

## Switzerland (Bern)

**Projektschule Impuls an der Pädagogischen Hochschule PHSG**

*This is a school characterized by mixed-age groupings. Another particular feature is the student parliament, and generally high degree of learner responsibility and co-determination of directions followed. There is a particular organization of the typical school day beginning in a circle and (for grades 3-6) foreign language learning, before working on the 'weekly plan' and then project groups. One feature is the 25 minutes 'sand glass' time, when the students work in total silence. All students write a diary on a daily basis, which is also intended to improve written abilities. The teaching is organized by teams, and the teachers spend part of their time in the school, the other part of their time in the teacher education college. The curriculum adheres to local requirements, with the approach to learning and teaching inspired by different features of alternative education (Freinet, Petersen, Montessori, Jena Plan). There is a student parliament, and participation in an international project (GLOBE).*

**Main Focus of Innovation:** LEARNERS, TEACHERS, ORGANIZATION

**Other Keywords:** alternative philosophy

**General Information**

**Name of the ILE:** Projektschule Impuls an der Pädagogischen Hochschule PHSG

**Location/Address:** Seminarstrasse 27 9400 Rorschach

**Website:** <http://www.projektschule.ch/>

**Rationale**

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

The project school “Impuls” of the PHSG<sup>1</sup> includes two departments, a basic level for age 4-8 (kindergarten and grade 1-2) and a middle level for grade 3-6. This means covers learning in mixed-age groups. We try to emphasize this topic/field and designate ourselves as experts in mixed-age learning.

Peculiarities of the school:

- student parliament (after Janusz Korczak) currently grade 2-6
- open schedule with “Projektunterricht”<sup>2</sup>
- outward documentation: Expositions in the cloister
- teaching English grades 3-6
- GLOBE-school, participation in the international project GLOBE
- Cooperation with the “RDZ” (Regionale Didaktisches Zentrum)<sup>3</sup>

**Evidence**

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

We have been working based on the new concept for one and a half year only. Evidence is press reports, written feedbacks, our homepage and the “Forscherkiste” (book and project:

[www.projektschule.ch](http://www.projektschule.ch)

[www.phsg.ch](http://www.phsg.ch) -> Dienstleistungen -> Forscherkiste (=http://www.phsg.ch/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-1356/)

**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)*

- In the first place: learning from each other and with each other in mixed-age groups.
- In the students’/learners’ parliament: autonomous learning in self-responsibility (depending on development steps), highest possible participation, co-determination and co-responsibility.
- Broad general learning outcomes, including a high degree of general knowledge, high basic competencies, ability to apply skills and knowledge, expressiveness

**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?*

Two “normal” (not selected) groups of students from the town Rorschach, chosen by quarter of residence and including students with special needs, very seldom by parent’s special request. Currently two groups of 20 children each. Age 4 - 12

<sup>1</sup> „PHSG“ is a (tertiary) Teacher Training College of the canton St.Gallen

<sup>2</sup> „Projektunterricht“ implies learning with projects, applying a project method

<sup>3</sup> „RDZ“ is the regional centre of the PHSG (see [www.phsg.ch](http://www.phsg.ch) -> RDZ -> RDZ Rorschach)

**Facilitators**

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

Leader of the project is the head of the school, has more than 30 years of experience in teaching in a multi-grade class in the countryside; broad basis in theory including professional policy work (in Swiss Teachers' Association).

All teachers have long lasting experience in mixed-age learning. We practice team-teaching, are in continuous self- and external evaluation. We are part of the schools of the municipality of Rorschach, and simultaneously part of the PHSG, including cooperation in different departments of the college.

**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 consider elements of alternative education methods of Freinet, Petersen, Montessori, further experiences of Jena-Plan-schools, of "Laborschule Bielefeld". Learning with elements/stations of Roland Bauer, learning biology of Frederic Vester, Ivo Nezel.

The curriculum of the canton of St. Gallen is binding and the usual teaching materials of the canton are used. We apply open methods with clear structures, individual schedules work, and working on projects.

**Organization Day to Day (example of class with grades 3 – 6):**

Every day the school door opens about 20-30 min before the official start at 8 am. Students have e.g. the possibility to finish homework. At 8 o'clock, we begin in a circle and give a "speaker-stone" around. Each girl or boy can tell about her or his feelings or thoughts.

Then we start with a foreign-language session. We call them "learning at different stations", that means always two students (different age) are learning at one place (TV, PC, Sheets, Games, Recorder etc.) for about 20 min.

Next part is called "Weekly plan". Each group decides to work with the official plan given by the teachers or is allowed to work with an individual program. Top students are called "Master of learning", they have free choice.

For exactly 25 min there is running a sand-glass and in this time the students have to work absolutely quiet, sitting on their place, without speaking, whispering or walking around. There is silent music in the background.

After a break they normally work in "project-groups" of four, there is "the Boss", the oldest student (class 6), the "Vize-Boss" (class 5, one year younger), the "Assistant" (class 4, two years younger) and finally "the Beginner", the youngest (class 3) of this team.

Actually we have five groups, called: (a) "The Globe", responsible for the measurements for the GLOBE-project, (b) the group "Animals", responsible for the fishes in the aquarium and the phasmatidae (insects), (c) the group "Flower Power", responsible for the flowers in the classroom and also for decoration, (d) the group "PC", responsible for the technical support (10 stations), (e) the group "Games", responsible for all the games, plays, think-sport and brain-puzzles. These groups are working together over four years, so one can go through and become a very specialist in his item. But actually everybody has to learn and know all about the various matters.

**Organization Month by Month:**

We sometimes change our main subjects: So the next month we'll learn Chess and in wintertime we'll collect stamps from all over the world as a basis for knowing a lot about culture, history, biology, sports etc.

The pupils write a diary every day and this is the basis the teacher uses to help improve the ability in written language.

This form of teaching is only interrupted, when students from the "PH" (teacher training college) come for special events like theatre.

We are a part of the "PH", but we are absolutely independent. We have the same budget like all the other schools in town. The only difference: We are free to try some new forms of teaching and learning.

One goal is still to be progressive and innovative so that we can be a school "in the window" for the teachers at the "PH" or even an example how to teach such a "heterogeneous" group of children.

**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?*

The school is part of the PHSG and embedded in their premises.

The "middle level" disposes of three rooms, 10 PC's and has access to professional workshops. Collaboration is wanted, yet we try to have a "normal" school life.

**History of ILE**

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

The school "Impuls" has existed for a long time. Earlier it was called "Übungsschule" (i.e. "training school"), where students of the "Seminar"<sup>4</sup> could practice the theoretical knowledge with learners.

Since the reorganization into the PHSG, it changed to a project school. Only in 2007, the current learning environment was started with the employment of the new head of the school and a corresponding mission/mandate.

**Funding of the ILE**

*How is it funded?*

By the municipality of Rorschach (running costs on the same level as for its other schools, part of teacher salaries) and the PHSG (building, teacher salary). The student teacher ratio of 13.3 is not much lower than the cantonal mean of 14.0. Together, funding for this school is similar to standard funding in the canton.

**Learning Outcomes**

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

In principle the learners are assessed exactly in the same way as the learners in all other schools of the canton St. Gallen (including standardized comparative tests, e.g. "class cockpit").

Additional knowledge and abilities, especially of social nature, cannot be measured. Reflection/self-evaluation is achieved by public relations, expositions, and portfolio.

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<sup>4</sup> "Seminar" is the predecessor of the actual PHSG.

**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)*

Website; internal documentations in the form of presentations and expositions

**Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE**

The project school “Impuls” is on the way, the project is at the beginning; the goal is the work on this journey for the next ten years.