

Austria

Kirchberg Primary School

This primary school with a large population of children with special needs is oriented towards principles of Freinet education, which emphasize children's expression of their views, and responsiveness to students' questions and needs. The school aims to foster student maturity, independence, and self-reliance, as well as constructive and nonviolent conflict resolutions. The children have an active say in the classroom and in performance assessments; there is a classroom student council and a student parliament. Learning activities include individual work, project work, cross-class learning, and joint instruction. Performance is measured with portfolios, which require an ongoing dialogue between teachers and students and involve appraisal interviews at the end of each semester.

Main Focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, ORGANISATION

Additional Keywords: alternative philosophy, equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: Kirchberg Primary School

Location/Address: 4550 Kremsmünster, Kirchberg 19

Website: www.kirchberg.eduhi.at

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?

Our school is oriented towards the principles of Freinet Education, which lets the children express their views and which responds to the pupils' questions and needs. Co-determination and the sharing of responsibility are very important.

We especially focus on promoting maturity, independence and self-reliance, on the one hand, and on constructive and nonviolent conflict resolution methods, on the other. This means that the children have an active say in the social life in the classroom as well as in classroom teaching. Democracy and communication are the predominant and characteristic forms of encounter in our daily school routines. Co-determination in the classroom through children's councils and active involvement in school life through sessions of the children's parliament as well as co-determination in performance assessments are of major importance to us.

For conflict resolution, we have created a "peace stair" with four steps for nonviolent communication based on the Marshall Rosenberg model.

Evidence

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

Progress documentation gives evidence of learning outcomes, which are achieved by focussing on learning aims and by portfolio work.

The school was one of the pilot schools in the testing of the Reading Portfolio.

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 primary learning aims are the curricular aims, i.e. achievement in terms of content and subjects; the achievement of standards and the acquisition of the required personal skills; methodological and strategic skills, and social and communicative skills. The main focus is on educating learners towards independence, self-organisation, self-reliance, solidarity, and conflict-solving strategies.

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?

Our school is attended by 82 primary-school pupils who have been assigned to this school district, plus a number of children who switched schools because of the education we offer.

Facilitators

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

We are always teachers and learners at the same time. This is reflected from the outset in our motto: "Kirchberg Primary School – where children have a say and teachers keep learning".

All our teachers have additional training and qualifications – see website.

The school head strives to concentrate and coordinate strengths in order to take the development further ahead.

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?

We do not have a special curriculum, but are a “normal” mainstream school.

Learning is organised according to a pupil-centred approach, covering individual work, work schedules, project work and cross-class learning, as well as joint instruction and teaching in small groups, etc.

Our school is oriented towards the principles of Freinet Education: free development of personality, cooperation and mutual responsibility, independent learning and critical interaction with the environment.

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 building is in great need of renovation, unfortunately, however, little financial support is given by the school provider. The interiors consist of a motley mix of furniture from abandoned schools or donations by parents. The classroom doors stand open. The classrooms are small, multi-coloured and friendly. The centre of the classroom is the assembly corner, where there is space for all children. Discussion groups, presentations, the children’s councils, and usually also the phases of classroom instruction take place there. The tables are designed to reflect the mostly open learning and working methods. Each class has a small computer corner with internet access. In addition to the classrooms, we have an assembly hall, a resting and reading room, a freely accessible room with materials to explore the world, and a kitchenette which serves as printing room. The hallway and any empty areas are used as learning space. On our own initiative, we try to make the learning spaces pleasant.

History of ILE

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

The Kirchberg primary school faces, among others things, the challenge of offering children with special needs an adequate learning and living environment. Near our school, there is a home for “maladjusted” children who, because of their life history, need our particular attention and affection. By clear agreements between the children and teachers, democratic structures and conflict resolution options that are suitable for children, we try to create a school climate in which the children can learn in a self-determined, responsible and independent manner and co-exist democratically and peacefully. The in-depth focus on democracy and conflict resolution at our school stems from crisis situations arising from the particular situation with socially disadvantaged children and is based on the site-related school development process.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

The school enjoys no special support and is funded by the municipality.

Learning Outcomes

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

Learning outcomes are monitored on an ongoing basis by means of the progress documentation or the portfolio. Portfolios require and enable an ongoing dialogue between teachers and pupils. A performance appraisal interview at the end of each semester and at the end of the school year is part of portfolio work.

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)

Documentation includes the chronicle and the website, supplemented by studies or research reports on our form of performance assessment and the school's focus on democracy. Furthermore, there is external evaluation in the form of a diploma R&D work by a student of educational science.