

Austria

**Lernwerkstatt im Wasserschloss Pottenbrunn – Privatschule mit
Öffentlichkeitsrecht**

A private Montessori school with public-law status for students aged 6 to 16, offering integrative teaching of children with disabilities and children with behavioural problems. Learning is self-organised and the students freely select activities, supported by teachers who have a reform pedagogical education. The learning environment is structured into different areas of experience, between which the students move freely (e.g., kitchen, workshop, handicraft, music, etc.). Activities of the individual students are recorded daily and summarized in an annual development report. Parents pay tuition and contribute 80 hours of voluntary work to the school every year. There are regular exchanges between parents and teachers.

Main focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, ORGANISATION

Other keywords: alternative_philosophy, equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: Lernwerkstatt im Wasserschloss Pottenbrunn – Privatschule mit Öffentlichkeitsrecht

Location/Address: Trautmansdorfferstrasse 10, A-3140 Pottenbrunn

Website: www.lernwerkstatt.ws

ILE submitted by: Dachverband für Selbstbestimmtes Lernen (Umbrella Organisation for Self-determined Learning)

Rationale

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

Lernwerkstatt (LWS) is an innovative learning institution. Characteristically, learning is always self-determined by the learners, not by externally-controlled requirements or stimuli.

We think that the challenges of the 21st century that our children are confronted with ask for qualities that are rarely cultivated or encouraged, if not outright suppressed, in the regular school system:

- self-competence and self-determined learning competence
- team competence and high social competence
- bodily and mental health
- flexibility and learning aptitude
- creativity

It is the main goal of our pedagogical work to accompany and support our children in the development of these features.

Evidence

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

The various activities of the individual learners are recorded daily and summarised in an annual development report which also covers the socio-emotional development of each child.

A comprehensive quality assurance manual for internal evaluation exists.

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 main learning outcome is the best possible holistic development of the young person in accordance with their individual talents and skills. This includes the acquisition of fundamental understanding and action structures in the following areas:

- Language and writing
- Mathematics
- Social and emotional development
- Arts/creativity
- Physical exercise

The authorised statutes of the LWS in connection with a supplementary curriculum serve as curriculum.

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?

Primary level: 6-11 years

Secondary level: 12-16 years

Eligibility is not restricted, admission procedures apply.

Age cohort:		
1991	1992	1
1992	1993	6
1993	1994	2
1994	1995	14
1995	1996	9
1996	1997	13
1997	1998	22
1998	1999	11
1999	2000	11
2000	2001	10
2001	2002	9
Total		108

Facilitators

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

Teachers must have a Montessori education or comparable reform pedagogical education. Some hold a teaching diploma from university.

Teachers have special qualifications such as advanced seminars on non-directive pedagogy (e.g. Rebecca and Mauricio Wild); or specialist expertise in selected areas of interest.

The educational facilitators are part of the prepared environment. Their role is to show affection, love and respect vis-à-vis the children and to trust their inherent development plan. They are not supposed to intervene directly, but to lead and support children in their needs as well as to create a framework in which children feel at ease so that they can identify and meet their authentic needs in a stress-free atmosphere. Moreover, they act as “counterparts” (e.g. setting limits) for adolescents who are living through a phase of confrontation with the world. They observe and facilitate individual and group processes, define priorities in the transmission of knowledge appropriate to the development stages of the children, act as moderators in developing communication and in conflict work. The focus lies on children and adolescents being able to make their own experiences and mistakes, and find their own solutions.

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?

As a general rule, learning is self-organised; the learners can freely select the activity and level of facilitation.

The school building is subdivided into various areas which encourage a wide variety of learning situations. Structured and unstructured materials invite children and teenagers to deal on their own with their surrounding world in a creative way. The tutors act as contact person and support the learning situations in many ways. Their interaction with the learners is a respectful one.

Our pedagogy is based on the work of Maria Montessori taken further by Rebeca and Mauricio Wild and on the stages of development described by Jean Piaget. Furthermore it is supported by modern brain science (Chilton Pearce, Manfred Spitzer, Gerald Hüther and others).

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?

Learning takes place in the prepared environment of the Pottenbrunn moated castle. The learning environment is structured in different areas that correspond to the different areas of experience and in which the children are allowed to move freely. These areas are: kitchen, workshop, board games, mathematics, languages, the world, painting, handicraft, role play, exercise, music, secondary-level, multi-purpose area for other activities. Weekly outings are arranged to different sites and on different themes, as well as a summer and a winter week.

We regularly use the gymnasium of the local secondary general school. Various contacts have been built with companies and organisations offering internships to our pupils.

History of ILE

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

This initiative was founded by a group of parents, prompted by the wish to integrate a disabled girl, for whom inclusive education in a mainstream setting had not been possible at the time. Over time, the focus has shifted from the integrative teaching of disabled children to the integration of children with behavioural problems.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

The school is almost totally funded and maintained by parental contributions and parental involvement in the organisation. Approx. 5% of the total cost is covered by public grants.

The parents' contribution is about 3600€ per child a year. In addition, each parent agrees to contribute 80 hours volunteer work a year. This work serves the upkeep of the organization, the acquisition of additional financial means and the assurance and improvement of the pedagogical quality.

Learning Outcomes

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

In general, progress in development is assessed by observation and on-going contact with the children. These observations are documented in appraisal sheets and summarised once yearly in a development report. Moreover, there are regular team reflections on the development state of each individual child. There is no external evaluation (tests of standards/skills attained), but other forms of quality assurance.

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)

The following diploma or research papers discuss the educational work at the LWS:

- Research paper – Teaching Diploma: Harald Bartruff submitted at the University College of Teacher Education Heidelberg (Prof. Almut Grabolle, Prof. Dr. Dorothea Freudenreich) 1993
- Research report: Dr. Markus Distelberger, Benno Kapellari, Leo Pöcksteiner, Dr. Karl Garnitschnig 1995, 1997
- Diploma paper: Thomas Schmutzer Vienna University 1995
- National bank project No. 5663, co-authored by Ruth Bric, Heidi Kamleitner, Martina Mazal, Dr. Karl Garnitschnig - „Förderung von Kindern im Alter von 10-14 Jahren mit besonderen Bedürfnissen in der Lernwerkstatt durch offenes und aktives Lernen“ – 1996
- Diploma paper „Humane Schule – ein Versuch“ submitted by Helga Biebl with Dr. Ingo Mörth, Linz 1995
- Diploma paper “Lernen in Freiheit” An empirical study of the pedagogical concept of the Lernwerkstatt Pottenbrunn – submitted by Elisabeth Pfneisl, with Dr. Karl Garnitschnig, 2002
- Diploma paper submitted by Alexandra Hawel at the Vienna University– 2001
- www.lernwerkstatt.ws

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

The work of the LWS critically depends on close cooperation of parents and the school. Parent/facilitator nights are held regularly, where the current situation and educational issues are reflected on. Moreover, there are regular exchanges among parents, and close contact between parents and facilitators.

Families being accepted by LWS commit themselves to implementing the educational principles of LWS also at home.