Experiences and concepts of including and integrative gifted education and talent development in Switzerland – Gifted education from the heart of Europe

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Lead

This article will give an insight in efforts and projects to the provision of gifted students and talent development in Swiss schools and with partners in the German speaking Central Europe.
In a first part relevant activities in teacher education in Switzerland based on the cooperation with the University of Connecticut will be shown – as well as its international impact and influence to new professional and scientific networks in this specific field of the teacher education.
The second part describes «best practices« from three different schools in different parts of Switzerland: An elementary school (KG – 6th) in Central Switzerland, a middle school (7 - 9) from East Switzerland and a Gymnasium (High School; 11 – 13) from Northwestern Switzerland. Their concepts, milestones and missions may give an impression of the actual situation.
Outgoing from these examples we will focus on relevant aspects of gifted education and also introduce a Swiss award for schools with deep engagement in strength-oriented individualized learning.

Teacher education in national and international cooperation

In Switzerland, since mid of the 90ies, various courses for teachers to the education on gifted and talented existed. 2003 we had a chance to study and work at the Neag Center for gifted education and talent development of the University of Connecticut (UCONN). We also took the opportunity to discuss with public schools the practical implementation of concepts, their long lasting experiences and their practices of school-improvement fostering the needs of gifted and talented. The outcome of that year was the development of the first international Master study program in German speaking Europe in gifted education and talent development in Switzerland, located at the University of Education Northwestern Switzerland (PH FHNW).

This master program has been started in cooperation with the Neag Center at UConn with the intent to establish research and a research based teacher education and school-development in Switzerland and to share experiences, knowledge and expertise between the partners. Teacher students could take all their studies either at PH FHNW in German and get their master degree from there. Or they could pursue their studies at both universities and get a joint masters or the degree from the University of Connecticut. Since 2004, 149 students realized their studies in this program. Every year a group of Swiss students is taking part at Confratute, the annual summer conference at UConn, to network and cultivate the knowledge exchange between our universities and national efforts in gifted education.

The study program is situated in the Swiss and European educational and cultural contexts to serve the needs of Swiss schools and school systems in German speaking central Europe (Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland). Pedagogically it is based on the concept of the Three Ring Conception of giftedness (Renzulli, 1978; Renzulli & Reis, 1997) and on the theories and concepts of the Schollwode Enrichment Model SEM (Renzulli & Reis, 1985; 1997). With our cooperation we are trying to bring together research results, educational theories and best practices from both continents to discuss international efforts and their impacts on the development and lives of students who are prepared to create the future of a global village in respect to local contexts, proveniences and ethic situations.

In the meantime the program is broadening. Starting in fall 2009 the studies in the master program of the University of Teacher Education Northwestern Switzerland will be offered in amended cooperations with the University of Teacher Education Central Switzerland (PHZ) and the University of Education at Karlsruhe (Germany). Students then can apply to three levels of final degrees for different functions and responsibilities within the schools:

- CAS (certificate of applied studies for classroom and subject teachers),
- MAS (Master of applied studies for experts, tutors and program leaders in gifted educations and

talent development in schools

- MA (Master of Arts as an academic master to qualify teachers for further functions, leadership and research).

Another cooperation that is important for the dissemination of our concepts based on our goals to make schools a better place to encourage students to realize their interests - based on their abilities and passions - and to stand for schools that are working together with their students on their strength-based profiles, is our close collaboration with the Austrian Research and Support Center for the Gifted and Talented (oezbf).

