Austria

BRG & WRG 8, Felgasse

An inner city school with high social and cultural diversity attended by students aged 10 to 18 years. The school has several innovative projects including a reading training for non-native speakers of German, voluntary afternoon classes focussing at cognitive and social competencies, classes taught in English (a foreign language for the students), peer training, a virtual learning environment in which teachers and students communicate and work, and an alternative grading system that is used in addition to state regulated grading and requires students to work with a list of learning objectives that they meet by means of portfolios, exams, project work, etc. Students have a reading pass in which they keep track of books that they read, and prizes are awarded at the end of the year to the most ambitious readers. Students work independently, but within limits set by the teachers.

Main focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION
Other keywords: equity, technology-rich

General Information

Name of the ILE: BRG&WRG 8, Feldgasse

Location/Address: Feldgasse 6-8, 1080 Wien

Website: www.feldgasse.at

ILE submitted by: Vienna Municipal School Board

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

In our school – an inner city school with high social and cultural diversity – we apply innovative teaching methods permitting students to learn with and from one another and providing for an individualisation of the learning process:

In years 2 and 4 our students learn different methods of learning. We use student-centred teaching methods such as "Eigenverantwortliches Arbeiten" (independent learning), open learning, projects, and assessment according to defined learning aims.
Learning processes are further individualised through the use of the MOODLE platform and by providing students with learning materials via our local IT network. Information technology forms an integral part of our teaching approach.
To meet the needs of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds we have introduced extra training for reading and a "reading pass" in our first form to document individual progress.
Our Dual Language Programme in the lower cycle and the use of English as a working language with native speaker support in the upper cycle – especially in the sciences – helps prepare our students for an international working environment.

In the afternoon we offer additional support in main subjects as well as sports and creative subjects. Students may either learn individually, on their own, or participate in various activities. Moreover, we also offer additional support for students with a migration background.
In both the lower and upper cycles, we have, under school autonomy provisions, developed and introduced subjects that permit active and holistic learning.

Lower cycle: Science (physics and chemistry, which are usually taught separately in Austria) including lab sessions, computer aided geometry (in the science branch), computer aided design (in the economics branch).

Upper cycle: Work techniques and presentation skills, science lab (for physics, chemistry and biology), economics and special-purpose math, project management, science or business English depending on the branch, plus preparation for external exams such as Cambridge Certificates or special business certificates.

In our upper cycle, we have introduced innovative forms of organisation: Based on a modular principle, the curriculum is divided into standard courses and elective courses; allowing students to make their own timetable as far as elective modules are concerned. In what is called "special era" projects, students work individually and independently on interdisciplinary topics from German, history and arts, documenting their progress in a portfolio.
Our students can prepare for external certificates such as ECDL and language certificates, if they wish to do so. By participating in international competitions such as the annual Kangaroo Math Competition, they get to know international test formats, which are also used in international studies such as PISA.
We encourage our students to acquire social skills: We offer combined lessons for communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution for first-years and peer mediation provided by upper cycle students.

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

Our school participated in Austria's pilot scheme to establish national standards for education for the subjects German, English and mathematics and we are now working on national standards for science subjects.

Apart from legally binding assessment methods and marking schemes for school reports, we rely on assessment according to defined learning aims as well as the submission of portfolios by students in several subjects.

Moreover, students have successfully obtained external certificates (ECDL, Cambridge Certificates, certificates showing their achievements in contests such as IMO and IPHO, and their national equivalents). We plan to have our modular approach for the upper cycle evaluated by experts and are currently evaluating our school-specific subjects (work techniques, presentation skills, lab, etc.) in-house. Classroom activities and projects are frequently documented in photos, and our website also documents school events and activities.

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)

After 8 years, students can pass the matriculation exam, which gives access to university studies.
After these eight years, students should not only have acquired cognitive competencies, but also social ones, such as team spirit, for instance. Our aim is to help students to become self-reliant and independent individuals capable of lifelong learning and able to use today's media in a responsible and critical manner.
The aims of our modular upper cycle project are set forth in the application submitted to the school authorities. For the modular upper cycle, we adapted the national curriculum according to legal requirements, and we developed specific curricula for the subjects introduced under school autonomy provisions.

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?

Students in our school are between 10 and 18 years old. Only students that meet admission criteria for academic secondary schools (good marks in primary school, no mark below 2 in German and math is accepted) or students having passed an entrance examination are entitled to enrol. During their school life, all students benefit from the relevant innovative learning environment in line with their age. There are 560 students, 350 in the lower cycle (ages 10-14) and 210 in the upper cycle (ages 15-18), in both age groups around 50% are female.

