

The Köck Private Foundation has been supporting projects related to school reform and child-centered education for more than 10 years. Their focus is on the continued development of the educational system.

## Expert Panel

A prominent expert panel has provided consultation services to the INITIATIVE NEUES LERNEN regarding its pedagogic direction and in the selection of foundation projects and, in this function, has developed the principles of child-centered education. We sincerely thank:

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# Child-centered education

Children love to learn!

Learning is instinctive to them  
They learn by playing, by being inquisitive,  
and through discovery

With concentration and pure enjoyment

By preserving our children's enthusiasm for learning we can effect a change in our society: A life-long pleasure in learning is the basis for successful life journeys in our globalized knowledge-based society.

# The principles of child-centered education

The basic principle of child-centered education is to enable the optimal development of a child's personality and competencies in line with his/her individual needs and requirements. Based on the inquisitiveness of the child, and his/her interests, learning should support the self-educational process of the child, particularly by supporting his/her own senses of self-organization and responsibility. In order to achieve this, learning methods are shaped mutually by the adult and the child, and adapted in accordance with the child's individual learning requirements. This necessitates a learning environment with a didactic structure, one characterized by mutual trust and capable of enabling independent as well as cooperative learning.

## 1. Orientation on the needs of the Children

Lessons should offer opportunities for children to include and implement their needs and requirements, specifically

- › having a say in the planning and design of the topics/units of instruction
- › opportunities to structure their own learning conditions in terms of time, place, pace and learning partners and
- › a basic concentration on promoting child development, especially during sensitive growth stages

## 2. Active self-regulated learning

Children are instructed and encouraged to actively search for knowledge, to carry out complex learning activities, to reflect on their personal learning, to plan learning responsibly and to be accountable for it, for example by

- › autonomously researching and working through scholastic topics and learning material
- › independently working through texts
- › presenting their results
- › cooperating and discussing scholastic topics with others and
- › reflecting on their own work

## 3. Well designed learning environment

In a well designed learning environment children can work towards developing their competencies in an autonomous and self-directed manner, and in accordance with their own needs, e.g.

- › didactically designed learning material (learning tasks, games, materials to stimulate development, learning platforms)
- › user-friendly libraries
- › access to arranged environments such as learning rooms, learning workshops, studios
- › school garden, suitable recess areas

## 4. Social learning as a method and a goal

Learning is designed as a shared social process. Children can present their needs and learn individually at the same time, e.g.

- › cooperative planning
- › working in teams and groups
- › socially oriented organizational forms (class advisory board, discussion groups, student council)
- › models to conduct respectful argumentation and conflict solution
- › actively designing and reflecting on social processes

## 5. Broad understanding of performance and ability

Pupil performance is not only demonstrated by meeting the cognitive requirements posed by the school, but also by developing individual competencies which they use to become involved in their community and to develop their personalities. This includes

- › the development of independent and meaningful learning strategies instead of a mechanic-receptive learning
- › the acquisition of social and emotional competence
- › taking on class or school obligations
- › assuming age-appropriate responsibility
- › the continued development of individual skills and strengths

## 6. Addressing performance assessments in an encouraging manner

Children are given diverse opportunities to show what they are capable of. Feedback provides them with concrete examples of how well they managed and achieved their tasks. This should help them to develop means of evaluating their own performance, for example by

- › focusing more on what they are capable of and less on what they are not capable of
- › having a broader understanding of what counts as achievement
- › amassing portfolios in which they can present and comment on the outcomes of their learning
- › using quotas and lists of learning objectives to establish requirements and document achievement
- › having access to guidelines, and opportunities, for self-assessment of their performance
- › being provided with characteristic and descriptive feedback as well as / instead of judgmental evaluation

## 7. Conducive school community

School administrators, teachers, pupils and parents all work together in a respectful, professional and committed way and form a conducive school community. Above and beyond appropriate pupil training this implies the following

- › trusting and positive relationships between the teachers and pupils, whereby building and maintaining these is perceived by the teachers as their responsibility
- › teachers cooperate with, and include, the parents in school activities
- › continued and collective training for the teachers towards instilling child-centered schooling
- › measures towards supporting a cooperation among teachers which is founded in trust
- › development and maintenance of the competencies among teachers and pupils to create and reflect on relationships

The principles of child-centered education were developed by the expert panel of INITIATIVE NEUES LERNEN (see reverse).