IPEGE – a new network of universities on the gifted and talented

Following to the conviction that collaboration in research and teacher education causes more critical reflection, additional impacts in each partner team and higher excellence for all of the partners, we initiated - together with oezbf and PHZ - an International Panel of Experts in Gifted Education (IPEGE). At this time the panel meets experts from Austria (oezbf, University of Teacher Education Steiermark, Germany (University Erfurt, University of Education Karlsruhe, University Rostock, University Trier) and Switzerland (University of Teacher Education Central Switzerland and University of Teacher Education Northwestern Switzerland). This panel of experts from German speaking nations worked out - based on its expertise - international standards and concepts for teacher education focused on the field of gifted education. These new standards meet a professional deepened teacher education and the quality requirements of the European «Declaration of Bologna» for higher education (IPEGE 2009).

eVOCATIOn – an European project for teacher education

Another European project that is strongly connected to the theoretical frames of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model is «eVOCATIOn». It is a multilateral «Comenius-project» within the EG (European Community). Participants are several universities from Germany, Switzerland, Austria,

Netherlands, France, Slovak Republic, Poland and seven experienced schools from these nations with elaborated programs for gifted education and talent development. In this program educational scientists are reflecting and analyzing best practices of schools in teamwork with experienced teachers of these model schools, looking for relevant conditions, aspects and characteristics for a successful support of giftedness (Weigand, Schenz 2008). The tasks of our international project are to develop study concepts, materials and medias for a specific teacher education to provide gifted children and talent development. The project will combine the knowledge and experiences from the schools and their practices with the knowledge from research of the universities and the expertise of the teacher education. The product of this project will be to create four modules for teacher education: Basics, identification, individualization of learning arrangements, support of learning processes (Weigand, Schenz, Hackl, Hascher, Mueller-Oppliger, 2009). Online modules will be supplemented by a handbook that contains corresponding video vignettes with case studies and examples.

Improvement of teaching and promotion of giftedness and talents in Swiss schools

In Switzerland, each Canton (like the states in the US) is responsible and in charge of its school system, curriculum and educational policies. Even though the Swiss school actually is in a current process called HARMOS to harmonize the different school systems, to identify meeting points within learning processes and at certain learning levels, to establish learning standards and create competence profiles, we still have the situation, that each Cantonal board of education decides more or less autonomously on its school regulations. Within the passed five years most of the 26 Swiss Cantons worked out guidelines and programs to the promotion of giftedness and gifted students. This prepares the base for our programs of further education for teachers but also the scope for development in schools that are ready for innovations in this field.

Induced by our master program we get the chance to evoke, support and accompany school developments within the schools of our teacher students all over Switzerland. Often the master the-

sis of these teacher students are related to theoretically and science-based school improvements, developmental processes or creating new school programs in our field of raising the giftedness off all students or supporting individual capacities of high end learners.

These projects have to be school referred (vocational field), application oriented and meeting the scientific standards. This way the master program stands as a relevant germ cell and a place of professionalized school- and teaching-innovations. The individual school projects of the teacher students are valuable sources for ongoing school developments in the tradition of reflective practitioners (Schoen 1983), Action Researchers (Elliott 1981, 1991; Altrichter, Posch 2001) and sustainable school improvement (Fullan 1991; Teddlie, Reynolds 2000).

Representative for a plurality of school programs that have been developed during the past eight years this article will try to picture three schools. The selection includes three different school types in Switzerland. The first report will be from an elementary school from Kindergarten - 6th grade. Then we will take an insight in a project of a middle school (grades 7 - 9) and thirdly we will get an impression of the work in a Gymnasium (High school: grade 11 – 13).

«Using the personal potentials - fostering the individual strengths»

(Elementary School in Oberaegeri, Canton Zug, Central Switzerland)

«We are quite a normal public school», is the comment of the principal of this school. «We have a dream, that the strengths of all children can be nurtured in the most beneficial way within their classroom and learning groups».

The elementary school of Oberaegeri starts its efforts in the year 2001 with the intention: «We will create a school that gives room to foster individual interests, abilities and talents of all children. Successful structures should not be given up; they have to be discussed, optimized and enriched by effective practices to reach the goal». The guidelines are: «The strengths of all kids will be fostered. Each child gets the chance to show his or her talents. Every child can bring in and follow to

her or his interests. Every child has the right to experience her or his success and appreciation by the teachers and the learning community». As pedagogical tasks the school team phrased: «providing and keeping the curiosity of the students, motivating self activities and individual creativity, promoting positive self-esteem and getting prepared for lifelong learning». The teachers obligated themselves to assist the students to build up their individual strengths, so that they can be and feel successful at school (Baettig & Pegoraro 2008, Speerli 2008).