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

All teachers have a university degree in their subjects. Teachers teaching school-specific subjects have obtained various post-graduate certificates. Some teachers have acquired additional qualifications at university colleges of teacher education and have followed in-service teacher training courses. Teachers understand their role as coaches accompanying the learning process, and as learners themselves. Of course, from a legal point of view they still have to assess students.

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?

Teachers require students to achieve goals while supporting them by asking guiding questions and preparing materials that students can use to learn individually and independently. They try to make and keep students interested in various topics, treating students as equals who may also have access to and contribute special knowledge.

KOKOKO

In the first forms we offer lessons dedicated to social learning called KOKOKO (Cooperation, Communication and discussing Conflicts) organised by the class teacher (Klassenvorstand).

Peer Mediation

Specially trained peers, which are students of upper levels, help younger students to deal with their conflicts. The students of this group offer help during breaks. The meetings take place in a small extra-room, which is only used for the mediations. Peer mediators are guided by teachers with a post-graduate certificate.

Open learning with a work plan

The students are handed out a work plan. It´s a survey of what resources are available and what range of activities pupils can choose from. It shows whether there´s a feedback by the teacher or if the pupils have to check the results by themselves.
Pictograms tell the pupils if they are expected to do the work alone, in pairs or as a group. Other pictograms show, if the activity is compulsory or extra activity.

Sometimes they may choose out of a variety of activities, but must do a certain amount within this category. Pupils know that they must be able to present their work at the deadline and they might be tested on everything, which was obligatory. At the end of their work pupils will reflect their learning process.

In lower grades the choices are more limited since teachers offer the activities and materials. In all grades teachers set the deadline, when work has to be done. When students are used to this kind of learning and work more independently, they can also set their goals and put the main emphasis on what they are interested in. There might always be a consensus of minimum objectives to be done in a certain time.

The choices offered to the learners contain activities for all senses.

During phases of open learning students can choose what they want to do from a number of tasks. They can choose the partner they want to work with and can work at their own pace until the deadline. They can spend more time with the activities they are interested in, than in the ones they are not. Students can check some results themselves and assess their own work. They have the chance to practise and to find their own solutions. At the same time different students can work on different topics

Open learning gives slow students a chance to keep up and bright ones a chance to excel.

Teachers are not the only source of all wisdom in classroom. To avoid chaos in classroom rules and contracts are necessary.

Training for Klippert's learning methods

In the second and fourth form students receive training in learning techniques after Klippert. The methods students get to know are then used in the various lessons.

Students in the second form are offered a two-day training specializing in learning according to the work of Klippert. First, they analyse which type of learner they are and which methods best support their learning. After that, they get to know basic techniques for learning and working and are made familiar with communication and argumentation skills. These include designing posters and pages in the notebook clearly and transparently, applying reading techniques, looking up facts, highlighting important information in a text, producing excerpts and structuring and visualizing information. The training programme also contains recommendations to prepare for written exams and tests.

Methods acquired during the training are repeatedly used in various subjects and in various didactic scenarios. In year 4, the training is deepened and the repertoire of methods thus extended.

The Klippert training helps students to get to know methods and techniques for successful learning. Students are made familiar with key qualifications. They work with worksheets, produce posters and other learning materials and give short presentations. Students work in different social settings: in groups, with a partner or on their own.

LOB (LernzielOrientierte Beurteilung)

In addition to the grading required by state regulations, students are offered the opportunity for more self-responsibility in various subjects due to the alternative grading system LOB (grading according to learning objectives). Students receive a grading sheet which lists all necessary learning objectives for a class / semester. All results produced by students are recorded on the grading sheet; learning objectives not met can be made up for until a certain date and are then put down on the grading sheet.
Learning objectives that exceed the basic requirements for the completion of a class can also be met by individual achievements; i.e. for grades exceeding the mark required to pass a course ("Genügend") students can produce results in areas where they are especially gifted.

Learning objectives are met at various times throughout the school year: through participation in tests, active participation in class, revision, mini exams or open learning. On the grade sheet students can find a key telling them which number of successfully achieved learning objectives will result in a particular grade.

In lower forms students are offered the subject „Science"which gives an overview of basic knowledge in physics and chemistry. One lesson per week students spends time in the science lab, where they can carry out experiments and discover phenomena independently, supervised by physics- and a chemistry-teacher in team teaching.

Literacy competence

One of our teachers coordinates our school's strategies for increasing students' literacy competence. Special training may be given by German teachers, often in lessons where two teachers are responsible for the class, but literacy training is also encouraged in other subjects across the curriculum.

