

Austria

Hauptschule 1 Schärding (General Secondary School)

This general secondary school (students aged 10 – 14) has separate tracks with a focus on music education and new media, health and social issues. Teaching methods include action-based project-oriented work, health-promotion activities, inquiry-based learning in research projects, interdisciplinary science courses, and the use of an e-learning platform where students can access additional practice materials, work independently or cooperate in groups. Teachers act as coaches that support student learning and work with coordinated annual syllabi for the different subjects.

Main Focus of Innovation: CONTENT, ORGANISATION

General Information

Name of the ILE: Hauptschule 1 Schärding (general secondary school)

Location/Address: Schulstrasse 5b, 4780 Schärding

Website: www.asn-linz.ac.at/schule/schaerding

ILE submitted by: Federal Ministry of Education

Rationale

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

Every child has different talents and interests. We give our students the freedom to further their personal leanings and skills within our action-based and project-oriented work, specialising in the fields of new media, health and social issues.

Classroom teaching integrates environmental education in a variety of ways, as insights, experiences and attitudes gained can be used in various subjects. We aim to empower students to perceive and shape their school as a place within their natural environment. We want to encourage ecological learning and environmental awareness with a conscious view to promoting sustainability and help our students to develop a love of learning and social skills.

The children make use of their hands, hearts and brains. They can share their experiences with others and learn to take responsibility.

Health-promotion activities aim to increase the students' physical and mental well-being and change the attitudes of students and their families, as well as broaden the social skills of our students.

At the **behavioural level** and in terms of **relationships**, the **monthly social skills training** laid down in our school mission statement (students work as a class on solution strategies covering monthly focus themes) have made a great impact. Our students are given a supplement to their year-end report ("verbal assessment" of social skills.).

Evidence

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

There are evaluations:

- Research projects conducted jointly by teachers and students based on the "exploratory discovery" method
- Regular internal surveys through feedback in the form of discussions with staff, feedback questionnaires, etc.
- Evaluation within a "Leadership Academy Case Study" by the University of Innsbruck
- Since the academic year 2003-04, HS 1 Schärding has been a pilot school for educational standards. As part of this work we have been dealing with feedback on student and teacher work from the first results of the pilot phase.
- Participation in IMST/MNI (Innovations in Mathematics, Science and Technology Teaching) projects on the following themes:
 - "Our school becomes a general secondary school with a special focus on new media, health and social issues" (2006)
 - "Evaluation of project-based training with new media based on the creation of a CMS (content management system) for the school" (2007)
 - "Understanding and computerisation with the introduction of algebra" (2008)

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)

We invest a lot of commitment into preparing the children for their transition to working life or higher-level education. The teachers' readiness to respond to social change by innovative and forward-looking forms of instruction and content is backed by their efforts to impart solid basic knowledge structures and skills.

In particular, we stress the following:

- Quality improvement based on aims developed by us.
- Quality management that is characterised by a willingness to achieve, personal initiative and inventiveness.
- Conflict resolution through cooperation among all those involved in the school community.

Accordingly, our school is committed to its overriding aim: a positive personal, social and cognitive development of students whilst supporting their individual talents in the best possible manner.

In addition, we organise mandatory special-focus projects at our school, which are carried out in various subjects. Particular importance is attached to integrating new media and considering important topics from the field of health and social issues.

- Nature and health project week (year one)
- Ecosystems – habitats in a biological balance, organic farming and husbandry, healthy nutrition (year two)
- Narcotics and sex education in cooperation with doctors and therapists (year four)
- Monthly social skills training (years one to four)
- E-learning: with our internal **e-learning platform**, our students have access to new forms of learning and extended practice material. For most subjects, there are learning courses (in addition to classes) at pupil's disposal on the "Edumoodle"-learning platform. Therefore the children have the possibility to
 - ✓ work on new subject matters independently or with teams
 - ✓ study or practise independently
 - ✓ discuss, interpret and reason on subjects such as democracy and participation, cooperation and capacity for teamwork – and consolidate those issues through communication.
 - ✓ work on common projects (within the class or across-the-board) – "Blended Learning": The music school students created e.g. in the school subject "New Media" screen-plays, dialogues, presentations or data collections for musical visualisations, animated films, audio reportages and for social research projects.

- Desktop publishing, digital image editing and marketing in the form of an interdisciplinary school magazine project (year four)
- Empirical research project (year four)
- Interdisciplinary instruction in science subjects with interdisciplinary annual syllabi (year four)

For achievements in the field of social skills, our school was given the **Fairness Award 2007** in the category of 10 to 14 year olds.

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?

As a compulsory school, our institution is mostly attended by learners aged 10 to 14 years who are resident in the school district.

Facilitators

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

All our teachers are graduates from a *Pädagogische Akademie* (training institutes for general compulsory school teachers), and some of them continued their education by studying (part-time) at universities (Ph.D. or Master of Arts programmes, subject-related educational management) and INSET courses (self-reliant working according to the Klippert model, etc.).

The role of the teachers is changing: from a lecturer and imparter of knowledge to a learning coach who supports the learning process by examining relevant problems. Subject knowledge is discussed, interpreted, substantiated and consolidated by communicating. As learning coaches, teachers are also open to the concerns of parents and see themselves as professionals in their field.

The shared approach should result in the students taking responsibility for their own learning process.

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?

Learning is organised quite conventionally in ability groups and classes. What is special are the methods chosen and the inclusive specialisations plus the coordinated annual syllabi for the individual subjects.

We subscribe to the view that the student's self-reliance must be strengthened. Self-reliant work methods are therefore an important integral part of our concept.

With the learning-by-discovery method, the path to the teaching aim is not clearly predefined. Rather, students must always have an option to research independently, including trial and error. In the past few academic years, 4 empirical social research projects were conducted based on this method.

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?

Unfortunately our space and equipment as well as funding on the part of the school provider are very limited. We were able to achieve a minor improvement in the external situation by means of ecology projects: the school garden is included in the learning environment as a “green classroom”.

Health promotion is done on a public platform in cooperation with the “Healthy Municipality” project group of the town of Schärding.

Financial aid is further provided by the association of Austrian school sponsors, with support from service clubs (Kiwanis), banks and local businesses.

History of ILE

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

Our students in the “mainstream classes” were jealous of the many activities on offer for the students attending our parallel general secondary school with a special focus on music. The reputation of “bad students” was also a burden. Restructuring helped the students discover their own strengths and to increase their feeling of self-worth in these areas, which in turn strengthened the “reputation” of the classes and the teaching motivation of the staff.

An additional challenge we faced was that we had to take countermeasures against a trend towards becoming a school for students who do not fit into other school types. Geographically speaking, we are next door to a federal *Gymnasium* and another general secondary school with a special focus on sport.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

Funding through the school provider, sponsors, public project grants (Ecolog, etc.).

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 mission statement; information folder; website; IMST project reports; University of Innsbruck Leadership Academy Case Study