The success story of this school is an example of longtime and continued efforts together with the complete team of the school (teachers, principal, board). A group of four teachers began early in 2001 to learn more about giftedness and talent development in their further education. Retrospectively the teachers make out that the beginning in a small group might have been one of the success factors in their situation. They worked out a concept together with all the other teachers of their school, which finally has been accepted by the school board.

In the first year the school opens learning ateliers in language, math and science for students with higher abilities and curiosity; each learning atelier meeting for only two hours per week. Simultaneously time a mentor program in music starts. The parents offer to support this mentor program financially.

Learning ateliers for gifted education

Since 2004 the music mentorship was changed into an additional learning atelier for gifted students, which is offered alternating to another new learning atelier in creative arts.

The learning ateliers of Oberaegeri are enrichment offers for those students who – even with an individualized learning in their classes – want to achieve more challenging and demanding activities or have special interests that cannot be satisfied within the regular classroom context. The students are working in the ateliers in personal projects or group projects. They are guided and coached in their specific learning and taught at the border of their abilities. The peer setting is en-

couragement and stimulation at the same time. The children are learning to get their information, to rate the information, to use it for their own tasks and to produce an output that is worth to be presented to a public. Important goals of these ateliers are to enhance self-regulating learning, learning techniques, thinking strategies and simultaneously, personal and social competencies, self-awareness and self-esteem. The learning ateliers are based on the ideas and expectations of the type II and type III activities of the Schoolwide Enrichment Concept (Renzulli, 1977, Reis & Renzulli, 2009).

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Differentiation for every student

At the same time and parallel to the installation of these pullout opportunities, a wider staff- and school-development is initiated to individualize teaching and learning in every classroom. With newer teaching methods and open learning arrangements like «Werkstatt-Unterricht», an open learning setting with various tasks within the same subject area or theme (Zuercher, 1987), «Wochenplan», work plans with given tasks and open spaces for individual projects, «Freiarbeit», open learning arrangements based on the concepts of Freinet, (1994), Montessori 1909; 1974 and other educational progressivists) and «learning in projects» (Dewey, Kilpatrick, 1935). Individual learning premises, learning speed, learning approaches and learning styles are accepted as a social reality and taken as starting points to individual learning processes. Teachers are going to be interested in learning environments that enable more self regulated, explorative and discovering learning (Wagenschein, 1989).

Moreover the school begins to organize Type I activities in classes and also for the whole school. The intention is to expose the students to a wide variety of disciplines, topics, occupations, hobbies, persons, places, and events that would not ordinarily be covered in the regular curriculum (Renzulli, 1977). The students are meeting hunters, firemen and dancers; they work on a farm, meet different sport champions, work with media specialists, listen to a mountain guide, artists, writers and scientists. They get a chance to experience the fascination of personalities in their excellence, with all their personal engagement and empathy and as role models. They get new questions, new ideas and motivations and get in touch with other worlds and life realities that have not been opened up for them before.

Parallel to that these changes, the teachers and school administrators work hard on the adaptation of the learning tracks with curriculum compacting and acceleration. The elimination of «waiting rooms» by a more flexible scool organization and structures and the streamlining of curriculum enable above average students to avoid repetition of previously mastered work and guaranteed mastery while simultaneously finding time for more appropriately challenging activities (Renzulli, Smith, & Reis, 1982).

Schoolwide projects

The school also implements periodical special weeks where the classes are disbanded and the students are learning in groups of interest. The learning concepts of the different workshops follow the approaches of the multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983, 2000) and the triarchic theory of

human intelligence (Sternberg 1995, 1997). During these weeks, you can see 6th graders learning together with kids from the kindergarten. The school turns into a learning community, where it is natural that not everybody is working at the same time at the same point and students teach each other as individuals with their own abilities with no reductions on labelings in age, classes or previous learning biographies and attitudes in their regular classes. Some of the workshops are:

- painting and creating like famous artists
- experience nature with all your senses
- everything you can do with your feet
- kids power chorus
- digital camera and power point
- story telling and playing with our language

2007 the school appends - initiated by feedbacks from outside experts – a mentor concept. Once a week, teams from one to three students get the chance to work in special areas together with a mentor. Often this is the first situation where high-end learners find themselves in the situation to learn more sophisticated research-techniques and thinking- and/or problemsolving-strategies.

