

Switzerland (Bern)

Gesamtschule Schüpberg: Part of group of Small Mixed-Grade Schools

This school has one mixed-age class with students from grade 1 to 9 (age 6-17), including students with special needs who failed in the regular school system. Teaching practice is inspired by reform pedagogic ideas (Hentig, Montessori, Steiner, Freinet), giving much autonomy to the students who work with weekly schedules. There is a tutor system, and students teach each other. Every two weeks, students and teachers write feedback into a “learn booklet” and then discuss it in individual student-teacher conversations. The teaching team meets every two weeks to discuss organizational and pedagogical topics.

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

Other Keywords: alternative philosophy

General Information

Name of the ILE: Gesamtschule Schüpberg: Part of group of Small Mixed-Grade Schools

Location/Address: Schüpberg CH-3045 Schüpfen

Website: http://www.schuepfen.ch/de/bildung/schulen/?action=showschule&schule_id=952

Rationale

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

The Schüpberg School belongs to the municipality Schüpfen and is a traditional multi grade school with an integrative concept. The learners from first to 9th grade attend together the same class.

About half of the learners come from surrounding villages and attend our school for various individually different reasons.

The class is composed heterogeneously referring to the age of the learners (between 6 – 17 years), their ability to learn and their behaviour, as well as referring to the level / standard of their mental and physical development.

We lay particular emphasis on the heterogeneity, which we consider as a condition for successful integration or better: for a school for all!

Mixing ages has various positive effects:

- Multiplicity / variety of stimulations for the social and cognitive development
- Tutor system as part of the teaching → great independence
- No concentration / accumulation of children in problematical phases (entry to school, passover to a higher school, puberty)
- To experience various roles → less stigmatizations
- Different learning conditions call for individual learning
- Anticipative and recurrent learning → the question of separation comes up less frequently

Evidence

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

The fact that the Schüpberg School has existed for many years is proof for its successful concept:

- Out of totally 15 children only 4 have their domicile in Schüpberg (see History of ILE)
- Every year applications from educational advisers, schools and parents exceed the free places we can dispose of.
- For every child individual solutions are aimed at: Students with special needs and learning disability as well as the child who enters the secondary school with higher demands after grade 6 can learn and develop himself in conformity with his capabilities. (See reports of former students in the “Schüpbergzeitung”)

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 principle we follow the curriculum of the canton of Berne and comply with its requirements. Besides the school performs a task of integration (see Learning Context).

We consider a stable / sustaining personal relation and a trustful learning environment as indispensable conditions for successful learning.

Every two weeks, the children as well as the teachers write a feedback into the “Lernheft”/learn booklet (auto-evaluation, feedback, learning aims...), which is subsequently discussed in individual conversation between child and teacher/facilitator.

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?

- Children between 6 and 17 years.
- Classes of maximum 16 children.

Besides children from Schüpberg, children with learning disability, partial impairment of performance, behavioural disorders and children with slight physical handicaps share the class.

At entry, after a three weeks trial period, we pay attention to a sustainable balance.

Facilitators

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

In summer 2008 the team suffered a great change. After 22 years, the team dispersed. Now two new teachers work together with the head of the school (B. Friedli, since 1987 in the Schüpberg school). Two teachers are remedial teachers, the third person graduated from a teacher college in summer 2008.

Team meetings take place every two weeks. The agenda covers both organizational and pedagogical topics. Supervision taking place every quarter is institutionalized.

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?

Constructivist, independent and self-responsible learning is aimed at.

The children work with “Lernheft” (see Learning Aims/Intended Learning Outcomes for ILE) and weekly schedule.

Projects (GLOBE¹, free work, market, theatre...), class council, physical education in free nature (there is no gymnasium), adoption of some tasks of the caretaker/janitor, and supervised lunch are important elements of the Schüpberg concept.

Hentig, Montessori, Steiner, Freinet – Their ideas of progressive education are constantly inspiring us.

In practice, learning is very similarly organized to the comprehensive school Lindental.

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?

As a result of the mixed ages in the class, there is a lot of time for learning. The subjects dealt with are being resumed (principle of spiral). This enables certain calmness both for us teachers as well as for the children (anticipative and recurrent learning).

Children learn from children – we consciously apply this teaching and learning approach.

We constantly look for real challenges, for the learning for life:

A hut in the woods was built with the assistance of parents; the school takes now care of the maintenance. The children come to school (which is situated on a hill) by bicycle. Physical education takes place outdoor, also in winter.

On the market, the products produced by the children are being sold; the proceeds go into the class fund. A pupils of grade 9 earned money with a bike project (He repaired and resold old bikes).

¹ see <http://www.globe-swiss.ch/en/>

History of ILE

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

When I was appointed as teacher at the school in Schüpberg, there was no child from the location Schüpberg in the class: a generation gap. Only slowly this situation changed. At the moment, four out of 15 children come from Schüpberg.

They were never more than 1/3. The school was not closed down; this has to do with our concept. With the so-called “silent integration”, our predecessor Paul Lehmann, opened the door of the school for children who would “fall between chair and bench” in the normal school system.

What was considered a more or less exotic idea 30 years ago has proven to be of value in the course of time and responds to an increasing need for integrative school forms. This is also evidenced by the numerous demands for visits of our school.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

The Schüpberg School is a public school and is financed by the municipality. For children from other municipalities, there is an equalization of burdens between municipalities.

Learning Outcomes

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

We follow the learning objectives of the curriculum of the canton of Berne. Besides the cognitive learning results, we put emphasis on the development and fostering of social and self-competence.

“A multitude of ideas and challenges, both in the cognitive and the social field, is characteristic for mixed-age communities. In a natural way, the children experience their diversity /dissimilarity in their living together.

In the course of the years, the children experience themselves in different roles and their social status is over and over being redefined. They learn to integrate themselves into a group and to subordinate themselves or to assume leadership and responsibility.

Independence and sharing of responsibility are exercised from the beginning.

In the daily life, rites, proven rules of the class, forms of learning and modes of interaction are conveyed and further developed. A “class memory” is thus created which allows that traditions grow and conflicts are being approached constructively or being alleviated” (see concept of Schüpberg School).

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)

- Concept of the Schüpberg school
- School newspaper (August 08)
- Article “Integration in mixed-age classes”, in Albert Tanner (Ed.), (2006). “Heterogenität und Integration” Zürich: Seismo
- (All three documents in German and available as pdf on request)
- DVD “Lernen am gemeinsamen Gegenstand” (B. Friedli, self production)
- <http://profi-I.net/2005.03-vielfalter/heterogeniale-klassen/schupberg>
- book: Paul Michael Meyer (2009). Lehrer sein. Wenn Kinder Schule machen. Bern: Zytglogge Verlag (ISBN 978-3-7296-0791-0)

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

Small schools, multi grade schools and traditional village schools with their mixed-age learning groups are valuable niches from the pedagogical standpoint.

Their manageability, the great autonomy and the experience in dealing with heterogeneity correspond in many respects to the high requirements of today's school situation.

The comprehensive school Schüpberg (i.e. including grade 1 to 9) is part of a network of small schools with mixed-grade classes in the canton of Bern. Originally, these schools have classes including students of several grades because they serve a very small catchment area. They intentionally use the heterogeneity of their students as a pedagogical basis for an individualized education aiming for integration and autonomous learning. Other members of the network are e.g. the comprehensive school Lindental (grade 1-9) and primary school Geristein (grade 1-4).