Reading pass

The "reading pass" was introduced to our students in 2008. Pupils are encouraged to keep a record of their reading by filling in books they've read for private purposes or in school. Neither light fiction nor books in the student's native language are excluded since we believe that it makes little difference what you read as

long as you read. Little prices and presents at the end of the school year are given out to good readers to acknowledge personal progress and effort.

Dyslexia training

We offer special training for students with dyslexia as an optional subject. Teachers offering this training have obtained post-graduate certificate

German as a foreign language

In the first and second forms, German as a foreign language is integrated in the German lessons. One lesson per week a second German teacher is provided to support students with difficulties with German, often by using methods of the Open Learning. For students with very little knowledge of German we offer optional classes in the afternoon for two hours per week.

Dual Language Program

The Dual Language Program is running with a native speaker. DLP classes get three extra English lessons combined with another subject (e.g. Geography in English).
The idea behind the program is to give students the opportunity to talk freely in English without the fear of making mistakes (as mistakes can affect final grades). The main focus is on actual language usage and not on being absolutely perfect. So while major mistakes may be corrected, and pronunciation is improved it is only done in a way to improve communication skills.

The use of various methods is an important part of the learning process such as interactive exercises, worksheets and role plays simulating everyday situations in relation to the subject. In each method the focal point is always to improve oral communication for instance they have to talk about their results with fellow students and teachers. They also have to present their role-plays to the rest of the class.
Lifelong learning at the “Schulperpetuum” – a kind of parents’ evening

The “Schulperpetuum” is a special kind of parents’ evening which informs parents about the topics their children worked on in class. In contrast to a usual parents’ evening, parents visiting the “Schulperpetuum” have to actively participate in Open Learning prepared by the students. Students are in charge of producing the materials and running the learning stations. The “Schulperpetuum” was developed at our school and takes place regularly with lower forms and upper forms.

Peer teaching

Several students attending different classes participate in our peer teaching programme and show their own presentations about different topics from our curriculum to other classes or support younger students in project work.

Learning in the afternoon

In our after school child care our students have the opportunity to do their homework. Every day, a number of “Tutorien” (learning clubs) are offered where students can study independently, often with materials from Open Learning, supported by a teacher. There are also other “Tutorien” (clubs) for our afternoon students offering extra-curricular activities, such as “Being creative with the computer” or sport clubs.

IT Skills

In the first forms there is an extra teacher in one German lesson per week allowing small groups to work on issues from the German lessons using IT. Additionally we offer an introduction in the use of IT in connection with various subjects. In the second forms students use IT in one English lesson per week.

Moodle and eLSA days (eLSA: elearning im Schulalltag)

Students at our school are encouraged to combine learning at different places: at school and at home, during learning sessions in the morning and study time in the afternoon. We are following the concept of 360° learning which aims at creating a continuous learning process and thus accompanies our students during their first steps towards lifelong learning.

An important tool connecting various learning environments is our virtual learning environment Moodle, which is accessible from any computer with an internet connection. All our students have their own Moodle accounts with which they can log onto the platform at any time and stay in touch with their fellow students and many of the teachers. Either they work on materials published by their teachers in their respective Moodle "courses" (virtual classrooms) or they can access their personal ePortfolio which allows them to store, organize and share their personal learning materials, links and notes.
Our school participates in the Austrian eLearning network eLSA which connects students and teachers in order to share each other's experiences, ideas and projects. To prepare students best for working with the computer in various lessons in a natural and established way, we offer students of the first and the fifth forms (when we usually welcome many new students) a special training. Students of the first forms are made familiar with online communication and security; students of the fifth forms discover methods and techniques for online research.

ECDL

We offer students the opportunity to do the European Computer Driving Licence within three years – starting in the third form. Our school is a registered testing centre. The ECDL consists of seven exams (modules). It is also possible to get a certificate listing all passed exams instead of finishing the complete ECDL.

The modules are taught partly in compulsory lessons (ICT lessons in form 5; year 9), partly in optional subjects or extra-curricular activities.
Teaching and assessing methods, which are introduced in the lower levels, are adapted to the upper level requirements.

Modular upper level

In grades 6 to 8 (years 10 to 12) classes are held in semester courses ("modules").
There are basic modules for all students, and compulsory and optional ones depending on the school type which students have chosen to attend. These additional modules focus on either science or economics and thus provide for further specialization in either the school type emphasising mathematics and science (Naturwissenschaftliches Realgymnasium) or the type emphasising economics.(Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium) Students can join additional modules from both school types according to their interests and talents.

This concept of optional modules can lead to individual timetables for the students within the legally determined schedule and number of classes per week. All positively passed modules are credited. There is no "repetition" of a whole school year in the conventional sense. The students only repeat the modules they have failed. The final exams ("Matura") entitle the students to all university studies.