The mentor supports the students to find their own paths, to build up their individual competencies and performances in knowledge, personal and social aspects and to evaluate and reflect their own products, learning processes and learning attitudes.

The spark jumps over to the parents

All these efforts of this school over the years and its effects are highly valued by the parents. «We want to support the school of Oeberaegeri in their positive efforts to a future-orientated school that integrates all students with all their strengths in one learning community» is the statement of the parents in November 2007, when they take an initiative to launch a new «resource» room for their school. Such a «resource room» (Flury, 2006) is a special classroom with inspiring, challenging and providing materials, problems, tasks and support structures to solve the problems and to learn. While the learning atelier in Oeberaegeri is intended for the estimated 15 % of gifted students (Weinert, 1990, Reis, 1981, Reis & Renzulli, 1997), this resource room is made available to all students of the school. It is a place where students can work and learn (coached by teachers, experts or mentors) strength- and interest-oriented. Since 2008, the parents of the school of Oberaegeri are taking care of this «resource room» of their school. They are also working there with the students and teaching them in specific fields of their competencies and expertise.

Michael (8) is living from meeting to meeting with his mentor

Listening to the teachers, we get lots of examples of successful fostering of their students potential cause of the variable opportunities within this schoolwide concept. We hear from growing and blossom out, from the scale that has to be offered to the students that they can spark their inner fire and also from the enthusiasm of parents and other adults who are involved in the enrichment programs. We are especially touched by the story of Michael, a first grader. Ever since he was at the age of 9 months he had a favorite interest in trains. No day without construction of a cog rail-

road or a railroad bridge or a tunnel. When he began to write at the age of 3 years, he also started to draw railway wagons three-dimensional.

Today, if something does not work out corresponding to his imagination he gets very angry. At school he has a hard time. He shows average achievements, but he doesn't fit to the classroom and learning context. He leaves school if there is nothing he is interested in; he even bit his kindergarten teacher, when she wanted to hold him back. He is identified with high ability potential in various areas. Physically he is very active. He is also very self-deciding. In this situation, fortunately Michael found competent teachers in this school who are working with him on both: adapting to a class and learning community but also enhancing his high abilities. Michael loves to work with his mentor. There he can follow to his interests and feels respected in his character and attitudes. The learning situation with his mentor gives him a chance to realize his own interests and inner urge but also to cope with the situation in his class and the regular school context.

What makes this school development to be a model?

Several facts may have had relevant influences. For sure it is the situation that from the first beginning the complete staff, including the principal and the board, were standing behind the idea. The project also shows an attentive and careful long-term effort. It shows, how, over the years, an

intention, initiated by four teachers can turn into a characteristic of a school and a town and can make everybody proud and identify with her or his school.

Another important point for sure is, that every year the school invites several experts to bring in experiences and knowledge at staff development days. The school also reviews each of the activities in self-reflections and -evaluations and also, from time to time, with an external validation through the university of teacher education.

Further on, a main feature is, that the program provides all students on all levels of their abilities, conditions and interests. The program is exemplary for the «rising tide lifts all ships» approach (Renzulli, 1997).

The school distinguishes itself by the efforts for gifted education and talent development in various areas of its educational influence: Teaching and learning within each classroom has been individualized and changed into a more strength-orientated learning (with individual portfolios for every student). Over the years, the school has created several enrichment possibilities on different levels (for every student as well as for high-end-learners). The school succeeded to involve parents, outside-of-school-mentors and also the population of the town in a unique process of more efficient and meaningful learning processes in favor of all learners and the future generation.

