergymnasium”⁷-students enter the NMS-“Gymnasium”, since there teaching will tie in with the methods introduced in the “Lernwelt”
- Lots of students take advantage of the possibility to graduate or to obtain diplomas, partly in Switzerland, partly abroad (disposition to network the acquired knowledge and to apply it in other contexts)

Learning assessment:

In grade 10, learning aims and progresses are recorded in the “work journal”, in grade 7 – 9 in the “Bildungspass” and in the counselling sessions. Regressions are analyzed. Counselling sessions take part once a quarter in every school year. Discussions with parents normally are once a year.

Knowledge:

Learning objective tests after a meaningful unit. Basic and extended learning objectives are evaluated in accordance with the level.

Skills are tested in combination with the knowledge expected to be acquired, whether they are correctly applied: e.g. reading and understanding, working with appropriate means, planning and organizing a longer-lasting work, handling and presenting a common project with subsequent evaluation.

Concerning languages, we follow the standards defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages⁸ in the areas hearing, reading, talking and writing.

Attitudes:

Attitudes are assessed at the end of the semester/term as equal part to the performance (to be found in the report under the rubric “working-, learning- and social attitude”)

⁶ see footnote 2

⁷ see footnote 5

⁸ see www.coe.int/T/DG4/linguistic/

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)

Brochure NMS

Website: www.nmsbern.ch

Evaluation: carried out in 2005

Other forms of documentation: PowerPoint-presentation for introducing “Lernwelt” at information events, various other documents

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

Enclosure

PowerPoint-presentation “Lernwelt”: Präsentation VS Ld komp.ppt

Results of the evaluation “Lernwelt” 2005: Lernwelt Auswertung 2005.pdf