The subject Study and Presentations Skills is taught in form 5 (year 9). It focuses on presentation techniques including basic principles of communication, visualisation and interpretation of body language. The subject is taught by two teachers to small groups of students.

In forms 6 to 8 (years 10 to 12) students can join supplementary courses which comprise research work, quotation and excerption, working in and with libraries, and text interpretation.

Once a week in a block of four consecutive lessons, students of forms 6 and 7 (years 10 and 11) do cross-curricular research work within the frame of their basic modules German, History, Art and Music. These lessons, called "epoch" or "special era" projects, are dedicated to particular cultural ages. The students work individually. They eventually document the results of their assigned work in a folder ("portfolio"), by applying the skills acquired in the module Study and Presentation Skills in form 5.

The following school-autonomous modules are additionally offered:

"Laboratory" with issues from physics, biology, chemistry and cross-curricular topics.

Practical courses in biology

In order to acquire practical skills in the field of life science, biotechnology, physics and chemistry students have to attend a certain amount of practical courses and are given the possibility to choose from a range of different modules. Each practical course (module) spans over a period of one term (5 months) and covers a variety of topics. The number of participants is limited to guarantee best possible support.

Recently established interdisciplinary practical courses try to bridge the gaps between different science subjects. Physics, chemistry and biology join forces to offer a new, more comprehensive approach to science.

"Science English" with special focus on communication in English on a popular science level.

Classes deal with scientific topics taken from relevant internet sites, papers and magazines. Students complete this course with presentations of topics they are interested in.
"Business English" is intended to acquire practical skills useful in the economic and professional world. In both modules Science and Business English, presentations and the techniques acquired in Study and Presentations Skills, particularly in connection with electronic media, are essential components of the curriculum.

The successful passing of the modules "Economics" entitle the students to take an extra-curricular exam ("Unternehmerführerschein"/ "entrepreneurial licence") in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer) This module deals with the basic principles of business mathematics and introduces the students to the basics of enterprise.

In the modules "Project management" the students learn the theory of project management and in small teams conduct their own individual projects in various cultural and social fields. The groups present their projects at the end of the school year.

The offers of optional modules vary and are listed in a catalogue in the preceding academic year. The students choose their modules and, thereby, set up their own, individual timetable, which is also determined by the school autonomous modules and the subjects that provide for further specialization in certain subject areas according to the school type.

Impulses from 20th century "reform pedagogy" have been adapted to the requirements of the 21st century. For our modular upper cycle, the national curriculum was adapted according to legal requirements.

The curricula are adapted and comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Education

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?

Our school premises are being used extensively.
During open learning sessions in the lower cycle, students may choose where to work in the classroom; the halls are often included in activities as well. The relevant learning environment is provided by the teacher. There is an extra room for storing material. For special learning events, a part of the building is converted to feature learning and break-time zones.
In the upper cycle, the organisation structure has been partly adapted.
During "special era" sessions, students can choose a room to work in: our library, computer labs, or their own classroom. It is also permitted to use the assembly hall for independent learning purposes.
An extra room has been made available for peer mediation.
Our science labs each have their own small library to provide students with books for individual learning.
When organising projects and for the school-specific subject Project Management, students have access to all the resources available in Vienna.

In particular, we use the advantages of an inner city location: Museums (science, arts ...), theatres, etc... Libraries (national and local) are close by, as well as other public institutions and various clubs that support schools and students.
External experts contribute new angles to a variety of topics, and field trips allow students to learn also outside the school premises.
Parents support us with information about different jobs and work placement opportunities.
All of these resources provide a stimulus from outside as well as more pronounced practical orientation.

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

Before taking over as head of the school, the school head used to provide teacher training, and so brought new ideas to the school. Teachers were ready and willing to adopt new methods due to the increasing diversity of students' backgrounds.
Changes started with the lower cycle and were then carried forward to the upper cycle. Improvements and adaptations are an ongoing process based on feedback and experience.

Funding of the ILE
How is it funded?

The school is funded from the federal budget, with a standardised amount.
No funding is provided from external sources.

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

Enhanced forms of performance assessment
Tests within the scope of piloting national standards for education. Due to our tight budget we have not started external evaluation yet.

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)

We provide folders, a photo documentary, a website, a timetable for elective courses, and a description of our modular upper-cycle approach.

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

Our students come from various social and cultural backgrounds. The 10-18 age range makes it necessary to cater to very different needs. The variety of learning environments we offer provides support for different age groups and levels of development; we accept students at the level they come to us after primary school and help them to become competent, critical, self-reflecting young adults with a wide variety of knowledge and competences that will be able to cope with the requirements of their future work place.