«SOOK – StaerkenOrientierte Oberstufe Kirchberg»

(strength-orientated high school in Kirchberg, Canton Sankt Gallen)

The second example that should be shared in this article describes the development of a high school in East Switzerland. The goal of this school is to foster students within the regular school program and in attached individual research projects. The project is based on three pillars: «Individualize within lessons», «learning journal», «research room». The program was started from a teacher student of our master program. First she promoted her intentions to her staff (Schoenenberger 2006). After acceptance within the teacher team and building up a project team, the concept was worked out and was presented to the board of education. At this point, the teachers

were going to visit two other schools with experiences and expertise in gifted education. These exchanges led to the consequence to over think the own concept, to sharpen the guidelines and to adjust the concept to the new knowledge. One year later the program could start.
The focus for the classroom lessons is to give the students more opportunities and the support to build up their learning competencies in self-contained and self-responsible learning. The students are working with individualized learning plans that ask them to decide on their own learning time, speed, learning style and also the point in time for examination. The plans contain the learning program, the tasks and goals and also the checkpoints within the learning process and the schedule for learning consultations and optional learning offers.

A Research room and a local junior research competition

Students who are succesful can apply to work in the «research room». The school follows the reasonings of compacting and of the revolving door identification model (Renzulli, Reis, & Smith, 1981). In the research room the students can work on more sophisticated and demanding problems or with own research projects based on personal interests. Teaching and learning in the «research room» are specifications of type II and type III activities of the triad model (Renzulli, 1976). The students decide if they are working as an experimental researcher, a creative researcher or a scientific researcher. They learn the different proceedings, initial points and products. Every research project ends with a presentation in the class and can lead to the participation in the Kirchberg junior research competition («Kirchberger Jugend forscht»). This town competition is part of the going public strategy with the visible products of the gifted program.

There, you can hear from interviews with people concerned with the war in Kosovo and learn about the reasons behind the conflict. You can learn about the construction of a touch screen or a chip of a credit card that has been deconstructed and rebuilt by a student. You hear about Che Guevara, his life and mission, his self-understanding and effects of his actions. You know more than before about avalanches and the instruments to find and rescue buried persons and about the research of the Swiss Avalanche Institute. Or you hear about the cosmic radiation and their

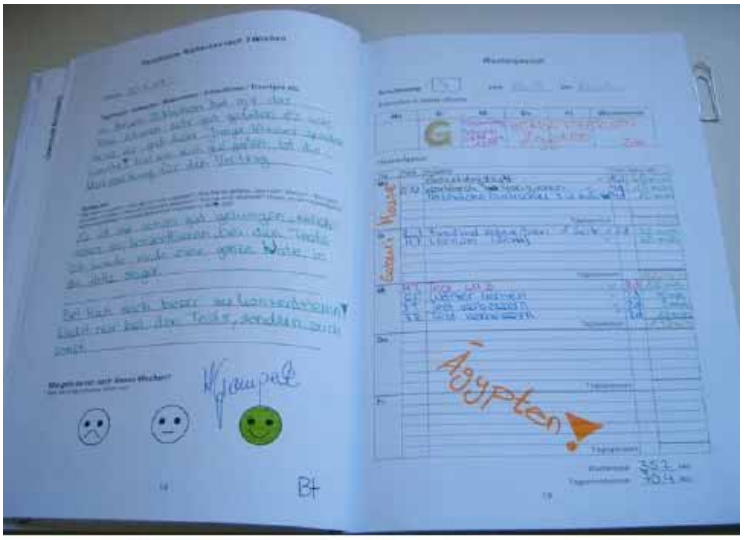
influences on human beings and lots of other presentations based on individual interests, deep empathies, high achievements, and overaverage learning abilities of students.

Learning journal for the improvement of individual learning processes

The SOKO project has developed an elaborated system of reflection sheets and helpful suggestions to improve the student's competence to reflect their own learning (Schoenenberger, 2006). The students learn to monitor their learning practices, strategies of problem handling, decision-makings, aspects of motivation, learning attitudes and engagement. Based on these learning journals the students can detect and retrace their own personal growing but also structures of the own acting to success or failures.

