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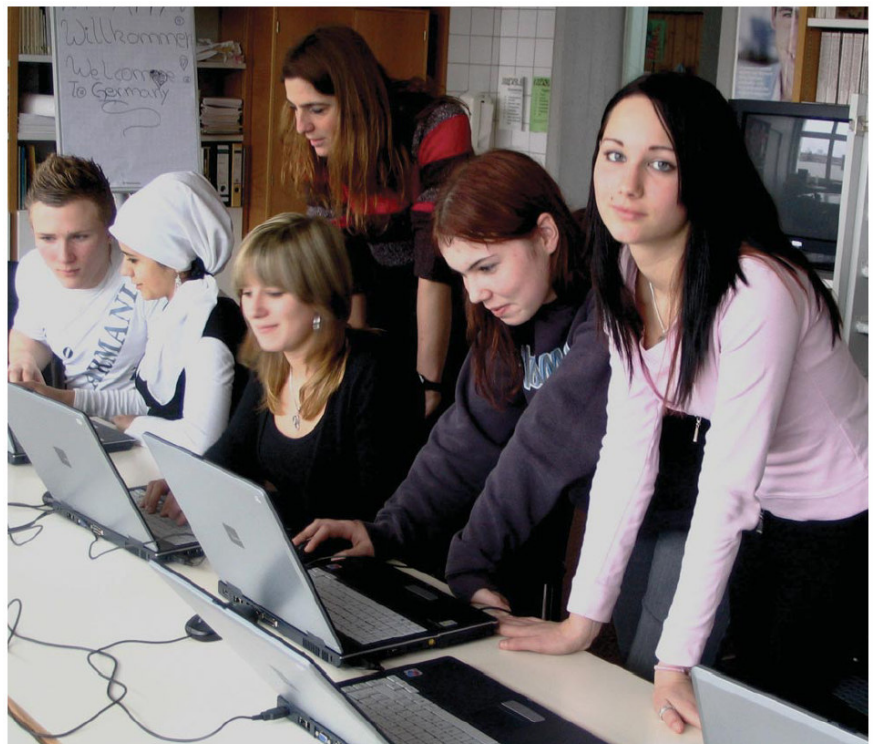
innovative
teachers®

A platform for success in school

Schools profit from the exchange of ideas and concepts over the innovative internet Teacher's Network.

The Initiative

Over the internet portal "Innovative Teacher's Network", Microsoft Germany provides an internet platform through which teachers can be supported closely as they conduct their communications classes. This support takes the form of preformatted digital media which can be presented in the classroom. Educators can compare and swap materials with each other. The intent is to create a national internet community of teachers who can work together online and tap into each other's talents and experience. The implementation of modern communications technology in the classroom can be found at the internet site www.innovative-teachers.de. Educators will find a source of free information, classroom tools and materials for a computer-assisted teaching experience. Included in the materials are a complete teaching plan as well as downloadable teaching materials themselves together with instructions for using the materials.



In the city of Aurich, the [Ulricianum high school](#) was founded way back in 1646, and has an annex in the neighboring city of Moorhusen. There, the student population is over 1,930. A full-day study curriculum has existed there since the school year 2004/2005. There is also a self-paced learning center, a library student group and a multimedia PC student group. The schools in the southern Pfalz region of Wörth on the Rhein river is a combination of high school and advanced high school with a student population of around 700. The educational system here is a combination of high schools and advanced high schools. Because the high schools and advanced high schools are combined, the same courses are taught sometimes to students from both environments. Since the school year 2002/2003, the school program has been extended to full-days, and more and more students are participating in the full-day program, up to now, around 450. The teachers have introduced new media into the regular and extended curriculum, and even into the exams. "The time schedule is really tight", says Fritz Hock, director of the Wörth school district. This is why it is increasingly important for the teachers to accelerate the educational-tempo through teamwork.

"Each child determines the level of difficulty for her or himself"

Sonja Schalck, teacher at the Wörth school

5000
teachers have registered at the "Innovative Teachers Platform" internet site.

"Many teachers place their exams on our server and request feedback from their colleagues concerning the exams", says Hock. So it is really simple to respond to the input from their colleagues and tailor their study plans accordingly. They do the same thing with the classroom materials. "Everybody knows that they can only profit from working together", reports Hock.



They have even stepped out beyond their own school yard boundaries. Via the internet "Innovative Teacher's Network" www.innovative-teachers.de, some schools have presented their complete curricula, and have documented their experiences with the full-day study program online. This platform is the heart of the Microsoft educational initiative, "Innovative Teachers". It supports teachers in their quest to find modern communications technologies which can be quickly adapted to the ever changing challenges presented in the classroom. In this way, good examples sort of "go to school". What has already been proven to be successful can be also a source of excitement for many others. "Because of this, we are going to use the internet platform www.innovative-teachers.de even more in the future as a forum for the exchange of ideas between schools", says the Wörth school director. Thereby, the first priority will be the sharing of experiences with full-day school curricula. "After all, every school should not have to start from ground zero".