These records are an excellent basis for metakognitive and metacommunicative processes of the learners to their individual learning styles, preferences, approaches and practices. They are the access to learning analyzes and reflection between students and teachers and a learning coaching that goes much further than subject learning, methods of learning, learningproducts or grades.

With learning journals and an elaborated learning review from students with teachers as their learning coaches we get a clue to understand the way of thinking, the meanings behind and the subjective knowledge construction and attitudes of the students. Following to the pedagogical constructivists (Vygotsky, 1978, Mandl, 2001, Reich, 2004,) and the conclusions of the neuropsychology (Spitzer, 2003, Jaencke 2005, Geake, 2009) these tracks of individual learning and their interpretation from the learners on their own horizon of individual meanings and beliefs opens to us a door to a deeper understanding of their self understanding, self regulation and self practices in their learning (Mueller-Oppliger, 2008).



Tim says «thank you for the time I could follow to my mind»

We hear the story of Tim, who has been not very interested in school contents. Nevertheless, he got the chance to work for hours in the research room, were he showed excellent results. Each

time he came back from there, he also showed more interest and collaboration in the regular classroom activities. With a second prize at the local research competition he got the attention and affirmation he needed. After leaving the school, he thanked his teachers for all the time he could follow his own interests with learning support from teachers. Only with the individual work he would have realized to have strengths and could be able to be successful and capable to create meaningful work.

Tim actually is extraordinary successful in his apprenticeship as an architectural draftsman.

SOOK is a model...

because all the students of the school have the benefit that the lessons are more individualized and provide more individual responsibility, self-reliance and self-reflection. Successful learners get the chance to enhance their abilities or interests in personal projects in the research room. This program is open to every student. All the teachers of the school are involved in the program and every student is the author of his/her personal learning journal. The strong focus on the reflection of the own learning processes and learning practices is orientated to a lifelong learning, self-efficacy and self-responsibility of the students.

The program is signaling to the learner that in fact they are the masters of their own learning processes, that they are called upon to make own decisions, to determine their own speed of learning, to participate in the planning of their learning processes, even to make suggestions to methods of assessment, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the own learning in a dialog with the teacher as their professional learning guide. At this point we also are talking about a democratization of the learning processes (Dewey, 1916). Lots of decisions, innovations and improvements can be initiated by students that gives to them a sense of satisfaction, the feeling of importance and the assurance to be taken as seriously by the school than their teachers (Schmid, 2005).

The outcomes of the projects in the research room are brought back into the classes (initiation, motivation, reflection). Learning from each other in a learning community is a principle.

The program has been introduced quite carefully under enduring inclusion of the parents and students (introduction and evaluation events) and has grown step by step within three years. It is evaluated both, internally and externally, and will be enhanced continuously.
A special characteristic is, to establish a public competition in the town that gives the students a stage to perform with their abilities, products or knowledge and, to the public, the chance to identify with a school that enhances innovations and high achievement.

b&b (Begabungs- und Begabtenfoerderung) Gymnasium Oberwil

(Gifted education and talent development at Oberwil High School, Canton Basel-Landschaft)

Our third example brings us to a Gymnasium (High school: grade 11 – 13) near Basel (Northwestern Switzerland). This school does not have a fixed program for gifted students but offers the

students various options to improve their individual abilities from initiation (type I) and individual projects (type II and III), to mentoring or studying at the university while being a student of this school. The goals of the program - that doesn't understand itself as a «program» - is, to be open to support all their students in all over average abilities (Chiquet, 2008).

In June 2004, some teachers formed a team and worked out a concept. Within their staff development the draft has been discussed together with external experts and the benches of the concept and next steps were decided. Then, that reassessed concept was brought to the students, discussed with them and presented to the school board for confirmation.

At spring 2005, every disciplinary team was working out proposals for advanced studies, names and addresses of possible mentors, institutions or companies that would be possible to involve.

Pay attention to special abilities and efforts

A that point the teachers also decided, that at the qualification meetings for the future they would take as much time to discuss strengths and over average potentials or interests of their students as for the requested decision on marks and grades. The observation categories for the teachers are: «general high ability», «high abilities in special domains», «noticeable attitudes or behaviors that could be a sign of underachievement» or misfits.

Moreover the teacher's convent decided to point and show special achievements and competencies of the students in the certificates and diploma of the school from that time. Today, in the certificates we can read about the effort of being a chairman of the student reunion, a member of the organizational committee of a school festival or about an excellent research project in the laboratories of a pharma company; but also from participation in a mentor program by a famous writer.

Inspiration, fascination and famous persons as role models

On the occasion of «Mittagsforen» (forums at lunch-time), Feierabendgespraechen (talk after work), late afternoon and other special events, successful professionals or persons are presenting their projects, engagements and passions. These events are optional for the students but

very well visited. Some of these persons are former students of this same gymnasium. The intention of these events (type I) is, to open up new horizons, to inspire additional interest for activities, professions, culture or social tasks or disciplines and to share the fascination with these successful persons and role models.

Special courses and out of school improvement (type II and III)

The school offers special blocs and courses a wide range to improve specific competencies (like workshops with writers, musicians, movie producers but also engineering or technical weeks at universities). Every student is invited to participate and to follow his individual interests and capacities in courses like «creative writing», «theater», additional foreign languages like Greek, Chinese, Japanese (supplemental to French, Italian, Spanish, and Latin as standard choices) «marimba-ensemble», «chorus», «school band», «political discourses» or «cafe philo» (philosophical discourses at the cafeteria). Every year the list of offered courses is expanding.

In addition to these offers of the school, each student has the possibility to apply for an individual way to enhance her or his abilities besides school (and part-time within the school schedule). Every proposal is being discussed and worked out to an individual agreement about school basics and further activities. At this point the student gets a mentor from the school who accompanies his learning and improvement.

In the ranks of this gymnasium we find students studying at the university of Basel, playing at the music academy, researching at the CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) and at the BioCenter, working with a sculptor or training with national teams in sports.

«I look at my actual school situation as a unique chance... »

are the words of Giulietta (16). She started her carrier as a piano player very early and has already won several Swiss, German and international 1st prizes in youth contests. She is playing with the radio symphony orchestra in Berlin and with the Ukrainian national philharmonic orchestra.

«I play the piano and this takes much time to practice. That's why, I' am happy to be dispensed from music and chorus. I'm also dispensed from English lessons (because English is my mother-tongue) and from sport (I once broke a finger). This gives me the time I need to rehearse and to learn at the music academy. From there my grades will be taken over to my actual school. I practice four hours a day and at weekends it is more. For concerts I get time off from my school».

Swiss Award for «Best Practices« in Gifted Education

These three described «best practices» from Swiss schools on their ways to provide giftedness and talent development also are prizewinners at the annual Swiss award for strength-orientated teaching LISSA (Lernfreude in Schweizer Schulen anregen). LISSA is an initiative from the Swiss Foundation for Gifted Children. The prizes are spoken to the benefit of implemented school concepts on gifted education and talent development integrated in regular school structures and organizations. Getting a prize from this organization is a quality label that often has a huge impact on to the school, the public and the town.

The criteria to apply for this prize are deeply connected to the theory and «spirit of the SEM and the Triad Model». The main criteria are:

- to refer closely to the classroom learning

- to keep open access (revolving door concept and self nomination)
- to consider all domains of giftedness and talents as different but of the same value.
- to incorporate minorities and special population groups
- to look on gifted education as an ongoing process of school development
- the involvement and participation of all parties (students, parents, teachers, experts, school administration)
- local networking (other schools, mentors, public authorities, companies, media…,)
- the definition of quality standards and internal and external evaluations
- to have an impact as a multiplicator for other schools and the public.

More of «best practices» and efforts from Swiss schools can be found under «www.lissa-preis.ch»

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