In order to strengthen inter-school cooperation, Microsoft also offers a variety of classroom materials over the internet, from job-related topics dealing with information about Europe, to economic trends, space exploration, communication, sports, and online learning. More and more teachers are recognizing the advantages of inter-school teamwork and they are increasingly open to exchanging ideas and experiences. "Actually, the effort to deliver the first digital documents was greater than by conventional methods back then", explains Hock. "When you are standing in front a whole pool of work, and everybody pitches in and does their share, you can see readily how easy it is to get the job done", so says the director. In order to realize the benefits of digital documents, the schools in the Wörth school district use the Microsoft Class Server. Using this method, the students can take their exams directly on the computer. In some subjects like economics and sociology, one out of every two exams is taken this way. Multiple choice questions are used frequently, as well as open thought questions requiring fully-written answers which can be evaluated and graded by the teacher.



The Ulricianum high school places a high value on independent learning, as well as group learning.

The good computer equipment in the school also helps in finding new solutions, even in areas not related to speech and language. The Wörth teacher Sonja Schalck was facing the challenge that in her fifth grade class, students had wide-ranging skill levels when it came to figuring math problems in their heads.

Additionally, the learning tempo varied from one student to the next. "Due to the pressure of the study plan, I hardly had the time to give each student the necessary individual attention he or she needed", she remembers. Schalck found the answer by entering key words into a search engine on the internet. She searched for a software program which helped students figure out math problems in their heads. "Each child sets the level of difficulty and the learning tempo for her or himself", says Schalck. "I facilitate the optimal adjustment of the tempo and the level of difficulty in order to avoid having the child be over or under-challenged". Additionally, the use of computers raises the motivation level considerably. Thirty-five intense minutes per week of working math problems in their heads, is the norm. The students are not the only ones who benefit from this solution. Schalck saves time with this method. "I don't need to make up any more math worksheets", she summarizes.

The answers are not always so easy. Mario Haseborg of the Ulricianum advanced high school in Aurich considers an early start in delving into new technology as "an enriching experience that can only enhance one's own learning development". But to him, there is a lack of suitable software programs which can perform automatic evaluations. "We have around 100 CDs such as vocabulary training in our self-paced learning center", he says. For him, information technology is more like a teaching aid which complements other information sources. He wants to teach the children to ask questions themselves, and to find answers and solutions to those questions by themselves. Direct contact with the teacher will decrease continuously as the children become more self-reliant. At first, the teacher will present the tasks to be accomplished and concrete paths towards solutions which the student will follow. Later, in the second stage, the students will have to find the paths to the solutions for themselves. In the third and final stage, the students create the tasks as well as find the solution paths to those tasks themselves. This should serve as a step-by-step method of preparation for even higher education.

A profile of two school districts: Wörth and Aurich

The schools in the Wörth school district near the city of Karlsruhe, Germany are a combination of high school and advanced high school. The



student population is approximately 700. Because the high schools and advanced high schools are combined, the

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In the city of Aurich, the Ulricianum high school was founded way back in 1646, and has an annex in neighboring city of Moorhusen. There, the student population is over 1,930. A full-day study curriculum has existed there since 2004. There is also a library and PC student group.

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This concept is also supported by Kerstin Beutling, project supervisor of the Microsoft educational network "WissensWert". "Information technology is not the center of focus here. Instead, it is a means of achieving an innovative form of teaching". Microsoft makes its know-how available in the form of the Innovative Teachers Initiative. Microsoft does this wherever it simply makes sense to implement computer-assisted communications teaching processes. Due to the fact that career opportunities particularly in science and economics are dependent in ever increasing measure on proper computer skills, one can readily imagine the following newflash, "Starting next school year, students in Aurich will start doing research and writing their exams on computers. The quality of their work will be evaluated critically".

"I lead the students first in the analysis of an Aria, for example. Then I let them analyze a variety of Arias on their own over a period of several weeks. The results of which will be a topic on the upcoming exam", says educator Haseborg. The end result is not all that important, but the time and level of effort expended are the crucial factors. The time element is a very important aspect of the self-evaluation process for students. So, when the student sees that she or he needs a lot of time to research a particular topic online, then the student should concentrate on more efficient techniques of doing the research. Officials in the Wörth school district recognize the ever increasing importance of computer skills as preparatory for making their way in the job market, upon completion of their studies. That is one reason why the students in Wörth use Microsoft Office programs like Word in the classroom. This is not only possible to do in the computer rooms, but also via the "virtual knowledge-center", a rollable cart containing twelve laptops, a printer, and an overhead projector. A WLAN access point is also installed on the cart so that the laptops can be used in each room while maintaining a wireless connection to the school server or the internet. Haseborg looks on this in the same way as his colleague Hock. They both think it's great to be able to exchange ideas with each other, "A platform of exchange like the Innovative Teachers Network seems like a very helpful thing to me". This way, schools can react faster to new innovations like full-day studies in which, for instance, normally-accepted best practices, concepts, and projects can be shared readily and openly."

Support Education

Microsoft has maintained a presence in Germany for over 20 years, and continues to grow and expand. The company is continuously involved in a multitude of initiatives and projects. The core themes: Support Education, Inspire Growth, Encourage Research, and Enhance Security. The educational network "WissensWert" from Microsoft Germany, together with its partners, serves as a means of achieving these goals. The main thrust of these efforts is the innovative and effective use of computers and software in kindergartens and schools.